



**Grassroots  
International**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# **SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY**

**Redefining Philanthropy's  
Relationship to Social Movements**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**For those working toward social and ecological justice, philanthropy is a key site of contestation. It is deeply flawed and in urgent need of transformation. Now is the time to organize the philanthropic sector into an active community for movement support and a force for resource redistribution. But how do we get there?**

How do we change philanthropy from within – by funders, donors, and others in the sector – in tandem with social movements and allies?

We offer this framework of solidarity philanthropy as a synthesis of mutual learning through decades of deep relationships with social movements, allies, and our peers in philanthropy. This offering contributes to a growing ecosystem of approaches for shifting philanthropy toward justice, with the intention of sparking further collective dialogue and organizing.

Solidarity philanthropy begins from a recognition of the ways in which philanthropy is implicated in upholding uneven power dynamics. Indeed, philanthropic wealth maintains direct ties to the forms of colonization and exploitation that are at the core of the global extractive economy we live in.

We begin with an exploration of “the making of philanthropy,” outlining the ways in which philanthropy both grew out of and feeds into multiple and interconnected systems of oppression.



**CIS-HETERO  
PATRIARCHY**

**Control over bodies**



**WHITE  
SUPREMACY**

**Unequal social relations**

**Structural racism**



**CAPITALISM**

**Theft of territory**



**COLONIALISM**

**Militarism**

**Exploitation of labor**



**EXTRACTIVISM**

**Destruction of the Earth**

**WEALTH  
ACCUMULATION**

Philanthropy both grew out of and feeds into multiple and interconnected systems of oppression.

# PHILANTHROPY AS A SITE OF ORGANIZING

We then ask: How can those of us within philanthropy disrupt these cycles and contribute to transformative change? This involves approaching philanthropy not as a fixed, monolithic structure, but as a site of contestation, to be humanized and organized. If we understand philanthropy as a space rife with competing tendencies associated with different practices, attitudes, assumptions, and power dynamics, we can situate ourselves within these dynamics and identify our contradictions, growing edges, and leverage points for collective change. Here we identify four competing, and often overlapping, tendencies within philanthropy: *philanthrocapitalist*, *charity*, *liberal*, and *progressive*. We unpack these four tendencies in order to more deeply interrogate our role in perpetuating the problems and limitations of our philanthropic practices.

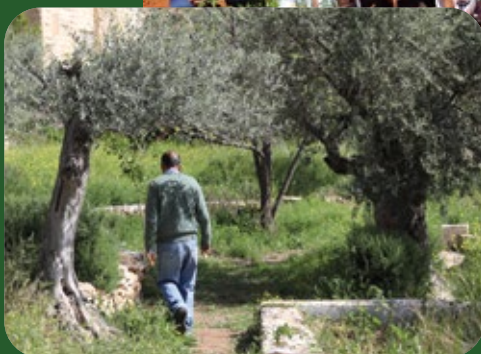
In seeking a way forward, there are highly organized and effective social movements whom we can turn to for political clarity, composed of and led by frontline communities, who are paving the way toward transformative change. To understand how we can better align with movements, we explore some of the visions that they are working towards. Grounded in diverse organizing traditions and cosmovisions, these include **food sovereignty**, **ecological/climate justice**, **feminist economies for the sustainability of life**, **just transition**, and *buen vivir*, among others. At their essence, these visions focus on bringing people into right relationship with one another and with all living systems.

**These visions focus on bringing people into right relationship with one another and with all living systems. For those of us in philanthropy, our task at hand is to come into right relationship with social movements.**

This brings us to a deeper exploration of solidarity philanthropy. The framework of solidarity philanthropy offered within this publication is based on seven intertwined components, summarized below.

The framework is followed by a section on growing a practice of solidarity philanthropy, detailing how its implementation takes place across different levels of organizing and building. It starts from within at the personal level,

calling us to engage in this work through our political consciousness. Organizations can then provide the space to build community, practice accountability, learn, and take collective action. Finally, we recognize that these changes on the personal and organizational levels are not enough. The entire philanthropic ecosystem must redefine its purpose, practices, and relationships to transform itself into a powerful movement-support sector.

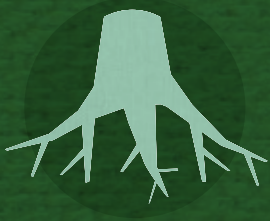


# SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY FRAMEWORK



## **Solidarity, Internationalism, and Praxis**

Solidarity and internationalism affirm that our fates are inextricably linked within and across borders as we strive to build a better world. Praxis helps us approach our collective work as a living, breathing process based on continual learning and evolution.



## **Positionality and Alignment with Movements**

Awareness of our own positionality vis-a-vis systems of power and oppression and alignment with social movements on values, visions, analyses, and theories of change are fundamental to carrying out the work.



## **Movement Accompaniment and Donor Organizing**

These go hand-in-hand as two main manifestations of what the work of solidarity philanthropy looks like in practice.

# SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

SOLIDARITY

PRAXIS

MOVEMENT ACCOMPANIMENT

MOVEMENT  
ALIGNMENT

POSITIONALITY

DONOR ORGANIZING

INTERNATIONALISM

# 10 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTICING SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

**1. Reckoning with our personal and institutional connection with wealth helps us to fundamentally reorient the work of philanthropy.**

Understanding where our money has come from helps us understand where it needs to go. With this awareness and accountability, our financial resources can be a tool of solidarity rather than an obstacle.

**2. Funding social movements is one of the most effective ways to move money back to the people.**

Social movements do the hard work of organizing those most impacted by systemic injustices into articulated movements. Through funding them, we can directly resource the power-building efforts that are necessary to create deep transformation in systems, structures, and culture toward social, economic, and ecological justice.

**3. It is imperative to drastically increase the amount of funding going to Global South social movements.**

Given the massive extraction of wealth from the Global South to Global North through colonization, slavery, and other forms of domination, Global North funders have a particular obligation to return stolen wealth to the Global South.

**4. Grantmaking must be aligned with movement partners' needs and realities.**

This involves moving away from top-down, donor-driven project grants and onerous reporting requirements, toward long-term general operating or flexible core support and additional funding for movement infrastructure, learning exchanges, emergency response, and other needs as they emerge.

**5. Beyond funding, accompanying social movements entails a commitment to deep allyship.**

This involves cultivating our own political consciousness through open dialogue with social movements, ongoing political education, self-reflection, collective learning, and action to align with movements toward liberated futures.

**6. We must organize others.**

Beyond our own giving, we must organize our peers and collaborate with others in the sector to build a broader, more expansive and powerful constituency. To do this, we can find a political home by joining a donor network and connecting with movement support public foundations with active donor engagement programs.

**7. It is essential to use our voices and take action.**

This is especially the case when movements and broader civil society are targeted and criminalized. Our solidarity is stronger when we support movement partners by publicly advocating for their rights, causes, and protection. In the case of private foundations, speaking up can reduce risks for public foundations and movement partners, amplifying their efforts in a crucial way.

**8. Public foundations are a key part of movement support infrastructure and need to be supported as such.**

Public foundations that serve as movement support intermediaries have established trusted relationships with social movements in our communities and around the world. For those who have not done global grantmaking, or have a global program without an emphasis on social movements, collaboration with intermediary foundations can enhance the effectiveness, reach, and longevity of support.

**9. We need to rethink impact and orient towards learning and collaboration.**

It is time for us to join a move away from prescriptive, extractive, and overly quantitative metrics. We can embrace a framework that centers mutual learning and collaboration; respects local cultural and political contexts; acknowledges that systemic and historic change takes time; and understands that material outcomes cannot be separated from holistic movement building.

**10. Solidarity philanthropy includes divestment from harmful systems and investment in life-affirming ones**

It is important to examine the entirety of our wealth, not only the portion going toward grantmaking. Whether institutional foundations that typically have 95% of their resources in endowments or individual donors with significant resources in reserves or other forms of wealth, it is critical to ensure that our investments are aligned with our solidarity.

**Read the full report at [grassrootsonline.org/solidarity](https://grassrootsonline.org/solidarity)**

# ACCOMPANYING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE



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International**

[grassrootsinternational.org](http://grassrootsinternational.org)