

Kenyan Diaspora Philanthropy: Key Practices, Trends and Issues

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On September 11th, 2006 a moving ceremony in a small Kenyan village provides a perfect introduction to the core principles of philanthropy in this part of the world.

The 14 cattle and their offspring graze on a farm near the village of Enosaen. Maasai elders had deemed the animals sacred, never to be eaten or given away, but to act as a permanent reminder of the day on which thousands had lost their lives.

Meanwhile, just up the hill, an American delegation headed by U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael Ranneberger arrives for the ceremony, flanked by hundreds of community members wrapped in their bright red traditional cloths and beaded necklaces. . .

"But, while the cattle could not be physically moved to the United States, I want to assure the people of this community of one thing: your gift achieved its objective. You did ease the pain and suffering of the people of the United States," he said. "Tomorrow, back home, the people of the United States will be reminded that in a remote village of western Kenya that does not have skyscrapers or fighter planes or concerns that international terrorists will disrupt their lives, that the Maasai of Enosaen again express their solidarity with the American people."

The Maasai elders, in turn, say they are personally affected by what happened to the 9/11 victims and their families.

The elders came to know about the events of September 11 through Kimeli Willson Naiyomah, a young man from Enosaen who was poor and homeless. With funds raised from the community and a scholarship, Naiyomah pursued his undergraduate degree at Stanford University in the United States.

On September 11th, Naiyomah was visiting New York and saw the World Trade Center towers falling. A few months later, he returned to Enosaen to undergo a ceremony that would make him a community elder, and told people in the village what he had seen.

"Americans embraced me like their baby, like their child. They did not look at my poverty. When the tragedy of 9/11 happened, you can see why I was emotionally devastated just like an American, and I felt like I was an American, too," said Naiyomah. "It created that deep emotional distress that an American boy from Alabama would have felt."

The elders were moved by Naiyomah's story and were distressed that a country that provided education for one of their own underwent such suffering.

Maasai elder Oltetia ole Pempa Semeyioi . . . says the community elders talked about what occurred on September 11th and decided to volunteer the main resource they have, their cattle, because, in his words, cattle is a handkerchief to wipe the tears of the American people.

In Maasailand, cattle mean much more than just a source of food. The cow is central to the Maasai culture . . .

At Sunday's event, Ambassador Ranneberger announced that the American embassy in Nairobi is providing 14 four-year secondary school scholarships to Maasai youth studying in Enosae in memory of the September 11 victims.

The elders promise to donate the offspring of the original 14 cattle to a Maasai scholarship fund.¹

This example offers several lessons as we attempt to understand Kenyan giving in the U.S. First, human compassion is universal. The assumption, sometimes suggested in the literature, that non-Western giving practices are somehow less philanthropic but more self-interested is a fallacy. Good intentions and self-interest co-exist, albeit sometimes quite uncomfortably, throughout the world's philanthropy. Second, most Kenyan philanthropy flows through individual relationships of trust and compassion and not formal institutions. Third, the poor are undeniably philanthropists and, as the example shows, can also give to the rich in meaningful ways. Fourth, Kenyan philanthropy is both ancient and modern, creatively blending centuries old traditions with modern information and technologies. The mix of old and new in philanthropy is producing novel practices throughout Kenya and its diaspora that, with additional support, have exciting potential to address social issues. This paper attempts to (1) draw together the limited and dispersed data describing the innovative ways that Kenyans living in the U.S. adapt their indigenous philanthropy practices; and (2) make some recommendations for expanding the scale and impact of giving on community and national development.

Philanthropy is defined in many different ways by scholars and practitioners. Instead of becoming mired in the field's intricate and perpetual debates about what philanthropy is and is not, this paper uses a cross-cultural model that accommodates institutional and non-institutional forms in diverse, global contexts. Philanthropy consists of the voluntary means that any culture, social group or individual uses to redistribute financial and other resources for the purposes of promoting some collective

¹C. Majtenyi, "Kenya's Maasai Commemorate 9/11 Victims." *Voice of America Online Newspaper*, September 11, 2006. www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-09/2006-09-11-voa22.cfm

good. The institutional and social mechanisms that surround these voluntary practices will vary across societies and their constituent communities and may not be explicitly defined as philanthropic from a conventional Western perspective (Copeland-Carson 2005:78). This approach accepts philanthropy as a social relation that may be manifested in different institutional guises (see Schervish and Ostrander 1990).

Given the limited study of Kenyan diaspora giving, this paper errs on the side of accepting indigenous perspectives of philanthropy. The complete continuum of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy is presented, including remittances to extended family and hometown projects, grassroots practices such as giving circles, volunteer support, knowledge exchange networks, as well as institutional giving. Kenyan diaspora giving practices do not fit neatly into established diaspora philanthropy definitions and theories. Instead of retrofitting Kenyan diaspora giving patterns into these approaches, this paper examines the Kenyan data and suggests ways that philanthropy models might be refined to accommodate its practices. Remittances are a particularly controversial diaspora giving practice with some scholars seeing them as a primarily economic transaction and other construing them as an altruistic form of philanthropy. For the Kenyans interviewed for this study, as well as the few scholarly studies of the topic, remittances are motivated by various factors, including a social obligation to provide extended family support; affinity for hometowns, ethnic groups or regional areas; and an altruistic interest in aiding Kenyan development. Interviewees emphasized that in many cases giving to relatives is support for distant kin, who except for a bloodline, are effectively strangers. Although the inequitable distribution and development impact are recognized, remittances are thought to be more effective than either international aid or foundation grants in lifting people out of poverty. Dismissing remittances as “un-philanthropic” discounts Kenyan perspectives and inhibits our ability to promote their role in equitable development. Therefore, this study includes remittances as one dimension of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section One provides an overview of the U.S. African diaspora and its philanthropy, including its historical context and key trends. Section Two profiles the various social customs and institutions that constitute Kenyan philanthropy—the base of diaspora practices. Section Three describes how these customs and practices are being adapted in the United States. The final section provides some recommendations for expanding and strengthening Kenyan diaspora philanthropy.

There is very little published on African diaspora giving or philanthropy in general and even less on Kenya. This is an exploratory study drawing on data from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including interviews with Kenyan philanthropy leaders in the United States and abroad, newspapers and magazines, conference proceedings, as well as available research reports. Instead of drawing definitive conclusions about Kenyan diaspora philanthropy, this paper outlines the broad contours of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy, hopefully establishing a basis for further research and advocacy.

I. African Diaspora Philanthropy in the United States: Context and Trends

The African diaspora is a new area of study in philanthropy warranting some brief historical and cultural background to preface our discussion of the Kenyan experience in the United States. Kenyan diaspora philanthropy is part of a longstanding tradition of African-derived philanthropy in the United States, starting with the practices created by slaves from diverse West and Central African communities during the country's colonial period. African-American philanthropy is a distinctive stream of African diaspora philanthropy in the United States. As documented by a growing field of scholars and practitioners, African-American philanthropy occurs within a wide array of social institutions, including families, social clubs and churches and, historically, has been focused primarily on direct services and education with notable exceptions including support for the abolitionist, women's suffrage, and civil rights movements.

There is also a fascinating but largely unwritten history of transnational African-American philanthropy to Africa. For example, African-American mutual aid associations provided financial and other support to repatriate African slaves to Liberia and other West African countries beginning in the 19th Century. Starting in the 18th Century, African-American philanthropies, notably churches, gave to African causes through mission programs as well as Pan-African organizations (Campbell 1998; Jacobs 1982).

Twentieth Century African diaspora philanthropy in the U.S. manifests several trends. First, although the church continues to be a major conduit of giving among African-Americans, giving through other formal institutions, including foundations, secular nonprofits as well as increasingly more sophisticated planned giving vehicles, gradually grew throughout the 1900s as black opportunity and wealth expanded.

Second, the changing demographics of the U.S. African diaspora are influencing its philanthropy. The immigration of Africans as well as Latino and Caribbean people of African heritage increased beginning in the mid-20th Century and accelerated after 1990 and into the 21st Century. U.S. African diaspora giving moved into another phase with increasing migration of African immigrants throughout the 20th and now 21st Centuries coupled with the advent of a truly global financial system. The next wave of significant African immigration to the U.S. occurred from the 1960s through 1970s as Africans sought economic opportunity after World War II and independence from European colonialism. In this period, the trend was for African expatriates, following schooling and a term of employment, to return to their countries of origin to contribute their skills and talents to the development effort. However, with political and economic instability at home, Africans immigrants began to stay in host countries, leading to a dramatic increase in international migration.²

²It should be noted here (see Sander and Maimbo 2003), according to the few studies available, that Africans have a lower rate of overseas migration than other developing regions. And although not fully documented, intraregional remittances made by migrants within the African continent may be more significant sources of remittances than overseas sources.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census figures, there are 34,658,190 African diasporan Americans of which about 1 million are foreign-born Africans. The U.S. African immigrant population quadrupled from 1990 through 2000. Most Africans in the U.S. live in the major metropolitan areas of New York, California and Texas, but there is also increasing migration to mid-size cities in the South and Midwest. Although Africans are migrating to the U.S. in historically unprecedented levels, their numbers are still small relative to the general and foreign-born groups, representing only .3% of the general population. As a result of these demographic trends over the past 2 decades, the U.S. African diaspora and its philanthropy are more multi-cultural and global than in previous eras.

Like its African-American precursor, African immigrant philanthropy in the U.S. tends to focus more on direct social services and education, although there is a growing number of identity-based nonprofits that advocate for policy reforms in the U.S. and abroad. The church and mosque figure prominently as philanthropic institutions among African immigrants because they raise funds, provide in-kind support and provide services to their congregations and the broader community in the U.S. and abroad. African immigrants, as one would expect, have more transnational philanthropic interests, reflecting their continuing commitment to aiding kin and community in countries of origin. Interestingly, however, African-American interest in African issues continues and has been aided by the global media and more exposure to African immigrants. This trend has gradually intensified with support for the anti-apartheid movement and has coalesced around human rights issues such as the Darfur crisis in Sudan and a more general interest in African development.

A third contemporary trend in U.S. African diaspora philanthropy is the creation of formal non-profit institutions, many of which combine services and giving, in some ways resembling a culturally specific operating foundation. While culturally specific groups are still predominant, pan-African organizations such as the 21st Century Fund, The African Federation, Inc., the African Women's Development Fund, and Friends of the Kenyan Community Development Foundation as well as numerous others, transcend ethnic or tribal affiliations and provide a conduit for the increasing interest in African-oriented transnational giving (also see Copeland-Carson 2004). They also provide a means for the U.S.- and African-based non-profits to tap into the growing wealth of the U.S. African diaspora. Furthermore, these cross-cultural and transnational partnerships provide an increased pool of intellectual capital for philanthropic learning and exchange, reviving dying grassroots, African-derived philanthropic practices among African-Americans and others such as various types of giving circles and exposing African immigrants to the intricacies and opportunities of U.S. institutional philanthropy.

Remittances are an important mechanism of U.S. African diaspora giving among immigrants today. Worldwide the over 16 million North and Sub-Saharan African migrants remitted from \$20 to \$40 billion last year. According to a recent UN study, remittances from Africans working abroad in the period 2000-2003 averaged about \$17 billion per annum virtually overtaking foreign direct investment flows, which

averaged about \$15 billion per annum during the same period. The majority of this giving came from North African countries which have higher numbers of overseas migrants and has overtaken foreign direct investment (World Bank 2007). These figures only represent remittances made through formal mechanisms such as banks and there is a likely an even larger share of undocumented contributions. Unfortunately, reliable figures on the amount of remittances by sending or receiving countries are rare. Two-thirds of African governments do not collect remittance data and the two major data sources, the World Bank and IMF, use proxy indicators for countries without this information.

Despite the relatively small number of African overseas migrants compared to other countries, remittances have had a significant impact on the continent, which has a high concentration of the world's poorest countries. For example, during the 1980s international remittances covered 80 percent of the current account deficit in Botswana; they were equal to almost three-quarters of total commodity export earnings in Sudan; and constituted more than half of Lesotho's foreign exchange earnings (de Haan 2000). African governments are just beginning to take notice and a few such as Mali and Ghana are creating tax or matching gifts programs to further encourage giving and direct it to local development goals. According to a study by Crush (1996), Lesotho and Mozambique even have compulsory giving schemes supported by tax legislation that require migrants working in South African mines to remit 60% and 30% of their wages respectively. Although miners (and the Chamber of Mines) oppose the system, miners' wives seem to favor it. For the same migrants, the South African miners' bank, TEBA, has developed services to facilitate voluntary remittances by mineworkers. More funds are being remitted voluntarily than through the compulsory system, suggesting that the abolition of compulsory deferred pay would not be as disastrous for these countries as is often made out. The primary losers would not be individual households but the governments, which benefit from the interest on deferred pay (also see Sander and Maimbo 2003:37).

Servicing the needs of the growing U.S. market for remittances has created economic opportunity for African immigrant entrepreneurs as well as larger corporations. A vibrant international money transfer sector has emerged, specializing in countries with weak financial institutions and/or dispersed, hard to reach rural recipient communities. Western Union has been especially effective among money transfer operators (MTOs) with 200,000 of its expansive 400,000-strong worldwide money transfer agents placed in Africa. It has also recently established a partnership with a continental African bank and has a giving program that provides post-secondary educational scholarships for Africans. Responding to pressure to lower its transfer costs and increasing competition, it has lowered its fees by 50% in the past year.

Although a subject for another paper, the case of Somalis in the U.S. is instructive. Most U.S. Somalis live in Minnesota where enterprising businesspeople have created a vibrant international money transfer business connecting U.S.-based banks with traditional money transfer agents called hawalas in Somalia.³ Hawalas have the local credibility and expertise to ensure money is received by relatives in remote villages. The

³Hussein Samatar, a prominent Minnesota Somali American leader and former banker shared his insights on the philanthropic role and innovations of community-based MTOs in November 2006 interview.

internet is increasingly used by these smaller MTOs, which often have less name recognition and serve more specialized or regional populations like Dawabshil in Somalia (see Baruah 2006; Sander and Maimbo 2003). Although these businesses have been under greater scrutiny by U.S. government officials to ensure that they do not support terrorist groups and larger corporations such as Western Union have created additional competition, community-based money transfer operations continue to thrive in the U.S., providing a vital mechanism for transnational African giving.

Informal money transfer mechanisms, including couriering money through family, friends or traditional money changers are common and largely undocumented in African philanthropy studies. The limited literature on the subject suggests that increasing numbers of migrants are gravitating towards more formal transfer mechanisms as robbery of couriers increases in communities with political instability (Sander and Maimbo 2003). Furthermore, growing concerns about the security of informal transfers have also created a market for contribution of goods and services. The Ghanaian government encourages donation of goods by allowing expatriates to import these items without duties. Given that a significant portion of transfer recipients are rural and perhaps not connected to banks or other formal institutions, informal transfer mechanisms will likely remain prominent.

African communities have a rich associational life with a wide range of rural and urban voluntary groups that provide assistance to members and the broader community. These mutual aid associations are replicated in the United States, sometimes recreated as ethnic-based, professional groups and/or hometown associations that provide both a social and networking outlet for members and a vehicle for philanthropy from U.S. diaspora communities to African communities of origin. These associations have become the basis for an emergent African transnational nonprofit sector in the U.S.

There are no national studies of U.S. African diaspora nonprofits, but findings from the Twin Cities, the state with one of the country's highest concentrations of African immigrants and the most diverse black populations, suggest some interesting new dynamics since the early 1990s. New, formally incorporated nonprofits are emerging from these mutual aid associations and are beginning to specialize in certain social sector issues. Many raise money in the U.S. to address issues in African countries as well as support Africans living in the U.S. Some are even replicating their organizations in their African home countries. The examples are legion and only a few can be provided here. The University of Hargeisa in Somalia was founded in 2000 with start-up gifts from Somalis living in the U.S. and other countries. The Somaliland Forum, a diaspora nonprofit with a strong U.S. base, was a leader in fundraising for the University, which also now has a trust fund to encourage continuing giving. The African Women's Development Fund, the first women-led African-wide philanthropy, with support from multiple individual and institutional donors, has created a U.S. arm to tap into the U.S.-based diaspora's philanthropy and direct it to projects in Africa. The African Federation, Inc., founded in 2006 and chaired by a Ghanaian (who also happens to be a Ford

Foundation grant administrator), is a multi-ethnic, national intermediary designed to build the capacity of emerging U.S. African non-profits.⁴

These institutions can also operate rotating savings or credit pools in which members make a scheduled contribution and each participant has an opportunity to use the collective pool for a family or community project on a regular basis, typically, but not necessarily once a year. For example, building on indigenous models, the African Federation is planning a credit union that would provide business financing and support philanthropy. The pools are not necessarily only associated with a formal institution such as a mutual aid association but may be organized on a more ad hoc basis by a social network such as a group of friends. Although called by different names, these pools are ancient and ubiquitous throughout Africa and have been operating as an important source of personal financial and philanthropic capital throughout the Africa diaspora in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean since the colonial period. They are precursors to “giving circles” providing an indigenous mechanism for grassroots philanthropy that Kenyans and other African immigrants are actively adapting in the U.S. context.

II. Kenyan Philanthropy: Indigenous to Institutional Forms

A full presentation of Kenya’s rich history is beyond this paper’s scope. But understanding giving in its diaspora requires a brief introduction to Kenyan history and culture. A complex, diverse society since ancient times, Kenya has a population of 34.3 million people and about 40 different ethnic groups (World Bank Data Group 2006; Okoth 2003). There are two national languages, English, adopted during British colonialism, and Swahili, a blend of indigenous Bantu languages and Arabic emerging as early as the 10th Century. Although the population is mostly rural and poor, Kenya has one of sub-Saharan Africa’s strongest economic infrastructures and is a major settlement area for refugees fleeing civil strife and looking for opportunity from neighboring African countries.

Over two-thirds of Kenyans are Christians, mostly Protestants of various denominations and Roman Catholics. But Muslims represent a sizeable minority with small communities of Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Jains and Bah’ais. Each of these faiths encourages giving to the poor and is a conduit for philanthropic giving. Because most Kenyans are Christians, the church has a significant philanthropic role.

Kenyans, like most Africans, generally have strong extended family social obligations. From an early age youth are socialized to provide support even to remote relatives and members of their ethnic group, clan or village. In fact, as has been documented in much of the social science literature on Africa, the ethic of sharing is so strong that those who conspicuously accumulate wealth or status without sharing it are thought to be anti-social and even immoral in many indigenous African faiths and philosophies (Feierman 1998; Iliffe 1987).

⁴Interview with Benjamin Afrifra, chair of the African Federation, in Fall 2006.

Most African cultures espouse some version of a philosophy found in East and Southern Africa, including Kenya, called *ubuntu*, a word found in Bantu languages, emphasizing common humanity, interdependence and mutual responsibility for others. Although translation into English is difficult, its meaning approximates “I am because you are.” In this worldview, one can only fully experience one’s own humanity by supporting others; and another person’s suffering diminishes one’s own humanity. Thus, although an exact translation for “philanthropy” does not exist in most indigenous African languages, the concept of love for humanity certainly does, but in a culturally distinctive way. Giving and helping are considered basic components of responsible social behavior manifested across society’s various institutions. Thus, in communities of even humble means, it is common to pool resources to build schools, send teenagers to college abroad, donate medical assistance, foster orphans and provide a wide range of mutual aid and support. This widespread culture of compassion persists despite the ravages of civil conflict, corruption, development and severe poverty and is in fact the glue that holds Kenyan and most African society together. This ethic of giving is a primary motivator for Kenyan diaspora remittances and other forms of philanthropy.

Indigenous forms of Kenyan philanthropy include several mechanisms widely practiced since ancient times throughout Africa, although described by different names in various countries and ethnicities. Individual and community philanthropy ranging from simple merry-go-rounds, religious tithing and community revolving funds to large scale resource mobilization through “harambees” are longstanding, common Kenyan philanthropy tools. Villages in Kenya often gather funds by hosting harambees, a Swahili word for “pull together.” Harambees are days of singing, storytelling and speeches, where families and interested persons donate what they can for a community project. Funding is often used for community infrastructure or educational projects, particularly schools, churches, centers and scholarships, and can include in-kind or cash support. Harambee became a rally cry promoted by Kenya’s founding father and first president Jomo Kenyatta that today also suggests cooperation for the sake of self-help and development.

In one of the few studies of Kenyan community giving, Sibilike Makhanu (2006:3-4) describes three types of harambees: 1) public, organized to supplement government public work projects; 2) private/personal for family-oriented needs; and 3) group, which includes fundraising for grassroots organizations and/or projects not related to government initiatives. Good examples of these types are construction of institutes of technology, schools and teachers’ houses, health facilities and youth centers. Private or personal harambees were organized by individuals, with a view to solving individual problems like raising funds for students to travel overseas for education, payment of school fees in the country, payment of medical bills, and reconstruction of houses destroyed by fire, lightning and floods.

Group harambees were organized by particular groups, for example, women groups to put up a development project for themselves. In Kenyan tradition they are called self-help groups. The most famous example was the Nyakinywa Mabati Women Harambee organized to ensure those with grass-thatched roofs converted to mabati (iron

sheet) roofs. Harambees have helped women and youth groups to come up with income generating projects and access loan facilities from financial institutions. A good example is Nyakinywa Mabati Women Group. This group evolved from just raising money for improved housing to keeping grade cows, individual household and community water provision, and ultimately to land ownership and other commercial activities.

Among the many positive benefits of harambees noted by Makhanu are promotion of sharing and cooperation for development, supplement of government services, and support of vulnerable people. Harambees' impact on Kenyan education is most notable. According to Makhanu, most students from poor backgrounds have been able to access primary, secondary, and college/university education through harambees. Many of these harambees are evolving into ongoing funds called Constituency Educational Development Harambees. Recent controversy about the abuse of harambees for unscrupulous political or NGO fundraising has led to government efforts to regulate them as well as policies to both promote and regulate charitable activity.

Merry-go-rounds are a type of revolving fund organized for self- or community-help groups formed by individuals to pull their resources together for the purpose of uplifting their standards of life. Like indigenous revolving funds throughout the world, merry-go-rounds pool resources for a member at a time until all members are served then start again from the first member to receive the pooled resources. So they keep on rotating like a merry-go-round. Ubiquitous throughout Africa, they can be organized within established social groups such as age-, gender-, and village-based groupings. Kenya's women's self-help movement has made widespread use of merry-go-rounds. Within Africa itself, there are multiple attempts by international aid projects and governments to formalize these revolving pools into micro-credit and investment pools as well as philanthropy funds, although they have met with very mixed results (Siebel 2000).

Makhanu (2006:6-8) provides a rare and very helpful description of Kenyan merry-go-rounds. For example, in the 1960s groups in the Central Province began contributing money for their members on a merry-go-round basis for buying utensils, paying school fees for members' children or for meeting other urgent needs. Members also helped each other with farm work and with other manual work like building houses. The groups gradually moved into assisting their members with money for purchase of mabati (corrugated iron sheets) for roofing their houses. In other districts, merry go rounds organized by girls clans predominate. Members compete with each other on uplifting their members by pulling their finances together or assisting each other in the farm on a merry-go-round basis. By 1966 there were 1600 women self-help groups with 45,000 members in the country. There are now countless merry-go-rounds in Kenya and now in both rural and urban areas. Men have also started to join or form their own. Most, if not all, members of merry-go-rounds are literate and therefore operate the groups in a modern way. They appoint or elect their officials, chairperson, secretary, treasurer and the auditor. Most groups have a written constitution that guides them in the activities of the group. They keep records of the accounts and minutes of their meetings. Most groups hold their meetings in members' houses (in the house of the member whose turn is to

receive the money). The meeting frequency and contribution requirements vary from group to group depending on the income of members. Contributions can be used for either community, business or personal finance needs.

There are no studies that quantify indigenous Kenyan volunteer levels. But according to Makhanu (2006:4-5) volunteerism is common in Kenya and, like volunteerism elsewhere, can be motivated by an interest in community recognition, by religious obligations, as well as an altruistic commitment to community improvement. This in-kind support is an important component of Kenyan philanthropy. A prominent and compelling example of the Kenyan volunteerism is the work of Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Wangari's Greenbelt Movement started as a grassroots volunteer initiative that ultimately organized women to plant 20 million trees in Kenya and now is being replicated in other African countries (Maathai 2003).

In addition to these indigenous forms of philanthropy, a wide range of international foundations and other donors support local causes in Kenya and are encouraging indigenous philanthropy. The World Bank, Ford Foundation, the Aga Khan Foundations and the UK-based NGO Allavida all support prominent initiatives to develop African philanthropy with key projects in Kenya. Ford Foundation has two new projects that promote philanthropy throughout Africa, including Kenya. The International Philanthropy Initiative (IPI) supports select philanthropies to expand giving in various countries. Through IPI Ford supports the work of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF). Established in 2000, AWDF is the first Africa-wide fundraising and grant-making fund, which aims to support the work of organizations working to promote women's rights in Africa. The AWDF funds local, national, sub-regional and regional organizations in Africa working towards women's empowerment. TrustAfrica is a new African foundation, supported by Ford, which promotes peace, economic prosperity, and social justice throughout the continent. The Foundation hosts dialogues, makes grants, and provides technical assistance so that African institutions can work together to develop appropriate and lasting solutions to the continent's most pressing challenges. TrustAfrica's core program areas are Peace and Security, Regional Integration, and Citizenship and Identity. Allavida, with support from the Ford Foundation, is leading a major project researching and promoting grantmaking and philanthropy in East Africa. It includes training, technical assistance, primary research into community philanthropy, and case studies as well as a publications series. In 2006 the World Bank with Ford and other foundations convened a conference on philanthropy and development in Kenya.

Institutional philanthropy is just developing in Kenya. At the forefront of this new development is the Kenyan Community Development Fund (KCDF), founded in 2001 by a coalition of Kenyan leaders interested in fostering giving to support local development. The country's only public foundation, it was organized as a community foundation on Kenyan cultural principles. KCDF has taken on a critical dual role as an intermediary between international donors and community groups and a cultivator of indigenous philanthropy. With deep and authentic community accountability and

knowledge, it has successfully tapped into indigenous forms of philanthropy such as the merry-go-round and harambees, with matching gift programs, endowment development and technical training. KCDF also established a U.S. arm in late 2006 -- Friends of KCDF -- which is incorporated in Delaware and awaiting its tax exemption letter as a 501(c) (3) public charity. Friends of KCDF will raise money in the U.S. to support its Kenya initiatives and over time hopes to become a primary conduit whereby Kenyans living in the U.S. can support their charitable interests through the creation of donor advised and other funds (Malombe 2007). It has just started its fundraising efforts but given its credibility and track record is primed to help organize U.S. giving by Kenyans to increase its impact on development. In 2002, KDCE -- along with other East Africa grantmakers -- created the East Africa Grantmaking Association (EGAG), a regional affinity group to promote philanthropy. EGAG is working through its various members to promote tax and other policy changes to facilitate giving to Kenya, including giving from its diaspora. In just the past six months there have been three major, first-ever conferences on Kenyan philanthropy, diaspora giving or development investment convened by NGOs, the World Bank, and foundations.

III. U.S. Kenya Diaspora Philanthropy: Adapting the Old and New

Profile of Kenyans in the United States

The U.S. Kenyan community is adapting indigenous traditions to the realities and opportunities presented by their new country to address the needs of their homeland. Although this is likely a gross underestimate and is now seven years outdated, the 2000 U.S. Census estimated that 47,000 Kenyans lived in the United States. Most are professionals and part of the middle class, suggesting that the United States is a significant source of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy. The other country with a high concentration of Kenyans is the United Kingdom, which is another primary source of remittances. The majority of Kenya diaspora giving likely comes from the United States and United Kingdom given their high concentrations of migrants from the country. Other countries with significant Kenyan migrant populations include Canada, Australia, and India.

Kenya diaspora philanthropy is characterized by four key trends: 1) the creative use of remittances to assist extended family members and community projects, increasingly involving innovative application of technology; 2) the use of traditional voluntary organizations to create identity-based nonprofits and associations that have a philanthropic function; 3) a primary focus on health, education and social service giving; and 4) an emergent use of identity-based philanthropic organizations to advocate for public policy reform, especially in Kenya.

Kenya's government does not collect remittance data. The latest World Bank figures for 2005 estimate that Kenyan migrants remitted about \$494.3 million to their country or origin. However, several Kenyan diaspora organizations, including estimated undocumented remittances as well as goods and services—estimate the figure to be closer

to \$1 billion for the same period. Reliable figures on the amount of remittances from the United States are unavailable; however, Kenyans are very committed and active givers.

There is a very current and active debate about the role of migrants and remittances in the country's development. There is some segment of the public that feels Kenyans living abroad are disloyal and have lost their identity. However, many Kenyans benefit from overseas remittances. According to the few studies available, remittance recipients have a notably higher quality of life than those who are not. The current Kenyan presidential and parliamentary election campaign has heightened the debate about the role of its diaspora. The World Bank's release of the updated estimated of Kenyan remittance figures also highlighted that giving is almost ten times the amount of foreign aid, emphasizing the influence of the country's overseas migrants. Overseas Kenyans do not have a mechanism to vote in their homeland's elections. Nonetheless Kenyan candidates are actively campaigning in U.S. cities with high concentrations of migrants attempting to garner both funding and endorsements.

Kenyan newspapers, magazines and radio shows, thanks to the Internet, are now easily accessible by Kenyans living abroad. In fact, in diasporas worldwide digital technology, including the Internet and mobile phones, has created virtual communities that enable people to sustain various commercial, familial and philanthropic connections to their homelands.

The Social Organization of U.S. Kenyan Diaspora Philanthropy

In addition to community centers spread throughout the country, the Kenya diaspora has also organized several organizations that help people stay connected to issues in the homeland and can act as vehicles for philanthropy. Most prominent among these in the United States are the Kenya Community Abroad (KCA), the Kenya Diaspora Network, the Kenya Development Network Consortium, and the Kenyan Professional Association as well as a variety of university-based student associations throughout the country. The KCA is an international association with local chapters in ten U.S. cities as well as five countries. The KCA is currently mounting a campaign to encourage the Kenyan government to create a mechanism for Kenyans abroad to vote in the country's elections and have dual citizenship.

Kenyans living worldwide have formed the Kenyan Diaspora Investment Forum, with support from government and the private sector, to encourage investment in the country, including philanthropy, from the diaspora. The Forum convened an international conference in February 2007 to promote investment, including philanthropy, and now publishes a magazine on the subject. In March 2007, a first-ever international conference on the Kenyan diaspora was convened by Kennesaw State University in Georgia to examine, among other topics, philanthropy and other investments for Kenya from the United States. Civil society organizations in the United States, Europe and Kenya are just beginning to organize to document and promote Kenyan diaspora giving. Each U.S. region with a sizeable Kenyan migrant population also has a number of

regional, ethnic- or hometown-based associations that provide a means of social networking, mutual support as well as connection to Kenyans abroad.

There are no national studies of the social organization of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy. However, case study data from Minnesota, a region with a high concentration of Kenyans, as well as analysis of communications from Kenyan virtual communities, are instructive. According to the 2000 U.S. Census there are about 5,000 Kenyans living in the Minnesota metropolitan area. Over the past decade, the region's largely successful and professional Kenyan community has created a number of nonprofit institutions to address social issues in their host and home country. For example Minnesota Kenyans were instrumental in creating the national Kenyan Development Network and have recently formed a local KCA chapter. In addition to involvement in the national and international Kenyan diaspora organizations, there are at least four ethnic-based associations, including one for Luos, Kikuyus, Somali-Kenyans and Nandis.

Most Kenyan diaspora philanthropy takes place outside of these organizations and is private with individuals making gifts to their extended family or projects in their home communities. Members of these ethnic associations may participate in merry go rounds, but they are not usually formally sponsored by the community associations. Nonetheless, they do provide trusted networks of people with whom these indigenous giving circles can be practiced.⁵ They provide a social structure through which traditional philanthropic practices can be sustained and adapted in the United States.

As is the case with diaspora giving more broadly, Kenyan diaspora giving is not limited to the home country. In addition, Kenyans in Minnesota are reliable supporters of local community organizations, providing volunteer, in-kind and financial support. For example, the region's Kenyan diaspora pooled resources five years ago to construct a community center which garnered widespread support. The community has highly prominent business people who have had particular success in the real estate market and are looked to provide philanthropic support and leadership on a variety of community concerns. Kenyan organizations do not typically lead fundraising campaigns to address social issues. They do, however, provide important forums for networking and communications to facilitate philanthropy. Individual community leaders have tapped these community associations to mount fundraising campaigns to support Kenyans affected by recent natural disasters, for the construction of schools and to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has taken a great toll on Kenyan society. These fundraising efforts are often organized around community events and in newspaper accounts are sometimes described as harambees. Direct aid to extended family members, construction of community facilities, educational scholarships and health and other services to assist HIV/AIDS victims seem to be the most popular areas of philanthropic support among Kenyans in Minnesota. Although the majority of this support is to Kenyans living in the

⁵This is an area that people were reluctant to discuss because of concerns that proceeds or gifts to Kenya could some how be taxed or run afoul of some new post-9/11 requirement.

home country, it should be noted that giving may include extended kin residing in countries throughout the diaspora. Recognizing the local Kenyan market, MTOs actively compete for Kenyans' business in Minnesota through advertisements in the ethnic press, regular meetings with prominent community officials, as well as sponsorship of community events such as festivals.

Because most Kenyans living in the United States are Christians, the church is a primary philanthropic institution for Minnesota's Kenyan diaspora. Kenyans in Minnesota represent several different denominations and each one has an active mission arm with some focus on Kenyan issues. Examples include assistance with immigration sponsorship and appeals; as well as fundraising to build schools, provide scholarships and health care support; as well as disaster relief. A drought in northeastern Kenya highlighted both church-based and grassroots giving, raising thousands of dollars from Minnesota to support the 2.5 million people needing food during the resulting famine. Mosques were also active in this effort as Northeastern Kenya is populated largely by ethnic Somalis, who are primarily Muslim. While faith organizations are the primary institutional vehicle for Kenya diaspora giving, most giving continues to be private and focused on individuals' family and community networks.

Technological Innovation for and through Philanthropy

Digital technology, with innovations often created in the diaspora, is changing the way philanthropy is done throughout Africa. As noted by Mojúbàolú Okome (2006 and forthcoming), this contribution of technological skills and infrastructure is itself a form of in-kind diaspora philanthropy to Africa. Technology has the potential to revolutionize Kenyan diaspora giving.

There have been several very recent giving innovations that highlight the U.S. Kenyan diaspora's powerful influence and business acumen as well as the growing importance of the Kenyan market in the international remittance industry. Most notable is the creation of two Kenyan-owned businesses, Watu Wetu and Mama Mike's, both website businesses that provide service vouchers that can be used by Kenyans to purchase services and products in their local communities. More documentation is available about six-year old Mama Mike's (www.mamamikes.com); so we highlight it here. The brainchild of its U.S. Kenyan owner, customers can purchase electronic vouchers that can be redeemed at a network of over 20 retail establishments in Kenya, including grocers, general merchandise, furniture stores, and pharmacies. Customers can also send flowers for special occasions and be part of a plan that regularly sends monthly vouchers to assist family members. Another novel start up in Kenya and Uganda now offers medical vouchers for services back home (Stoll n.d.).

The growing use of the Internet and innovative electronic funds transfer mechanisms such as smart cards, can help expand and safeguard Kenyan as well as African diaspora philanthropy more broadly, particularly as the persons most in need of the assistance typically do not have access to traditional financial institutions. As noted by Sander and Maimbo (2003) above, there has been increasing concern about the safety

of remittances using informal networks throughout Africa. At the same time, until recently the cost of transfers through banks and many MTOs have been prohibitively high. Interviews with Kenyan philanthropists for this paper also indicate concerns about better controlling family members' use of cash remittances to ensure that they are used to promote sustainable economic improvement as well as meet direct needs. Furthermore, Minnesota Kenyans interviewed noted the financial toll of sending remittances that are driven by family requests. Sending of non-cash goods and services is one vehicle to help sending families influence the use of support.

PostaPay, a new Kenyan-owned money transfer organization, is designed to compete with the foreign-owned companies such as Western Union who have profited greatly from the African remittances market. In addition to providing state-of-the-art remittance services, PostaPay is tapping into the U.S. Kenya diaspora's patriotism by highlighting its role as the only major Kenyan-owned money transfer company. KCA has a partnership with PostaPay and a link to its service through its website. PostaPay debuted in the United States with a press conference in March 2007 and embarked on a tour of ten U.S. cities with significant Kenyan populations to market its services.

Mobile phone use has proliferated in Africa over the past decade, connecting many communities that up until now had no telephone or Internet connections. Vodaphone -- which operates Safaricom, Africa's largest cellular phone network -- with backing from Citibank, has just launched a mobile phone payment systems pilot in Kenya. Subscribers can purchase an account and deposit a certain amount of cash that can be instantly transferred via cellular phone to members of the Safaricom network throughout Africa using a secure pin code. The transferred cash can be deposited in a bank account or members can redeem it for a debit card that can be used at various establishments. Only in operation for less than a month, early reviews are that the system is easy to use and secure. Vodaphone will refine the services based on the results of the Kenya pilot and has plans to roll it out throughout Africa and its diaspora over the next year. Given the growing and widespread use of cellular phones, even in remote rural areas, technology, if the proper safeguards are provided, could further expand Kenya diaspora giving. Cellular technology makes Internet access more feasible and provides an alternative to international MTOs and their still relatively high transaction fees.

Through technology, vouchers and the U.S. nonprofit system, the U.S. Kenya diaspora is blending longstanding giving traditions with new technologies to create novel innovations that, in some cases, are creating new models for diaspora giving more broadly. These new strategies and their ultimate impact is uncertain and should not be overstated. But the models are truly cutting edge, with great potential to not only expand philanthropy but also technology to the almost countless Kenyan villages that may not have a bank but increasingly have mobile or some other digital access.

IV. Diaspora Giving for Development: Recommendations and Conclusions

U.S. Kenyans have a rich heritage of philanthropy and are creating dynamic strategies to support their home countries. Case study data show that whether support is given through family remittances, faith-based institutions, or trusted community leaders, Kenyans living in the U.S. support community projects in their hometowns, most notably emergency relief during disasters, support for AIDS/HIV victims, community facilities and scholarships. However, given the creativity and commitment of Kenyans living abroad to development of their home country, there are multiple ways that philanthropy could be further harnessed to promote equitable development.

Kenyan leadership in the U.S., with partners, could build on the heightened attention to the Kenyan diaspora during the presidential and parliamentary elections to promote reforms that facilitate philanthropy, including creation of tax and other incentives to increase giving, consumer-friendly regulation of MTOs, and government documentation of remittances, as well as broader policies that encourage diaspora investment.

Like most people, Kenyans do not generally recognize the philanthropic potential of remittances and grassroots giving practices. Training and development that help Kenyans in the diaspora begin to view themselves as part of a broader diaspora philanthropy movement would help develop emerging leadership. A national convening on U.S. African diaspora giving could help to encourage and further develop philanthropy. Such an effort would expose diverse African diaspora leaders, including U.S.- and foreign-born of various nationalities and ethnicities, to the philanthropic potential of the often taken for granted social mechanisms of giving as well as innovations in the broader field. Instead of imposing Western notions of philanthropy, the entire spectrum of African diasporan philanthropy, from extended family remittances to transnational foundations, should be highlighted. The church and mosque as respected Kenyan institutions with philanthropic roles have important roles to play in any credible effort to encourage diaspora giving. Special attention should be paid to building the philanthropic role of Kenyan NGOs, both in Kenya and the United States.

The development of PostaPay and other reputable MTOs promotes competition and reduces the transaction cost of remittances. Continued development of credible, cost-effective and efficient transfer services providing for both cash and non-cash assistance, particularly those that provide business and employment opportunities to Kenyans both in the home country and abroad, would expand philanthropy.

The growing use of technology for philanthropy in Kenya and Africa more broadly is exciting. Technology devised for extended family remittances can be adapted to electronic philanthropy for nonprofits. This is a formidable task because Kenyan diaspora philanthropy, like African diaspora philanthropy more generally, is personal and relationship-based. But there are precedents, most notably in South Asian philanthropy, that provide models.

For example, www.giveindia.org, created in 1999, provides a reliable web-based giving vehicle for pre-qualified Indian non-profits that is widely used by Indians living abroad as well as others interested in supporting Indian causes. As the new Kenyan websites fostering family-based remittances become more widely trusted, they could add e-philanthropy services to funnel support to Kenyan-based non-profits. Any such effort would need to be led by a diverse group of Kenyans fully inclusive of the community's ethnic diversity. KCDF, as it becomes better known in the U.S. Kenyan diaspora could partner with a web-based remittance service to facilitate e-philanthropy; or a coalition of Kenyan associations could collaborate to produce such a service. Creative application of technology used for remittances is the next frontier in expanding Kenyan diaspora philanthropy.

U.S.-based foundations and infrastructure organizations, in addition to supporting the development of foundations in Kenya, should encourage and support capacity-building among U.S.-based Kenya diaspora non-profits with particular attention to their potential as agents of philanthropy. Ideas include helping KCA or other Kenyan diaspora organizations develop campaigns to encourage collective philanthropy among members; understand how U.S. charity laws can be used to encourage giving; and assist U.S.-based arms of Kenyan philanthropies with outreach and marketing to both the expatriate and other members of the public who might be interested in supporting Kenyan projects (e.g. U.S.-based tourism and trade companies).

Legitimate concerns about fraud and corruption in the home country are serious impediments to U.S. Kenyan diaspora philanthropy. Kenyans generally circumvent philanthropic institutions, preferring to give directly to individuals in need or support projects lead by honorable persons with whom there is a prior relationship of trust. However, these non-institutional forms of philanthropy, while powerful, are insufficient for Kenya's formidable development challenges. Current efforts in Kenya to better regulate NGOs and their fundraising activities such as harambees should be encouraged, as they, if publicized, could help improve the diaspora's willingness to give to the sector. Also, a credible NGO sector review and certification process would help immensely. The EGAG with Kenyan NGO associations could take action to encourage policies and procedures for better sector accountability.

Until recent initiatives, international aid organizations have largely ignored indigenous philanthropy in favor of microfinance projects designed to promote small business development. Foreign development organizations should consider ways to collaborate with foundations and other philanthropy institutions to encourage the growth of sustainable grassroots philanthropy both in its non-institutional and institutional forms. KDCF's work in this area is encouraging.

Much of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy, like African diaspora philanthropy more generally, is not well documented. This paper just scratches the surface of Kenyan diaspora philanthropy trends and practices. More basic research is necessary, particularly documenting the scale and scope of Kenya diaspora philanthropy by country as well as its

impact on both sending and receiving communities. Cases studies that document emerging practices, including the broad continuum of diasporan giving, are critical. These data are an integral component of promoting the public policy changes necessary to expand Kenya diaspora philanthropy, especially to maximize its social equity and development impact.

In a recent speech, Wangari Maathai reminds us “It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference.” Kenyan diaspora philanthropy demonstrates the power of the compassion and creativity of ordinary people to make an extraordinary difference. Its dynamic blend of traditional, grassroots and state-of-the-art digital technology is creating important new ways of giving that has attracted the attention of multi-national corporations and enterprising Kenyan entrepreneurs on several continents. It is one of the most recent chapters in the now centuries old story of adapting homegrown African social practices in the United States. To help fully unleash Kenyan diaspora giving's potential, we must remove the blinders created by narrow, ethnocentric approaches that underestimate or dismiss remittances or non-institutional forms, realizing that almost by definition, philanthropy in a global age knows few boundaries.

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