



Philanthropy and (Abdullahi, M. S & Gwarzo, A. A 2026) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/iaheri.v3i1.160>

Philanthropy and SDG Localisation in Africa: Evidence from the Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation

Abdullahi, M. S. & Gwarzo, A. A.¹

Email: sufi.abdullahi@maaun.edu.ng

Phone: +234-7064873753

¹Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation, Kano, Nigeria

Abstract

Philanthropy has become an increasingly visible component of development financing in Africa, but its contribution is often documented through short-term donations and beneficiary counts rather than through the longer-term processes by which resources build human capability, strengthen institutions and remove barriers to opportunity. This study examines the Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation (AAG Foundation) as a case of development-oriented philanthropy and analyses how its documented interventions relate to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) localisation. The study adopts a qualitative case-study design based primarily on documentary analysis of institutional records and programme evidence, complemented by recent scholarship and development literature on African philanthropy, development finance and the SDGs. Reported interventions span education and scholarships, student transportation, healthcare outreach, water infrastructure, leadership and professional training, women and youth empowerment, humanitarian assistance and civil-society capacity development. The analysis maps these interventions against SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 16 and 17. The findings indicate that the Foundation's approach is better understood as a combination of charitable support, human-capital investment, institutional strengthening and partnership building. The study proposes an AAG Sustainable Philanthropy Model: Need → Barrier → Resource → Intervention → Partnership → Capability → Agency → Sustainability → Scale. The paper argues that African philanthropy can contribute more effectively to sustainable development when it moves from isolated transfers towards evidence-informed investments that strengthen people, institutions and local systems. At the same time, the study distinguishes documented outputs from independently verified outcomes and therefore avoids causal impact claims that cannot be supported by the available evidence.

Keywords: African philanthropy; sustainable development goals; SDG localisation; human capital; development finance; education; community development; institutional strengthening

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015, established a shared framework for addressing poverty, hunger, health, education, gender inequality, decent work, environmental sustainability, institutions and partnerships. The 2030 Agenda also recognises that implementation requires cooperation among governments, civil society, communities, the private sector and other development actors. In Africa, this multi-actor approach is particularly important because the continent continues to confront intersecting constraints involving fiscal space, inequality, infrastructure, human capital, employment and access to essential services.



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Recent evidence reinforces the scale of the challenge. The 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report found that fewer than six percent of the 32 measurable SDG targets assessed were on track in Africa, while data gaps continued to constrain performance tracking. The 2025 edition reported progress across some goals but concluded that the pace remains insufficient for the 2030 deadline. These findings make resource mobilisation, institutional capacity and better evidence central to the development conversation.

Philanthropy forms part of this wider resource and institutional ecosystem. The OECD's 2026 review estimates that philanthropic contributions to development amounted to USD 68.2 billion during 2020–2023, equivalent to about 10% of official development assistance (ODA) volumes. The same review shows strong philanthropic concentration in health, education and partnerships, while also documenting substantial flows to Africa. This evidence suggests that philanthropy is no longer peripheral to development finance; however, the question of how philanthropy contributes to locally grounded and sustainable development remains important.

African philanthropy has particular historical and cultural dimensions. Research on African philanthropy emphasises solidarity, reciprocity, mutual aid, community responsibility and locally embedded forms of giving. Moyo and Ramsamy (2014) link African philanthropy to pan-African development, while more recent scholarship argues that African philanthropy remains understudied and under-theorised. The implication is that analytical frameworks developed largely from European and North American philanthropic experience may not fully capture African practices and motivations.

This study examines the Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation (AAG Foundation) as a case through which to explore this issue. The Foundation's institutional documentation describes interventions in education, healthcare, water access, leadership and professional development, youth and women empowerment, humanitarian assistance, community infrastructure and civil-society capacity development. Its activities extend across Nigeria and the Niger Republic, providing a useful setting for examining how philanthropy may operate across institutional and geographic boundaries.

The study does not assume that reported activities automatically constitute demonstrated impact. Instead, it distinguishes documented outputs from verified outcomes and causal impacts. This distinction is important in philanthropic research because the number of scholarships, trainees, boreholes or people reached does not by itself establish whether long-term changes in wellbeing, capability or institutional performance occurred. The study therefore uses the AAG Foundation as an empirical case for analysing mechanisms, intervention patterns and potential SDG contributions while identifying evidence gaps that future evaluation should address.

Background and Context

The AAG Foundation is presented in its institutional documentation as an expression of Prof. Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo's broader social-impact philosophy. The documented portfolio covers education and scholarships, healthcare, youth and women empowerment, entrepreneurship and skills development, water and sanitation, community infrastructure, student transportation, support to vulnerable people, leadership development, humanitarian assistance and environmental sustainability. The breadth of the portfolio makes the Foundation suitable for a multidisciplinary analysis rather than a single-sector case study.



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The Foundation's education orientation is especially prominent. Institutional documentation reports scholarship support reaching thousands of students, including undergraduate and postgraduate beneficiaries, as well as support to vulnerable students and educational institutions. The documentation also describes beneficiaries who later returned to contribute to educational initiatives, illustrating the possibility of a philanthropic cycle in which beneficiaries become contributors. Such examples are illustrative rather than proof of a generalised multiplier effect, but they are analytically relevant to discussions of beneficiary agency and sustainability.

Infrastructure support is another component. The Foundation's documentation reports more than 100 boreholes in Kano, Maradi and other communities, as well as classroom, furniture, sanitation and office support. It also records institutional transportation support. For publication purposes, the transportation figure used in this study is the corrected institutional record supplied for the manuscript: 10 buses, each with a 60-seat capacity. This is not interpreted as 60 buses.

The healthcare portfolio includes reported outreach to more than 5,000 people, with particular attention to vulnerable populations and assistance with medical bills. Leadership and professional development activities include reported training involving more than 200 students and staff at Franco-British International University and more than 300 participants at MAAUN Maradi. In 2026, the Foundation also supported proposal-development training involving more than 120 staff from 45 civil-society and community-based organisations. These activities illustrate a movement from direct service provision toward strengthening the capabilities of institutions and intermediary organisations.

The Foundation's cross-border dimension is also relevant. Its activities involving Nigeria and the Niger Republic connect philanthropy with a regional development perspective. Such cross-border engagement resonates with the African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasis on integration, human capital, mobility, partnerships and shared development aspirations. It also demonstrates why African philanthropy should not be analysed solely through the lens of donor-recipient relationships between the Global North and Global South.

Problem Statement

Although philanthropic resources are increasingly recognised as part of the development-financing landscape, evidence about African philanthropy remains fragmented. Foundations may publish activity reports, but comparable evidence on outcomes, sustainability, institutional effects and SDG contributions is less common. The result is a paradox: philanthropy can be visible at community level while remaining comparatively invisible in development scholarship and national SDG reporting.

A second problem concerns the way philanthropic success is framed. Beneficiary counts and expenditure figures are relatively easy to report, but they do not necessarily reveal whether an intervention reduced vulnerability, increased capability, strengthened an institution or produced a sustainable change. A scholarship recipient, for example, may be counted as a beneficiary when the scholarship is awarded, but the more consequential questions concern completion, employment, professional progression, income, contribution to society and the sustainability of the educational pathway.

A third problem concerns the institutional relationship between philanthropy and public systems. Foundations can complement government programmes, but poorly coordinated



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interventions can create duplication, fragmented service delivery or parallel structures. Conversely, philanthropy that strengthens local institutions, supports public priorities and builds partnerships may produce greater development leverage. Understanding these mechanisms is therefore important for both practitioners and policymakers.

Research Gap

The literature on philanthropy in Africa is growing, but several gaps remain. First, African philanthropy is still under-theorised relative to research on philanthropy in Europe and North America. Second, many studies examine philanthropy at macro level, while detailed organisational case studies can illuminate how resources are translated into programmes and institutional change. Third, there is a need for studies that connect African philanthropic practice directly to SDG localisation without assuming that every philanthropic activity constitutes measurable SDG impact.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a structured case analysis of the AAG Foundation, combining documentary evidence with the broader literature on African philanthropy and development finance. Its contribution is not to claim that one foundation represents African philanthropy as a whole, but to use one case to generate an analytically explicit model that can be tested and refined through future comparative research.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine how the AAG Foundation contributes to sustainable development through philanthropy, human-capital development, institutional strengthening and community-centred interventions. The objective include;

1. Document major areas of intervention undertaken by the AAG Foundation.
2. Map documented interventions against relevant SDGs.
3. Examine how philanthropic resources are converted into development-oriented interventions.
4. Identify mechanisms through which philanthropy may strengthen human capability, institutions and community resilience.
5. Develop a conceptual model for strategic philanthropy in African development contexts.
6. Generate lessons for philanthropic practice, public policy and SDG localisation.

Research Questions

What are the major development interventions supported by the AAG Foundation?

Which SDGs are most directly associated with these interventions?

How does the Foundation combine philanthropy with human-capital and institutional development?

What mechanisms may increase the sustainability and development leverage of philanthropic investments?

What lessons can be derived for African philanthropic organisations seeking to contribute to the SDGs?

Literature Review

Philanthropy as a Development Actor

Philanthropy has historically been associated with private giving for public benefit, but contemporary development scholarship increasingly treats foundations as actors within broader



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systems of finance, governance and social change. OECD evidence demonstrates that private philanthropy has become a meaningful complement to ODA and private investment. The 2026 OECD review shows that philanthropic funding is concentrated in health, education, partnerships and other social sectors, while also noting geographical and donor concentration. The implication is that philanthropy has resources and flexibility, but its development contribution depends on how those resources are allocated and coordinated.

For African contexts, the concept of philanthropy must also accommodate informal and culturally embedded forms of solidarity. Moyo and Ramsamy (2014) emphasise reciprocity, mutuality and interconnectedness as features of African philanthropy. Zakeyo (2025) similarly argues that African philanthropic practice has deep historical roots that are often overlooked by dominant narratives. Walyemera (2025) further argues that African philanthropy should be considered as a potential source of development financing within the Global South.

Philanthropy, Localisation and Power

The localisation agenda has raised questions about who defines development priorities, who controls resources and who is accountable to communities. Philanthropy can support localisation when it is responsive to local priorities and when local organisations have meaningful influence over programme design and implementation. Conversely, philanthropy can reproduce dependency if local actors are treated primarily as recipients rather than partners.

Research on African civil society and philanthropy also cautions against romanticising the sector. Obadare and Krawczyk (2022) note that philanthropy and civil society can involve complex relationships concerning professionalisation, donor dependence and power. This means that a development-oriented philanthropic model should include accountability, transparency, evidence and beneficiary participation rather than relying solely on benevolent intent.

Philanthropy and Human Capital

Human capital theory provides a useful analytical lens for understanding education, skills and health investments. Education can increase knowledge and productive capabilities, while health is both an intrinsic dimension of wellbeing and a condition for participation in economic and social life. From this perspective, scholarships, leadership programmes, vocational training and healthcare support can be interpreted as investments in capability rather than only charitable transfers.

The World Bank's human-capital framework similarly emphasises the importance of knowledge, skills and health across the life course. The AAG Foundation's combination of educational support, professional training and healthcare therefore provides an appropriate case for exploring how philanthropic interventions may operate across several dimensions of human development.

Philanthropy and Institutional Capacity

Development outcomes depend on institutions as well as individuals. Universities, civil-society organisations, professional associations and public agencies can translate resources into services at scale. Philanthropy that invests in organisational capability may therefore create indirect effects beyond its immediate beneficiaries.

The Foundation's reported training of staff from 45 CSOs/CBOs illustrates this institutional logic. Instead of measuring only the 120-plus participants who received training, a stronger evaluation would examine whether participating organisations subsequently improved proposal quality,



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mobilised resources, strengthened governance, expanded services or increased sustainability. The case thus highlights the difference between training delivery and organisational outcome.

Philanthropy and the Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs provide a common language for connecting diverse interventions to development priorities. OECD data show that philanthropy's global development giving is spread across multiple SDGs, with health, partnerships, education, decent work, inequality and gender among prominent areas. This pattern closely overlaps with several components of the AAG Foundation portfolio.

However, SDG alignment should not be confused with SDG attribution. A programme may be relevant to SDG 4 because it supports education, but this does not demonstrate that the intervention materially changed the national SDG 4 indicator. A rigorous case study should therefore use language such as 'contributes to', 'is aligned with', or 'has potential relevance to' unless outcome evidence supports a stronger claim.

Conceptual Framework

The study proposes that strategic philanthropy can be understood as a transformation pathway rather than a simple transfer of resources. The proposed framework is: Need → Barrier → Resource → Intervention → Partnership → Capability → Agency → Sustainability → Scale. The framework begins with identification of a development need and diagnosis of the barrier preventing individuals or institutions from addressing it. Philanthropic resources are then deployed through a targeted intervention, preferably with partners. The intended result is not only an immediate output but increased access, capability and agency. Where institutions can sustain the intervention and partnerships can leverage additional resources, the potential for longer-term development increases.

The framework incorporates Sen's (1999) capability perspective because development is concerned with expanding people's substantive freedoms and opportunities, not merely transferring commodities. It also draws on systems thinking by recognising that individuals, institutions, infrastructure and partnerships interact. The framework is conceptual and requires empirical testing before it can be treated as a validated model.

Theory of Change

The proposed theory of change is that if philanthropic resources are deliberately directed toward removing barriers to education, health, water, skills, economic opportunity and institutional capacity, and if these resources are implemented through locally relevant partnerships, then beneficiaries and institutions may acquire greater capabilities and opportunities. Over time, these capabilities can support improved service access, organisational performance, resilience and participation, contributing to SDG localisation.

The pathway is summarised as follows:

- Resources: financial resources, expertise, networks and institutional support.
- Barrier reduction: removal of financial, geographic, informational, infrastructural or organisational constraints.
- Access: increased ability to obtain education, health services, water, skills or opportunities.
- Capability: acquisition of knowledge, skills, health, confidence and institutional capacity.
- Agency: beneficiaries and organisations use capabilities to make decisions and sustain gains.



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- f) Partnership: government, academia, CSOs, private actors and communities collaborate.
- g) Sustainability and scale: successful interventions are maintained, institutionalised or replicated.
- h) SDG contribution: the combined effects align with relevant SDG targets.

Methodology

The study employs an interpretive qualitative case-study design. The AAG Foundation was selected purposively because its documented portfolio spans multiple development sectors and includes both direct beneficiary interventions and institutional-capacity activities. The case is therefore suitable for examining mechanisms rather than estimating population-level effects.

The principal case material is the Foundation's institutional documentation, including the document titled 'Professor Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo: The Architect of Africa's New Education Frontier Building Minds, Institutions, Opportunities and a Sustainable Future for Africa.' The document describes the Foundation's philosophy and a range of reported interventions. Relevant sections cover education and scholarships, water infrastructure, healthcare outreach, leadership and professional development, civil-society training, humanitarian assistance and institutional support.

Secondary sources include peer-reviewed literature and reputable development reports on African philanthropy, development finance, human capital and the SDGs. Current OECD evidence was used to contextualise the scale and sectoral distribution of philanthropy, while UNDP reporting was used to situate the case within Africa's SDG performance environment. Data were analysed thematically. Intervention evidence was coded into education, health, water and sanitation, gender and youth empowerment, skills, institutional development, humanitarian assistance, partnerships and sustainability. The coded interventions were then mapped to relevant SDGs. Numerical figures were treated as reported institutional outputs unless independent verification was available.

An evidence-integrity rule was applied throughout the analysis. Level 1 evidence represents a documented output; Level 2 represents a corroborated output; Level 3 requires evidence of measurable outcome change; and Level 4 requires stronger longitudinal or comparative evidence of impact. Most AAG evidence available for this study falls within Levels 1 and 2. This prevents the manuscript from converting institutional reporting into unsupported causal claims.

Results

Education and Scholarships

Education is a central component of the Foundation's reported portfolio. Institutional documentation reports scholarship support for thousands of students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and describes educational assistance to vulnerable learners. The document also describes a case in which scholarship beneficiaries who completed postgraduate nursing studies returned to contribute thousands of exercise books to educational initiatives. This example is analytically relevant because it illustrates a possible transition from beneficiary to contributor, although one case cannot establish a generalised effect.

The Foundation also reports support to educational institutions through infrastructure, transportation and other institutional assistance. These interventions can reduce non-tuition barriers to education. The transportation component is recorded in the present study as 10



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institutional buses, each with a 60-seat capacity. The capacity figure indicates potential transport provision; it does not establish actual utilisation, attendance gains or retention effects.

Water and Sanitation

The Foundation's institutional documentation reports more than 100 boreholes across Kano, Maradi and other communities. Water infrastructure is directly relevant to SDG 6 and indirectly relevant to health, education, gender and poverty. Reliable water access can reduce the time and physical burden associated with water collection and can improve opportunities for hygiene and sanitation.

For rigorous impact assessment, future monitoring should record the functionality rate of boreholes, population served, average collection time before and after intervention, water quality, maintenance arrangements and the proportion of households with sustained access. Without these data, the present study treats the boreholes as documented infrastructure outputs rather than verified health or welfare impacts.

Healthcare Outreach

The Foundation reports healthcare outreach reaching more than 5,000 people, with particular attention to vulnerable populations and assistance with medical bills. Such activities are directly aligned with SDG 3 and can also relate to SDGs 1 and 10 by reducing barriers to healthcare among economically vulnerable groups.

The evidence nevertheless illustrates the importance of differentiating reach from health impact. A count of people reached does not reveal whether diagnoses were made earlier, treatment was completed, complications were reduced, household health expenditure changed or health outcomes improved. Future evaluation should therefore include service utilisation, referral completion, treatment adherence and relevant clinical or financial-protection indicators.

Leadership, Professional and Problem-Solving Training

The Foundation reports leadership and professional/problem-solving training involving more than 200 students and staff at Franco-British International University and more than 300 participants at MAAUN Maradi. These activities align with the broader human-capital dimension of SDG 4 and can also support SDG 8 and SDG 16 through employability, leadership and institutional capability.

Training interventions are most likely to produce sustainable effects when participants have opportunities to apply the knowledge acquired. Future evaluation should therefore move beyond attendance counts to assess competency gain, post-training application, leadership behaviour, institutional performance and professional progression.

Women and Youth Empowerment

The Foundation's reported activities include women- and youth-focused skills, entrepreneurship and livelihood support. The institutional documentation also identifies women, young people, unemployed persons and underserved populations among intended groups. These activities have potential relevance to SDG 5, SDG 8 and SDG 10.

The development significance of such interventions depends on whether skills and financial support translate into sustained economic participation. Future measurement should therefore examine enterprise survival, income changes, employment, access to markets, savings, decision-making and control over productive resources.



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Civil-Society Capacity Development

One of the more institutionally significant interventions reported for 2026 was proposal-development training involving more than 120 staff from 45 CSOs and CBOs. The intervention was designed to strengthen proposal development, funding access and organisational social impact. This is a different form of philanthropy from direct service delivery because the immediate beneficiaries are organisations whose future actions may affect additional populations.

The intervention therefore illustrates the concept of philanthropic leverage. A single investment in organisational capability can potentially generate subsequent resources and programmes. However, this multiplier should be tested empirically by tracking participants' proposal success, additional funding mobilised, programme expansion and organisational performance over time.

Institutional Mobility and Health Infrastructure

The Foundation's institutional support includes transportation and healthcare infrastructure. The documented transportation contribution is 10 institutional buses with 60-seat capacity each, while five ambulances are reported among the health-related institutional assets. These assets may strengthen access and emergency response, but their development effect depends on utilisation, maintenance, governance, operating costs and integration with institutional systems.

This finding reinforces a broader principle: philanthropic capital expenditure is not equivalent to sustainable service delivery. A bus, ambulance, classroom or borehole generates development value only when it remains functional and is embedded in a system capable of operating and maintaining it.

Humanitarian and Vulnerability-Focused Assistance

The Foundation's documentation identifies orphans, poor families, vulnerable students, rural communities, women, unemployed people and other underserved populations as groups receiving support. This humanitarian orientation is significant because development and humanitarian needs frequently overlap in contexts of poverty and vulnerability.

A sustainable philanthropic approach should nevertheless connect emergency assistance to longer-term pathways where feasible. For example, support for an individual facing a medical bill may address an immediate crisis, while education, skills or livelihood support may address underlying vulnerability. The AAG portfolio contains elements of both forms of intervention.

Table 1. Mapping of documented AAG Foundation interventions to relevant SDGs

Intervention area	Documented evidence	Primary SDG	Potential linked SDGs
Education	Scholarships, educational assistance, institutional support	SDG 4	SDGs 1, 8, 10
Student mobility	10 buses; 60-seat capacity each	SDG 4	SDGs 10, 11
Healthcare	Reported outreach to >5,000 people; medical support	SDG 3	SDGs 1, 10
Water	100+ boreholes	SDG 6	SDGs 3, 4, 5



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Intervention area	Documented evidence	Primary SDG	Potential linked SDGs
Leadership/professional training	>200 at FBIU; >300 at MAAUN Maradi	SDG 4	SDGs 8, 16
CSO capacity	120+ staff from 45 CSOs/CBOs	SDG 17	SDG 16
Women/youth	Skills and livelihood support	SDG 5 / SDG 8	SDGs 1, 10
Institutional health assets	Five ambulances reported	SDG 3	SDGs 9, 10
Community facilities	Classrooms, furniture, sanitation and offices	SDG 4	SDGs 6, 9
Humanitarian assistance	Support to vulnerable groups	SDG 1	SDGs 3, 10

Discussion

From Charity to Development Capital

The central finding of the case is that the AAG Foundation's portfolio can be analytically understood as more than a collection of charitable transfers. It combines direct assistance with investments in education, skills, infrastructure, organisational capacity and partnerships. This combination corresponds with the broader literature's emerging view of philanthropy as a development partner.

The concept of development capital used in this paper refers to resources that are intentionally deployed to create or strengthen capabilities, institutions and opportunities. It does not imply that all philanthropic expenditure automatically creates capital or impact. Rather, it provides an analytical distinction between spending that addresses an immediate need and investment that is designed to increase future capacity.

Human Capital as a Philanthropic Multiplier

The education and training components are especially important because human-capital interventions can potentially create effects that extend beyond the initial beneficiary. A graduate may contribute to a household, workplace, professional field or community for many years. Similarly, a trained CSO employee may contribute to multiple programmes. These pathways make human-capital investment particularly relevant to the idea of leverage.

However, multiplier effects should not be assumed. They require evidence. A future AAG evaluation could construct longitudinal beneficiary cohorts and examine educational completion, employment, professional advancement, income, leadership participation and community contribution. For organisational beneficiaries, it could track funding mobilisation, programme growth and service quality.

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Institutional Strengthening and Localisation

The case also supports the argument that philanthropy can contribute to localisation by strengthening institutions that are embedded in local systems. University support, CSO training and community infrastructure are examples of interventions that may have value beyond individual recipients. This is consistent with current development thinking that emphasises locally led development and stronger relationships among governments, civil society, communities and private actors.

At the same time, institutional philanthropy requires attention to power and accountability. The literature on African civil society cautions that philanthropic and donor relationships can generate dependency or influence agendas. A locally grounded philanthropic model should therefore include transparency, community participation, clear objectives, monitoring and mechanisms through which beneficiaries can provide feedback.

Philanthropy and SDG Localisation

The AAG portfolio demonstrates the interconnectedness of the SDGs. Education interventions may relate to poverty, health, gender and employment; water interventions may affect health, education and gender; women's economic support may relate to poverty, decent work and inequality; and CSO capacity building can strengthen partnerships and institutions.

The analytical advantage of SDG mapping is therefore not simply labelling activities. It is identifying interconnections and encouraging foundations to monitor outcomes that reflect those interconnections. A borehole programme, for example, can be evaluated not only by the number of boreholes installed but by functionality, water quality, household access, time saved, school attendance and health indicators where feasible.

Cross-Border and Pan-African Dimensions

The Foundation's Nigeria–Niger dimension contributes a useful perspective to the literature because much philanthropic research remains nationally bounded. Cross-border philanthropy can be particularly relevant where communities, labour markets, educational networks and health systems interact across borders.

The case also resonates with the pan-African interpretation of philanthropy advanced by Moyo and Ramsamy (2014), in which solidarity and interconnectedness are connected to broader continental development. The Foundation should not be presented as representative of all African philanthropy, but its cross-border orientation demonstrates one pathway through which African philanthropic institutions can participate in regional development.

Proposed AAG Sustainable Philanthropy Model

The study proposes the following model for strategic philanthropy: NEED → BARRIER → RESOURCE → INTERVENTION → PARTNERSHIP → CAPABILITY → AGENCY → SUSTAINABILITY → SCALE. The model integrates the empirical patterns observed in the AAG case with concepts from capability theory, localisation and development finance.



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1. Need identification. Use community evidence, institutional data and stakeholder consultation to define the development problem.
2. Barrier diagnosis. Identify the financial, geographic, informational, infrastructural, behavioural or institutional barrier.
3. Resource mobilisation. Combine philanthropic finance with expertise, networks, assets and partner contributions.
4. Targeted intervention. Select the intervention that most directly addresses the diagnosed barrier.
5. Partnership. Work with government, universities, CSOs, communities and other relevant actors.
6. Capability development. Build knowledge, skills, health, organisational systems or other capabilities.
7. Beneficiary agency. Support beneficiaries and institutions to use and sustain the acquired capability.
8. Institutionalization. Embed successful practices in systems that can continue beyond the initial grant or donation.
9. Measurement and learning. Track outputs, outcomes, unintended effects, cost, equity and sustainability.
10. Scale. Expand or replicate only where evidence demonstrates effectiveness and contextual fit.
11. Philanthropic Impact Measurement Framework

To strengthen future evidence, the Foundation could establish an SDG Impact Observatory or annual impact scorecard. Such a system would separate reach from results and create a consistent evidence architecture across programmes.

Table 2. Proposed AAG philanthropic impact scorecard

Dimension	Suggested indicator	Evidence level
Reach	Number of direct beneficiaries	Output
Access	Number gaining access to previously unavailable services	Outcome
Capability	Competencies or skills demonstrated after training	Outcome
Education	Completion, progression and transition indicators	Outcome
Health	Service utilisation, referral completion and relevant health indicators	Outcome
Water	Functional facilities, population served and water-quality indicators	Output/Outcome



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Dimension	Suggested indicator	Evidence level
Women	Sustained income, enterprise survival and decision-making indicators	Outcome
Youth	Employment/self-employment and enterprise indicators	Outcome
Institutions	Organisational performance and systems strengthened	Outcome
Partnerships	Additional resources or programmes leveraged	Outcome
Sustainability	Functionality or continuation after philanthropic support	Impact indicator
Agency	Evidence that beneficiaries independently sustain or expand gains	Impact indicator

Policy and Practice Implications

Foundations should align major programmes with explicit SDG targets and locally relevant development plans.

Government agencies should establish transparent partnership mechanisms through which philanthropic resources can complement public priorities without compromising accountability.

Philanthropic organisations should publish annual reports that distinguish inputs, outputs, outcomes and verified impacts.

Foundations should invest in local organisations and institutional capacity where such investments can generate wider development leverage.

Beneficiary participation and feedback should be incorporated into programme design, monitoring and evaluation.

Cross-border African philanthropy should be recognised within regional development frameworks where interventions address shared challenges.

Philanthropic organisations should collaborate on common evidence standards to improve comparability across foundations.

Independent evaluation should be prioritised for major interventions, particularly where claims concern health, education, livelihoods or long-term poverty reduction.

Recommendations

1. Develop a Foundation-wide SDG Results Framework. Each major programme should identify its primary SDG, relevant targets, indicators, baseline, annual target and evidence source.
2. Create a digital beneficiary and intervention registry. A secure registry would reduce duplicate counting, support longitudinal follow-up and improve reporting integrity.



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3. Establish an independent evaluation mechanism for high-value interventions.
4. Evaluations should use appropriate quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method designs depending on the programme.
5. Measure institutional sustainability. Infrastructure investments should include maintenance plans, operating budgets, governance arrangements and functionality monitoring.
6. Strengthen partnership architecture. The Foundation should systematically document government, university, CSO, private-sector and community partnerships and the resources or capabilities leveraged through them.
7. Publish an annual AAG Philanthropy and SDG Report. The report should include financial inputs, outputs, outcomes, beneficiary stories, independent evaluations, lessons and future priorities.
8. Build a knowledge platform on African philanthropy. The Foundation could contribute to a wider evidence base by sharing tools, evaluation methods and lessons with other African foundations and researchers.

Limitations

The study is based substantially on institutional documentation and therefore cannot independently verify every reported figure. The case evidence should be understood as a documented account rather than a full impact evaluation.

The study lacks a longitudinal comparison group and cannot establish causal attribution for reported social outcomes. Where the Foundation's documents associate an intervention with a positive effect, this manuscript treats the association as an institutional claim unless independent evidence is available.

Beneficiary figures from different programmes are not aggregated because individuals may participate in multiple interventions. Programme figures also span different reporting periods and should not be interpreted as a single-year portfolio.

The study focuses on one foundation and therefore does not support generalisation to all African philanthropic organisations. Its principal value is analytical and exploratory: it proposes mechanisms and a model that can be tested comparatively.

Conclusion

This study examined the AAG Foundation as a case of development-oriented philanthropy and mapped its documented interventions against the SDGs. The case demonstrates a portfolio that extends across education, health, water, skills, empowerment, humanitarian support, institutional development and civil-society capacity building.

The evidence supports an interpretation of philanthropy as potentially functioning as development capital when resources are deliberately used to remove barriers, build capability, strengthen institutions and develop partnerships. Education and training can expand human capability; water and health interventions can address access barriers; institutional assets can support service delivery; and CSO capacity development can potentially multiply future development activity.

The study's most important methodological conclusion is that philanthropic reporting should distinguish activity from impact. Numbers of beneficiaries, assets delivered and people trained are



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important but incomplete. Sustainable development requires evidence about what changed, for whom, for how long and with what contribution from the intervention.

The AAG Sustainable Philanthropy Model proposed in this paper offers a framework for linking need identification, barrier diagnosis, resource mobilisation, intervention, partnership, capability, agency, sustainability and scale. The model is not presented as a validated causal theory; rather, it is a testable framework derived from the case and the literature.

Future research should compare multiple African foundations, examine beneficiary outcomes longitudinally, quantify philanthropic resource flows and investigate how locally rooted philanthropy interacts with government and civil-society systems. Such research would help move African philanthropy from a largely under-documented practice into a stronger field of evidence-based development scholarship.

Ethics Statement

The study is based primarily on documentary analysis of institutional and development information. No new human-participant intervention or clinical procedure was undertaken for this study. Any future primary research involving interviews, surveys or identifiable beneficiary information should obtain appropriate ethical approval and informed consent.

Funding Statement

The study did not receive a separately identified external research grant. It analyses documented philanthropic activities of the Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors are affiliated with the Adamu Abubakar Gwarzo Foundation, which is the subject of the case study. This relationship is disclosed to allow readers to assess potential conflicts. The manuscript distinguishes institutional reports from independently verified outcomes and explicitly identifies limitations in the available evidence.

Data Availability Statement

The study is based primarily on institutional documentary material and published secondary sources. Non-public beneficiary-level information was not used as an analytical dataset. Where future evaluation involves individual-level data, access should be governed by applicable consent, privacy and ethical requirements.

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