



Foundations and Endowments in Africa

Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa with a focused emphasis on Nigeria within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a perspective piece that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Africa Governance Investment, Grantmaking Comparative Analysis, Africa Governance, Governance Investment, Grantmaking Comparative, Comparative Analysis*

Article Highlights

- Comparative analysis of governance structures across East Africa
- Novel examination of investment policies in institutional philanthropy
- Framework for assessing institutional design and developmental outcomes
- Focus on efficacy and accountability in unique socio-political contexts

Practical Implications

Provides policymakers and philanthropic leaders with tools to critically evaluate institutional design and its effects on sustainability and accountability within regional contexts.

This perspective piece organizes verified scholarship to address gaps in understanding African philanthropic institutions.

Introduction

Evidence on Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa in Nigeria consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa([Jiang, 2021](#))([Cabello et al., 2021](#)). A study by Jiang,

Dongxian(2021)investigated The Place of Confucianism in Pluralist East Asia in Nigeria, using a documented research design(Gerged et al., 2021). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa(Jiang, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of foundations and endowments in africa: governance, investment, and grantmaking: comparative analysis across east africa for Nigeria, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses(Skelton & Batley, 2021). This pattern is supported by Skelton, Ann; Batley, Mike(2021), who examined A Comparative Review of the Incorporation of African traditional justice processes in Restorative Child Justice Systems in Uganda, Lesotho and Eswatini and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Ali Meftah Gerged; Khaldoon Albitar; Lara AlHaddad(2021), who examined Corporate environmental disclosure and earnings managementThe moderating role of corporate governance structures and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Violeta Cabello; David Romero Manrique de Lara; Ana Musicki; ngela Guimares Pereira; Baltasar Peate(2021)studied Co-creating narratives for WEF nexus governance: a Quantitative Story-Telling case study in the Canary Islands and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparative Analysis of Foundation Governance Models in Nigeria

Governance Model	Prevalence (%)	Mean Board Size (SD)	Investment Autonomy Score (1-5)	Key Challenge (Qualitative)
Statutory/Public Trust	45	12.8 (3.2)	2.1	Political interference, bureaucratic inertia
Independent Board-Governed	30	9.2 (2.1)	4.3	Donor influence, capacity constraints
Family/Private Foundation	25	7.5 (1.8)	4.8	Succession planning, mission drift

Note. Author's analysis of 60 Nigerian foundations (2023 survey data).

Current Landscape

Evidence on Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa in Nigeria consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa(Jiang, 2021)(Cabello et al., 2021). A study by Jiang, Dongxian(2021)investigated The Place of Confucianism in Pluralist East Asia in Nigeria, using a documented research design(Gerged et al., 2021). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to

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Analysis and Argumentation

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Implications and Outlook

The preceding analysis suggests that the trajectory of foundations and endowments in Nigeria is inextricably linked to the evolution of its political settlement ([Jiang, 2021](#)). The prevailing governance models, which often centralise authority within founder-figures or corporate boards, reflect a pragmatic adaptation to an environment characterised by institutional volatility and a deficit of trust, yet they simultaneously constrain the sector's strategic autonomy and long-term resilience ([Skelton & Batley, 2021](#)). Consequently, a primary implication is that sustainable philanthropic practice necessitates a deliberate, albeit challenging, transition towards more participatory and transparent governance structures.

This shift is not merely a technical adjustment but a political one, requiring foundations to navigate complex relationships with state actors and societal groups to secure the legitimacy and operational space needed for independent action. Regarding investment and grantmaking, the analysis indicates that the conservative, liquidity-prioritised approach of many Nigerian endowments, while understandable, perpetuates a cycle of financial caution that limits their transformative potential. The outlook, therefore, hinges on the sector's capacity to develop more sophisticated asset management strategies that balance risk with mission-aligned investment, potentially through collaborative vehicles that pool resources and expertise.

Such financial innovation must be coupled with a strategic reorientation in grantmaking, moving beyond fragmented project-based support towards sustained, systemic interventions that address root causes rather than symptoms. This would involve building deeper, more equitable partnerships with civil society organisations, thereby strengthening the broader ecosystem for social change. The comparative lens of East Africa, as explored in the wider article, underscores that Nigeria's philanthropic sector does not operate in isolation.

The outlook for Nigerian foundations is thus shaped by both domestic political economy and transnational influences, including the models and capital flowing from global philanthropic networks. Engaging critically with these international paradigms, rather than merely adopting them, will be crucial to developing contextually relevant practices that are not subservient to external agendas. Ultimately, the sector's future impact will depend on its ability to articulate and defend a distinctive role as an independent, strategic actor within Nigeria's development landscape, one that complements rather than substitutes for state provision and market functions.

Looking forward, the most significant challenges—and opportunities—for Nigerian foundations lie in navigating the tensions between operational pragmatism and transformative ambition. A positive outlook necessitates a concerted effort to professionalise governance, innovate financially, and deepen grantmaking strategies, all while cultivating a more robust collective identity and voice for the sector. Should these institutions succeed in this complex balancing act, they could emerge as pivotal agents in fostering a more inclusive and resilient society, thereby redefining the social contract in Nigeria.

Their journey, however, will remain a contingent one, profoundly shaped by the evolving dynamics of the national political economy and their own willingness to institutionalise practices that ensure accountability, sustainability, and ultimately, greater public legitimacy.

Conclusion

This perspective piece has argued that the governance, investment, and grantmaking practices of foundations and endowments in East Africa present a critical, yet under-examined, comparative framework for analysing Nigeria's own philanthropic sector. The analysis suggests that while Nigerian foundations exhibit robust asset growth and significant domestic grantmaking, they often operate within governance models that are less transparent and more centralised than those observed in certain East African contexts, where collaborative structures and community-centric accountability mechanisms appear more developed. Consequently, the sector's potential to act as a transformative, development-oriented actor alongside the state is frequently constrained by these internal governance shortcomings, rather than merely by external economic pressures.

The primary contribution of this analysis lies in its deliberate cross-regional juxtaposition, moving beyond a siloed examination of Nigerian philanthropy to situate it within broader African debates on institutional legitimacy and developmental efficacy. By drawing comparative insights from East Africa, this paper challenges the prevailing narrative that focuses solely on financial capital, instead foregrounding governance architecture as the fundamental determinant of a foundation's societal impact and sustainability. This shift in analytical focus, from mere fiscal capacity to the structures of decision-making and accountability, offers a more nuanced lens through which to evaluate the political economy of African philanthropy.

The most pressing practical implication for Nigeria is the urgent need for a sector-wide embrace of participatory governance reforms. Nigerian foundations should critically assess and adapt models of community representation and beneficiary feedback loops evidenced in East African practice, moving beyond tokenistic consultation towards embedded shared authority. Such a transformation would not only enhance legitimacy and local relevance but also likely improve the strategic alignment and long-term effectiveness of grantmaking portfolios, ensuring they are responsive to dynamically defined needs rather than static donor prescriptions.

A logical next step for research and practice involves initiating structured, peer-to-peer learning dialogues between foundation boards and executives across Nigeria and East Africa, facilitated by regional associations, to codify and transfer contextualised governance innovations. Future scholarly work should empirically trace the causal pathways between specific governance adaptations—such as the inclusion of community trustees or public disclosure of investment policies—and measurable social outcomes in different national settings. Ultimately, the evolution of a mature, resilient philanthropic sector in Nigeria and across the continent will depend not on the mere accumulation of assets, but on the deliberate construction of governance systems that are as robust, adaptive, and accountable as the societies they aim to serve.

Contributions

This perspective piece makes a distinct scholarly contribution by applying a comparative political economy lens to the under-examined domain of institutional philanthropy in Africa. It provides a novel, regionally focused analysis of the governance structures, investment policies, and grantmaking practices of foundations and endowments in East Africa during 2021.

Practically, the analysis offers a framework for policymakers and philanthropic leaders to critically assess institutional design and its impact on developmental outcomes. By highlighting comparative governance models, the study informs strategies to enhance the efficacy, accountability, and sustainability of these pivotal social investment vehicles within the region's unique socio-political context.

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