

Philanthropy Letter



FONDATION
DE LUXEMBOURG

Philanthropy in action

“When you invest in women, you invest in a powerful source of global development.”

Melinda French Gates

The role of women as a multiplying factor is often underestimated. When supported and empowered, women are key contributors to the development of their families, their communities, and thereby society at large. To that end, the dual objectives of empowering women and building a better world are inextricably connected.

By dedicating this year’s Philanthropy Letter to the theme Women and Philanthropy, we hope to shine a light not only on philanthropic efforts that help women, but also some of the women who themselves focus on helping others.

In this edition, we are especially honoured to feature a keynote contribution by **Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess of Luxembourg**. Herself a lifelong philanthropist, many of her endeavors focus on the plight of women, both in the developing world as well as at home. Recently named Global Champion for the Fight Against Sexual Violence in Conflict by the United Nations, Her Royal Highness generously shares from her wealth of experience in this inspirational and deeply personal article.

We also asked four female philanthropists in our network to share what they find most rewarding about their engagement. Their insights are a poignant reminder of why we participate in philanthropy.

Our featured project this year unites the themes of women’s empowerment and climate change through capacity-building workshops in Nepal. This special project, supported by the Mangrove Foundation, makes the case that supporting women can have a wide-reaching impact.

For many, philanthropy is not an individual but rather a family affair. In this edition, we explore the process of running a family foundation from conception to handover. Moreover, this article also shines a spotlight on a family foundation under our aegis, the Fondation Norbert et Poupette Graas-Lavie. For those eager to expand their philanthropy to include the next generation, this article is an invaluable source of inspiration.

The end of the year is an opportunity to both reflect on our achievements and on the work that remains to be done. As we look towards the future, let us remember to consider those who are forgotten or left behind by development, so that we all may live safer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives.

We wish you a pleasant reading,

Tonika Hirdman



- 2 Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess of Luxembourg shares from her lifetime of philanthropic experience
- 4 Bringing the next generation into family philanthropy

- 5 Building a philanthropic legacy across three generations
- 6 Supporting women through agriculture
- 8 Female philanthropists reflect on the impact of their engagement

Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess of Luxembourg

Women and Philanthropy: Driving Change Through Empowerment



Her Royal Highness
The Grand Duchess of
Luxembourg

I come from a family of dedicated philanthropists in Cuba, who instilled in me the philosophy that “the more you have, the more you should give”. My roots, in addition to being married to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, have given me a unique opportunity to be the voice of the voiceless.

My Foundation started as a wedding gift by the people of the Grand Duchy in 1981. It enables me to respond to the calls for assistance addressed to my husband and me, and to develop social and humanitarian projects in Luxembourg and abroad. These projects are built over time, not only because of the complexity, but above all because of a demand for results, results which are recognised for their uniqueness and effectiveness by inter-governmental agencies, national and international media and donors.

My work has taken me to many corners of the world, where I have met countless courageous and resilient women. In many of these countries, women are the backbone of the economy. In this regard, in the 1990s, as UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, I met “the banker of the poor”, Professor Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2006 for his idea of microcredit. Aware of the impact of women’s empowerment on society, and with the help of Prof. Yunus, I was able to promote his ideas during many visits in southeast Asia and in Africa, but also in Luxembourg. As a result, the Grand Duchy is today one of the key actors in this area.

“Ensuring women’s access to education and their means for economic empowerment has always been crucial for me.”



The participants of the inaugural international forum on victims of sexual violence in fragile environments in Luxembourg, 2019



Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess with Professor Muhammad Yunus on mission in Bangladesh © Christophe Olinger

Over the years I met many women who inspired me to fight the injustices of this world and to use this privileged position I have, to help them change their lives, the lives of their children as well as their communities. I am convinced that investing in women and girls’ education transforms communities, countries, and the entire world.

Having supported educational programmes for young girls in Afghanistan since 2004, I am devastated by the current situation there. Through my friend and advisor Chékéba Hachemi—a former diplomat and herself a philanthropist—we have been financing Afghanistan’s first cooperative of women, i.e. tailors, through the association *Afghanistan Libre*. We have also been supporting 200 girls in their preparations for their university admission exams. While these efforts have been successful and led to better living conditions over the years, due to the current situation, we have had to interrupt our projects and redirect our funds to basic humanitarian aid. Life doesn’t follow our plans, and we have to adapt to the needs on the ground.

For some years now, my focus has been on one of the greatest taboos of our time: sexual violence in fragile environments. Since 2014 I have met and exchanged with survivors, front-line service providers, experts, and thought leaders in this area, in particular with the, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege. He asked me to lend my voice to amplify the plight of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. These survivors are often cast out of their homes and community due to stigma, and are forced to fend for themselves and their children.

In 2019, I invited 50 survivors from 19 countries to Luxembourg for a two-day forum, where, for the first time, they were placed centre-stage and heard by policymakers and members of the donor and diplomatic communities. This forum marked the beginning of the “Stand, Speak, Rise Up” initiative, which has since become an association that funds tangible projects in conflict-affected settings. Crucially, it embraces the global and humanistic vision that has guided my social and humanitarian commitment for 40 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic also brought to light many needs closer to home. Throughout the pandemic, I reached out to first line support groups in Luxembourg, and was subsequently made aware of a disturbing reality: young single mom students were unable to pay their rent. Having lost their student job because of the pandemic, they faced giving up their studies as their financial situation became unbearable. I listened to these young mothers and their struggle in managing university studies, raising a child and working to pay for accommodation and food. I could not accept them to quit their studies, not only for themselves but also considering the impact on their children and on society. Through my Foundation and its generous sponsors, we created a grant to help specifically single mother students throughout their university years.

The identification of this pressing issue and the collaboration that followed are a poignant example of openness, adaptability, and meaningful impact.

If I must summarize my methodology into a few words, I will emphasise how important it is to go to the field and to take your time: listen to those concerned – especially women. Meet with them in respect of cultural differences, understand their background, and acknowledge their suffering. In my experience, real solutions require multidimensional and long-term holistic approaches. **Philanthropic work should not only be about business models and economic efficiency, but also about exchanges and understanding other human beings.**

I deeply believe that when we help someone to regain their dignity, we are actively working towards a culture of global peace. Echoing the words of Nelson Mandela, “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice.”

Bringing the next generation into family philanthropy



Liz Gadd is Principal Consultant for Effective Philanthropy at New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), a UK-based think tank and consultancy supporting charities and funders.

and new energy abound and, providing there is openness to these new ideas, family philanthropy can go from strength to strength. Whilst some philanthropists will plan to hand over the reins at a set date, most will support the younger generations to build their skills, experience, and confidence by letting them lead discrete areas of work before maturing to a handover.

Open and honest conversations on both sides will ease the transition. The established generation should share their hopes and wishes for how their legacy will be continued; and for the younger generation, recognising the expertise and experience of the established family members is an important backdrop to any changes they may wish to suggest.

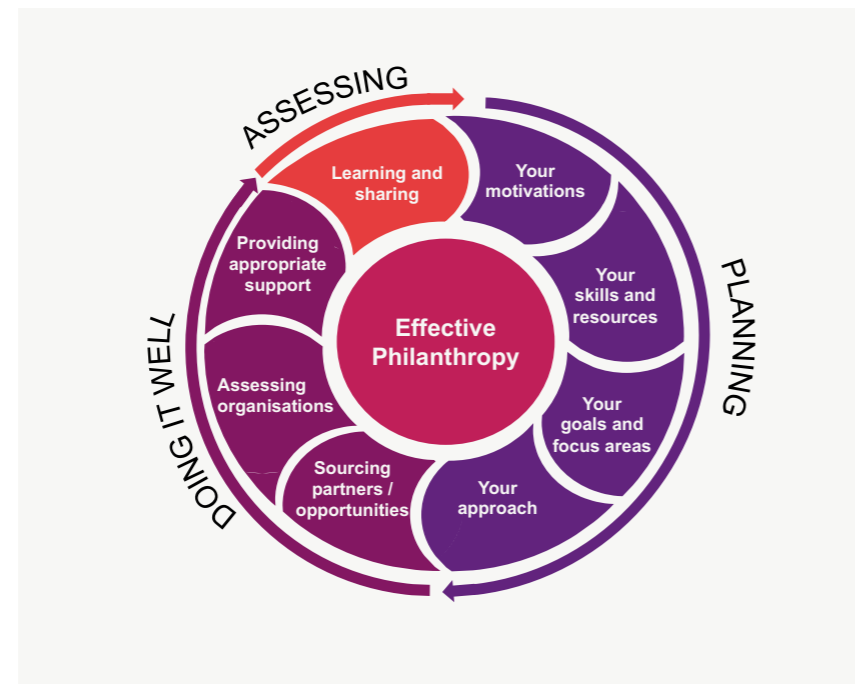
The smoothest transitions are often where intergenerational discussions yield opportunities to integrate new ideas into existing portfolios, building on the existing expertise and networks of the family. For example, exploring how digital technology can enhance a youth portfolio or how climate change might be addressed through a health portfolio.

The foundational values will vary between families, however the key ingredients that support success in this time of transition are shown to be treating each other as equals; trusting each other to make sound recommendations; remaining open to new ideas; and being generous with time and feedback when requested.

We are living through the largest transfer of wealth in history, as wealth passes from ‘Baby Boomers’ to their children and grandchildren. \$15 trillion worldwide, with \$3.2 trillion of that within Europe, is predicted to pass between generations by 2030. As family philanthropy enters a new era, philanthropists can build upon the skills and knowledge of each generation to strengthen their impact.

Family foundations are rarely static; there is a cycle of planning, delivering, learning, and adapting that underpins all effective philanthropy.

Welcoming the next generation into family foundations is often a moment of joy and opportunities – fresh ideas



NPC's Effective Philanthropy Cycle

There are also additional practical considerations to reflect upon together as a family:

- 1. Motivations** – as a family and as individuals, what motivates you? What remains the same and what is evolving as the next generation is integrated into the foundation?
- 2. Skills and resources** – how have the balance of skills and resources changed as a result of new family members coming on board? Are there other family members who could add desirable skills and experience to the foundation?

- 3. Goals and focus areas** – do your goals and focus areas remain relevant to your evolving family passions and the external need? If a refresh of your strategy is desirable, when will this happen and who will be involved?
- 4. Giving approach** – as a family, does your approach to philanthropy remain relevant to the external context, your skills, experiences and understanding of effective philanthropy?

- 5. The practical transition** – how will the handover take place? What will different family members roles be and how is that decided? Are there regulator or fiscal considerations to keep in mind during this time (ie. signing authority)? Do you have the advisory support required for your agreed direction? How will the changes to the family’s philanthropy be influenced by key milestones such as parenting young children, busy work lives or retirement?

For all of these conversations, a strong sense of shared family values underpins open and effective decision making. Involving the next generation is an opportunity to unite the family in making a positive impact to social and environmental issues and expand your philanthropic legacy together.

Building a philanthropic legacy across three generations



With **Nicolas Graas**, Co-Founder of the **Fondation Norbert et Poupette Graas-Lavie**, under the aegis of the **Fondation de Luxembourg**

What was the motivation behind your family foundation? How did it come to be?

The main idea was to create something to honour our parents, and to teach our children about their grandparents’ legacy and values. More broadly, we also wanted to teach them to use their lucky position in life as an opportunity to give and think about how to create positive impact. Lastly, we wanted to create a space where the our grandchildren can come together and discuss giving throughout their lives.

The Fondation Norbert et Poupette Graas-Lavie involves three generations. How do you all work together towards your common goals?

It has always been an open discussion between our mother, us siblings, and our children. More recently, the older grandchildren have stepped up to help the

younger grandchildren understand what it means to give. We sit together as three generations and at the board meetings, and it creates a nice atmosphere for everyone. In this sense, the foundation has become a real platform for familial exchange that is different from our usual discussions.

What is your best piece of advice for other families seeking to embark on a philanthropic journey together?

I advise them to go for it! Let the elder generation outline the foundation’s goals, and let the younger generation find ways to implement them. Maintaining an open line of communication is paramount – take the time to sit, exchange, and understand the complexity of the issues you are trying to solve as best as you can. Creating a foundation is a great way to teach your children about values and respect, and helping others is a great way of living.

Supporting Women Through Sustainable Agriculture

Supported by the Mangrove Foundation, under the aegis of the Fondation de Luxembourg



Françoise Binsfeld

is the executive director of the NGO Aide à l'Enfance de l'Inde et du Népal, AEIN, Luxembourg since 2016. She has 15 years' experience in managing and monitoring programs in India and Nepal. Since 2021, she also serves on the Board of the Cercle de coopération des ONGD de Luxembourg.

What is the main mission of Aide à l'Enfance de l'Inde et du Népal? What are your principal activities, and how does your team evaluate the needs of the communities you reach?

Our mission is to empower the most vulnerable social groups – children, youth and women – in rural communities of India and Nepal so that they can assert their rights and become autonomous. We finance mostly integrated projects focusing on education, health, ecology, income and rights. We also carry out various awareness raising activities in Luxembourg. Since its inception in 1967, AEIN has supported more than 670 projects.

The initiatives we support are developed and implemented on site by local organizations, with the participation of the beneficiaries at every stage of the project. We also undertake scoping visits in India and Nepal to evaluate the needs of the communities before supporting a project.

Can you describe the collaboration with the Mangrove Foundation under the aegis of the Fondation de Luxembourg, and how this collaboration was initiated?

The Mangrove Foundation acts for environment protection and rehabilitation and women empowerment. Our collaboration goes beyond financial support, as we have regular exchanges on the project's progress and Nepal's socio-economic development, and also monitor the project together. **The exchange of expertise is very enriching, and the Fondation encourages both us and our local partner to outperform our impact for the betterment of society.**



Women participating in the Farmer Field School, where they learn climate change adaptation practices © Shabir Shrestha

What prompted the launch of the Jagaran project, supported by the Mangrove Foundation? Who are your key beneficiaries?

As our strategy is to work in the poorest provinces of Nepal as per the Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index, the Jagaran project is implemented in the districts of Sarlahi, Mahottari and Danusha of Province 2 in Nepal. The socio-economic status, health care facilities, literacy rate, political participation, decision making and access and control over resources is very poor among the women and adolescent girls in the project region. This critical need strongly aligns with the Mangrove Foundation's mission.

The direct beneficiaries of the project are 1581 disadvantaged and marginalized women, 2700 adolescent girls and students, 4200 community people and 345 local government representatives.

Why is it especially important to uplift women and girls in this region?

The persistence of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, dowry, son preference, polygamy, widows accused of witchcraft etc. are overarching and significant barriers in this Province to sustainable social development.

How are climate change and women's empowerment intertwined?

The project's districts are highly prone to natural catastrophes, mainly floods and heavy winds, that impact the vulnerable households. For some time, the rain pattern has also been very difficult to predict. 60% of the targeted families have less than 3 months of food security in a year. Women are particularly impacted by climate change as their main occupation is in agriculture.

Can you describe how the capacity-building workshops are carried out? How can these workshops create impact for them beyond the curriculum?

The Nepali word 'Jagaran' means to move the community people towards prosperity and livelihood by changing their behaviour. The capacity-building workshops focus on leadership and economic capacity enhancement, behaviour change communications, awareness on laws, policies and programs, entrepreneurship development and market linkages. The women and girls will be able to claim and exercise



Women are learning the traditional Mithila art for income generation © WOREC Nepal

their rights by participating in the decision-making process for gender responsive budgeting, gender friendly policies and development plans at local level and by accessing local governments' and other resources.

You recently visited the project in Nepal. What were your impressions?

On the one hand, I have been very impressed by the impact of the project on women's lives since its start in 2020. Women are more vocal now, have more knowledge about their rights and are greatly benefitting from the various trainings they received and the project's livelihood support. Thanks to their leadership qualities, some women gained access to government funding to further improve their economic status. We also received very good feedback from the local authorities who requested us to expand our support to other wards of the three districts.

On the other hand, I have been moved by the extreme poverty most of our beneficiaries are living in. Their housing, sanitation, nutrition, hygiene and education status is very poor.

What are the biggest challenges to running this program? How do you monitor its success?

The biggest challenges we have are the impact of climate change on the vulnerable communities and our budget limitations. We monitor the success of the project through field visits and by analysing the reports we receive from our local partner Women's Rehabilitation Centre.

We are very grateful to the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mangrove Foundation under the aegis of the Fondation de Luxembourg for their financial support to implement this project.

Quel est l'aspect le plus gratifiant de votre engagement philanthropique ?

Diane Wolter,
Présidente et Fondatrice de la Fondation
CBM Luxembourg



La philanthropie est un état d'esprit qui pousse à l'action. Dans mon cas, cet état d'esprit s'est développé au fil des années pour aboutir à la récente création de la Fondation CBM Luxembourg.

Lors d'une visite sur le terrain à une clinique des yeux, j'ai assisté à des tests d'acuité visuelle de quinze patients qui ont bénéficié la veille d'une chirurgie de la cataracte. J'ai été émue en voyant un jeune homme qui, à peine le patch enlevé et le test réalisé, se tourne vers sa famille avec un grand sourire et son pouce en l'air, en signe de succès de l'opération de la cataracte.

Emmanuelle Tesch,
Co-Fondatrice de la Fondation Christine
Tesch-Goblet d'Alviella - La Violette



Le plus grand bonheur que l'on ressent de la Fondation La Violette sont les bienfaits que l'art thérapie, par ses différents médiums, apporte aux personnes en souffrance physique et psychologique. Elle offre un réel support pour les malades qui vivent des moments très difficiles.

Bien évidemment, ce projet ne serait rien sans notre mère. Il nous permet de perpétuer sa mémoire en agissant en son nom, car si elle avait survécu à la maladie, ce serait elle par sa grande générosité, sa bonté de coeur et son amour pour l'art qui aurait porté ce projet.

Evelyne Pourteau,
Fondatrice de la Fondation Jacqueline NOEL



La signature de l'acte de création de cette fondation qui s'inscrit dans le long terme, aura été un des moments le plus gratifiant de cet engagement. C'est aujourd'hui un sentiment de très grande satisfaction : celui d'avoir accompli une mission !

L'accompagnement de la Fondation du Luxembourg, de part son savoir-faire et l'écoute de l'équipe, a largement facilité ma mission par le réconfort d'être correctement guidée !

Aujourd'hui, ce qui fut extrêmement gratifiant, c'est le message enthousiaste de la lière Boursière, étudiante au Collège de l'Europe ! C'est exactement ce que Jacqueline NOEL aurait aimé lire...

Marianne Ruggieri,
Fondatrice de la Fondation Juniclair



L'engagement philanthropique plus que tout autre, nécessite une grande part de soi-même. C'est un challenge professionnel et personnel. Mener à bien la collaboration avec des acteurs de terrain, nouer des liens forts avec les hommes et les femmes rencontrés, identifier des bénéficiaires,

être toujours à l'écoute des besoins – ces aspects de la philanthropie sont essentiels. Plus que des mots, des actes. L'étincelle dans le regard d'un enfant, d'une femme, d'un homme, est la plus belle récompense et le cadeau de l'engagement vrai. Créer du lien, permettre l'éducation et lutter contre l'exploitation humaine ont été au coeur de l'action de la fondation.

