IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Philanthropy: An Overview Of Its Dimensions

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Abstract

This concept paper explores the domain of philanthropy, focusing on its evolution and the various dimensions of giving. Philanthropy, fundamentally defined as selfless giving, is driven by the principle of altruism. However, in contemporary society, the practice of giving has often taken on a more transactional nature, with expectations of return or personal benefit. While traditional philanthropy has its roots in charity, it has evolved beyond mere charitable acts to encompass a broader understanding of goodwill. Unlike charity, which often involves assessing the worthiness of recipients, philanthropy emphasizes the act of giving without judgment or expectation. However, the commodification of philanthropy has led to a shift where giving can sometimes appear as "the rich giving to the rich," creating a disparity in the distribution of resources. This paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of philanthropy, examining its various dimensions from individual to community-based giving. By offering insights into different forms of philanthropic endeavors, the paper seeks to enhance readers' awareness of the types of giving they may engage in, encouraging a more reflective and informed approach to philanthropy.

Introduction

The term 'remit' simply means 'to give,' typically referring to a sum of money sent as payment or a gift. Unlike revenue, which is compensation for work done, remittance often lacks a formal contract between employer and employee (Anghel et al., 2015). In this research, remittance is viewed as a contribution to the common good, particularly in village contexts. Revenue takes on the form of remittance when it serves a social purpose, such as supporting individual households or community welfare. Remittances can also be collective, used for community investments like building roads, schools, or hospitals (Goldring, 2003). Beyond financial contributions, remittances may include non-monetary contributions, known as social remittances, which encompass knowledge, skills, values, and experiences transferred from host to home countries (Lacroix et al., 2016). These remittances can be categorized as financial, human, or social capital (Helgesson et al., 2014). Contributions can be individual or collective, often channeled through reputable foundations, NGOs, or hometown associations with widely accepted secular objectives (Bada, 2016).

Various Types of Remittance:

1. **Individual remittance**

Within the concept of economic remittance, various types of remittances can be identified based on how they are transferred and their intended use. (Douglas et al., 2022) (Mata-Codesal, 2015) refers to these as "migrant-dollars," which can be sent traditionally through money orders (Naiditch & Vranceanu, 2011) or saved and invested in constructing houses or purchasing durable goods such as televisions and vehicles (Goldring, 2003). According to Durand (Chen, 2021), individual remittances can be categorized into several types: (1) remittances sent as wages and salaries by circular migrants to support family members left behind, (2) investments made during visits or upon return to purchase land or build houses, (3) remittances used as capital for productive ventures, and (4) contributions to community welfare beyond personal households. Individual remittances are sent by emigrants to their families, who are the primary recipients and beneficiaries (Naiditch & Vranceanu, 2011). These remittances are primarily monetary transfers used for essentials such as food, clothing, education, healthcare, business, and social services.

2. **Collective remittance**

Collective remittances refer to the pooling of resources by migrants for productive and community-oriented projects (Bada, 2016; (Duquette-Rury, 2014), 2014). These remittances go beyond individual contributions, involving organized efforts by groups such as migrant communities, families, hometown clubs, and associations (Pettey, 2014). The beneficiaries of these remittances are the target communities and project partners (Goldring, 2003). Key players include community networks, migrant organizations, local and federal governments, NGOs, and public sectors (Walton-Roberts & Fundraising, n.d.). Common projects funded through collective remittances include welfare initiatives like old age homes, food programs, scholarships, public infrastructure projects, and environmental efforts such as water body restoration. These remittances aim for sustainability and are oriented towards benefiting both current and future generations (Kandilige, 2017). To ensure accountability and effectiveness, collective remittances are managed by reliable hometown clubs and associations rather than a few individuals (Meyer, 2020).Click or tap here to enter text..

3. **Monetary Remittances**

Monetary contributions primarily refer to financial support, which can vary in scale depending on whether it comes from a few wealthy individuals or a group of contributors (Lu et al., 2012). These contributions can be directed towards the development of individual households or used for broader public purposes. Financial assistance for public projects can be either short-term or long-term, depending on the nature of the initiatives (Hernandez & Coutin, 2006). Such support is often provided through direct cash payments, electronic transfers, or during visits to the hometown for various functions and celebrations. In addition to monetary contributions, non-monetary transfers, or social capital, also occur, where skills, knowledge, and networks are shared from destination countries back to countries of origin (Lacroix et al., 2016; Levitt & Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011), 2011).

4. Non-monetary Remittance

Research on remittances initially focused heavily on their economic aspects, but since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in exploring their non-financial dimensions (Mukherjee, 2017). Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011 introduced the term "social remittance" to describe the non-monetary components of remittances (Markley, 2011). These trans-economic aspects include skills, ideas, values, knowledge, attitudes, and social capital exchanged between the host and home countries (Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2015). When emigrants return to their home countries, they often bring new skills, perspectives, and cultural ideologies, which can influence the attitudes and behaviors of both their family members and the broader community (Markley, 2011).

5. Migrants' remittance on poverty alleviation in the home countries

Emigrants leave their place of origin seeking better livelihoods, which helps reduce unemployment in their home countries (Asch, 2018). Emigration contributes to home country development through several types of remittances: (1) remittances sent back to families left behind (Ivlevs et al., 2019), (2) alleviating unemployment and low wages, and (3) the influence of returned emigrants who act as a "brain bank," bringing back skills and knowledge, also known as social remittances, that support both household and community development (Agrawal et al., 2011; A. (Ghimire & Maharjan, 2015); D. J. Ghimire et al., 2021). These factors show that emigration can help alleviate poverty in the home country. According to Debnath, migrant contributions can be categorized into four areas: (1) human capital from returnees, (2) financial capital through cash remittances, (3) social capital through networks with transnational (Debnath, 2016) communities, and (4) acting as change-makers through innovative entrepreneurial efforts.

6. Migrants' remittance enhances Inter-Culturality

Migration has significantly enriched the cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity of destination countries. It facilitates the exchange of cultural practices between home and host countries, creating a bidirectional flow of culture (McKenzie, 2002). While migration can lead to the loss of local culture, religious customs, and social support systems in the emigrant's home country, it also affects the identity of individuals in their new environment (McKenzie, 2002). Social remittances contribute to this cultural exchange between sending and receiving countries (Mukherjee, 2017). Migration is interconnected with cultural loss, identity, and congruity, as well as physical, mental, and social factors (Bhugra & Arya, 2005). Rather than a one-way process, this exchange is multidirectional; returning migrants bring back ideas, knowledge, values, and attitudes from the host country, while also sharing their home culture abroad (Lipton, 1980, 2005). Language exchange is a key aspect of interculturality, as migrants learn the local language of the host country and bring foreign languages back home, broadening worldviews and breaking down territorial boundaries (Eisenbruch, 1990). Having discussed both monetary and non-monetary contributions of migrants, this research now explores the connection between these contributions and various aspects of philanthropy.

2. Remittance as Philanthropy

Generous philanthropists make tangible and sustainable contributions that are visible and measurable. While the term "philanthropy" might seem abstract, the act of giving is very concrete. The word “philanthropy” is derived from two Greek words: “Philio,” meaning love, and “Anthrapo,” meaning humanity, together meaning "love for humanity." The actual practice of philanthropy worldwide has its roots in charitable actions.

Philanthropy with various types and dimensions

As it is very well stated, the word philanthropy means “love for the humanity”, this study focus on the philanthropic initiatives by the migrants through their selfless contribution for the common development of their native places. The field of philanthropy has got various types and dimensions. Here the researcher would like to bring out those types and dimensions of philanthropy in the following passage.

2.1 Big philanthropy

a. **Individuals**

Discussing the various dimensions of philanthropy, we are now at the juncture to examine the contributions made by the individuals at least a few great and prominent personalities in this segment through their philanthropic projects. The individual giving in the modernity was looked with wonder with the great contribution of Mark Zuckerberk and Priscilla Chan, the administrators of Facebook, who promised to give 99 per cent of their shares ($45 billions) for the common cause to make the world a better place for promoting equality to everyone to have access to opportunity notwithstanding of the nations, race, colour, families or circumstances they are born with (Callahan D, 2017 Page No:21).

Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York City, famously stated, "the reality of great wealth is ‘what you can’t spend and you can’t take it with you’," which inspired his significant philanthropic efforts (Lambin & Surender, 2021). He quietly donated $450 million to various noble causes, including anti-smoking initiatives, reducing traffic deaths in poorer countries, combating climate change, and shutting down coal-fired power plants in the U.S. Bloomberg was influenced by another wealthy donor who planned to give $50 million upon his death and persuaded him to make his contributions while still alive (Joseph & Reddy, 2021).

Foundations

While looking at the contributions through the foundations, *the Gates foundation* comes to mind as the largest private foundation in the world. It was founded in 2000, having its base in Seattle, Washington. Shocked by the health in a mess while going on the long trip to African countries, Bill Gates and Melinda, the builders of the Gates Foundation, were deeply moved to give away their wealth investing on global health. The foundation has an asset worth of $50.7 billion, aiming globally to enhance healthcare and to bring down extreme poverty. It focuses on bridging the equal health accessibility between the rich and the poor in the world.

Azim Premji, India's most generous philanthropist, leads the field of philanthropy with his exceptional contributions. His donations, derived from his shares in Wipro, are carefully planned and executed. Since the establishment of Premji's charitable foundation in 2001, it has funded numerous projects, contributing $21 million, which amounts to 25% of his personal wealth (Times of India, April 19, 2013). The foundation's efforts have made a significant impact by training thousands of teachers to enhance educational techniques in government schools across fifty districts in six states in India. Premji's dedication to philanthropy, initially focused on improving education for disadvantaged children, is now admired by corporations and business leaders for its commitment to inclusive development in the country.

2.2 Vertical & Horizontal Philanthropy (the well-off helping the ill off)

Vertical philanthropy primarily involves financial contributions from the wealthy to the poor, often reflecting a hierarchical dynamic where the rich may not fully understand the poor's situation. It can sometimes convey a condescending attitude. In contrast, horizontal philanthropy transcends financial aid by emphasizing shared experiences and a common sense of humanity. This approach highlights that philanthropy is not only about the rich helping the poor (vertical) but also includes the poor helping each other (horizontal) (Mahtani, 2019). During crises like famine or violence, people of goodwill gather resources from those with more and distribute them to those in need (Brewis, 2010). Financial supporters fall under vertical philanthropy (Corneo, 2018), while those executing and implementing projects are part of horizontal philanthropy (Fowler & Mati, 2019). The relatively poor have some advantages for survival compared to the absolutely poor, whose very survival is at risk. Horizontal philanthropists, often closer to those in severe poverty, are generally more attuned to their needs compared to vertical philanthropists who may overlook the most impoverished (Hulme et al., 2001).

2.3 Mutations of philanthropy through Indian religious and political traditions

Before British rule, local communities and families provided welfare to the poor. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 introduced by the British established a new system for poverty relief in England, offering work to able-bodied individuals and classifying the poor into deserving and undeserving categories (Hitchcock, 2021). During colonial times, philanthropy focused on supporting orphans, widows, and accident victims (Meenaz Hassam, 2016). The 20th century saw a shift from traditional philanthropy through Hindu temples and Muslim zakat to modern urban philanthropy involving educational institutions, NGOs, and corporate philanthropy (Fisman et al., 2006). Industrial wealth has become central to contemporary philanthropy, culminating in corporate social responsibility (CSR) under the Companies Act 2013.

2.4 Corporate philanthropy:

Corporate philanthropy involves companies using their revenue and resources to support non-profit organizations and drive social change (Ramamurti, 2001). Contributions can include cash donations, use of facilities, and volunteer time. Corporations often partner directly with civil society and community organizations to promote social change (Layton, 2016). Some companies have dedicated units to manage charitable gifts and philanthropic activities, including matching gift programs. This approach, which highlights corporate branding rather than solely focusing on large donations, reflects a shift from traditional big philanthropy to a more structured and integrated model.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Act of 2013 has formalized philanthropy, making donations mandatory rather than optional. CSR focuses on how corporations can conduct their business to positively impact society (Chen, 2021) and includes sustainability in philanthropic efforts. CSR activities are categorized into: 1) Environmental efforts to reduce business-related environmental damage, 2) Philanthropy through monetary donations for community development, 3) Ethical labor practices to ensure fair treatment of employees, and 4) Volunteering through altruistic actions. CSR ensures that management practices contribute positively to society (Islam et al., 2021).

2.5 Philanthro-capitalism

The term 'capital' typically refers to investment, and modern philanthropy approaches contributions as responsible investments rather than just charitable donations. Philanthropy, meaning "love for mankind," often involves anonymous giving. Philanthro-capitalism focuses on making the right contributions to the right people at the right time (Bishop & Green, 2015). Just as traditional capitalism seeks financial returns, philanthropy aims for social returns. Sustainable investors are crucial for modern philanthropy, which prioritizes long-term impact over short-term gains (Thompson, 2018). The current focus is on measuring the impact of charitable donations to maximize effectiveness.

2.6 Diaspora philanthropy:

Diaspora refers to a settled community of migrants who maintain a strong attachment to their homeland, even though they don't intend to return permanently. Their contributions benefit both the host country and their home country (Mahtani, 2019 p. 34-35). In host countries, they boost labor demand and contribute through their skills and expertise, despite the phenomenon known as 'brain drain' (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005). However, diasporas also act as philanthropists by supporting development in their home countries. For instance, an Indian couple in New York, Mr. Om Sharma and his wife Krishna, donated $2,500 annually for 20 years to fund a school in India. This desire to "give back to their motherland" motivates many immigrant communities to support their home countries (Dusenbery, 2016).

2.7 Emigrants as Philanthropists

Emigrants differ from diasporas, who are part of a settled community; emigrants are temporary migrants planning to return to their place of origin (Mahtani, 2019). They maintain connections with their birthplace through friends, family, and local institutions like schools, shops, and places of worship. Visits to their hometowns often inspire them to contribute to their communities, especially after witnessing local needs firsthand. During natural disasters and emergencies, such as the Chennai flood (2015), the Gaja cyclone (2017), and the Kerala flood (2018), emigrants abroad have provided generous support. Emigrants contribute both financially and with their time, energy, and skills, particularly when they return to their home country (Ghimire & Maharjan, 2015).

2.8 Philanthropy at the trans-national level

Trans-nationalism extends beyond the borders of one's native land to include other countries. Emigrants often "give back" to their home country by sharing their knowledge, skills, expertise, values, and worldview, reflecting a transnational approach (Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016; Burgess, 2018). Despite benefiting from their host countries, diaspora emigrants maintain a deep connection to their homeland. True philanthropy naturally crosses national boundaries in its efforts and effects. As migration and development become increasingly interconnected, development transcends territorial limits, impacting nations globally and enhancing development beyond borders (Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, philanthropy is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various forms of giving, from charitable donations to sustained and strategic contributions. It is not merely an act of generosity but a carefully considered investment in social impact, requiring both experience and expertise. The dimensions of philanthropy have evolved to include diverse remittances and contributions that extend beyond traditional charity, reflecting a deep commitment to fostering long-term, meaningful change. As discussed in this paper, drawing on a wide range of national and international perspectives, philanthropy today is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for addressing social, economic, and cultural challenges across borders. By understanding its various dimensions and approaches, philanthropists and organizations can better leverage their resources to create sustainable impact and drive positive change in communities worldwide.

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