PHILANTHROPY IN EAST AFRICA CONVENES ONLINE TO RESPOND TO COVID-19

East Africa Philanthropy Network (EAPN) on 30th March 2020, held a successful virtual forum that brought together over 30 Philanthropy Partners in the East Africa region along with their private-sector collaborators and government representatives to discuss the sector’s response to the Corona pandemic.

In the prolific meeting that had representatives from the 3 East Africa countries and Philanthropy heads from the partner, donor organizations, private sector collaborators and government representatives deliberated and settled on the following;

The Organizations agreed that a unified approach to communicating COVID-19 should be put in place. such a centre should be a one-stop shop from where updates, government directives and situation analysis can be sourced from. The Partners through EAPN would collaborate with Official Government Communications, noting the Information Centre established by Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNNCI) as a bridge to local level comprehension are serving to Raise Awareness Levels; encourage community participation in understanding and domesticating directives, and help in building the trust between Government and Communities.

The National Business Compact group (NBCG) already established a Flexi Fund, the committee has attracted KES. 24 M (Cash) and KES. 40 M (in Kind) from Private Sector Actors by 30th March. The philanthropy sector could share details of the Flexi-Fund for coordinated resource mobilization at National Level in Kenya. Support is open and not restricted- further guidance from the Committee and Government would be useful to maximize on immediate impact.
On safety nets, there are advanced plans in coordination with the Government structures (Nyumba-Kumi Initiative) and efforts, support towards the Vulnerable Groups (Children, PWDs, Street Families, Homeless Populations, Most At-Risk Populations (MARPs) in form of distribution of sanitary utilities, Fumigation and Sanitization of Food Markets, Security and Safety during the transportation of the Food Provisions from Demand to Supply areas, Water Access and Availability in needed neighbourhoods, Social Safety Nets and Economic Stimulus Packages- Gender Balance being at the centre of the assistance. Philanthropy sector could plugin by using the community-level approaches in the various project implementation sites.

The need for Philanthropy Organizations to share knowledge through EAPN their individual efforts, ideas, data, contributions and strategies would assist profoundly in streamlining, quantifying, matching with relevant stakeholders, sharing positive community stories and to amplify efforts against COVID19. Funders are also encouraged to share operational best practices on relationships with Grantees and Project Management Best practices and flexibility in light of the Stay Home directive and potential lockdowns in the region.

There are obvious research gaps on COVID19, effects on various aspects of society and business continuity strategies- Innovation between the Private and Philanthropy and Technology companies example of Aga Khan Foundation and USHAHIDI- using crowdsourcing online platform to get feedback from communities on response against COVID-19 in Kenya and soon Tanzania; Long term health systems improvements; Enhanced Manufacturing Capacities for health-related equipment and sanitary products.

COVID 19 with the differing capacities by different Governments of East Africa, consideration to have shared cross-border initiatives among East African populations
are encouraged. Philanthropy sector in Tanzania and Uganda are complimenting government contingency plans in response to COVID-19 at the National levels by striving to save livelihoods and cushioning the most vulnerable at the community levels. The Non-profits are rebuilding community trust, encouraging community philanthropy and seeking to amplify stories of generosity to inspire more giving at the community levels.

Together we shall overcome!