



Philanthropy Flashcards



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Part C

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**PHILANTHROPIC
COLLABORATIVES**

Collaboratives offer significant benefits compared to individual philanthropic endeavours, increasingly as the challenges they are confronting require collective action, significant funding, and intricate ground-level problem-solving.

Though still relatively nascent in India, collaborative philanthropy has grown threefold, and capital invested in them has grown sixfold¹. This unprecedented growth is reflected in the rise of new initiatives like pooled funds, networks, and platforms, brim with potential and a renewed commitment to social change. Both experienced and emerging funders are adopting more strategic, multi-stakeholder approaches, shifting their focus from individual giving to collaborative endeavours.

This note delves into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by collaboratives in India. Drawing insights from an expert panel discussion held at the Dasra Philanthropy Week (DPW) on 29th February 2024, it offers valuable perspectives on the need for domestic philanthropy to strengthen civil society organizations as anchors of domestic collaboratives.

CONTEXT

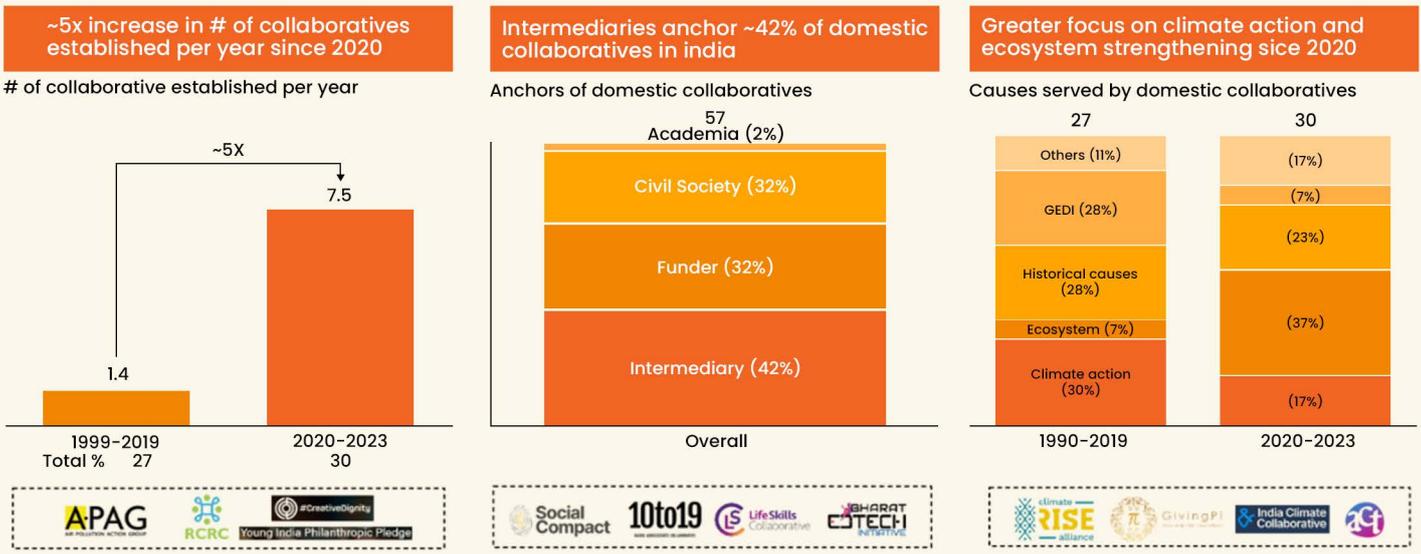
Collaboratives are initiatives usually developed by three or more separate entities, with at least one being a philanthropic entity². A philanthropic collaborative is united by a shared vision and strategy to achieve social impact. The premise for collaboratives is pooling resources and establishing agreed-upon governance structures to work towards common goals. These platforms unite multiple stakeholders with shared responsibilities, playing a catalytic role in addressing critical issues.

While collaboratives have existed for some time, their significance has grown since the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis underscored the complexity of societal challenges, necessitating coordinated, systemic change through collaborative efforts by diverse stakeholders.

KEY TRENDS³

- **5X increase in number of collaboratives established per year since 2020 compared to the last decade** with increased effectiveness and need to solve intricate challenges through collaboration (e.g., Air Pollution Action Group, Young India Philanthropic Pledge)
- **Intermediaries anchor ~42% of domestic collaboratives in India**, providing strategic guideposts to ensure a structured and neutral environment (e.g., Social Compact, 10to19 Dasra Adolescents Collaborative, Life Skills Collaborative)
- Greater focus on underfunded causes with **~53% of collaboratives focused on climate action and ecosystem strengthening** since 2020 (e.g., India Climate Collaborative, ACT Grants)





BREAKPOINTS

Collaborative philanthropy has the potential to galvanize the giving landscape; not just by unlocking new funding, but also by transforming knowledge exchange and intergenerational learning within the development ecosystem, further amplifying the enduring impact within communities. This section outlines some of the opportunities and challenges that these collaboratives are likely to encounter, presented as breakpoints. Analysing these breakpoints can offer valuable insights into how collaboratives can leverage their strengths, exchange valuable insights, and proceed as a unified, unifying force in philanthropy.

Future growth hinges on domestic momentum

“Collaborative philanthropy can reshape the giving mindset, not only by unlocking a larger pool of funds, but also by enabling greater knowledge transfer, enabling intergenerational gains, and creating lasting impact in communities. It can also serve as a vital risk mitigation tool; anchored in trust, it can add value by cultivating shared service platforms, collective expertise, and resources to serve the sector better”

Aparna Uppaluri
Tata Trusts

Funders are increasingly realizing the critical importance of addressing root causes and navigating complex systems. The interest in collaborative initiatives is gaining rapid momentum, with meetings and knowledge-sharing platforms providing ample opportunities for dialogue and diverse perspectives. However, the potential impact of these collaboratives hinges on domestic momentum. Indian philanthropy should focus on strengthening civil society organizations as strong institutions and anchors of collaborative efforts. Global good practices indicate that tackling root causes and triggering systemic shifts depends on stewardship from local funders and civil society organizations. This necessitates concerted and long-term investments in local and grassroots NGOs, enhancing their capacity, and positioning them as pivotal anchors of collaborative endeavours.

Lack of trust leads to inefficiencies and hinders progress

“Trust is foundational in collaborative endeavours, and fostering it often requires a substantial investment in donor education and capacity building. This process is not just about establishing mutual understanding but also about donors willingly ceding some decision-making authority, recognizing the collective nature of collaborative efforts.”

Sara Lomelin
Philanthropy Together

Trust forms the bedrock of success in philanthropic collaboratives. Given that most collaboratives embrace field strengthening as their primary goal, establishing trust around their vision and theory of change is both crucial and challenging. The diverse stakeholders in these collaboratives, each with their unique priorities and resource allocations, create a complex environment with inherent trust limitations. While there was swift alignment during the Covid-19 crisis, the post-pandemic era necessitates active measures to mitigate trust deficits and ensure the continued agility of decision-making structures.

Indeed, collaboratives represent a unique opportunity to reshape the power dynamics within philanthropic relationships entirely, fostering more dynamic and equitable platforms and processes. Partners must strategically invest in initiatives aimed at building trust, share decision-making responsibilities, and adeptly navigate power dynamics to cultivate a culture of trust. Without trust, collaborative efforts risk facing challenges such as misalignment, inefficiencies, and governance issues, thereby hindering progress towards shared philanthropic objectives.

Difficulty in showcasing and measuring impact

“Capturing the impact of philanthropic collaboratives proves challenging due to their multifaceted outcomes, not easily quantifiable in conventional terms. If we cannot sharply elaborate impact, then the expansion of collaboratives is going to be even tougher. While not all impact is measurable, recognizing the unique value they bring requires a broader perspective beyond traditional metrics.”

Anant Bhagwati
Bridgespan

Measuring the impact of philanthropic collaboratives in India is a more complex issue than it initially appears. While these initiatives are pivotal in addressing significant societal issues, the outcomes they generate are not always immediately apparent or quantifiable. The results produced by collaboratives can be intangible, such as narrative change, institutional strengthening, and intergenerational benefits for communities. The traditional Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks often fall short in capturing the subtle and long-term impacts these collaboratives aim to achieve. There is a need for developing more nuanced and flexible evaluation methods that can fully recognize and articulate the unique contributions of philanthropic collaboratives, ensuring their efforts are not only recognized but also effectively expanded.



CONCLUSION

Collaboratives add value by fostering shared service platforms, collective expertise, and resources to build resilience for communities. The pandemic accelerated this momentum, leading to a surge in domestic collaboratives. However, sustained growth depends on increased investment in capacity-building of civil society organizations, as well as unlocking greater funding from domestic foundations. Transparent communication, unrestricted long-term funding, strong governance structures, and programmatic adaptability can further enhance the impact and sustainability of collaboratives.

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1. <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/the-growing-momentum-behind-philanthropic-collaboratives-in-india>
 2. *Philanthropic Collaboratives in India: The Power of Many* (Bridgespan, 2020)
 3. *India Philanthropy Report 2024: Philanthropy as the bridge for impact in India's growth* (Dasra & Bain & Company, 2024)

About the Philanthropy Flashcard Series

Private philanthropy, growing at 10% in FY 2023, is pegged at INR 1.2 lakh crore (\$15 billion). It is playing a critical role in addressing India's most pressing challenges and advancing its boldest ambitions. If you want to know the big picture, it helps to start with the small details. This series aims to provide a strategic vantage point into the ever-changing landscape of philanthropy in India. Presented as flashcards, we capture key insights on shifting trends, barriers, and opportunities, on philanthropy. This volume covers three key segments: family foundations, corporate social responsibility, and collaborative philanthropy. Dasra is committed to boosting philanthropy within and towards India from a global perspective. The Philanthropy Flashcard series provides succinct insights based on data and conversations with key stakeholders.

