

Strategies in Building the Culture of Local Giving in South Africa: Making the Case for Community Foundations as Agency to Facilitate Giving

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Abstract

South Africa has a history of dependence on external funding that predates the end of apartheid in 1994. The nation's recent classification as an upper-middle income country, however, has prompted a systematic reduction in such direct aid over the last ten years. This is particularly problematic because such classification obscures the extraordinary income disparity that exists within South Africa, epitomized by the socioeconomic rift separating the country's economically advanced urban areas and impoverished townships, informal settlements, and rural regions. Although there is considerable promise within the country's fledgling democratic political system to increase standards of living for previously marginalized citizens, Shaun George Samuels argues, there is a largely untapped segment of local resources that could be used by communities to successfully foster their own development without requiring them to rely heavily on government and donors.

This paper posits that the time has come for South Africa—and, in particular, its organizations of civil society—to transition away from dependence on external funding and instead promote an emphasis on local giving. Though there is very little empirical data on philanthropic practices in South Africa, Mr. Samuels points to fostering community leadership as the key to unlocking local resources, thus promoting a lifestyle of local giving and drawing connections across populations in support of the community foundation model.

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