



From 365 to 651 billion dollars in foundation giving to the SDGs. The SDGPP: An enabler of catalytic philanthropic capital.

In 2015 the SDG Philanthropy Platform (SDGPP) was launched to educate philanthropy on the role of the Sustainable Development Goals to enable more strategic giving to achieve global development outcomes. One way of doing this was by collecting and analyzing grantmaking data by foundations around the world and aligning it with the SDGs to demonstrate how foundations had made and could continue to make strategic grants while creating a baseline of giving – the result of this was [SDGfunders.org](https://sdgfunders.org).

SDGfunders.org includes historical data from 2010 to 2015 as if the SDGs and their targets had existed at that time, as well as actual data for the SDG period commencing in 2016 onwards. Candid created this historical data to establish a baseline and, in 2016, calculated that from the years 2010 - 2013, a total of \$97.3 billion in philanthropic giving for the SDGs over the four years would have been made had the SDGs existed at that time. [Based on this calculation, Candid estimated that philanthropy's global overall funding through 2030 for the SDGs would be at least USD 365 billion \(364,875,000.00 to be exact\).](#)

This original calculation did not include the data sets for years 2014 and 2015 because foundation data typically has a 2+ year delay before it is shared by the Internal Revenue Service in the US or obtained through partners in other countries, and then additional time is required to clean and code the data. Thus, it wasn't until 2018 that the complete picture for the historical baseline became clear, and it was even higher than initially anticipated. It turned out that, in fact, USD 209 billion had been tagged to the SDGs between 2010 and 2015. Based on these historical figures alone, we can now make a crude calculation that had funding continued at the same rate from 2016 to 2030 throughout the duration of the SDGs, then USD 627 billion would have been contributed to the SDGs.

These numbers had always been estimated as conservative because they only included one form of philanthropy at the time – institutional foundations - which is one of the most dominant and well-understood forms of giving, but not the only one. Therefore, this meant these historical figures did not consider other forms of philanthropy or a growth in philanthropy, both of which are essential considerations to address. Individual giving is particularly relevant as we see a rise in donations being made by the middle class. It also did not account for giving by high-net-worth individuals, which is now likely to significantly increase associated with growth in immense fortunes driven by central bank liquidity injections and economic boom for some sectors as a result of the pandemic. Further, it was anticipated and hoped that there would be an increase in awareness by foundations about the SDGs, and thus their giving practices would likely shift somewhat as the framework was embraced. Finally, it

was well known that not all giving was being tracked, and not all data was available to access, although it was expected that volumes of giving data would increase over the period of the SDGs.

With these points in mind, we can now turn to the actual current foundation giving data that has been collected since the inception of the SDGs in 2016. Five years into the SDGs, based on SDGfunders, we can now efficiently track data on grantmaking and calculate actual and estimated volumes of giving that could be made by foundations specifically. As of end 2020, current foundation giving accounted for in SDGfunders totals USD 217 billion over five years. The likelihood that this total accounts for only a limited amount of data from 2019 and particularly 2020 is high based on the aforementioned conservative assumptions and the anomaly of the coronavirus pandemic, which created significant delays in data collection and sharing due to extended tax filing dates in the US, and delays in processing due to a short-term shift in priorities to process and analyze COVID-19 related data. Regardless, based on this figure, we can now estimate that USD 651 billion in funding could be potentially unlocked by 2030 when the Goals expire. This total accounts for an additional USD 286 billion in financing than estimated initially back in 2016.

In reliable research, the Charities Aid Foundation estimates that if the world's middle classes were to give over just 0.5% of their spending – less than the average UK household and about the same as people in the Republic of Korea – that could amount to USD 319 billion in resources for civil society organizations annually by 2030¹

This increased actual and projected giving is an excellent achievement by philanthropy, in part thanks to the SDGPP; however, we need to keep this momentum going and not fall back into a business-as-usual approach. Ford Foundation, an original donor to the SDGPP, and some others have recently tripled down on their grantmaking, and they want the rest of the industry to follow. Although the foundation sector has made great strides and achievements in contributing funding to the SDGs, this amount is minimal compared with ODA and some private sector investment. Achieving this increased goal in SDG giving will not be an easy task and has already required significant efforts by many, including the SDGPP, to support policy, shift donor thinking, unlock capital and educate on the SDGs. Philanthropic dollars can not only act as additional funding but, if enabled in the right way, can unlock and contribute to leveraging additional funding sources, ensuring the money is genuinely catalytic in nature.

The SDGPP is a necessary enabler and facilitator to continue this progress both in terms of increasing volumes and new and broader approaches to philanthropy. The SDGPP is perfectly positioned and committed to facilitate the unlocking USD 100 billion of this additional USD 286 billion.

¹ Charities Aid Foundation, Groundwork for Global Giving, <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/caf-campaigns/campaigning-for-a-giving-world/groundwork-for-growing-giving>