

Strategic Plays for Philanthropy to Build Scaling Pathways



With foreign aid under pressure, philanthropy's role in driving systemic, locally-led impact is more critical than ever. Rather than plugging gaps, funders have the power to create leverage—helping governments become sustainable payers for impact at scale.

This document shares concrete examples of how philanthropies are using two key approaches—**Enablers** and **Rules/Norms Shifters**—to unlock large-scale funding, strengthen government capacity, and embed accountability for results. These strategies offer a path forward to shaping systems that deliver meaningful, lasting change.

1

Enablers

Tools, Capabilities, Evidence, Expertise

Strategies that equip government and civil servants with improved capabilities and knowhow to deliver greater impact. They make governments more effective and efficient.

They enable the government to play the game better.

1. Upgrading government teams/capabilities

- Training and capacity-building of government teams on cutting-edge skills/topics
- Building new institutional capabilities/teams (innovation units, gender teams, etc.)
- Introduce evidence in policy-making

2. Building systems/tools

- Building data, procurement, and payment systems
- Digital Public Infrastructure and tools

2

Rules / Norms Shifters

Rules, Regulations, Incentives and Motivation

Strategies that seek to reshape and recenter the force field around governments on impact. They evolve what success means for politicians, government leaders and teams, and seek to transform the behaviors and culture.

They change the rules of the game.

1. Regulatory and governance reform

- Reshaping sector-specific regulations (public health regulations, regulation on domestic violence, etc)
- Reshaping electoral rules to ensure competitive outcomes
- Strengthening the role of safeguarding institutions

2. Reshaping the motivation of government and civil servants

- Open government/ procurement and other transparency efforts
- Accountability initiatives (Civil society-led, media-led, or otherwise to drive accountability)
- Government performance index/measurement

3. Empowering citizens-led pressure and accountability

- Civil service incentive schemes (financial and non-financial)
- Performance-based budgeting and financing
- Using private funding to incentivize results within government and aid agencies
- Other interventions on civil service motivation

Examples of this work

1.1. Upgrading government teams/capabilities

- The **Chandler Foundation** supports the Singapore-based **Chandler Institute of Governance (CIG)** and the Cape Town-based **Chandler Institute of Justice (CIJ)** in strengthening public systems. **CIG** partners with governments to enhance public sector capabilities through training, projects, and knowledge sharing. **CIJ** assists African lawmakers with legal training, advisory services, and model laws to promote governance, economic growth, and social mobility.
- Across East Africa, **Village Enterprise** partners with governments to build systems and capacity for scaling cost-effective, evidence-based poverty graduation programs. A key focus is developing Management Information Systems (MIS) for real-time tracking, coordination, and performance management. In Rwanda, with funding from **USAID DIV** and **AFD FID**, they support the government in implementing its National Strategy for Sustainable Graduation.
- **Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator**, a South African not-for-profit, bridges public-private partnerships by integrating private sector agility and data-driven insights into government employment strategies. As the SA Youth platform operator, it collaborates with the government and funders to scale employment solutions and promote inclusive hiring and workforce development.
- The **Fund for Innovation in Development (FID)**, which sits under the **French Development Agency (AFD)** has funded Evidence Units or Labs within Ministries in various countries, driving data-informed policymaking.
- Similarly, the **Jacobs Foundation** has funded evidence units within key ministries such as the Ministry of Education in Ghana to strengthen decision-making processes and embed a culture of evidence.

1.2. Building systems/tools:

- **Instiglio** has collaborated with the **Global Fund** and its grant recipients at developing outcomes-based procurement systems that reshape institutional priorities, ensure that the top-performing providers gain access to the necessary funding while also being incentivized to constantly deliver exceptional performance on the ground.
- With support from the **Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**, **Instiglio** has worked with national and city governments in Colombia, Ecuador, and Uganda at developing performance-based contracting systems as well as results frameworks to catalyze outcomes for refugees, migrants, and host communities.
- The **Chandler Foundation** has been supporting the **World Bank** results-based funding project in Malawi which introduces open contracting standards to the government's procurement system.
- **Co-Develop** helps countries adopt and scale Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) – including digital identity, payments, and data exchange – for inclusive digital transformation. It partners with governments, technologists, and funders to co-design locally owned, globally informed DPI investments. By 2027, Co-Develop aims to support DPI implementation in 50 countries by funding diverse grantees—including governments, nonprofits, and digital public goods developers—to ensure scalable, sustainable, and contextually relevant adoption.

2.1. Regulatory and governance reform

- **Instiglio** developed a Regulatory Compliance Systems Framework to help regulators and practitioners in LMICs diagnose regulatory failures and identify scalable, cost-effective solutions to enhance compliance and health outcomes. The framework was piloted with the **Malawi Bureau of Standards** and the **Lead Exposure Elimination Project**.

2.2. Empowering citizens-led pressure and accountability

- The **Chandler Foundation** supports **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** in advancing transparent and accountable governance. **OGP** unites governments and civil society to create action plans that enhance transparency, empower citizens, combat corruption, and leverage technology. With philanthropic support, **OGP** aids national governments in developing and implementing National Action Plans while collaborating with civil society.
- **UnlockAid** is a coalition of social innovators and organizations dedicated to transforming the United States' approach to global development. The organization advocates for **USAID** to spend funding on cost-effective interventions that leverage technology.
- **Accountability Lab** is a global organization that promotes good governance, transparency, and civic participation by empowering local changemakers. It helps citizens hold leaders accountable, strengthens anti-corruption efforts, and supports responsive governments. Through tools, networks, and resources, it fosters integrity and innovation, particularly in fragile and developing contexts.
- **Twaweza** fosters accountability by empowering civil society, leveraging media, and using data-driven advocacy to hold governments accountable. They collect real-time citizen data to inform policies, while partnering with journalists and grassroots organizations to amplify public concerns and drive systemic change.

2.3. Reshaping the incentives / motivation of governments and civil servants

- The **Gates Foundation** supported the creation of a "Gender Transformative Mechanism" within the multilateral development bank **IFAD**. Through this results-based mechanisms, countries receive additional grants on top of their loans if they achieve measurable gender and climate outcomes.
- The **Eleanor Crook Foundation**, the **CRI Foundation**, The **ELMA Relief Foundation** and **Sir Chris Hohn** committed \$50 million and committed to raise another US\$50 million as part of a joint contribution with **USAID** of \$200 million to support **UNICEF** to combat child wasting.
- **Open Philanthropy** supported **USAID DIV** with \$45 million to identify and scale global health and development interventions.
- The **CRI Foundation** and **Open Philanthropy** have supported the Chief Economist's Office within **USAID** to advance evidence-based decision-making.