DRIVING SYSTEMS CHANGE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Lagos, August 25, 2020-

“There is a need to work and change the whole system rather than focus on smaller group activities.” - Jeff Walker.

In recognition of the need to address systemic problems that have hindered the potential growth of Africa for decades and accelerate systems change initiatives across the continent, African Philanthropy Forum (APF) launched the APF Systems Change Program to build an African network of systems change leaders and philanthropists who can help cultivate conditions to make their transformative visions a reality.

The Systems Change Program, which began with a rigorous selection process managed by Dalberg, is a pilot with six initiatives led by system entrepreneurs who are solving problems in multiple SDG areas, including quality education, decent work and economic growth, good health and wellbeing, clean water and sanitation and reduced inequality. It is a direct response to the need to think differently and accelerate when considering Africa’s problems and solutions.

The Program commenced in May, 2020 and was publicly launched at a virtual event on August 20, where panelists and the system entrepreneurs took part in a stimulating conversation about Driving Systems Change in Africa towards achieving sustainable and inclusive development. The speakers included- Randy Newcomb- Senior Advisor; The Omidyar Group, Dr Angela Gichaga- CEO; Financing Alliance for Health, Mosun Layode- Executive Director; African Philanthropy Forum, Elena Bonometti-CEO; Tostan International, as well as Jeff Walker- Chairman New Profit/APF Board Member who served as the moderator.

The conversation addressed the need to ensure an extensive lens is used to view the world as a whole and make informed decisions not assumptions.

“The role of system thinking is to get us out of the trap of thinking about issues as individual parts instead of a whole. System thinking approach has enabled us to view the world in a broader view and as a series of complex interventions.” - Randy Newcomb

During the discussions, it was emphasized that there is a need to ensure that all parties involved understand that systems are not simplistic or linear, it requires time to understand and the ability to trust the process.

“No one stakeholder has the full answer. We must see our organizations as the tree and also see the ecosystem as the forest and figure out how to balance the two. As a tree, what is my role and how do I map...
We also delved into the importance of transforming the social change model to the system change model and two vital areas to focus on- sustainability and the importance of data.

"Reliable data is the best way to make informed decisions, it is vital in the decision-making process." - Elena Bonometti

The speakers also discussed the funding gap, which has been made more evident due to the occurring pandemic and the need to create a collaborative system whereby long lasting change is achieved.

“The disruption caused by the pandemic has heightened the realities we face as Africans and presents an opportunity for African philanthropists to rise up to the challenge of fixing our very fragile systems.” - Mosun Layode

Through the Systems Change Program, APF serves as the connecting glue that joins the system entrepreneurs to the vital resources they need to achieve transformational impact in Africa. The organizations participating in the program will receive support in areas including, partner engagement, leadership development, organizational capacity building, communications, policy advocacy, improving operations and developing new ideas. They will also benefit from access to a ready pool of African philanthropists and other mentors who can help catalyze step-changes in impact. Participating organizations include- Delta Philanthropies/Higherlife Foundation, LEAP Africa, Malawi Agricultural and Industrial Investment Corp (MAIIC), Sesame Workshop South Africa, Teach for Nigeria, as well as The END Fund.

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The African Philanthropy Forum is a strong and vibrant community of partners who through their strategic giving, investments and influence, foster shared prosperity on the African continent.