

CONFERENCE AGENDA



9th East Africa Philanthropy Conference

AGILE PHILANTHROPY: ADAPTING TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL SHIFTS



11 - 13 JUNE, 2025



SERENA HOTEL, KIGALI, RWANDA

HOSTED BY:



EAPN welcomes you to the

9th

Edition of the East Africa Philanthropy Conference

OVERVIEW

Philanthropy today is navigating an age of record unpredictability. The assumptions that once anchored the sector—reliable donor commitments, stable global economies, and linear development trajectories—are unscrambling at an unprecedented pace. The world is no longer shifting in decades; it is transforming in real-time. In this context, the necessity of an agile, responsive, and action-driven philanthropy ecosystem is an immediate imperative. The ability to adapt to shifting dynamics while ensuring sustained, high-impact, and locally anchored solutions has become the defining challenge of modern philanthropy.

The global philanthropic landscape is profoundly shifting, driven by economic precarity, geopolitical realignments, and evolving societal expectations. Traditional donor commitments are contracting as Western governments

prioritize domestic stability, leaving a funding vacuum that compels philanthropy to reimagine financial sustainability beyond reliance on aid. Simultaneously, rising inflation, economic volatility, and cost-of-living crises reshape donor behavior, forcing philanthropic actors to prioritize short-term, high impact interventions over long-term systemic solutions. Corporate giving, venture philanthropy, and blended finance models are increasingly supplementing traditional grant-making, with companies aligning social investments with business sustainability. At the same time, digitalization is revolutionizing philanthropic practices, enabling AI-driven analytics, blockchain-based transparency, and decentralized giving platforms to optimize resource allocation and enhance impact assessment. However, these innovations also introduce ethical and structural challenges, such as digital exclusion and algorithmic biases, that require deliberate action to ensure equitable access to philanthropic resources.

Beyond financial and technological evolution, the ecosystem is contending with heightened political and social complexities. Governments across various regions are tightening regulations on foreign-funded initiatives, asserting greater control over civic space, and restricting cross-border funding, compelling philanthropic organizations to adapt to new compliance frameworks while safeguarding operational autonomy. Social expectations around philanthropy are also shifting, with grassroots movements, younger generations, and advocacy networks demanding localized, trust-based, and participatory grant-making models prioritizing community-led solutions over externally imposed interventions. The generational transition in philanthropy is accelerating a departure from institutional giving toward decentralized, tech-enabled philanthropy emphasizing transparency and measurable outcomes. At the same time, the rise of nationalism, misinformation, and ideological polarization is eroding trust in philanthropy, making it increasingly difficult for philanthropic actors to navigate contested political environments. These seismic shifts—economic precarity, social realignment, regulatory constraints, and policy disruption—are reshaping the fundamental nature of philanthropy. The sector must now evolve from a reactive model to an anticipatory, agile, and adaptive force capable of thriving in uncertainty.

In response to these urgent realities, the East Africa Philanthropy Network convenes the 9th East Africa Philanthropy Conference, themed “Agile Philanthropy: Adapting to Economic, Social, and Political Shifts.” Scheduled for June 11th–13th, 2025, at Serena Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda, this conference is an opportune space for critical dialogue, strategic collaboration, and bold action to shape the future of philanthropy in a rapidly evolving world.

OBJECTIVES

Critically assess the impact of global economic shifts, political realignments, and evolving societal expectations on the sustainability and effectiveness of philanthropy

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Strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration between philanthropy, government, business, academia, and civil society to enhance systemic change and sustainable impact.

Interrogate philanthropy's role in navigating and influencing regulatory and policy landscapes to safeguard civic space and financial autonomy.

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Advance innovative financial models and capital mobilization strategies that secure philanthropy's long-term financial resilience.

Reimagine philanthropy's governance structures to embrace participatory, locally-led, and trust-based funding models.

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Examine the intersection of technology, AI, and philanthropy's future—leveraging digital tools while mitigating ethical risks.

Position philanthropy as an agile, anticipatory force that moves beyond reactive interventions to proactive, systems-level change.

7

10 June 2025
TUESDAY

PRE-EVENTS

14:30 PM
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16:30 PM

Masterclass (Invite Only)

This closed-door Masterclass convenes a select group of ecosystem shapers for a focused interrogation of one of the most consequential inflection points facing the philanthropic sector today. With geopolitical uncertainty, regulatory tightening, and capital reconfiguration reshaping the landscape, this session provides a critical opportunity to surface latent tensions, examine adaptive blind spots, and co-generate strategic foresight. It is less a knowledge transfer than a systems-level recalibration – a preparatory moment for those expected to attend and anchor the conference.

18:00 PM
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19:00 PM

Conference Registration

Delegates begin to arrive for orientation. This window allows for formal credentialing, material collection, and light networking before the opening reception. The tone is warm but intentional, setting the rhythm for the work ahead.

19:00 PM
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21:00 PM

Opening Reception

As the region's ecosystem actors convene, this reception will set the social architecture that scaffolds the days ahead. Designed to foster familiarity and early rapport among participants, it will offer a vital space for informal engagement and cross-sector introductions before the working sessions. Delegates will be welcomed with curated refreshments and light entertainment, creating an environment of ease and collegiality. Meaningful collaboration is first built in shared presence.

Ecosystem Analysis

Philanthropy stands on a fractured foundation – caught between the slow collapse of inherited models and the high-speed acceleration of global disruption. While we speak of innovation, collaboration, and community-led impact, much of the sector remains structurally dependent on external capital, reactive by design, and conceptually stuck in frameworks shaped decades ago. Aid is shrinking. Trust is cracked. Data systems remain extractive. The measurement of “impact” still rewards compliance, not transformation. We must ask: Why does philanthropy continue to orbit donor calendars instead of lived community rhythms? Why is resilience still an exception and not a systemic outcome?

This day calls for intellectual courage. We will not tinker at the edges; we will interrogate the ecosystem’s very architecture: its outdated funding logic, legitimacy gaps, geopolitical blind spots, and its tendency to protect its own comfort over its stated purpose. From the retrenchment of Western aid to the ideological fragility of legacy structures, we will surface the fault lines philanthropy has been too polite to name. We will expose inherited myths, disassemble inherited power, and confront the ecosystem with one urgent truth: we cannot fully redesign what we are unwilling to re-analyse.

07:30 AM
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08:30 AM

Registration & Settling In

Delegates arrive and complete registration. This hour provides space to orient, connect, and prepare for the day ahead. The Conversation Weaver will offer initial housekeeping, outline the agenda, and share key logistical updates. This session sets a clear and composed foundation for the convening to begin.

08:30 AM
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08:40 AM

Setting the Pulse

This session will establish the strategic intent of the convening. It will situate the conference within the broader shifts facing the philanthropic ecosystem and outline the expectations for engagement over the three days. It will mark the beginning of a focused dialogue on where the sector stands, and what it must now become.

08:40 AM
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08:55 AM

Official Conference Launch & Officiation

This will be the conference’s formal opening. It will affirm its significance in the current political, economic, and social context and underscore the evolving role of philanthropy as a structural force within the development ecosystem.

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09:10 AM

Conference Foresight: What This Moment Requires

This session will contextualize the shifts reshaping the philanthropic and development landscape across East Africa and beyond. It will surface the underlying tensions, structural inflection points, and converging disruptions that define this moment economically, politically, and institutionally. More than a state-of-the-sector update, it will outline the key questions this convening must confront and the systems-thinking lens required to interrogate them

9:10 AM
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10:30 AM

PLENARY SESSION: Plenary Session: Systems on the Brink: Why Philanthropy Must Break to Evolve

This session establishes the meta-frame for the entire convening: our current ecosystem is not just misaligned but structurally incompatible with the world it seeks to serve. The architecture of development as we know it – financial, institutional, and philosophical – is no longer fit for purpose. Philanthropy sits at a crossroads: adapt on its own terms, or become irrelevant on someone else's. The cracks are foundational. Donor logic is shrinking while social complexity is expanding. Partnerships are often transactional, designed to manage noise, not mobilize systems. The public sector is overburdened, private capital is self-preserving, and philanthropic capital is increasingly unsure whether it is a risk-taker or a reputational custodian. The 5P Framework will be interrogated as elements of an ecosystem that must be restructured, not simply harmonized. Each space has its own incentives, timelines, and boundaries of accountability. And yet – unless restructured – they remain locked in fragmentation. This session asks: Can we still call it a system when it doesn't cohere? Can we call it responsive when it fails to regenerate trust? This day begins with a proposition: that the legitimacy of philanthropy will not be secured by what it funds, but by how courageously it is willing to reimagine the conditions under which it exists.

10:30 AM
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11:00 AM

Health Break

This is a moment to recalibrate both focus and energy. It offers space to let the morning's insights settle while creating room for informal exchange and quiet reflection. Even systems thinking needs a breath between beats.

11:00 AM
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13:00 PM

DEEPER ECOSYSTEM INTERROGATIONS

SESSION 1:

Aid Retrenchment & Shifting Global Priorities: When the Money Moves, Who Moves with it?

This session confronts the shrinking footprint of traditional development capital. The implications for Africa are profound. The default logic of grant-funded stability is collapsing under the weight of its own fragility. What's emerging in its place is a philosophical vacuum, not a funding gap. What happens when aid no longer leads the agenda? Who decides what fills that void – domestic capital, private equity, or politically aligned philanthropy? And are we architecting new financing models, or simply shifting power from one elite to another? This session dissects the geopolitics of cutback, interrogates the legitimacy crisis in global giving, and asks what it means to design financial sovereignty in a post-aid paradigm.

SESSION 2:

Institutional Friction, Trust Collapse, and the Myth of Legacy Capacity

Trust is the currency that institutions claim but rarely earn. Across the philanthropic value chain – from donor boards to community partners – legitimacy is under pressure. Institutions that once held open space in shaping development agendas are now viewed as procedural, extractive, or outdated. This session explores the structure of institutional friction: where legacy organizations resist adaptation, local actors are excluded from upstream influence, and accountability has become more symbolic than structural. We will interrogate what institutional relevance looks like in a world where trust is no longer given by default. And we will ask – with brutal honesty – whether some institutions are protecting legacy more than impact. If resilience is the new legitimacy, then how must institutions be reimaged not just in form but in function, culture, and relational logic?

SESSION 3:

Data, Metrics & Impact Narratives: Who Gets to Count What Counts?

For decades, philanthropy has outsourced legitimacy to the language of metrics. However, as systems become more complex, the data designed to simplify them distorts them. Who defines what success looks like? Who is included in measurement – and who is left invisible by design? This session explores how dominant evaluation models continue to support top-down power, disregard lived expertise, and favor Western theories over contextual wisdom. How can measurement evolve to honor depth over scale, dignity over efficiency, and transformation over optics? And what would it take to build a new impact infrastructure that is participatory and unapologetically rooted in context? This is a call to reclaim who holds the pen that writes the story of progress.

13:00 PM
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14:00 PM

LUNCH

A shared table softens strategy and deepens relationships. This lunch offers a moment to expand the conversation, forge unexpected connections, and let insights mature through dialogue beyond the stage.

14:00 PM
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16:00 PM

CO-CREATION LABS

These labs will be structured design spaces where participants move from insight to invention. Each will focus on generating bold, testable responses to the systemic challenges surfaced earlier, blending practical experimentation with strategic imagination.

Lab 1:

Decommissioning What No Longer Works – Making Room for What Must Emerge

As the plenary surfaces sectoral stagnation and the interrogations lay bare outdated architectures, this lab becomes the space for design. Participants will identify one structural habit, mechanism, or practice that no longer enables relevance, and co-develop bold, testable replacements. Whether phasing out donor-led reporting regimes, reinventing how power flows through consortia, or retiring outdated funding pipelines, the lab will produce a “Transition Deck” – a mapped framework of legacy elements to sunset and the new leverage tools to take their place. What must be dismantled for the system to evolve? And what infrastructure must rise in its place?

Lab 2:

Designing Resilient Institutions for Systemic Disruption

Every institution says it’s resilient, until disruption calls its bluff. This lab begins with a shared premise: fragility isn’t just external – it is operational, cultural, and strategic. Together, participants will interrogate what makes an institution resilient not in theory, but in practice. Drawing from the morning’s exploration of trust erosion and legitimacy gaps, this lab surfaces the deep interior redesign needed to create institutions capable of absorbing shock while staying grounded in mission. We’ll prototype blueprints for structural resilience: from governance recalibration and adaptive capital models to cultural retooling and relational accountability. Each participant will build a “Resilience Framework” customized to their context, balancing the technical with the political – and naming the core shifts needed to move from survival logic to sovereign readiness.

Lab 3:

Rewriting the Rules of Impact – Building a Measurement System That Liberates

After confronting the extractive nature of traditional metrics, this lab picks up the pen: who gets to write the story of progress? Participants will challenge the logic of scale-for-scale’s sake, interrogate the violence of technocratic indicators, and co-create a regenerative measurement framework that repositions impact as transformation, not just deliverables. The session will explore participatory evaluation, narrative sovereignty, and context-anchored learning systems that reflect the wisdom of those most affected. We’ll build a “Liberatory Measurement Compass” – a prototype model that can guide institutions in assessing progress through dignity, depth, and decentralization. Because when metrics become tools of control, impact is domesticated. But when measurement is reclaimed, learning becomes liberation.

16:00 PM
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16:45 PM

Systems Checkpoint: Gaps, Patterns & Strategic Possibilities

This session pulls the whole system into one reflective frame. From the provocation of the morning plenary to the granular interrogation of outdated practices, participants will synthesize what the day has revealed about the architecture we've inherited and the ruptures we can no longer ignore. What are the critical tensions that surfaced across rooms? What legacy systems are holding us back? And what signals of adaptation are beginning to emerge? Beyond reflection, this session initiates an asset-mapping lens: what knowledge, networks, and institutional capital already exist within this convening, and how might they be leveraged to begin responding to the very challenges we've named?

16:45 PM
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18:00 PM:

Coffee & Curated Networking

This will be a relaxed window for informal dialogue, reconnection, and relationship building. Whether deepening ideas from the day or sparking new alliances, participants will have space to engage intentionally with peers across the ecosystem.

18:30 PM
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19:00 PM:

Dinner & Strategic Socials

This evening gathering will blend good food with generative conversation. Set in an informal atmosphere, it will offer room for reflection, celebration, and cross-sector connection as the first day of convening winds down.

Ecosystem Alignment

This day asks: What might coherence look like in a system designed around divergence? For decades, development actors – government, philanthropy, private sector, civil society – have danced around one another, often naming “partnership” while avoiding shared risk, shared decision-making, or shared design. The result? Parallel efforts dressed up as collaboration. Duplication masked as momentum. Trust reduced to compliance. Yet in an age of compounding disruption, convergence is an observed necessity.

This day explores what it would take to move from friction to functional alignment – not just across sectors, but across values, time horizons, and accountability structures. What does it mean for philanthropic capital to integrate into national development plans without being absorbed by bureaucracy? Can private capital align with social priorities without sanitizing impact? Can governments trust actors who have long operated outside their policy frameworks? More critically, what new coordination, governance, and power-sharing models are needed to avoid reproducing fragmentation in the name of reform? We will surface bold experiments and sobering failures because coherence must be designed, tested, and protected.

7:45 AM
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8:30 AM

Registration & Settling In

Delegates arrive, settle into the day’s pace, reconnect with peers, and prepare to engage

8:30 AM
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8:50 AM

Welcome & Framing Remarks

A welcome to anchor the day’s focus. A strategic invocation to highlight why alignment has become mission-critical and what institutional posture is needed to move from polite partnership to functional synergy.

8:50 AM
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9:10 AM

Keynote Address

A high-level address to provoke clarity of purpose. The speaker will reflect on the political, financial, and operational implications of systemic misalignment—and invite the room to imagine what philanthropy might enable when it is coherent with state, society, and economy.

9:10 AM
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10:30 AM

PLENARY SESSION:

Building Coherence in a Fragmented World

Alignment is the missing infrastructure. In today's fractured development ecosystem, actors speak the language of collaboration while protecting territorial mandates. What results are not synergy but static: philanthropy working besides, not with, government policy operating without philanthropic intelligence, and private sector capital flowing parallel to social need. This plenary confronts the **discipline of alignment** head-on. What systems, incentives, and values must shift to ensure assets don't just co-exist but converge? We'll examine the **critical enabling conditions for functional synergy**: political will that tolerates shared authority, regulatory frameworks that permit co-creation, and community-led models that ground strategy in legitimacy. Without these, coordination remains performative. They make alignment possible – not perfect, but principled, intentional, and structurally embedded. This session asks not whether alignment is desirable, but whether we are institutionally mature enough to withstand its demands.

10:30 AM
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11:00 AM

Health Break

This pause is designed to support integration; step back, process emerging ideas, and reconnect before diving forward

11:00 AM
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13:00 PM

DEEPER SYSTEM INTERROGATIONS

SESSION 1:

Policy & Philanthropy: Can They Dance Without Dominance?

Philanthropy often idealizes collaboration with government—until it meets the rigid boundaries of bureaucratic mistrust, unclear mandates, and incompatible timelines. At the same time, public institutions remain skeptical of philanthropic influence and wary of private capital steering public agendas. This session interrogates the mechanics of policy-philanthropy alignment: where it succeeds, fractures, and what it would take to move beyond symbolic MoUs into real regulatory coherence. We'll explore cross-border policy harmonization, examine emerging governance frameworks that allow for joint planning, and ask how philanthropic institutions can be legitimate contributors to national development plans, not shadow funders or external agitators. Alignment must be institutional, not interpersonal. It must be codified through a policy acknowledging power, defining roles, and enabling reciprocity without capture.

SESSION 2:

Trust as Infrastructure: Rethinking Transparency & Accountability in Ecosystem Practice

Most partnerships are built on optics; few are built on trust. This session centers on radical partnership models where accountability is structurally fixed. From community-led funding consortia to cross-sector coalitions grounded in transparency, we explore how trust is operationalized, not just earned. How can governance be co-held across sectors? What does ethical accountability look like when power is unequal but mutual commitment is non-negotiable? And what happens when communities are no longer consulted, but contracted as co-architects of impact? We'll examine mechanisms for transparent resource flows, participatory grantmaking, and shared governance as institutional design mandates. Because without trust, alignment is fiction. And without transparency, even the best-intentioned ecosystem collapses under suspicion.

SESSION 3:

Ecosystem Readiness: Building the Capacity for Coordinated Action

Philanthropy often positions itself as catalytic, yet it rarely develops the ecosystem capacity needed to sustain structural change. This session asks: What is the proper economic role of philanthropy, and what capacity must exist across the system to fulfill it? We'll identify systemic capability gaps across government, the private sector, and community institutions – from policy literacy to financial engineering to adaptive governance. We'll explore what it takes to move from isolated pilot projects to scalable, cross-sector transformation. How do we embed technical knowledge where it's lacking, redistribute expertise where it's hoarded, and create shared infrastructure for continuous learning? We must invest in ecosystem readiness.

13:00 PM

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14:00 PM

Lunch & Networking

Coherence is often built in the margins. This lunch invites participants to reflect on the morning's tensions, exchange ideas across sectors, and feed the body and the network. Consider this a continuation of alignment, served informally.

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16:00 PM

CO-CREATION LABS

Lab 1:

Infrastructure of Intention – Designing Vehicles for Convergent Action

Drawing from the sector's frustration with irregular coordination and fragmented follow-through, this lab interrogates one key constraint: the absence of shared vehicles. Ideas exist. Commitment exists. However, convergence remains rhetorical without institutional vessels to carry priorities across timelines, mandates, and accountability layers. This lab moves from aspiration to architecture, asking: What new institutional forms – cross-sector compacts, independent-

backed giving platforms, catalytic convenings, or inter-agency councils – must be adopted to enable continuity? Participants will identify design elements of high-functioning coordination mechanisms and map how trust, financing, and decision-making can be co-held without hierarchy. The output will be working presentations for cross-sector “alignment vessels” – mechanisms built to translate intent into infrastructure and dialogue into durable execution.

Lab 2:

Trust by Design – Building Governance Mechanisms that Hold

Alignment fails when governance is either symbolic or siloed. This lab begins by asking: if trust is the missing infrastructure in cross-sector work, how might we build it structurally, not just relationally? Participants will co-create foundational elements of governance architecture that can hold multi-actor coordination, from joint decision-making protocols and transparency clauses to accountability compacts and escalation frameworks. Drawing lessons from coalition failures and breakthrough partnerships, the session surfaces the minimum design conditions needed for trust to be earned and sustained: clarity of mandate, legitimacy of voice, and durability of process. The outcome will be a blueprint that institutions across sectors can adapt to structure cooperation, prevent drift, and embed credibility into shared mandates. Without co-created governance, trust becomes aspirational. And without structures that hold, even the most principled partnerships collapse under their own rhetoric.

Lab 3:

From Intent to Integration – Piloting a Regional Convergence Framework

Drawing from ecosystem capacity gaps and the shared frustration with fragmented implementation, this lab surfaces a collective opportunity: to pilot the Regional Public-Private-Philanthropy Partnership Framework for East Africa. This is envisioned as a foundational infrastructure for cross-sector governance that enables coordination across ministries, funders, implementers, and community actors with structural integrity. Participants will interrogate its logic, refine its components, and pressure-test its applicability across diverse country contexts. Key co-creation areas will include institutional thresholds for participation, mechanisms for pooled resourcing, and governance anchors that ensure community legitimacy and political durability. By the close session, the group will have advanced a model that could become the region’s first adaptive, multi-stakeholder framework for development alignment, designed as a living operating system.

16:00 PM

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16:45 PM

Coherence in Practice: Where Alignment Is Possible – and Where It’s Not

This session zooms out from the day’s sessions to consider the whole system in motion. What was uncovered across policy, trust, and institutional capacity? Where are the coordination failures still most entrenched? More importantly, where is alignment taking form, and what’s enabling it? Participants will work together to spotlight alignment gaps, surface practical pathways for multi-actor coherence, and identify which assets present in the room – political will, catalytic finance, cross-sector platforms – can be activated beyond this convening. This is where convergence becomes a practical and not a rhetorical ambition.

16:45 PM
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18:00 PM

Coffee & Curated Networking

This segment invites participants into structured yet relaxed engagement. Guided prompts and thematic corners will encourage peer exchange across institutional divides, focusing on translating dialogue into collaborative potential. Thoughtful design will ensure inclusion, intention, and inspiration.

18:30 PM
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21:00 PM

Dinner & Strategic Socials

As conversations deepen and familiarity grows, this evening will offer space for informal yet catalytic interactions. Shared meals have long been catalysts of trust, and this one is curated to surface the cross-sector imagination, partnership seeds, and leadership clarity that tomorrow's systems will require.

Ecosystem Resourcing

Philanthropy has long positioned itself as the great enabler, deploying capital to solve society's most complex challenges. But the question now is not how much capital flows, but how and why it flows the way it does. Too often, resourcing decisions mimic colonial patterns: risk is socialised, control is centralised, and power remains upstream. Capital becomes timid. Investment cycles are too short for systems change, and liquidity rarely meets the pace of urgency. Meanwhile, those obsessed with formal markets and imported models quietly overlook informal, faith-based, community-rooted domestic capital. It is time to unlearn this architecture.

Day 3 calls for the bold re-engineering of philanthropy's resource logic. What would it take to centre local capital not just as filler, but as a first mover? To normalize risk-sharing rather than risk-passing? To shift from fragmented grant cycles to long-term economic empowerment? We will examine how to move from charity to capital infrastructure – from funding programs to funding power. We'll interrogate the promises of AI, blockchain, and fintech, and ask: Are they democratizing giving or simply making exclusion more efficient? We'll ask if social enterprises truly redistribute wealth or reinforce extractive models in new clothes. We will provoke a collective redesign of how philanthropy moves money, transfers risk, and builds economic sovereignty, so that our resource strategies match the scale of the transformation we seek.

7:45 AM
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8:30 AM

Registration & Settling In

Delegates reconvene for the final day, entering with reflections from prior sessions and anticipation for what lies ahead. This window allows for logistically and intellectually reorientation as participants ground themselves in the day's core theme: capital, its flows, logic, and power.

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8:50 AM

Welcome & Framing Remarks

These opening remarks will sharpen the focus for Day 3, setting the tone for honest inquiry into how capital is mobilized, structured, and governed in the philanthropic ecosystem. The framing will challenge participants to examine their institutions' role in either reproducing fragility or enabling financial sovereignty, and to imagine capital as a tool of systems change, not charity.

8:50 AM
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9:10 AM

Keynote Address

This keynote will interrogate the prevailing architecture of resource mobilization. It will surface the risks of financial orthodoxy and the missed potential of underutilized domestic capital with urgency and nuance. The provocation will be apparent: philanthropy must move from transactional giving to revolutionary resourcing, where strategy, not sentiment, drives how and where money moves.

9:10 AM
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10:30 AM

PLENARY SESSION:

Capital Reimagined: Why the Financing of Change Must Change

The problem is not just underfunding – it's the architecture of how capital flows, what it prioritizes, and whom it protects. This plenary reframes the conversation around money from quantity to quality, accountability, and design. In a world where risk is passed downstream, liquidity arrives too late, and domestic capital is sidelined as informal or ungovernable, we must ask: What kind of financing architecture can deliver systems change? Philanthropy, development finance, and private capital operate within paradigms built for containment, not transformation, favoring short-term deliverables over long-term sovereignty. Meanwhile, financial models that center community control, adaptive timelines, and cross-sector solidarity remain underfunded or excluded.

This session challenges the ecosystem to evolve – from capital that funds projects to capital that builds institutional and economic power. It asks what it will take to redesign financing systems that fit for the purpose and the future. We will surface emergent practices in revenue generation, digital accountability, and domestic capital activation, and explore whether the sector is ready to finance activity and agency.

10:30 AM
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11:00 AM

Health Break

This break invites restoration. As we push toward resource reinvention and systems-level solutions, it offers space to recharge, ground, and prepare for the final stretch of work that still lies ahead.

11:00 AM
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13:00 PM

DEEPER ECOSYSTEM INTERROGATIONS

SESSION 1:

Domestic Capital: Untapped or Systemically Undervalued?

Africa moves billions annually through homegrown capital systems – from diaspora remittances and SACCOs, to faith-based giving, high-net-worth philanthropy, rotating savings groups, community cooperatives, local investment clubs, etc. Yet these channels remain structurally undervalued, excluded from national financing strategies and donor logic. Why? Because they are often illegible to formal institutions, and therefore dismissed as peripheral, unreliable, or too difficult to regulate. This session interrogates that erasure, not as oversight, but as embedded bias within the architecture of aid and philanthropy. It questions why donor frameworks still privilege foreign capital flows over indigenous financial ecosystems, even as the latter

demonstrate greater reach, resilience, and rooted legitimacy. We will surface models where local capital has not only filled institutional gaps but has outperformed formal mechanisms in speed, trust, and adaptability. The conversation will explore how to elevate domestic capital from an emergency buffer to a central feature of development finance. Because a system that excludes its own financial backbone cannot credibly claim to build sovereignty.

SESSION 2:

Tech, AI & Philanthropy: Infrastructure for Equity or Instruments of Extraction?

Technology now shapes how capital is moved, measured, and justified – but for whom is this intelligence standardized? In the rush toward AI-driven grantmaking, algorithmic evaluation, and blockchain-enabled transparency, philanthropy risks reproducing the same orders it claims to dismantle. This session examines the hidden biases in digital infrastructure: whose data counts, whose expertise is collected, and what is lost in translation. It alarms how tech, often imported, elite-engineered, and externally governed, can displace local practice under the guise of “innovation.” Can tech be designed as a public good in the philanthropic ecosystem, or will it become the next iteration of extractive governance? Participants will unpack emerging models of digital accountability and interrogate the myth of neutrality in AI systems. Because in the absence of equity frameworks, even the most innovative tools become instruments of capture.

SESSION 3:

Risk, Revenue & Resilience: Financing African Institutions on Transformational Terms

Philanthropy continues to cycle through a paradox it rarely names: it champions sustainability but structurally resists institution-building. African civil society remains trapped in a survival economy – over-audited, under-capitalized, and locked in short-term grants designed more for reporting than for results. This session challenges that reason head-on. It unpacks how philanthropy has normalized fragility by refusing to fund core operations, shying away from risk, and treating revenue generation as a deviation from “mission.” Yet if we are serious about shifting power, economic resilience is non-negotiable. We’ll examine bold models of adaptive financing – catalytic capital, mission-tied investments, programmatic endowments – and how to build institutional readiness to operate and own. Because no transformation is possible if the engines of change are kept structurally underfunded.

13:00 PM
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14:00 PM

Lunch & Networking

This pause is for reconnection as we explore how capital flows and power shift. It’s a space to ground, reflect, and build energy for the final movements of the convening

14:00 PM
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16:00 PM

CO-CREATION LABS

Lab 1:

Building Capital That Stays and Serves

This lab offers a strategic recalibration of how capital is designed, deployed, and governed across the ecosystem. Participants will dissect the barriers preventing capital from staying long enough or serving deeply enough, starting with a clear-eyed reflection on legacy financing models, where short cycles, rigid compliance, and donor-driven priorities dominate. We'll then surface emerging innovations in local, blended, and catalytic finance – from pooled community-led vehicles to performance-linked instruments and layered capital models that combine public, private, and philanthropic resources. Finally, the lab will look ahead: what infrastructure, risk-sharing logic, and accountability metrics are required to make capital move, but compound value – social, economic, and institutional – over time?

Lab 2:

Getting Institutions Ready – Tools for Growth, Risk, and Real Impact

Bold strategy needs strong institutions – but too many are asked to drive transformation while running on fumes. This lab is for those redesigning their own operational backbone. Participants will interrogate the internal gaps that stall scale: from finance model fragility and leadership succession to poor board accountability and an overreliance on donor cycles. Together, we'll prototype tools that grow institutional strength: new governance setups, blended revenue strategies, reserve fund frameworks, and leadership transitions that prioritize mission durability. This is about building organizations that can absorb risk, own their future, and lead without crumbling.

Lab 3:

Making “Community-Led” Real – Not Just a Good Idea

Too often, community-led funding is treated as a values statement, not a governance commitment. This lab will focus on moving from narrative to infrastructure: building mechanisms where communities do not just inform funding decisions, but direct them. Participants will explore practical design elements of power-sharing: decision boards rooted in place, feedback loops that shift budget priorities, pooled community-managed reserves, and accountability tools that center local legitimacy over donor validation. Through live case work and rapid sampling, we'll develop real structures that move control closer to the people whose futures are at stake. Because shared stewardship is structural.

16:00 PM
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16:45 PM

Shared Ground, Shared Commitments

This final synthesis moves from learning to leadership. It draws together the week's reflections – across the flow of capital, institutional readiness, and community-driven legitimacy – and invites each participant to name what they can contribute to what must now be built. What capital, data, infrastructure, or partnerships already exist within the room? What will it take to align them around shared priorities? Participants will surface concrete commitments: grounded next steps tied to assets, mandates, and institutional capacity. This is the first page of what comes after – the shift from convening to co-creation.

16:45 PM
–
17:00 PM

Closing Ceremony

This ceremonial close marks the official conclusion of the 9th East Africa Philanthropy Conference. It will honor the collective energy, strategic courage, and intellectual labor poured into the convening and offer final reflections for the future.

17:00 PM
–
18:00 PM

Networking Hour

This open, curated space allows delegates to reconnect, exchange contacts, and deepen post-session conversations. Whether forging cross-border alliances or planting the seeds of future collaborations, this final networking hour ensures no connection is left incomplete.

19:00 PM
–
21:00 PM

Final Dinner & Celebration

The final evening brings the community together for shared reflection, celebration, and rest. As music, food, and laughter create a lighter tone, we honor the spirit of solidarity and collective ambition that has defined the past three days. This is not just a dinner but a reaffirmation of why we gather.

DAY 4

**14 June 2025
SATURDAY**

**10:00 AM
–
15:00 PM**

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

Transport will be arranged from the Serena Hotel. These optional excursions are curated not as tourist visits, but as **contextual learning experiences**, inviting delegates to witness Rwanda's complex history, healing, and creative renaissance:



Kigali Genocide Memorial - A powerful, contemplative visit honoring the victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Delegates will engage with the country's hard-won peace, justice, and national rebirth journey.



Reconciliation Village (Bugesera District) - This rare site of coexistence invites reflection on forgiveness, healing, and community resilience. Here, survivors and former perpetrators live side by side, redefining reconciliation.



Inema Arts Center – This dynamic arts hub showcases contemporary African expression through exhibitions, live performances, and community-rooted creativity. It celebrates culture as power, healing, and imagination.



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