



The Power of Collaboration at a Time of Volatility in Global Health and Development

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The Bridgespan Group®



About The Bridgespan Group

The Bridgespan Group is a global nonprofit consulting and advisory firm that collaborates with social change organizations, philanthropists, and impact investors to make the world more equitable and just.

Bridgespan's services include strategy consulting and advising, sourcing and diligence, and leadership team support. We take what we learn from this work and build on it with original research, identifying best practices and innovative ideas to share with the social sector.

Resources on Collaborative Funds

A companion guide to this publication compiles key Bridgespan resources along with a curated selection of essential writing from across the field to help donors lean into collaborative giving, including those focused on the Global South.

See [Bridgespan.org](https://bridgespan.org) for more on collaborative funds.

Cover image: Pushpa Gupta administers a COVID-19 booster to Satyabati Malik at a vaccination center in New Delhi, India, in March 2022. (Photo: Mansi Midha, courtesy of the Gates Foundation)

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The recent shifts in international aid have been seismic. Across the world, communities are facing a new kind of upheaval—not a pandemic or a natural disaster but the sudden withdrawal of global aid.

In 2024, official development assistance (ODA) declined for the first time in six years, by 7.1 percent in real terms compared to 2023.¹ Major donor countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the United States, each cut aid spending.² Then, in early 2025, the US administration moved swiftly to dismantle the US Agency for International Development (USAID), deepening the shock waves across the field, shaking one of the major contributors to global health and development financing. Clinics have closed, teachers and community health workers have lost support, and programs that once saved millions of lives—immunization, nutrition, clean water, HIV treatment, and rural education among them—have scaled back or disappeared altogether.

“It’s not just discomfort,” says Françoise Moudouthe, chief executive officer of the [African Women’s Development Fund](#), a pan-African feminist fund that supports women’s rights organizations across Africa. “This has deadly consequences.” Countries within sub-Saharan Africa—historically the largest regional recipient of ODA—have been particularly affected, with some estimates projecting declines up to 28 percent in 2025.³

Leaders in the Global South have described the suddenness and severity of funding cuts as cruel and inhumane. As of November 5, 2025, it is estimated that USAID’s dismantling has already caused the deaths of six hundred thousand people, two-thirds of them children.⁴

Researchers project that an additional fourteen million lives will be lost by 2030 if USAID defunding continues at its current pace.⁵ In the face of this crisis, leaders remain deeply committed to the communities they serve—with many even asking whether this moment could create an inflection point, a chance to rebuild systems to be more just, resilient, locally rooted, sustainable, and self-reliant.

ODA has played a critical role in global health and development gains of recent decades, helping turn the tide on HIV,⁶ supporting mass vaccinations in low-income countries,⁷ and helping drive historic declines in child mortality.⁸ At the same time, criticism of the global aid status quo has been growing: its power is too centered in the Global North;⁹ it creates a cycle of dependence;¹⁰ it’s not built to scale up big ideas;¹¹ and it’s a product of the inequities of colonialism.¹²

“What if funding enabled locally led organizations to work without restriction, delivering fully locally led solutions?” asks Nadia Kist, executive director of [Blood:Water](#), which funds and strengthens African-led community organizations on the front-lines of ending health disparities. “What if we were able to build a more long-lasting approach that invests in sustainable community resilience? There would no longer be an indefinite need for bilateral assistance. If the moment the tap is closed and everything crumbles, that should raise a red flag. We need to rebuild the system with this in mind.”

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Nadia Kist, Executive Director,
Blood:Water



A woman in Lilongwe, Malawi receives anti-retroviral treatment from Partners in Hope, a previous Blood:Water partner. (August 2019) (Photo: Courtesy of Blood:Water)

To be sure, there is no single solution to address the challenges of this moment, which are too big for any one actor or pathway. The Bridgespan Group's client work and research have consistently demonstrated that broad collaboration—among funders, civil society organizations, governments, and the private sector—is essential for lasting social change. And while the gaps left by ODA withdrawals are too large for philanthropy to bridge alone, there remains a critical role for philanthropy to play, especially in partnership with others.

Over the last six months, Bridgespan set out to understand the role philanthropic collaboration can play amid the volatility dominating the global health and development fields. Through 27 interviews with collaborative leaders and donors of collaboratives, a review of nearly 50 articles and reports, and a survey of 52 leaders of collaboratives, we explored how collaboratives and their donors are navigating this new landscape. We specifically examined how collaboratives—most of which, according to our survey data, are not directly reliant on ODA—can respond to today's urgency and global disruption with coordinated, sustained, and flexible support for local leaders and communities. This work builds on Bridgespan's global research on philanthropic collaboratives,¹³ especially those working in Africa.¹⁴

What Are Collaborative Funds?

Collaborative funds are organizations that channel resources from multiple donors to nonprofit organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and other social change initiatives—often focusing on specific social issues or areas of interest. In the United States, philanthropists have increasingly turned to collaborative giving vehicles to join forces with other funders by pooling resources to achieve more than any single funder could on their own. In our experience in Africa and Asia, collaboratives most often have a multi-stakeholder focus, engaging philanthropy alongside governments, multilateral organizations, and the private sector. Funders often benefit from the issue area and geographic expertise of funder collaboratives, their relationships with proximate leaders, and their established giving infrastructure. While philanthropic collaboratives work in different ways, they tend to fall into the three broad types outlined below.

Community driven funds mobilize resources and regrant funds from a wide range of donors that have a shared goal, often working in concert with local stakeholders and communities.

Strategy-aligned funder collaboratives focus on a specific social issue, typically launched by one or more institutional foundations or other donors, and engage funders across sectors (such as philanthropy, governments, and multilaterals).

Giving platforms enable donors—particularly high-net-worth individuals—to pool or align investments in promising organizations and ideas that the collaborative has identified.

Of the individuals we surveyed, 51 percent identified their organizations as community-driven funds, 29 percent as strategy-aligned, and 4 percent as giving platforms. Sixteen percent saw their organizations aligned across a combination of the collaborative archetypes.



Virginie Niyizigama (far right), co-founder of Faith in Action Africa, with the African Collaborative team and local community members, attends a weekly self-help group meeting in a Bujumbura slum in Burundi. During these gatherings, community members come together to contribute, discuss group welfare, and lend funds to support local businesses. (Photo: Petros Teku, courtesy of African Collaborative)

Urgent Needs Meet Funder Hesitancy

The world has already seen that philanthropy, including institutional foundations, individual donors, and funder collaboratives, can rally in times of global volatility. In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, funders acted rapidly and decisively, playing a pivotal role in everything—from international, multi-stakeholder collaborations that incentivized vaccine development and equitable global access¹⁵ to numerous collaborative funds that quickly moved resources to local communities. Yet, while the philanthropic response to COVID-19 was swift and resounding, our interviews and research indicate that, with some exceptions, philanthropy in 2025 has been slower to respond to the foreign aid cuts in a meaningful way.

“There is a lot of talk about the urgency and responsibility funders have, but are funders ready to do more than respond to emergency needs?” asks Megan Hastings, head of partnerships at [Adeso](#), an African social enterprise working to shift power and resources to local leaders in Africa and globally. “This moment is a unique opportunity to embrace risk and make space for radical transformation in funding practices.”

What makes this moment different from the philanthropic response to COVID-19? Many funders describe a growing recognition that this “moment” is not a single moment but rather a permanent shift in global health and development. “With COVID, it felt like a tsunami, but it felt like it was going to be finite,” says Kara Weiss, executive director of the [CRI Foundation](#), a private philanthropy that funds evidence-based health interventions and development research across Africa.

This structural shift has left some funders experiencing what interviewees describe as “a sense of paralysis” as they grapple with how to adapt long-held strategies and notions of how to reach sustainable scale.

Whether or not greater stability will return has compounded funders’ worry.

“Philanthropy is waiting for the other shoe to drop,” says Solomon Zewdu, CEO of [The END Fund](#), a collaborative fund dedicated to ending six neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). “Everyone is guarded.”

At the same time, the rise of global authoritarianism, the weakening of civil society, and the backlash against diversity, equity, and inclusion in the United States have also left some funders more hesitant for fear of becoming a target or opening themselves up to political risk. “The US government executive orders had a real chilling effect,” says Weiss. “Folks were scared, and you didn’t want to react because anything could happen.”

“There is a lot of talk about the urgency and responsibility funders have, but are funders ready to do more than respond to emergency needs? This moment is a unique opportunity to embrace risk and make space for radical transformation in funding practices.”

Megan Hastings, Head of Partnerships, Adeso



Janet Memo helps her children put masks on before leaving their apartment in Nairobi, Kenya. (Photo: Alissa Everett, courtesy of the Gates Foundation)

Opportunity for Philanthropy to Be Catalytic and Time-Limited

Despite recent hesitation among funders, some optimism persists. Leaders we spoke with emphasize that a vital role for philanthropy lies in its catalytic and time-limited nature. While its resources are far smaller than global aid or government budgets, philanthropy can spark innovation, partnership, and long-term change. Further, at their best, technological breakthroughs in public health and the rise of artificial intelligence can bring dramatic advances to help accelerate the momentum of sustainable change. Against this backdrop, many leaders view this moment as an opportunity to embed practices for effective giving that many have long championed: investing in local leaders,¹⁶ leveraging technological innovation to drive down costs,¹⁷ strengthening capacity and infrastructure,¹⁸ and fostering broad collaboration.¹⁹

“Now is the time not to radically change strategies but to lean into core principles of local ownership, leadership, and proximity.”

Yasmin Madan, Director and US Lead of Philanthropic Collaboration, Co-Impact

Most prominently, and consistent with what we’ve long heard, leaders point to the need to shift decision making and flexible resources to proximate leaders—including local civil society leaders as well as national and local governments. Long-term resilience emerges when communities, countries, and regions aren’t reliant on foreign aid but rather when local assets and innovations build and maintain the social safety net. “Now is the time not to radically change strategies but to lean into core principles of local ownership, leadership, and proximity,” says Yasmin Madan, director and US lead of philanthropic collaboration

at [Co-Impact](#), which brings together local change-makers and funders from around the world to make health, education, and economic systems stronger and more inclusive, creating impact that lasts.

Across Africa, this opportunity is already taking shape. Locally led organizations across the continent are demonstrating that working closely with communities and governments to codesign solutions creates lasting progress. Katie Buntun-Wamaru, co-CEO of [African Collaborative](#), which invests exclusively in African-led organizations with multiyear capital, describes this as “a different version of scale.” Local leadership and collaboration, she says, create systemic, sustainable impact from the ground up.

Well-resourced local leadership and strong, accountable governments, when at their best, are mutually reinforcing. Many interviewees emphasize that this moment requires national governments to commit greater resources to development priorities. They urge philanthropy to back local and national development agendas by helping strengthen diverse talent pipelines and public infrastructure, both digital and physical. This could mean catalyzing local supply chains, strengthening data and research institutions, and funding local civil-society organizations.

For instance, Madan of Co-Impact emphasizes that it is important for philanthropy not to replace aid and funding for essential commodities, such as contraceptives, but rather help ensure their sustainability through domestic resources, including line items in national health budgets.

It is a sentiment that resonates with other sector leaders. “Philanthropy should play more of an enabler and facilitator role,” says Ruth Mapara, director of [Masana wa Afrika](#), which provides grants to community-based organizations serving children across Africa. “How can philanthropy help facilitate the integration

of services historically provided by civil society with government?” Alice Kang’ethe, CEO of [the Beginnings Fund](#)—a philanthropic collaborative aiming to prevent over three hundred thousand avoidable deaths of women and newborns by 2030 by advancing lower-cost, high-impact, evidence-based interventions—underscores the critical importance of government partnerships. “We cocreate investment plans, with sustainability built in from the outset, with government leadership and government ownership,” Kang’ethe says. Other leaders note that such accessible and adaptable innovations can permanently lower countries’ cost burdens.

Realizing this vision will also require mobilizing alternative sources of financing, such as sustainable investment by the private sector. For philanthropy, this could mean pursuing opportunities for blended finance,²⁰ expanding the market of development impact bonds,²¹ or implementing advance market commitments.²² Leaders also point to opportunities for debt relief, the burden of which frustrates many nations’ efforts to fund even lower-cost health interventions sustainably. They also underscore that no single investment will unlock this alternative financing shift. It will require coordinated and ecosystem-wide efforts.

Critical for that ecosystem will be collaboration in its broadest sense, with shared problem-solving and cross-sector partnership across donors, governments, nonprofits, and the private sector. “With the rapidly changing development landscape, the premium will be on building new partnerships, developing new sources and means of finance, and exploring how technology can be deployed to assist and scale delivery,” says Alice Albright, founder of Acadia Advisory and former CEO of the [Millennium Challenge Corporation](#), a US foreign aid agency that experienced deep funding cuts earlier this year.



A community health worker teaches a young boy about the prevention of NTDs at a handwashing station in Zimbabwe. (June 2017) (Photo: Tinashe Njagu/Higherlife Foundation, courtesy of The END Fund)

Collaboratives Are in a Position of Strength—and Can Do More

Philanthropic collaboratives occupy a key position in this moment of great disruption. By pooling resources across funders, they can mobilize more capital and shared expertise than any single donor or foundation can do alone. Further, collaboratives' deep connections to organizations and leaders on the ground and ability to build bridges across actors and sectors position them well to respond when traditional aid systems falter. To better understand how collaboratives are navigating the volatility of this moment, we surveyed 52 collaborative leaders working in global health and development. Of those respondents, 74 percent reported substantial work in Africa, 66 percent in Asia, and 50 percent in Latin America.

Collaboratives typically find themselves in a distinctive “middle-ground” position in the social change landscape. Like philanthropic donors, they operate as grantors to a wide range of organizations and must navigate the many competing demands from grantees. Meanwhile, as (typically) un-endowed funding

intermediaries, they are dependent on increasingly constrained philanthropic funding to carry out their work.

Our survey affirms this “middle-ground” position. Nearly 75 percent of collaboratives that responded to our survey receive less than 10 percent of their funding from ODA. By contrast, one survey found the USAID cuts have directly impacted 67 percent of civil society organizations globally.²³ For now, most collaboratives are continuing to deploy similar levels of resourcing—80 percent of survey respondents plan to move the same amount or more money this year compared to last.

However, collaboratives (like philanthropic foundations) are experiencing surging demand from grantees. Nearly 90 percent of our survey respondents report an increase in requests from potential grantees compared to this time last year. Despite this increased demand, collaboratives are also contending with funder paralysis: 59 percent of respondents expect their own 2025

funding to decrease, and 18 percent anticipate it will remain flat.

These findings highlight both the resilience and the strain within the collaborative model. Positioned between major donors and front-line organizations, collaboratives have maintained the flow of resources even amid cuts to aid. Their ability to mobilize quickly, share risk, and channel flexible funding directly to local partners makes them a critical bridge between shrinking public aid and urgent community needs. But they are reaching the limits of what they can do without greater investment.

In Bridgespan's previous research, a global landscape of collaboratives²⁴ across issue areas, respondents shared that they could deploy nearly three to five times their current annual resources if additional capital were available. It serves as a reminder that with sufficient philanthropic support, collaboratives can play an even more pivotal role in sustaining and scaling progress in global health and development.

Funder Collaboratives—and Collaboration—Can Scale Sustainable Global Health and Development

This theme ran through our interviews, research, and survey results: the global health and development fields are at a turning point, and collaboratives bring a relevant set of assets to this moment.

“They’re the eyes and ears on the ground and in a position to be more adaptable as the stimuli change around us all,” Liz Diebold, a longtime funder of collaborative vehicles, tells us. “Those are the types of actors that will feel it first and then instruct the rest of the space by demonstrating how they’re making micro adaptations.” At a time when scarcity mindsets are dominant, collaboratives build bridges—within communities, across organizations, and across sectors—to keep resources and learning flowing where they are most needed.

Collaboratives already operating at a significant scale, such as [The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#), Co-Impact, The END Fund, among others, as well as more recently launched collaboratives like the Beginnings Fund, can aggregate funding commensurate with systems-level and country-level change. Together, their ability to mobilize resources, share risk, and coordinate action positions collaboratives to address challenges far beyond the reach of any single donor. From our research and interviews, we see three ways collaborative funds and broader philanthropic collaborations are translating these strengths to address the specific needs of the global health and development fields today.



Lab technicians conduct epidemiological research in Musanze, Rwanda. (October 2019) (Photo: Gabriel Dusabe, courtesy of The END Fund)



Rapid regranting to shore up organizational capacity and urgently needed work

Collaboratives can move quickly to stabilize front-line organizations.

Ephy Imballi, executive director of Community Asset Building and Development Agency, a nonprofit in Kenya and Blood:Water partner, addresses community members in Kakamega county. (July 2023) (Photo: Courtesy of Blood:Water)

Following the recent aid cuts, several collaborative efforts rapidly emerged to shore up urgent work and organizational capacity. Take the CRI Foundation, which helped launch [Project Resource Optimization](#) (PRO), a platform designed to identify and fund the most urgent and cost-effective global development projects at risk due to cuts from USAID. It began with multiple donors all asking the same question: “What to do now?” Within months, a group of former USAID staffers reviewed paused and terminated activities and built PRO to help donors quickly direct resources to high-impact, cost-effective projects.

PRO combined a top-down analysis of over \$30 billion in spending with bottom-up insights from sector experts to generate a short list of projects. These

were then assessed for viability, cost-effectiveness, and potential impact beyond USAID systems. In just six months, PRO mobilized \$110 million to fund 81 health and humanitarian projects that otherwise would have been halted.²⁵

Critically, PRO did not establish a new organization but rather facilitated direct, rapid resourcing. Now hosted in the [Center for Global Development](#), a nonpartisan think tank, PRO is looking ahead to what comes next. “It’s time to pivot from searching for what we can save to investing in what comes next,” says Weiss of the CRI Foundation.

Other collaborative efforts have similarly leveraged existing infrastructure to support front-line organizations quickly. [GlobalGiving](#), a funding intermediary that

connects everyday donors to nonprofits, launched its Community Aid Fund to raise \$1 million in small-dollar amounts to support locally led nonprofits worldwide that are affected by the drop in international aid. The fund channels resources to trusted local organizations that deliver urgent and long-term support to communities most at risk.

Several other collaboratives have acted in the same spirit. African Collaborative launched an effort to raise an incremental \$5 million for grantee partners impacted by funding cuts. Masana Wa Afrika activated emergency grants while also helping partners navigate transitions within their organizations.



2 Building infrastructure and capacity in communities for the long term

Collaboratives invest in the systems, leadership, and digital tools that create sustainability.

African Collaborative's Nafissatou Sene (far left) and Julie Khamati (center) with a Friendship Bench team member during an office tour in Harare, Zimbabwe. The team explained how “gogos” (grandmothers) provide counseling and support to clinic patients and community members, and how the community counseling system was established. (Photo: Petros Tekla, courtesy of African Collaborative)

Beyond emergency response, collaborative funds are focused on strengthening the long-term capacity of local leaders, organizations, and local infrastructure.

African Collaborative views investing in African leaders as a distinct and more powerful pathway to achieving scaled impact. “Philanthropists are no longer able to hand things off to USAID, which many have historically relied on for scale,” says Bunten-Wamaru of African Collaborative. “But philanthropy has to wrap its mind around a different version of scale. There are locally led organizations all over the continent that are creating systemic, sustainable change in their communities, engaging with governments early and often, ensuring strong civil society accountability, and filling gaps in governance. Funders should recognize that this vast network of local organizations is its own type of scaled impact.”

One of African Collaborative’s grantees, [Friendship Bench](#), addresses the dearth of mental health services in Zimbabwe. Friendship Bench trains elders (“grandmothers”) as volunteer community health workers to provide evidence-

based talk therapy. They’ve grown from 14 volunteer grandmothers to 2,773 trained community health workers, with 78 percent of clients showing improvement in depression and anxiety symptoms.

Friendship Bench engaged Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Health and Child Care at the very early stages of its work and, in 2024, signed an official memorandum of understanding to scale its model nationally by 2028. This is just one example of locally driven, scaled impact. “We recently received over 3,000 grant applications from 47 African countries. The potential of these organizations is immense, and we see them as the future of development,” adds Bunten-Wamaru.

Blood:Water offers another example. Following funding cuts, half of its grantee partners lost 40 percent of their budgets essentially overnight, leaving many scrambling to keep HIV clinics and services running. However, as Executive Director Kist explains, decades of global investment have made HIV treatment widely accessible, pointing to a new frontier for the response: investing in livelihoods and economic security so communities can sustain their own health care.

Likewise, Blood:Water’s partners are pioneering blended models with earned income to fund their missions and strengthen long-term resilience. Blood:Water’s investment model is a great fit for organizations experiencing such transitions: for every dollar granted to programmatic work, another dollar is dedicated to strengthening the organizational health and operations. Blood:Water also invests for eight years, allowing partners to emerge fundamentally stronger and less reliant on external aid.

Other collaborative efforts are investing in longer-term digital solutions to support communities. In May 2022, African Philanthropy Forum (APF) launched [StartPoint Africa](#) to bridge the gap between donors and credible African-led organizations. Its mission is to unlock more philanthropic capital for African-led development by making it easier for both local and international donors to find and fund high-impact local initiatives. The platform enables nonprofits to share their impact stories, gain visibility, and access funding, while also fostering collaboration across the continent. “We are calling on African philanthropies to jump-start giving on the continent,” says Mosun Layode, executive director of APF.

3 Collaborating across sectors and stakeholders

No single institution can solve these problems alone—it will take broad collaboration between funders, governments, civil society, and private actors.

ACADES Founder and CEO Hastings Nhlane with the ACADES and African Collaborative teams in Lilongwe, Malawi. The visit included a tour of their office store showcasing agricultural produce, followed by a visit to their Mchingi club to see firsthand their economic empowerment initiatives, including livestock farming and community savings and lending groups. (Photo: Petros Teku, courtesy of African Collaborative)

Collaborative philanthropic efforts are proving the value of cross-sector, multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together funders, government, civil society, and the private sector to advance systemic and scaled change. As many of our interviewees emphasized, the problems facing the global health and development sectors are far too large for any single innovation or intervention to address. “If we’re going to have deeper impact than what we’ve had, we need government and philanthropy to work together more cohesively,” says APF’s Layode.

The END Fund is doing just that. Against the backdrop of diminishing ODA funding, the organization partnered with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the African Union Commission, and the World Health Organization to convene more than 50 member states to assess the NTD burden

across the continent and the financing needs for its elimination.²⁶ “We stand at a critical juncture, not just for NTD elimination but for rethinking health financing in Africa,” says Zewdu of The END Fund, which has trained nearly 7.5 million health workers since 2012 and treated 152 million people in 2024. “Traditional reliance on foreign aid has demonstrated its limits.”

The convening led to an unprecedented endorsement by member states of a continent-wide plan to track resource allocation, advocate for sustainable financing, and drive locally owned solutions to end NTDs by 2030. “Things were so fragmented,” says Zewdu. “Now we have a plan for everyone to program around, to bring in the level of efficiency we’re looking for.”

In other cases, foundations have leveraged and built on existing cross-

sector relationships to meet the moment. The [ELMA Foundation](#) has long worked to reduce HIV infections in children across Africa and worked particularly closely with the South African National Department of Health. When the funding cuts decimated HIV and AIDS service delivery and care, ELMA quickly convened fellow funders—including the [FirstRand Empowerment Foundation](#)—along with the National Department of Health and the National Treasury to develop a plan to integrate HIV services into the primary health care system, thereby allowing services to continue.

“We are leveraging donor funds to secure long-term commitments from the government,” says Zodwa Mbambo, director of programs for health at ELMA Philanthropies. “This is a powerful role for philanthropy to play in this moment.”

What Donors Can Do Right Now

"Funders keep telling us they're waiting to see how the dust settles," says Bunten-Wamaru of African Collaborative. "We tell them: 'You have the resources to help the dust settle better. Now would be the time to do this.' The most brilliant social impact leaders are already transforming their communities with innovative solutions that prove locally led development works. What they need now is investment."

Our interviewees overwhelmingly agree that the current state of global health and development is unquestionably dire and that it is time for a different approach to aid. Our research shows the potential for innovative, collaborative, high-leverage philanthropy.

Through private conversations with donors and our research, we consistently hear two themes. First, there is a fervent and real desire to meet this moment and to use their flexible capital to help in a time of unprecedented need. Second, the awareness of the need to rebuild systems has donors fearful that they will "throw good money after bad," that their funding may be too small to matter, or that they lack the knowledge to direct funding toward the right leverage points for sustainable change.

There are so many ways to thoughtfully resource leaders who are doing high-impact work today. Every day, we see examples where private capital, of all sizes, makes a dramatic difference. For donors looking to fund new geographies or issue areas, or those who feel they lack the time to fully source and research more bespoke giving options, collaboratives can offer ready-made avenues for learning while giving. Collaboratives can even identify organizations to fund directly in the future. For donors worried about being "a drop in the bucket," giving together with other donors to support systems-level change can offer a chance to meet the problem at a scale they couldn't achieve alone.

Last, while formal collaboratives are particularly well-suited to this moment, so is collaboration in a broader sense. Experienced donors with years of working on the ground are coming together in new ways to learn alongside each other, coordinate, and build collective action during a destabilizing time.

Philanthropy can never replace aid, but it can reimagine what comes next. By embracing collaboration, funders can help rebuild systems that are more just, resilient, and locally rooted. When it comes to global health and development, this is not simply a call for generosity—it is an invitation to act together, with intention, to shape a better future.

"Funders keep telling us they're waiting to see how the dust settles. We tell them: 'You have the resources to help the dust settle better. Now would be the time to do this.'"

Katie Bunten-Wamaru, Co-CEO,
African Collaborative



A community health worker measures a girl for schistosomiasis treatment in Mali. (October 2012)
(Photo: DTJ, courtesy of The END Fund)



Kamla Devi, at her roadside flower shop in the Uttam Nagar locality of New Delhi. She uses an SBI EKO mini savings account which she can operate through her mobile phone at various SBI Eko Customer Service Points. She is now able to save money for her flower business and has also been able to pay for her daughter's wedding. (Photo: Prashant Panjiar, courtesy of the Gates Foundation)

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