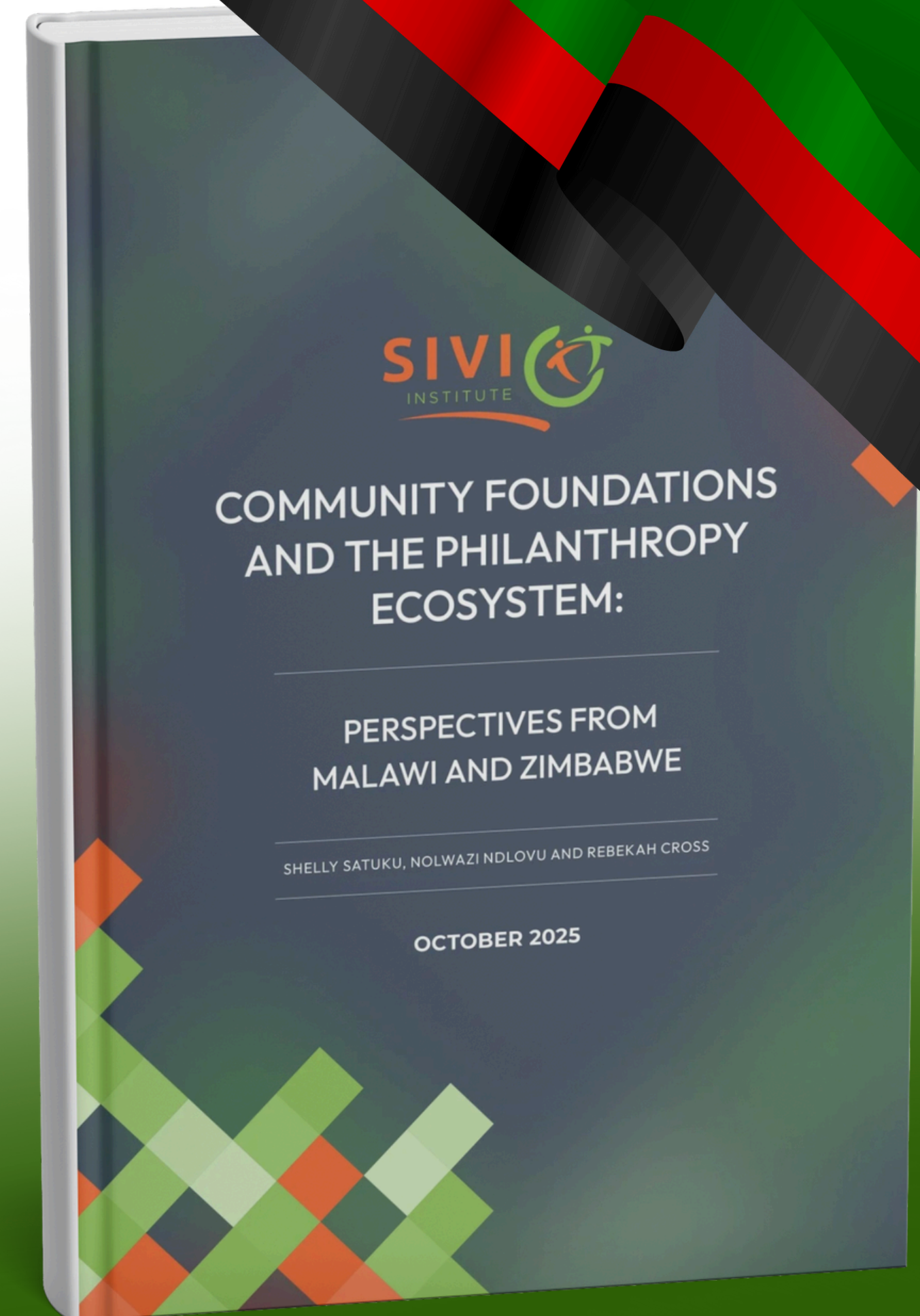


Community Foundations and the Philanthropy Ecosystem

Understanding how Community Foundations navigate complex networks of donors, government, nonprofits, and communities to drive sustainable development.





Why This Research Matters

Breaking Silos

Organisations often work in isolation, duplicating efforts and missing collaboration opportunities. Limited dialogue across sectors wastes resources.

Understanding Networks

Power dynamics, resource flows, and informal networks remain invisible, making coordination difficult and sustainable support systems hard to build.

Building Ecosystems

Comprehensive mapping is crucial for strengthening the industry, enhancing collaboration, and unlocking full potential for sustainable community development.

Research Approach

01

Survey Design

Comprehensive online survey capturing quantitative and qualitative data from Community Foundations across both countries.

02

Network Formation

23 Community Foundations identified in Malawi (12) and Zimbabwe (11), forming two national networks as survey population.

03

Data Collection

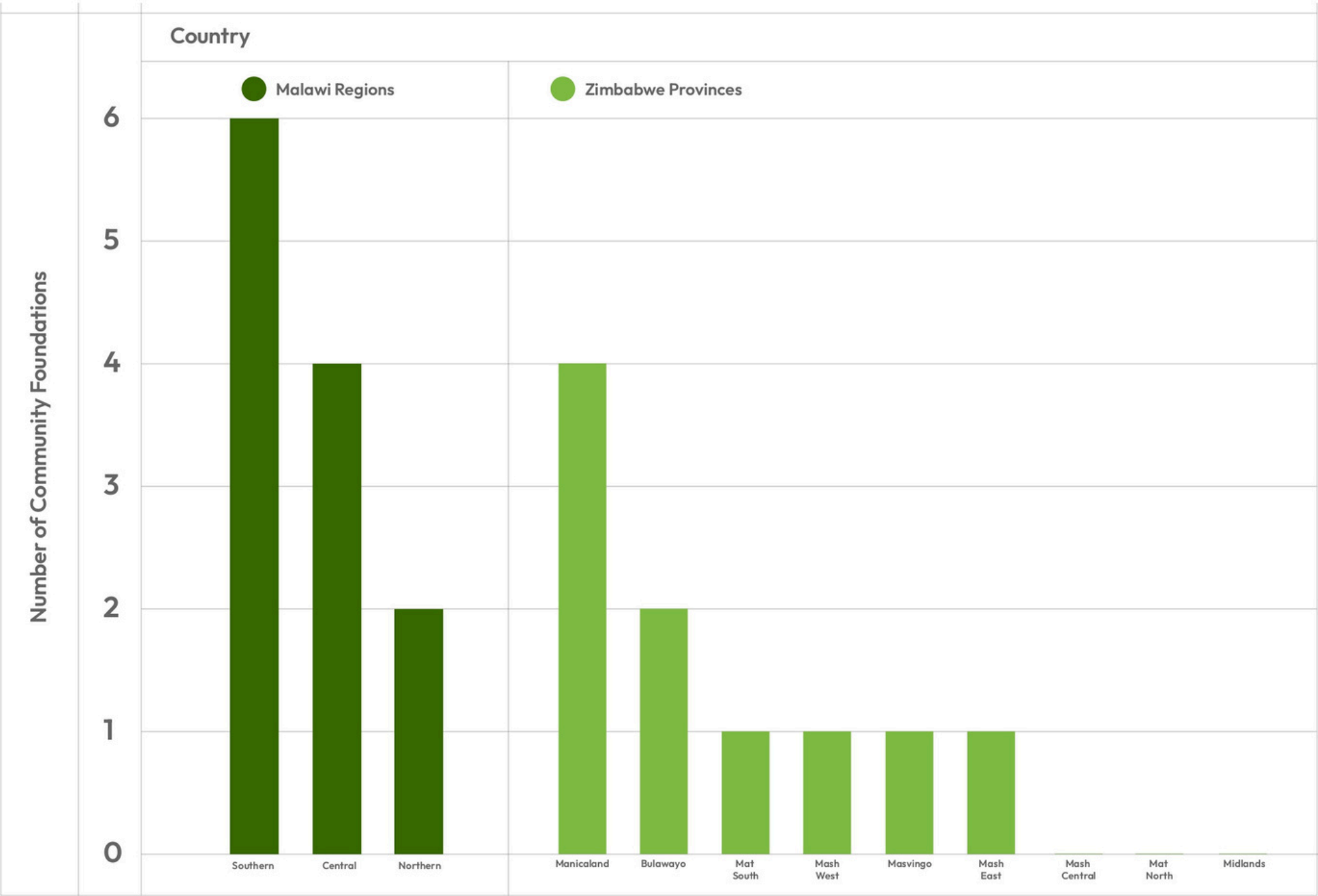
22 organisations responded (95% response rate), providing insights on ecosystem actors, relationships, and aspirations.

04

Analysis

Face-to-face dialogues and comparative analysis revealed patterns, strengths, and gaps in the philanthropy ecosystem.

Community Foundations: The Landscape



Organisations span Malawi's three regions (Northern, Central, Southern) and Zimbabwe's six provinces (Bulawayo, Manicaland, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo, Matabeleland South).

11

Average Years

In operation across both countries

4.9

Staff Size

Average full-time employees per foundation

90%

Modest Budgets

Range from \$8,500 to \$500,000 annually

Multiple Roles, One Mission

Implementers (86%)

Direct service delivery and program implementation addressing community needs, especially for vulnerable populations including people with disabilities.

Resource Mobilisers (77%)

Raising funds from diverse sources—international donors and local givers—while promoting a culture of local giving and community connection.

Conveners (27%)

Bringing stakeholders together for dialogue and collaboration, though resource scarcity limits this critical ecosystem-building role.



The Ecosystem: Key Actors and Relationships

Intermediary Organisations

Provide bridging functions and capacity-building support, connecting grassroots organisations to resources and networks.

International Foundations & Individual Donors

73% identify these as primary financial resources, essential for sustainability and attracting additional funding.



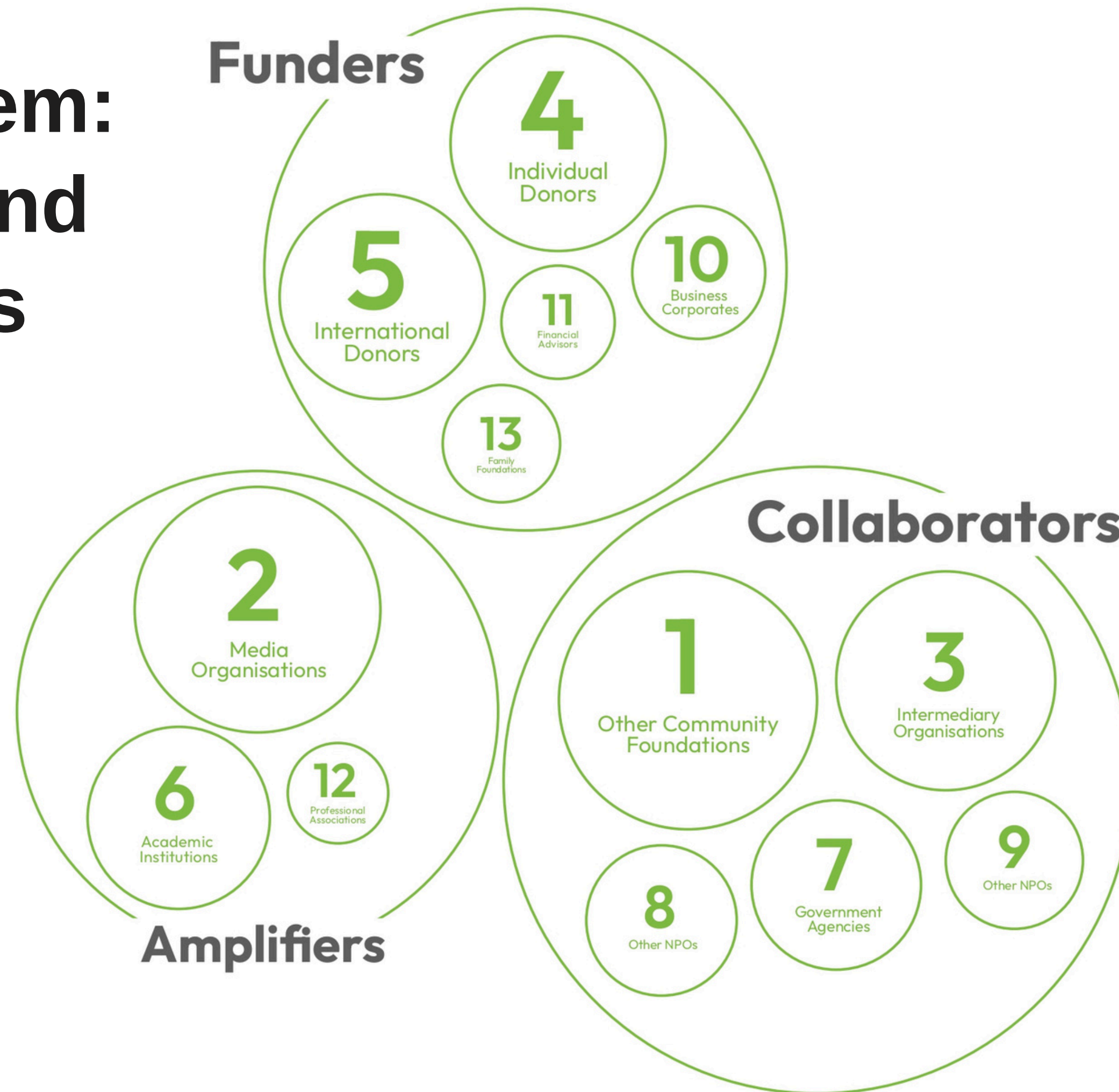
Other Community Foundations

77% rate peer organisations as very important for mutual support, learning opportunities, and collective action.

Nonprofit Organisations

Critical partners working on complementary issues—education, health, water—providing specialized expertise and community connections.

The Ecosystem: Key Actors and Relationships





Critical Challenges Facing the Ecosystem

Limited Funding (95%)

Inconsistent funding from community contributions, small grants, and occasional partner support threatens sustainability and collaboration.

Communication Gaps (36%)

Poor connectivity, limited visibility, and inadequate information sharing hamper coordination efforts across the ecosystem.

Regulatory Uncertainty

Zimbabwe's 2025 PVO Amendment Act creates confusion around registration, cash donations, and fintech giving platforms.



Building a Stronger Future Together

A vision for a stronger ecosystem highlighted the following themes

**Inclusion
and
Equity**

**Collaboration
and
Partnership**

**Increased
Coordination
and
Alignment**

**Sustainability
and
Resilience**

**Community-
Centred
Approach**

“A stronger philanthropy ecosystem would be characterised by increased collaboration, transparency, and accountability among stakeholders, with a shared vision and goal, and a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, ultimately driving greater impact and positive change.”

— Manica Youth Assembly Trust



Building a Stronger Future Together

Regular Convenings (91%)

Create platforms for connection, relationship building, and shared learning to address isolation and fragmentation.

Joint Capacity-Building (82%)

Strengthen organisational capabilities through peer learning, mentorship, and shared programs that reduce costs.

Collaborative Funding (77%)

Pool resources for greater impact, reduce competition, and build sustainable local giving culture.

"An ecosystem that is inclusive, transparent and has joint cooperation between grassroots Community Foundations and local nonprofits, donors, and public institutions."

— Luso Langa Community Foundation



The Path Forward: From Potential to Power

What We Know

- 91% report at least mildly strong relationships—a solid foundation exists
- 73% cite high community trust and engagement as the greatest strength
- 64% collaborate regularly with other actors
- Shared values: community-centred approach, collaboration, equity, sustainability

What's Needed

- Patient, strategic investment in connectivity and capacity
- Deeper engagement with government, academia, and private sector
- Sustainable local resource mobilisation for endowments
- Cross-border learning and strategic partnerships

Priority Tier	Initiative	Initiative's contribution
Tier 1: Critical Priorities	Regular Convenings and Networking Events (91%)	Create platforms for connection and relationship building Share learning and experiences Address isolation and fragmentation Build trust and collaboration Foster ecosystem identity
	Joint Capacity-Building Programs (82%)	Strengthen organisational capabilities collectively Peer learning and mentorship Develop common competencies Build collective capacity
	Collaborative Funding Platforms (77%)	Reduce costs through shared programs Pool resources for greater impact Reduce competition for funding Create sustainable funding mechanisms Enable collaborative grant making Build local giving culture
Tier 2: High Priorities	Mentorship Programs (55%)	Support new and emerging foundations Transfer knowledge and experience Build leadership pipeline Create support structures Strengthen succession planning
	Technology Platforms for Coordination (55%)	Enable virtual collaboration Overcome geographic barriers Improve information sharing Enhance coordination Create shared digital infrastructure
	Research and Knowledge Sharing (45%)	Build evidence base Document learning and best practices Inform decision-making Demonstrate impact Support advocacy
Tier 3: Moderate Priorities	Shared Database of Opportunities and Resources (36%)	Improved access and exposure
	Policy Advocacy Initiatives (23%)	For creation of improved operating environments

Read the full report

The full report with all the findings is found on the SIVIO Institute website (www.sivioinstitute.org/insights)

DOI: 10.59186/SI.8X4R4MKF

