

# Receive with one Hand, Give with the Other

If there was any doubt about the philanthropic intentions of wealthy Africans – think again, writes Belinda Otas

In Africa, the act of selfless giving for the betterment of the community – a form of *ubuntu* – is hardly new. The entrepreneurial spirit has long been alive and well too. Now it seems that as business has boomed in sectors from mining and cement to sugar and telecommunications, these two things have collided to create a large number of high-net wealth individuals who appear to have a deep desire to give back.

According to a report in 2010 into the global culture of philanthropy by Barclays Wealth, South Africa ranks as one of the top four countries in the world – alongside Ireland, India and the United States – to donate significant amounts of money and time to charitable causes. The report, which surveyed 2,000 high-net worth individuals, found that cultural differences fuel the desire to give in different places. Whereas in the US philanthropists are driven mainly by a sense of responsibility to encourage creativity and innovation, in South Africa it is mostly about bridging divides.

But it is not just wealthy South Africans who are giving to philanthropic causes. *Forbes* magazine's list of the 40 richest people in Africa criss-crosses the continent from South Africa to Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt. And while they may not grab the global headlines in the same way as the likes of Bill and Melinda Gates or The Rockefeller Foundation, some of these Africans are giving and, better still, their money is staying close to home.

In recent years, notable entrepreneurs like Nigerian Aliko Dangote, listed by *Forbes* magazine as Africa's richest man, and his compatriot Tony Elumelu, one of the most successful banking executives on the continent, have set up philanthropic foundations. Dangote recently donated \$500,000 to the victims of the munitions blast in the Congolese capital, Brazzaville, which claimed the lives of over 200 people. Oil magnate Theophilus Danjuma, another Nigerian and former defence minister, has established a foundation with the mantra 'By Nigerians, In Nigeria, For Nigerians'. He has invested \$100 million of his personal wealth, the largest in the



Tony Elumelu believes that giving money should involve local leadership and businesses

history of philanthropy in Nigeria, towards work in healthcare, education and poverty reduction.

Meanwhile in Liberia, entrepreneur Saran Kaba Jones is bringing change to rural communities by making safe drinking water available via her non-profit organisation Face Africa. The Harvard graduate, who was born in Liberia but left aged eight during the country's civil war, founded a social enterprise platform to generate funds for her work.

There is a perception, however, that philanthropy does not exist in Africa. Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg is the founder of Akili Dada, an educational, non-profit organisation based in Kenya, with a mission to raise young African women leaders. She thinks she knows why: "When an *mzungu* does it, we call it 'philanthropy'. When Wanjiru does it, it's not until an *mzungu* recognises it that we say, 'Wanjiru is a philanthropist,'" she says. "No one was calling me a philanthropist before. Let's be honest, it's only because Americans started saying there's this African doing something that my African brothers and sister were like, 'Oh! Really?'"

**K**amau-Rutenberg is part of a new generation of Africans who are in the business of giving – and trying to make their mark in an 'industry' that is growing daily. And according to Bhengkosi Moyo, an expert in philanthropy, civil society and governance at TrustAfrica, the practice is crucial if the continent's reliance on external donors is ever going to be diminished. Definitions, though, remain a problem. "I don't think we have a word that could be equated to philanthropy," he says. "So when people first hear the word, they think it is associated with an American or European tradition."

This certainly doesn't mean philanthropy has never existed in Africa. On the contrary, says Kamau-Rutenberg, who points out that while philanthropy is portrayed as a concept foreign to the continent "the act of 'giving' is integral to African identity."

Moyo explains that this philanthropic giving by some of Africa's richest individuals is deeply rooted. "In most [African] cultures, a rich person is looked upon scornfully if he or she does not put resources forward to help the development of the community," he says. "The reason they make profits is because the community allows them to."



Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg is investing heavily in education

COURTESY OF WANJIRU KAMAU-RUTENBERG

"Danjuma, for example, will tell you he is rich because the Nigerian community has been good to him," he says. "Elumelu has also recognised the private sector was good to him while he was the head of a bank and that he has a responsibility to groom others. Maybe these people realise they are only as good as their community."

The African diaspora also has a key role to play in African philanthropy. According to Solome Lemma, co-founder and executive director of Africans in the Diaspora (AiD), Africans

living abroad have "engaged in philanthropy for many years, whether formally or informally". Currently \$40 billion is sent back to the continent each year in remittances. This provides access to education, employment or healthcare – a practice not often thought of as philanthropy.

"The most recent East African food crisis showed the ways in which the African diaspora communities are empowered, with many throughout Canada and the US mobilising resources and networks to raise funds for famine relief. Moreover, members of the diaspora communities have played a critical role in promoting philanthropy within Africa, says US-based Lemma, who is of Ethiopian descent.

## "A new generation of Africans are in the business of giving"

However, Kamau-Rutenberg says Africa's wealthy and powerful could be giving much more. The benefits are obvious, she says: "We end up being a richer society from different perspectives. People's engagement with community improves and this too is valuable and not to mention that life improves. Giving gives and reproduces itself. Giving multiplies upon itself."

Her point is a valid one but it also demands some careful attention. Despite the fact that African economies are still growing – unlike in the West – the global economy is broken. Now is as good a time as any to rethink where private, public and philanthropic investment is directed for the most meaningful outcome.

Some, like Elumelu, have argued that giving needs to be done in a way that involves African leadership and the private sector rather than from a purely charitable perspective. One area where Africans could direct more of their wealth is to support innovation through research of science and technology.

The South African technology entrepreneur, Mark Shuttleworth has been leading the way in this field. African policy makers are said to be working on a fund that allows money from business to be directed into this area. But experts say that more could be done to encourage this through, for example, tax relief.

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### CARING CASH

**\$64.9bn** – the combined wealth of Africa's 40 richest people

**£11bn** – the estimated net worth of Nigerian Aliko Dangote, Africa's wealthiest man

**\$170m** – amount donated by South African Francois van Niekerk, one of Africa's top five biggest givers

**\$575m** – the amount received by South African Mark Shuttleworth for the sale of his online security firm Thawte in 2002

**\$45m** – the amount Shuttleworth has donated

**\$100m** – the largest amount given to Nigerian philanthropy by former defence minister Theophilus Danjuma

**28,000** – the number of bursaries and scholarships for orphaned children by the trust of Zimbabwean telecoms tycoon Strive Masiyiwa

Sources: Forbes Magazine, Barclays