Money, Markets, Mindsets

April 27–29, 2026 | Nairobi, Kenya





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Convening Synthesis Summary

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Executive Summary

Overview

Africa is at a turning point. As aid structures shift and local needs grow more urgent, there is a critical opportunity to harness Africa's capital, capabilities, and leadership to advance locally led development. AfricaXchange was created as a pan-African platform bringing together leaders across philanthropy, government, business, development, and grassroots organizations to rethink the future of development and accelerate locally led solutions across the continent. The inaugural AfricaXchange in 2025 highlighted that while locally led solutions already exist across the continent, the systems needed to finance and scale them remain fragmented and insufficient. Building on this, AfricaXchange 2026 was designed around the theme of Money, Markets, and Mindsets to explore the shifts needed to advance locally led development at scale. The convening was held from 27–29 April 2026 in Nairobi and brought together 350+ participants from philanthropy, government, development institutions, private sector, civil society from across Africa and beyond.

389+
Participants across three days

75+
Speakers shaping conversations

16+
African countries represented

25+
Total countries represented

Key Takeaways

Day 1: Money

Explore how Africa can move beyond aid dependency toward domestic development financing models

Africa's challenge is not of capital scarcity but systems needed to mobilize and deploy it effectively for development outcomes. For this, Africa must:

- Build stronger financing systems, capital markets, and accountability structures that enable capital to move efficiently for productive use
- Invest in public sector leadership and implementation capability to better coordinate actors for economic transformation
- Expand investment in building African narratives that shape confidence and perceptions of opportunity across the continent

Day 2: Markets

Unpack the shifts needed to build functioning and investable market systems for long-term growth.

The continent is rich in ideas and realizing its productive potential will require stronger and connected market systems. This will require actors to:

- Move from financing activities toward investments in value chains and industrial growth rooted in Africa's resources
- Strengthen government capability and market systems to coordinate policy and implementation across financing, infrastructure, and delivery at scale
- Accelerate regional integration that enable innovation, goods, talent, capital to move freely across Africa

Day 3: Mindsets

Frame the mindset and relationship shifts needed to enable African-led development at scale

Advancing locally led development models in Africa will require how decision-making and financing are designed. Key shifts for this include:

- Bring power, financing decision making and accountability mechanisms closer to communities
- Invest in long-term partnerships, ecosystems, and institutional capability that strengthen community institutions
- Support African-led storytelling, research, and youth voices that shape new development narratives

Looking Ahead

AfricaXchange 2026 surfaced a strong call to move beyond dialogue toward coordinated action. To build on this momentum, the following areas present opportunities to advance action on locally-led development:

- In the short run, sustain momentum from AfricaXchange 2026 by aligning stakeholders around emerging priorities through working groups and continued convenings
- In the medium term, identify opportunities to develop tools, examples and platforms that help organizations adopt alternative financing, market-building, collaborative delivery approaches for locally led development.
- Over the long term, use AfricaXchange 2027 as an opportunity showcase these models of change, highlight where progress has been made and identify gaps to shape the next set of priorities to advance African-led development.



02 | Setting the Stage

The purpose that brought us together

AfricaXchange 2026

About AfricaXchange

Africa's development sector is at a turning point. Global aid structures are shifting, capital flows are evolving and local needs are becoming increasingly urgent. Alongside these challenges lies a significant opportunity: to harness Africa's own capital, capabilities, markets, and leadership to advance resilient and locally led models of development. The question is no longer whether reform is needed — it is who will design what comes next.

AfricaXchange was born out of this moment. It is a platform designed to unite diverse actors around a shared goal: accelerating bold, locally led solutions that can redefine the future of development in Africa. While the call for localization is not new, the ecosystem has often lacked clear and actionable pathways to make it real at scale.

AfricaXchange is a pan-African platform focused on catalyzing systemic reform by connecting leaders who can deploy capital, influence policy, strengthen institutions, and scale commercially viable solutions. It is not a conference, it is an exchange built around action, accountability, and African ownership.

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AfricaXchange 2025 to 2026

In April 2025, participants gathered in Nairobi for the inaugural AfricaXchange to reflect on how Africa could navigate a rapidly shifting development landscape. The convening highlighted a clear reality: solutions for locally led development already exist but the systems required to finance, coordinate, and scale them remain fragmented and insufficient. AfricaXchange 2026 was built directly on the outcomes to unlock a shift that advances a localized approach to redefining the development financing ecosystem.

AfricaXchange 2026

AfricaXchange 2026 was designed to move beyond dialogue toward activating the capital, policy, and institutional levers needed for African self-determination. Under the theme: Money, Markets, and Mindsets, the convening explored three shifts needed to move locally led development from intention to implementation:

- ***Money:*** Move beyond commitments toward mobilizing domestic and alternative finance to scale solutions
- **Markets:** Prioritize domestic capital, private investment, and market-based models
- **Mindsets:** Advance African agency, leadership, and greater African ownership over capital, policy, and narrative

AfricaXchange 2026 was conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation & the Conrad N Hilton Foundation between 27th - 29th in Nairobi, Kenya. Over **389+** leaders from philanthropy, government, development institutions, private sector organizations, multilateral agencies, civil society, media, and grassroots joined from **16** countries in Africa and **25** globally

The convening agenda reflected the themes of Money, Markets, and Mindsets, and explored how shifts across each are critical to advancing locally led development. Through plenaries, strategic roundtables, thematic breakouts, exhibitions, and immersive site visits, participants examined what is already working, why many promising models still struggle to scale, and how stronger financing, policy alignment, stakeholder coordination, and accountability can help move locally led solutions from pilots to systems-level change.

AfricaXchange IN NUMBERS

389+ participants from 25 countries

joined AfricaXchange across three days.

- 55% from civil society organizations
- 2% from public institutions
- 13% from philanthropy
- 13% from private sector,, and investment organizations
- Participants joined from 16 countries in Africa and 25 globally

75+ speakers shaped conversations

featuring leaders and practitioners working across policy, finance, philanthropy,, media, and community-led development pan Africa.

- 10 government representatives and policymakers
- 200+ civil society and grassroots leaders
- 50+ private sector and investment leaders
- Voices spanning local organizations to global institutions

9 in 10 attendees felt inspired. Participants identified key shifts

to move locally led development from intention to implementation

- Stronger domestic financing models and systems
- Better coordination across actors
- Investment in African leadership and institutional capability

Context | Participant Journey



DAY 1

MONEY

Participants explored what the future of development financing could look like, and how alternative financing models are reshaping the way development is delivered. Discussions examined the role of effectively using government financing, domestic philanthropy, and private investment in supporting more locally led development.

Shift: From mobilizing more capital to deploying capital more effectively





DAY 2

MARKETS

Participants explored what it takes to build stronger and effective markets that can deliver impact at scale. Conversations examined how trade, entrepreneurship, and private sector growth can drive transformative development. The sessions highlighted the importance of coordinated action across actors, government enablement, and de-risking markets to support sustainable growth.

Shift: From designing solutions to enabling systems to deliver.



DAY 3

MINDSETS

Participants what it will take to center locally led development approaches and strengthen African agency, leadership, and ownership within development systems. Discussions emphasized the mindset shifts required to move beyond externally driven models toward approaches rooted in local capability, long-term partnership, and system transformation.

Shift: From externally driven systems to locally led ownership.



03 | Emerging Insights

Summary of takeaways from sessions

AfricaXchange

DAY 1: MONEY

Africa's opportunity is not only to mobilize capital, but to build systems that can deploy it effectively

Day 1 focused on moving the conversation from aid dependency toward building African-led institutions capable of mobilizing, coordinating, and deploying capital for development at scale. Participants repeatedly emphasized that organized capital cannot flow through fragmented structures and that advancing locally led development will require stronger financing systems, coordinated implementation, capable institutions, and narratives that build confidence in Africa's future.

1. Domestic capital mobilization requires stronger financing systems and accountability

- Africa already holds significant resources. The challenge is not only raising capital, but strengthening financing architecture that remain constrained by bureaucratic barriers, weak coordination, and high transaction costs. Discussions highlighted concerns around debt exposure, exchange-rate volatility, and financing that place long-term repayment burdens.
- The convening reinforced the need for financing models, capital markets, and payment infrastructure that work effectively, reduce costly intermediation, and crowd in long-term investment.
- Financing must also be tied to stronger accountability mechanisms that ensure capital translates into real public outcomes.

"Money alone will not solve development issues if the markets remain fragmented."

2. Fragmented structures are limiting long-term impact

- Siloed financing structures and fragmented delivery structures continue to slow progress, reinforcing that financing alone is insufficient without well-functioning and coordinated systems
- Discussions emphasized the need for stronger partnerships and more integrated approaches. Governments, philanthropy, civil society, DFIs, and private sector actors will require stronger alignment and more coordinated models to execute at scale.
- There is a need to experiment with new forms of cooperation across unlikely actors and sectors. Cross-border coordination and cooperation will be as critical to enabling more market- and trade-led models of growth across the continent.

"We are in a mobilisation crisis. The problem is not capital but intermediation."

3. Long-term transformation requires capable institutions and adaptive leaders

- Sustained impact and long-term delivery for locally-led development require governments that can coordinate across actors, create enabling conditions for markets to function effectively, and sustain implementation over time.
- Participants emphasized the need for public institutions built around integrated planning, stronger coordination across ministries, and implementation structures that can move beyond siloed approaches.
- Conversations also highlighted that future leaders will require more than technical expertise alone. Leadership, coordination, execution, relationship management, and decision-making skills will be critical for navigating complexity and aligning across sectors and institutions to drive long-term transformation.

"Crops do not need rain; they need water."

4. Narratives shape perception and potential which affects investments and Africa's development trajectory

- African narratives emerged as a strategic development issue rather than simply a communications challenge. Participants emphasized that the way Africa is represented directly shapes investment flows, trade relationships and confidence in the continent's future.
- Speakers challenged deficit-based narratives and called for investment in African storytelling, media, and creative industries to spotlight examples of African capability, innovation, and leadership shaping the continent.
- Discussions also reflected a broader mindset transition underway from externally framed development narratives toward greater African ownership and confidence in defining the continent's future development pathways.

"If we don't change how we think of ourselves we won't change our development."

The Opportunity: Africa's challenge is not resource constraint but a deployment and coordination challenge that translate capital and ideas into long-term development outcomes. Participants highlighted several critical shifts for this:

- Strengthen financing architecture, modernize capital markets and set up accountability mechanisms to better mobilize, deploy, and manage capital
- Strengthen coordinated financing and delivery systems across institutions to ensure capital can move efficiently toward implementation and impact at scale.
- Invest in public sector leadership, coordination capability, and implementation processes needed for long term transformation
- Expand investment in African storytelling, media ecosystems, and youth voices that shape confidence, ownership, and perceptions of opportunity across the continent

DAY 1: MONEY

Summary of breakout sessions

Day 1 sessions focused on innovative financing approaches to development. It explored how African philanthropy, blended finance, and refugee-inclusive investment models can help build more locally driven systems for impact.

African Philanthropy Roundtable: African philanthropy must move from fragmented giving toward ecosystem financing. The conversation emphasized that while philanthropy is deeply embedded within African communities, it now needs stronger structures, collaboration mechanisms, and financial tools capable of supporting long-term systems change.
"Giving is central to our ethos. We need to show up differently and not fall into a model that is of the past."

Changemakers of the Future: Young leaders are building solutions while simultaneously overcoming disbelief.The session surfaced the realities young African leaders face when navigating systems that were not designed for them. Discussions focused on rejection as part of the operating environment, the importance of authenticity in leadership, and the need for relational intelligence, emotional resilience, and long-term commitment to systems change.
"The first barrier is not whether it works - it's whether people believe it's possible."

Market-Driven financing for displacement contexts: The session explored how refugee and host communities can be reframed from aid recipients to active economic participants by using blended finance, private capital, and inclusive financial systems to unlock investment and livelihoods. The key takeaway was that refugees must be viewed not only as beneficiaries of aid, but as entrepreneurs, workers, consumers, and market actors — requiring financing models, policies, and investment ecosystems that support economic inclusion
Don't look at me as a refugee. Look at me as an entrepreneur

Financing systems that deliver for people: Systems change depends on aligning government, markets, philanthropy, and implementation capacity. Discussions focused on the need to move beyond short-term projects toward long-term financing systems capable of supporting delivery, institutional resilience, and productive economic participation.
Coalitions are critical because no one organization has the legitimacy, skills, or influence required to shift systems.









AfricaXchange

DAY 2: MARKETS

Africa has the ideas, but requires coordinated and connected market systems to deploy them

Day 2 focused on what it takes to move from capital and ideas to functioning markets that can drive productive economic growth across the continent. Discussions focused on moving beyond fragmented delivery models toward productive markets and regional value chains capable of crowding in investment, boosting jobs and driving economic growth. The discussions explored that building stronger market systems requires coordinated execution ecosystems, governments that shape markets effectively, creating competitive and investable value chains, and regional trade.

1. Thriving markets require coordinated ecosystems

- There was strong recognition that Africa is rich in resources, ideas, and productive potential, but translating these into scalable growth will require stronger alignment across capital, infrastructure, policy, and delivery systems.
- Fragmented financing and siloed implementation continue to limit the ability of market-based solutions to scale.
- Impact will depend less on the number of actors involved and more on how effectively governments, philanthropy, DFIs, and private sector actors work together. Governments can help create enabling conditions and strategic direction, philanthropy and DFIs can de-risk innovation and early-stage markets, while private sector actors can drive investment and scale.

"Governments own markets, philanthropy designs systems, and the private sector is expected to scale solutions — these actors move without coordination."

2. Governments are central in shaping productive markets

- Participants consistently emphasized that long-term market growth and scale cannot happen outside government systems. Governments play a critical role in setting industrial priorities, coordinating infrastructure, and creating the policy and regulatory conditions needed for investment and growth.
- Sustainable market systems also require strong policy alignment across sectors such as trade, energy, finance, manufacturing, and infrastructure in order to reduce fragmentation and enable coordinated execution.
- Sustainable market transformation will require governments that can coordinate across sectors, create procurement and financing pathways to scale solutions effectively over time.

"Government is the largest-scale engine. We cannot wish the governments away."

3. Investable markets must be intentionally built

- Capital does not naturally flow into development sectors. Markets become investable when there is predictable demand. Participants highlighted that investments in school feeding, agriculture, and energy, are more likely to succeed when there is steady demand, functioning supply chains, and conditions that support long-term growth.
- Financing institutions should support fit for purpose capital for new and emerging business working on development goals. Financing approaches should be better aligned to to local market conditions, community realities, and implementation constraints when balancing both development and commercial outcomes.
- Patient and catalytic capital, blended finance structures, and risk-sharing mechanisms can help reduce risk, strengthen market confidence, and crowd in sustained private sector participation over time.

"If we structure it right, school feeding can become an engine of development."

4. Value chain development and regional integration and are critical for competitiveness

- Leverage Africa's renewable energy potential, natural resources, and emerging innovation ecosystems to build strong value chains and industrial ecosystems.
- Fragmented national markets will struggle to compete globally without stronger regional manufacturing ecosystems, trade corridors, and integrated value chains.
- AfCFTA presents an opportunity to build regional value chains, activate continental markets, and strengthen Africa's industrial capacity. Africa's competitiveness will depend on coordination in trade systems, transport corridors, infrastructure, finance, language, technology, and innovation ecosystems that allow goods,capital, ideas, and talent to move effectively across the continent.

"Trade corridors are how products, ideas, and industries move across the continent."

The Opportunity: Africa must build coordinated and competitive market systems that can translate ideas, capital, resources into productive economic growth at scale. This will requires the following actions:

- Move from financing activities toward financing productive value chains and industrial growth rooted in Africa's resources and productive sectors
- Strengthen government capability to shape markets, coordinate implementation, and support long-term industrial growth
- Build investable development markets that crowd in private investment through blended finance, predictable demand, and commercial incentives
- Accelerate regional integration through trade corridors and harmonized systems that enable goods, talent, and capital to move more effectively across the continent

DAY 2: MARKETS

Summary of breakout sessions

Day 2 breakout sessions explored systems needed to scale impact beyond pilots: from government reform and coordinated action to market-based models, and financing systems capable of supporting long-term economic growth and delivery.

***African-led Reform in Practice*:** Government is the delivery system, yet most interventions are not designed to work within it. Reform efforts continue to underperform because solutions are introduced without aligning to how government actually operates, including budgeting cycles, institutional mandates, and political realities. Scaling requires early alignment with government priorities, designing for adoption within public systems, and committing to long-term engagement.
"Innovations need to learn ways to navigate the messy dynamics of working with government."

***EAT Lancet*:** Food systems require coordination across production, markets, and policy to deliver outcomes at scale. Food system challenges are cross-sectoral, but interventions remain siloed. Impact depends on aligning agriculture, nutrition, and market systems, and grounding solutions in local production realities.The priority is to strengthen coordination across the full system.
We already know what works… the question is what it will take for us to move faster.

Entrepreneurs powering Africa's safe water markets: Safe water will not scale through projects but through functioning markets. Current models rely too heavily on subsidies and fragmented interventions. Discussions highlighted that while demand and entrepreneurial models already exist, long-term scale will require better financing structures, clearer policy environments, stronger business capabilities, and market systems that support sustainable service delivery.
"Africa is a low-hanging fruit, not a cautionary tale."

Philanthropy and the Future of Development Finance: Existing financing models are optimized for short-term project funding rather than sustained, system-level scale. Philanthropy and development finance remain fragmented, risk-averse, and short-term. Capital exists, but does not flow effectively to where it is needed. The role of philanthropy must shift toward taking early risk, structuring markets, and enabling private capital and investing in long-term institutional capacity rather than repeated pilots.
"Let's build coalitions of unlikely allies."



AfricaXchange

DAY 3: MINDSETS

Strengthening locally led development requires shifting power, trust, and decision-making closer to community

Day 3 focused on the mindset and systems shifts required to enable African-led development to function sustainably at scale. While there is agreement on the importance of locally led development, discussions revealed that funding models have not yet shifted sufficiently to support it in practice. Across sessions, participants emphasized that stronger systems will require resharing power, investing in local institutions, and amplifying African-led narratives.

1. Locally led development requires shifting power and operational redesign closer to communities

- While localization is embraced, funding and governance structures largely have unequal decision-making power. Local organizations are treated as implementers rather than central actors shaping priorities, despite being closest to communities. Speakers called for relationships grounded in dignity, shared power, and equal partnership.
- Localization is not a trend but essential for relevant solutions. Proximity helps better understand lived realities, risks, and incentives which leads to stronger outcomes.
- Moving closer to communities requires decentralizing decision-making, building regional presence, investing in local partnerships, and redesigning systems around local realities rather than distant assumptions.

"Distance creates theoretical solutions; proximity creates practical ones." "

2. Trust and long-term investment are essential to strengthening locally led development

- Grassroots organizations are essential drivers of service delivery in communities and yet they are perceived "high risk" from funders which restricts access to financing.
- For funders and development actors, there is a tension between demonstrating short-term visible impact and investing in the slower work of building institutions. Localization requires long-term patient capital and trust-based investments rather than short-term delivery or transactional relationships.
- Current approaches prioritize oversight over outcomes. There is a need to invest in leadership, operational systems, institutional capability, and visibility efforts of grassroots organizations to support their growth while also preserving the community-rooted identity.

Trust is built through long-term partnership, not short-term transactions."

3. Locally led development requires stronger support ecosystems

- Grassroots organizations often struggle to navigate fragmented financing, partnership, and institutional systems without intermediary support structures.
- Coalitions and intermediary organizations can connect grassroots organizations to financing, partnerships, training, and visibility opportunities.
- Stronger locally led systems will also require more mutual accountability across actors, where communities, funders, governments, and development organizations remain accountable to shared outcomes.

"Grassroots organizations are not beneficiaries — they are systems actors."

4. Narrative change is critical to making development more locally relevant, trusted, and future-facing

- Storytelling shapes how communities see themselves and how institutions engage with people within development systems. Shifting toward locally relevant and youth-centered approaches is necessary to remain effective in changing societies.
- Narrative shifts must happen internally as well. Sustainable transformation begins with stronger belief in African leadership, knowledge, and solutions and reducing dependence on external validation.
- There is a need to invest in African storytellers, media platforms, researchers, and creators that can surface grounded examples of innovation, leadership, and locally driven change across communities. Young Africans are central to shaping a new future through activism, entrepreneurship, and challenging outdated models.

"Audiences want stories that reflect their realities and lived experiences"

The Opportunity: Building stronger locally led systems will require shifting decision-making, trust, financing, and accountability closer to communities. Discussions highlighted several critical shifts needed for this which include:

- Move decision-making, financing, and accountability closer to grassroots institutions
- Invest in long-term partnerships, institutional capability, and leadership with community partners rather than short-term transactional delivery models. Strengthen intermediary ecosystems for community-rooted organizations to reduce fragmentation
- Build systems of mutual accountability where governments, funders, private sector actors, and development institutions remain accountable to the communities they serve
- Support African-led storytelling, research, and youth voices that shape new development narratives

DAY 3: MINDSETS

Summary of breakout sessions

Breakout sessions on Day 3 focused on exploring how strategic philanthropy in Africa can be strengthened through more effective partnerships and by supporting family foundations to adopt more intentional approaches to giving.

Shaping Regional Leadership and Collaboration: The session brought together the Rockefeller Foundation and its partners in a roundtable dialogue to explore how the Foundation can strengthen regional leadership and better support and advance grantees' work across contexts. The session takeaways included deploying increased efforts toward collective action, shared learning breaking silos across sectors, engaging government at the right levels, and bringing data together to inform decisions.

"We are doing too many small, disconnected things which they don't add up to impact. For instance, bed nets alone won't eliminate malaria without a more integrated approach for work. Similarly, we need the right people in the room at the right time

Beyond Wealth: The roundtable explored how Kenya's philanthropy ecosystem can move from informal, fragmented giving toward more intentional, structured, and collaborative capital deployment. Discussions highlighted the need for a mindset shift from seeing philanthropy as charity to viewing it as long-term stewardship of capital and a critical driver of locally led development.

"Philanthropy is already happening across Africa — the challenge is not whether people give, but how we structure, steward, and align that giving to create lasting impact."











DAY 3: MINDSETS

Summary of Site Visits

The convening closed with site visits surrounding Nairobi, where participants explored how local organisations are advancing locally led development models and demonstrating new ways of mobilizing capital, shaping markets, and shifting mindsets to drive more sustainable and locally owned development. The visits highlighted how locally rooted approaches are creating practical, scalable solutions across sectors ranging from youth-centered health services and integrated community systems to circular economy enterprises.

1 *SHOFCO Visit*

This visit showcased how integrated, community-led systems can improve outcomes in complex urban communities. Through SHOFCO's work in Kibera, participants experienced a community-embedded model built on trust, proximity, and sustained local presence that integrates services such as clean water, education, girls' safety for women empowerment.



2 *Reproductive Health Network Visit*

This site visit to RHNK offered participants an opportunity to experience integrated models that expand access to essential Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights services. Participants witnessed a service delivery model that combines a youth-friendly clinic, a commodity-focused social enterprise, and a 24/7 toll-free call center to provide inclusive SRHR services, mental health and GBV support that come together to strengthen commodity access, outreach, and long-term sustainability.



3 *InsectiPro Visit*

Through InsectiPro's circular production model, participants experienced how organic waste is converted into insect-based protein for animal feed and human consumption, demonstrating how locally rooted enterprises can build new value chains that strengthen supply resilience, reduce pressure on existing systems, and create livelihood opportunities. The visit highlighted how targeted innovation and mindset shifts can unlock scalable, locally led solutions for sustainable food systems.





04 | Looking Ahead

Emerging opportunities and ideas to guide future action

Opportunities for Action

AfricaXchange 2026 surfaced a clear shift to move from dialogue toward coordinated action. Across conversations on participants emphasized that the next phase of African-led development will depend on productive markets, stronger execution ecosystems, regional collaboration, and narratives that place African capability, leadership, and confidence at the center. In this section, we highlight some short and medium term opportunities that can help translate these conversations into coordinated action and practical implementation to demonstrate progress toward AfricaXchange 2027.

SHORT TERM (1-3 MONTHS)

Align stakeholders around emerging priorities

How might we sustain the collective energy from AfricaXchange2026 and transform it quick wins over the next few months?

- Identify and convene small working groups to explore opportunities for coordinated action among stakeholders, including concrete actions that can be advanced ahead of AfricaXchange 2027. These groups could translate key conversations into practical collaboration in areas such as productive markets, regional trade, the future of philanthropy and innovative financing approaches for locally led development.
- Develop policy notes and thought pieces emerging from discussions at AfricaXchange to guide ongoing efforts around market system development, AfCFTA based regional integration efforts across governments, private sector and regional institutions.
- Conduct a visioning workshop with political leaders, development actors, young people, and media to explore what stronger African-led narratives could look like, including how Africa's capability and potential should be communicated to shape greater confidence and investment in African development, leadership, and markets.

MEDIUM TERM (4-12 MONTHS)

Develop practical tools, examples, and collaborative models to advance locally led development

How might we support organizations to adopt alternative financing, market-building, localization, and collaborative delivery to advance locally led development between AfricaXchange 2026 and 2027?

- Document examples, case studies, and implementation models emerging across AfricaXchange around catalytic finance, productive markets, localization, and coordinated action to help stakeholders learn from best practices across contexts.
- Develop practical playbooks and shared learning platforms that help governments, philanthropy, private sector actors, and grassroots organizations coordinate action by better understanding each other's ways of working, language, priorities and incentives structures
- Prototype small collaborative initiatives emerging from AfricaXchange working groups to test new approaches to financing, market-building, localization while documenting the practical lessons, tensions, and opportunities that emerge from working differently across actors.
- Work with governments and regional institutions to identify how successful financing, market-building, and locally led approaches can become embedded within public delivery structures.
- Initiate leadership and soft skills capability initiatives for public sector that strengthen their coordination, negotiation, systems thinking, and relationship-building skills needed to drive collaborative delivery for market-led transformation

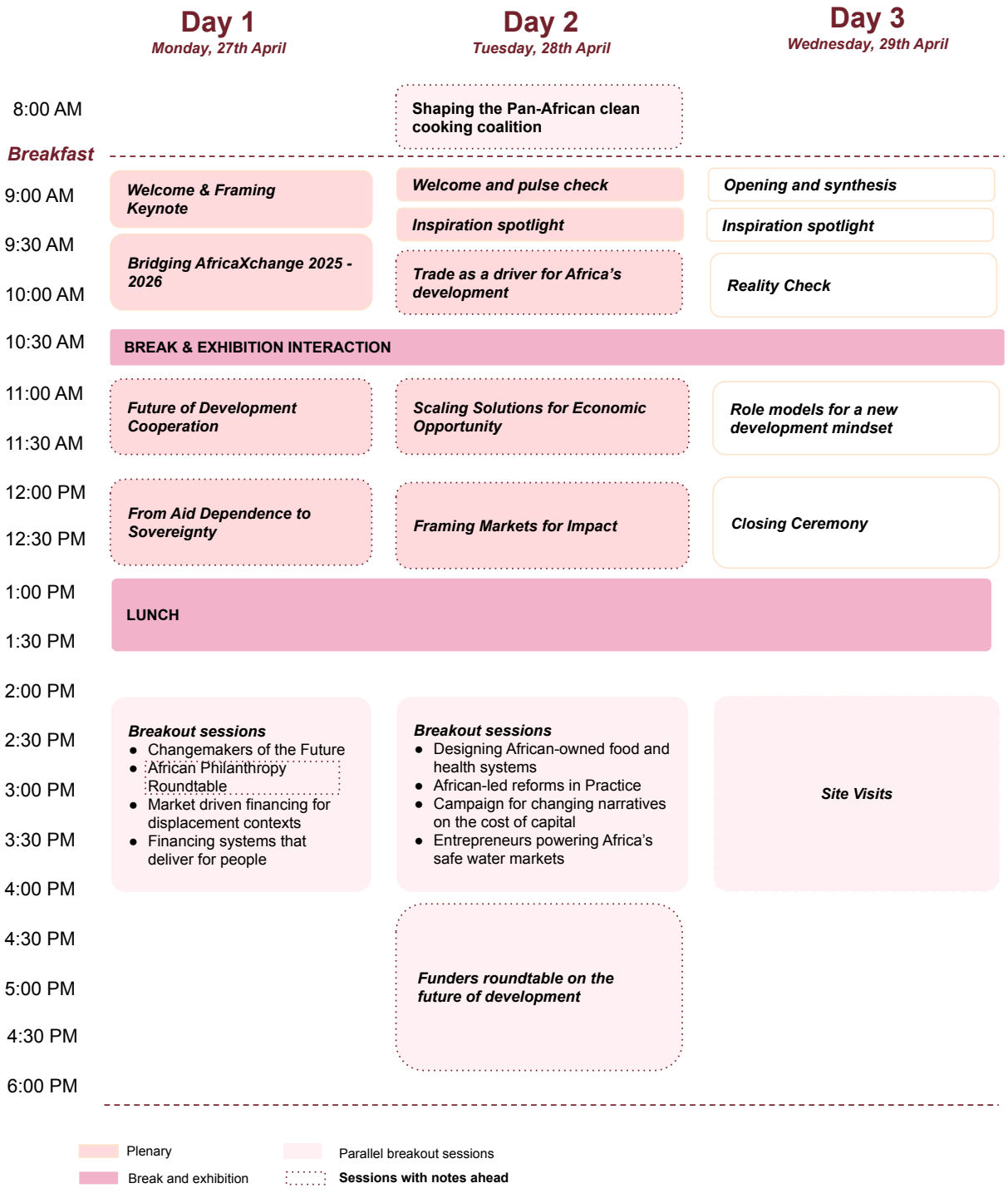


05 | Session Summaries

Notes from select plenaries and breakout sessions

Convening Agenda

The convening was designed to balance listening, learning, and active engagement. Morning plenary sessions provided fresh perspectives and big-picture insights, while the afternoon sessions created space for deeper learning, open dialogue, collaborative problem-solving among funders, implementers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Notes from high level sessions (marked in red outlines below) are shared ahead in this section.



Experiences and Exhibitions

Beyond the sessions, the convening created spaces for exchange and connection. Participants engaged with African-led initiatives through exhibits showcasing circular economy solutions, food systems innovations, and locally rooted enterprises. Alongside this, participants also had opportunities to connect through networking dinners, wellness spaces, and informal activities for reflection, conversation, and relationship-building.











Day 1: Future of Development Cooperation

The session set the stage for AfricaXchange 2026 by exploring how Africa can redefine development cooperation around a more self-determined development pathway.
Speakers: H.E. Prof. Yemi Osinbajo; H.E Nardos Bekele Thomas; Mamadou Biteye; Moky Makura
Moderator: Mr. William Asiko





African agency and ownership should define the future of development cooperation: The discussion signaled a broader shift away from donor-recipient models toward development systems rooted in African agency, ownership, and execution. Professor Yemi Osinbajo emphasized that Africa cannot remain only a participant in development cooperation and must shape and own its development agenda, including how priorities are financed, coordinated, and delivered. This shift requires moving beyond externally defined models toward regional partnerships grounded in shared ownership and aligned incentives. This also requires addressing structural challenges such as debt, trade fragmentation, and financing gaps..
"There must be African agency, ownership of development itself."

Government systems need to evolve into integrated delivery systems: Dr Nardos Bekele-Thomas emphasized that planning, budgeting, procurement, implementation, and monitoring continue to operate in silos across ministries and levels of government which weakens execution. She emphasized that implementation, planning, and budgeting processes must work together as one coordinated system, with stronger horizontal and vertical linkages across institutions. This also requires renewing public systems themselves - bringing in younger talent, modernizing public administration, and preparing leaders with the capabilities to navigate complex systems.
"We do not train our public servants to understand that they are serving the people."

The focus needs to shift from capacity to capability: Mamadou Biteye highlighted that significant capital, institutional presence, and human capability already exist across the continent, but systems are struggling to deploy them effectively. The conversation emphasized that Africa now needs to prepare people, enable markets, and redesign partnerships to better coordinate, execute, and deliver outcomes. This means building leaders with stronger behavioral and coordination skills, creating enabling regulatory and market systems, and moving toward partnerships with more aligned incentives and shared ownership.
"Crops do not need rain, they need water."

Narrative change is central to development - it shapes confidence, capital, and possibility: Ms. Moky Makura argued that deficit-based narratives about Africa continue to influence how the continent is perceived externally and internally—affecting investment, trust, confidence, and collaboration. She emphasized that while significant progress is happening across sectors and countries, these stories remain under-told. Examples such as Ethiopia's wheat self-sufficiency, expanding airline connectivity, and youth-led innovation were used to demonstrate that Africa is already building at scale. Shifting development outcomes also requires shifting the stories Africa tells about itself from narratives of deficit to narratives of capability, innovation, and agency.
"If we don't change how we think of ourselves we won't change our development."

Opportunity for Action: *The session created an opportunity for participants to rethink development cooperation through three interconnected shifts: strengthening African agency in setting priorities and partnerships; building the capabilities of people, institutions, and markets to better deliver outcomes; and reshaping narratives about Africa to build greater confidence, investment, and belief in what is already being built across the continent.*

Day 1: From Aid Dependence to Sovereignty

This session examined how the transition from aid dependency to development sovereignty is unfolding in practice. It focused on how governments are navigating financing gaps to maintain service continuity
Speakers: Mr. Daniel Ndolo, Boniface Mbuthia, Mohammed Abdiweli
Moderator: Dr. Ahmed Ouma





Building sovereignty requires more resilient financing systems and lower-cost capital: Mr. Daniel Ndolo highlighted that a significant share of public financing in Kenya is already mobilized domestically through taxation, pensions, insurance systems, and local borrowing. He emphasized that governments are constantly balancing the need to finance development while managing debt exposure, fiscal pressures, and external shocks. He also highlighted the risks of external borrowing, where long payback periods and exchange rate depreciation can sharply increase repayment obligations even without additional borrowing. The session raised questions around whether sectors like health, which require continuous recurrent expenditure, can rely on debt financing when repayment stretches across decades and places burdens on future generations. The key takeaway is that development sovereignty is not simply about accessing capital, but about building stronger financing systems that can manage long-term risk, reduce dependence on costly external financing structures.
"By December 2023, Kenya's public debt had increased by roughly KES 840 billion largely due to one factor alone: depreciation of the Kenyan shilling without any additional borrowing"

A quiet revolution of local innovative financing and delivery models is taking place: Mohamed Abdiweli shared that a "quiet revolution" taking place across countries as governments explore health taxes, debt swaps, blended finance, PPPs, and MDB and AfDB financing instruments to sustain social services in times of declining aid. Drawing on school feeding programmes, he highlighted how Rwanda has moved toward greater policy and financial autonomy. He shared examples where revenues from natural resources are being used strategically to finance human development priorities. While these mechanisms remain limited in scale today, they reflect a broader shift toward more local and forward-looking financing structures tied to productive transformation rather than short-term consumption.
"*The aid constraint itself is becoming a driver of innovation and is pushing governments to rethink how development is financed and sustained over the long term."*

Financing services is not enough, it must translate into long-term citizen outcomes: Boniface Mbuthia argued that accountability systems often remain too focused on inputs - infrastructure built or resources procured — rather than whether citizens are actually experiencing improved services. He emphasized that sovereignty cannot simply mean financing more services but it must also mean building systems that allocate resources strategically, strengthen accountability, and deliver equitable long-term outcomes for citizens. Civil society and citizens were positioned as critical in ensuring governments remain accountable for commitments around health, public services, and development outcomes.
"In a country where nearly 50% of people are living below the poverty line, and out-of-pocket expenditure accounts for almost 60% of health spending, people are effectively becoming poorer in order to access the healthcare they deserve"

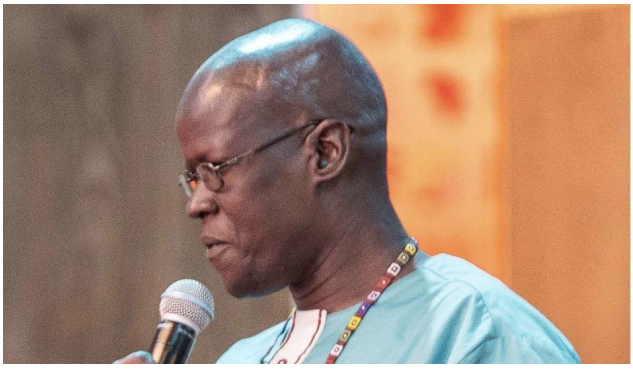
Sovereignty is not about rejecting aid, but about building resilient systems that can sustain services: A theme throughout the session was that the future challenge is not only where money comes from, but how effectively it is allocated and used. As aid declines and borrowing constraints increase, governments will need to make more deliberate decisions about prioritization, sustainability, and ensuring that limited resources generate long-term public value. This includes strengthening domestic financing systems, modernizing capital markets, reducing costly intermediation, and ensuring citizens are more engaged in conversations around public finance and development priorities.

Opportunity for Action: *The session created an opportunity for participants to rethink sovereignty through a practical lens. The discussion highlighted that while progress toward sovereignty is underway, it is critical to strengthen domestic financing and capital market systems to reduce costly intermediation. The discussion also reinforced the need for stronger accountability such that financing decisions that remain grounded in long-term public outcomes.*

Day 1: African Philanthropy

This roundtable convened philanthropic leaders from Africa who are shaping new models of resource mobilization. It highlighted how local foundations and funders are advancing locally led development, and examine what has enabled these approaches to succeed and where constraints remain.
Speakers: Mendi Njonjo, Dr. Roselyn Marandu-Kareithi, Eme Essien Lore
Moderator: Mosun Layode, Wadzanayi Muchenje





Move from fragmented giving to coordinated ecosystems: The discussion highlighted a need to move beyond fragmented, parallel, and short-term interventions toward more coordinated ecosystem models. Participants emphasized that what scales is not isolated projects, but long-term collaboration across philanthropy, government, corporates, and private capital. There was strong interest in building shared platforms, funding pathways, and collective infrastructure that can better connect grassroots innovation to larger pools of capital and support.
"What scales is not a project, but ecosystem building at national and regional levels."

Define African Philanthropy on African terms: Participants reflected on philanthropy as an embedded cultural practice across African societies rather than a purely institutional activity. Discussions emphasized the need to recognize and organize existing traditions of giving into more visible systems of social investment and develop narratives that reflect African realities rather than replicating Global North approaches.
"Africans are born giving… there is a natural philanthropy in how we impact society."

Intentionally explore philanthropy's role as catalytic and risk capital: Participants discussed the unique role philanthropy can play in absorbing risk, enabling experimentation, and crowding in larger pools of public and private finance. Several speakers reflected that philanthropy may be most effective not by directly scaling delivery itself, but by creating the conditions for markets, governments, and other actors to scale solutions sustainably over time.
"What the world needs right now is more risk capital — and that is where philanthropy should lean in."

Rally around youth entrepreneurship and digital inclusion as a continental opportunity: Youth entrepreneurship and digital inclusion emerged as one of the clearest areas around which African philanthropies could collectively align. Participants framed entrepreneurship not only as a pathway to jobs and economic participation, but also as a driver of future African philanthropy, market creation, and long-term ecosystem growth across the continent.
"Can we look at programs that are Africa-wide? So many programs are running in parallel."

Invest in long-term ecosystem support instead of short-term projects: Participants reflected on how short-term, projectized funding and competition for visibility can sometimes undermine sustainable impact. In contrast, importance of long-term partnerships, durable funding, and sustained support for grassroots organizations and ecosystem builders was emphasized as critical.
"Partnering means losing clear attribution for impact — but achieving bigger impact."

Design financial mechanisms to better support African Philanthropy: The session also highlighted a growing mismatch between African philanthropic ambitions and the financial systems currently available to support them. Participants reflected on the lack of mechanisms, instruments, and advisory structures designed for African giving models.
"Financial institutions are not ready to work with philanthropy."

***Opportunity* for Action:** *Strengthen African philanthropy as a more coordinated ecosystem to that one that can better connect community giving and long-term systems change. Participants identified collaboration across corporate, family, community, and global philanthropy actors as a critical next step, alongside the development of financing mechanisms and shared platforms better suited to African contexts. There was also strong interest in continuing the conversation beyond the convening through shared learning and collective action in areas such as youth entrepreneurship.*

Day 2: Shaping the Pan-African Coalition for Universal Clean Cooking Access

This session convened government representatives and development partners to align on the future of the proposed Pan-African Coalition for Universal Access to Clean Cooking (PACUACC). The discussion focused on refining the coalition's vision and securing early commitments ahead of the Africa Clean Cooking Summit formal launch.
Key Speakers: Elizabeth Kosgei, William Asiko, Benson Ireri, Alex Wachira
Moderator: Lucy Nyoike





Position clean cooking as a strategic market: Speakers positioned clean cooking not as a humanitarian intervention, but as a development, climate action and investment opportunity. There was strong emphasis to reposition clean cooking as a viable market and green finance opportunity capable of attracting commercial and blended finance.
"Clean cooking is no longer a woman's issue. It is a development issue."

Move from political momentum to coordinated delivery systems: Speakers noted that clean cooking has rising momentum across governments, African First Ladies' platforms, and development institutions. However, they also cautioned that Africa has seen many commitments and coalitions before. The real test is whether this momentum can translate into measurable targets, implementation capacity, and scalable delivery, not just new declarations.
"We have never had this level of attention paid to clean cooking before."

Unlock finance as it is the binding constraint: The session elevated finance as one of the sector's largest barriers. Participants highlighted the significant mismatch between financing flowing into electricity access compared to clean cooking, alongside the absence of dedicated national budget lines for clean cooking in many African countries. Speakers also pointed to opportunities for catalytic and blended finance, guarantees, and carbon finance mechanisms to help unlock the sector. Discussions emphasized the need for stronger commercial pathways capable of attracting private capital, improving investment readiness, and de-risking private sector participation..
"*The coalition should focus on unlocking finance, not just goodwill You need to think about what financiers want to invest in."*

Create institutional demand and utilise schools as clearest pathway to scale: Institutional clean cooking, particularly through school feeding systems is the most practical pathways for scaling demand and creating predictable markets
"If we get this right, we do not just change kitchens. We change futures."

Ensure intentional design and country-led implementation: Participants stressed that many coalitions fail due to weak coordination and unclear accountability. The proposed coalition was therefore framed not as an advocacy platform, but as a delivery mechanism requiring lean governance, country-led implementation, and strong public-private coordination. There was broad agreement that while the coalition should operate at a Pan-African level, implementation must remain country-led. Different countries will require different approaches depending on their policy environments, technologies, and priorities. Participants cautioned against building another high-level continental platform disconnected from implementation realities.
"This is not an initiative but a delivery platform

Ensure African manufacturing is a part of the transition: Manufacturers and private sector actors emphasized that demand already exists, but scaling remains constrained by financing gaps, weak distribution systems, and limited investment in local enterprise ecosystems. Discussions reinforced the importance of building African manufacturing and technical capacity alongside policy reform. The discussion highlighted an opportunity to move beyond import-dependent clean cooking models by strengthening African manufacturing, distribution, and enterprise ecosystems as part of the transition
"We need to invest in manufacturers, distributors, trainers, and sales agents."

Opportunity for Action: *The session created momentum around building an African-led clean cooking delivery platform anchored in financing, institutional implementation, and market activation. There was also a strong emphasis on ensuring the coalition remains focused on practical delivery. Stakeholders expressed interest in supporting financing mechanisms, institutional clean cooking transitions, manufacturing support, technical assistance, and country-level implementation.*

Day 2: Trade as a driver for Africa's Development

This plenary explored how trade and clean energy can drive Africa's locally led industrial growth and what it will take to move from potential to implementation through coordinated action for stronger value chains and regional markets.
Speakers: James Mwangi, Vanessa Erogbogbo
Moderator: William Asiko





Move beyond trade facilitation to strategic value chain development: The conversation must move beyond simply enabling the movement of goods toward developing strategic value chains. AfCFTA was positioned not only as a trade agreement, but as a platform for accessing finance, building industries, strengthening value addition. Participants highlighted the importance of governments, DFIs, academic institutions, technical experts, and partnerships working together to strengthen business ecosystems, market access, and financing opportunities, particularly for women-led trade and enterprise. Examples such as cocoa partnerships between Ghana and Swiss companies illustrated how development assistance, private investment, and industrial collaboration can work together to create economic opportunities
"We need not just to move goods but to activate demand and supply."

Deploy Africa's energy potential and resource advantages to build new industrial ecosystems: Africa has access to abundant renewable energy, critical minerals and natural resources. There is a need to move beyond an aid-centered narrative toward one that better connects trade, finance, and industry by using Africa's own resources. Participants highlighted the need of spotlighting what is working and building from existing momentum to drive change. Examples such as Safi Organics were highlighted as these models demonstrate how Africa can build new industrial ecosystems that support manufacturing hubs at both grassroots and larger industrial scales.
"*It's not just scaling at the grassroots, but there is also potential to scale at the grasstops."*

Align policy and stakeholder action to catalyse AfCFTA implementation: AfCFTA is a strong framework but there is a need for stronger coordination of policy, finance, infrastructure, and industrial strategy to turn it into a true economic engine. The discussion highlighted the need of aligning governments, investors, DFIs, continental institutions, and the private sector around strategic value chains such as batteries, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and fortified foods among others. Governments were seen as central to setting industrial direction and enabling market conditions, while others play a key role in mobilizing the capital, infrastructure, and trade systems. Participants shared that Africa can take phased approaches to industrialization by building capabilities in assembly and intermediate manufacturing before moving further upstream over time.
"There needs to be an intersection that happens around finance, trade, and industry - we need to be doing more together."

Strengthen regional integration to build competitiveness and scale: Regional integration is critical to making Africa more competitive and capable of supporting industrial growth at scale. The discussion highlighted the importance of stronger trade corridors, harmonized systems, and cross-border connections across transport, trade, language, mobility, and technology. Stronger regional coordination can support technology transfer, manufacturing growth, larger markets, and stronger positioning within global value chains.
"Integration is not just about tariffs - it is about connecting markets, industries, infrastructure, and people"

Build data and measurement systems as foundations for future green markets: The discussion concluded with a focus on the importance of data, measurement, and credibility in enabling Africa's participation in future markets. Africa was described as remaining "data poor" despite significant opportunities in climate-friendly production. There was a call for philanthropy to support the data infrastructure required for and businesses to participate in these markets.
"Markets are anchored on high-integrity data"

***Opportunity for Action:** The session created an opportunity to move AfCFTA from ambition to implementation by aligning trade, finance, and industrial strategy around strategic value chains. Participants emphasized the importance of using Africa's renewable energy and critical minerals to drive climate-positive industrial growth, while strengthening regional integration and data systems that can support long value creation on the continent.*

Day 2: Scaling Solutions for Economic Opportunity

This plenary explored how Africa can unlock economic opportunity by scaling market-based solutions that strengthen livelihoods, local economies, and inclusive growth across key sectors.
Speakers: Carol Koech, Alice Ruhweza, Denis Karema
Moderator: Emmanuel Aziebor





Scaling productive markets requires coordinated systems: Scaling market-based solutions requires more than successful pilots or technology innovation. It requires coordinated ecosystems that align capital, infrastructure, policy, markets, and local actors around shared outcomes. The discussion also highlighted the importance of integrated value chains and local market systems. Participants noted that farmers will only adopt new practices if markets exist to make those investments worthwhile. There was also recognition that energy access alone is insufficient unless it is linked to productive use and market opportunities in ways communities can afford.
"There is no point improving productivity if farmers do not have markets."

The missing gap is fit for purpose capital: A major theme throughout the session was the mismatch between existing financing structures and the realities of scaling early-stage or growth-stage enterprises operating in productive sectors such as agriculture and energy in Africa. Denis from SokoFresh shared that entrepreneurs often spend disproportionate amounts of time trying to secure financing instead of scaling operations.Participants also noted that financing gaps remain especially pronounced for women entrepreneurs, highlighting a significant untapped opportunity for women-focused financing models. There was strong recognition that patient, catalytic, and blended finance models remain critically important — particularly for enterprises that are too large for microfinance institutions but too small or risky for commercial banks. The conversation also reinforced that catalytic capital is most effective when it helps unlock broader market participation.
"The time it takes to secure capital becomes a major barrier to scale."

Scale requires collaboration and shared ownership: One of the greatest barriers to scale is fragmentation between actors. While many organizations are pursuing similar goals, development ecosystems often remain competitive, siloed, and driven by individual visibility rather than shared outcomes. The discussion emphasized that productive market systems will require collaboration between governments, private sector actors, financiers, aggregators, regulators, and communities. A strong emphasis was placed on moving toward place-based and systems-oriented approaches that organize actors around local realities and shared economic outcomes rather than disconnected interventions. Speakers highlighted that communities are often overwhelmed by fragmented interventions and called for stronger coalition models that reduce duplication.
"The outcomes are collective. We are responsible for them together."

Government and policy are imperative to scale: While entrepreneurship and private sector innovation are seen as essential, participants reinforced that sustainable scale ultimately requires government leadership, policy alignment, and supporting regulation. Successful models do not scale automatically: they must be institutionalized, embedded into broader systems, and expanded over time. Participants reflected that at a systems level, scale ultimately becomes synonymous with government because long-term adoption requires institutional ownership and public coordination. .Participants encouraged the room not only to focus on constraints, but also to recognize the momentum and examples of what is already working.
"Solutions need to think about interoperability and connected systems."

Opportunity for Action: *The session surfaced a strong opportunity to shift from fragmented pilots toward coordinated "market systems coalitions" that align infrastructure, finance, markets, and policy for economic opportunities. Participants highlighted the need toward coalition-based approaches that bring together governments, financiers, private sector actors around shared outcomes particularly in sectors such as energy and agriculture where infrastructure only creates impact when linked to livelihoods and markets. There was also strong momentum around using catalytic and blended finance more strategically to close the gap between proof of concept and commercial scale for local enterprises to access the right forms of capital at the right stage of growth.*

Day 2: Building Markets that Work

This session explored how some African markets are already delivering development outcomes through commercially viable models, highlighting what it takes to intentionally structure value chains, align incentives, and build markets that generate both commercial returns and social impact at scale
Speakers: Eric Naivasha, Matteo Scalabrino, Madji Sock
Moderator: William Asiko





Development outcomes can be intentionally embedded into commercial systems: Development opportunities do not have to sit at the periphery of business models. Instead, when approached intentionally, they can be embedded directly into commercial systems and core operations. KCB's work with schools emerged as a strong example. The discussion reinforced that markets capable of delivering development outcomes often already exist, but require actors to intentionally structure incentives, financing, and partnerships in ways that align commercial logic with long-term social and environmental outcomes.
"Sustainability is not a nice-to-do. It is part of the business model."

Predictability and demand certainty are what make markets investable: Many sectors traditionally viewed as social expenditures can become investable markets when demand and revenue structures are intentionally organized. Drawing on Regenerative School Meals (RSM), speakers reflected that school feeding is often misunderstood as a sovereign cost burden rather than one of the largest sources of predictable demand in emerging markets. The discussion highlighted how aggregating demand, creating stronger offtake structures, and improving payment and pricing predictability can transform fragmented sectors into more stable and bankable market systems.
"If we structure it right, school feeding can become an engine of development."

Redefining bankability requires starting from existing assets, not deficits: Speakers noted that development and financial systems often begin by focusing on what communities, farmers, or enterprises lack, rather than the assets, revenue streams, and demand structures that already exist. Eric reflected on how KCB approached schools not from the perspective of deficits, but from the realities of existing cash flows, demand certainty, and operational systems already present within schools.
"We should start with what people have — not what they do not have."

Development and private sector actors must learn to speak the same language: One of the strongest themes in the session was the disconnect between how development actors and private sector actors understand markets, value, and impact. Speakers reflected that development organizations often approach private sector engagement through theories of change and impact framing, while businesses are focused on customers, demand, revenue models, and operational viability. Development actors and private sector actors need to align around shared language, commercial incentives, and clearer understandings of markets, customers, and decision-making frameworks.
"Development actors must engage with the private sector using a private sector mindset."

Policy and Philanthropy can help build markets but not replace them: The session reinforced that governments and development actors continue to play important roles in shaping markets by helping absorb risk, and create enabling policy environments. However, speakers stressed that policy should function as a lever for market-building and derisking rather than as the sole entry point for collaboration. Participants discussed the importance of catalytic and concessional capital in helping establish new asset classes and enabling commercial actors to enter sectors that may initially appear too risky.
"Policy becomes a lever to build markets — not the starting point."

***Opportunity for Action:** Move beyond viewing development and markets as separate domains and instead focus on intentionally designing commercially viable systems that deliver both economic and social outcomes. Participants emphasized the need to build stronger derisking mechanisms, create clearer pathways for private sector participation, and develop practical collaboration models that help development actors and businesses align around shared market opportunities.*

Day 2: Philanthropy and the Future of Development Finance

The session reflected on how development financing, philanthropy, and institutions must evolve to better support scalable, sustainable impact
Speakers: Peter Laugharn, Alex Mubiru,, Frank Aswani,, Yemi Osinbajo, Frank Aswani
Facilitators: Edwin Macharia





Move beyond aid dependency toward more diversified financing models: There is a growing mismatch between development needs and available aid funding. There was strong recognition that aid and governments alone will not be able to close the financing gap, requiring new financing models, stronger domestic resource mobilization, and greater engagement of private capital.
We're not going to close that gap with aid and government alone."

Position philanthropy to absorb risk and unlock scale: The discussion highlighted that private capital exists, but does not naturally flow toward development challenges because of risk perceptions and return expectations. Participants emphasized the role of philanthropy in taking on early-stage risk, testing models, and enabling governments and private investors to scale proven solutions through blended finance approaches.
"*Social issues are now becoming business risks."*

Shift institutional cultures from control toward adaptability: There was strong critique of rigid institutional systems, including bureaucratic funding processes, centralized decision-making, and cultures that default toward safety and control. Participants argued that institutions will not evolve unless individuals within them begin operating differently and become more comfortable with uncertainty and experimentation.
"*If we can't change, the institutions will not change."*

Ground solutions in proximity, trust, and contextual understanding: Participants repeatedly emphasized that development challenges today are less about access to knowledge and more about proximity, trust, and contextual understanding. Solutions designed far away from communities often remain theoretical and disconnected from implementation realities.
"It's not knowledge asymmetry anymore — it's proximity to the problem."

Reframe local organizations as core parts of the system: The session challenged traditional development narratives that position local organizations as implementers or beneficiaries. Participants reflected on how communities and local institutions already hold significant capability and should be treated as core parts of the system itself.
"Communities are not beneficiaries — they are system."

Strengthen coordination across a fragmented ecosystem: Despite the growing number of actors and funding vehicles in development, participants reflected on how fragmented the ecosystem remains. There was a strong call for coalitions, coordination, and partnerships across governments, philanthropy, private sector to reduce duplication and align around shared outcomes.
"Let's build coalitions of unlikely allies."

Align financing models with the realities of systems change: Systems change was framed as essential but inherently long-term. Participants emphasized that sustainable scale requires working through government systems and investing over longer time horizons, rather than relying on short-term projects and fragmented interventions.
"*We need to change systems, but we are obsessed with projects."*

Day 2: Funders' Roundtable (Contd.)

Shift from endless piloting toward sustaining proven models: Governments and practitioners reflected on growing fatigue with continuous pilots that rarely translate into sustained implementation. Participants emphasized the need to identify what is already working and invest in scaling and sustaining proven models.
"We have more pilots than the air force."

Invest in "scaling deep" alongside scaling out: Beyond scaling interventions broadly, participants discussed the importance of "scaling deep" — investing in institutions, leaders, and communities over long time horizons. The conversation emphasized that durable impact requires strengthening local systems and relationships, not just expanding reach.
"There is another type of scale: scaling deep."

Build stronger African-led financing and philanthropic ecosystems: There was a strong call for Africa to increasingly finance its own development through stronger domestic resource mobilization and local philanthropic ecosystems. Participants reflected on the risks of continued dependency on external funding and the importance of building African-led capital systems.
"We have to save ourselves."

Bring governance and accountability closer to financing conversations: Participants highlighted that financing conversations often overlook governance systems, accountability, and political economy realities. There was strong recognition that governments must remain accountable to citizens and public outcomes, not only to funding flows.
"We need to acknowledge the political economy that underlies everything that we do."

Expand how risk is understood in development systems: Risk was reframed beyond financial exposure to include the lived realities faced by many frontline actors and communities, including violence, exile, and political repression. Participants reflected on how development conversations often fail to account for who is truly carrying risk within systems.
"We use the word risk a lot without really talking about risk for whom."









Thank you