

Transformational Philanthropy Model: A Strategy for Sustainable Community Development in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study identifies three core pillars for advancing sustainable community development in Indonesia: reinforcing local socio-institutional foundations, critically understanding patterns of socio-economic inequality, and systematically integrating collective cultural values such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation). The research is motivated by the recognized limitations of traditional, charity-based philanthropy, which often perpetuates dependency and fails to address the structural roots of poverty. Through a systematic qualitative review and thematic analysis of scholarly literature, the study aims to develop a contextualized transformational philanthropy model. This model is designed to shift the paradigm from passive aid distribution to active community empowerment, positioning local actors as central agents in their own development trajectory. The concluding argument emphasizes that the success of this transformational approach depends on a synergistic balance, merging modern managerial efficiency with deep-rooted local wisdom, aligning religious ethical principles with professional institutional governance, and leveraging digital innovation to foster broad, inclusive participation. Ultimately, the model presents a strategic pathway for philanthropy to contribute meaningfully to long-term, equitable, and resilient community development in the Indonesian context.

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Introduction

Traditional charity-based philanthropy, which has long dominated the landscape of benevolence in Indonesia, has proven increasingly inadequate in addressing the root causes of sustainable development challenges (Lessy et al., 2020; Naisabur et al., 2023; Suharso et al., 2018). The hand-out model of giving, which merely provides direct assistance, often runs counter to the fundamental principles of empowerment and self-reliance, the very essence of sustainable societies (Faculty of Economic and Business, Warmadewa University et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). Aid distributed sporadically and without a coherent strategy not only fails to build community resilience but may also stifle existing

local initiatives. Moreover, conventional philanthropy is frequently perceived as an imported product of Western individualistic paradigms, rendering it misaligned with the communal structures and deeply rooted values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) inherent in Indonesian culture (Armiadi Musa, 2024; Musa, 2024; Shapiro et al., 2018). The prevailing belief is that such traditional models foster a “dependency syndrome,” a condition of reliance that contradicts the ethos of autonomy and dignity upheld by local communities (Feingold & Rounsaville, 1995; Mirza et al., 2011). This reality is further compounded by the fact that the philanthropic acts is rarely accompanied by an equivalent rise in strategic literacy among philanthropic actors themselves (Abebe & Cha, 2018, 2018; Ricks, 2005). Many remain trapped within the paradigm of “giving fish” rather than “teaching how to fish,” let alone advancing toward the more transformative goal of “revitalizing the entire fishing ecosystem.” On the recipients’ side, community organizations often lack the institutional preparedness and managerial capacity necessary to transform financial aid into long-term social and economic capital (Moizer & Tracey, 2010; Terzieva et al., 2025). From these interrelated conditions, it becomes evident that conventional philanthropy creates a fundamental incompatibility with the dynamic character and developmental needs of Indonesian society, one that should be positioned as an active subject and rightful owner of its development process, rather than a passive object of compassion.

Although the fundamental limitations of charity-based philanthropy are increasingly recognized, both academic scholarship and policy practices in Indonesia have yet to adequately respond to this critical mismatch. Existing literature tends to frame philanthropy in linear and narrow terms, focusing primarily on short-term implications while neglecting the deeper structural relationship between giving models and holistic social transformation. Previous studies have seldom unpacked the foundational problems in the nexus between philanthropy and empowerment, thereby failing to propose truly transformative frameworks. At least three dominant tendencies can be identified in the current body of research. First are studies emphasizing the macro-level implications of philanthropy, such as its contribution to national economic growth or its effectiveness in delivering emergency humanitarian aid, as discussed by (Liu et al., 2020; H. Wang et al., 2008; X. Wang et al., 2022). While significant, these works often overlook the micro-social and cultural dimensions of empowerment processes. Second are critical analyses of the negative effects of charitable giving, exploring how poorly designed assistance can perpetuate dependency, distort local market mechanisms, and reinforce pre-existing inequalities (Andreoni & Payne, 2003; Brooks, 2004; Peck et al., 2012, 2012). Third are studies that focus

primarily on technical and administrative issues, such as regulation, transparency, and accountability in managing social funds (Mukhlishin et al., 2022; Striebing, 2017; Syaifuddin & Khalil, 2024). This mapping reveals a clear knowledge gap: the deeper socio-cultural, institutional, and communal dimensions, particularly the role of collective values and local agency, remain underexplored and insufficiently integrated into philanthropic design frameworks.

Addressing this gap, the primary objective of this study is to enrich existing scholarship by critically examining how Indonesia's sociocultural characteristics shape the effectiveness, acceptability, and sustainability of philanthropic models. The core argument is that a community's capacity for transformation and self-reliance never occurs in a vacuum; it is profoundly shaped by cultural values, local wisdom, social relations, and institutional strength. Understanding community perceptions of aid, empowerment, and collective ownership thus becomes an essential prerequisite before designing any intervention. To achieve this aim, three key research questions are formulated. First, how ready are local social and institutional infrastructures, such as customary institutions, women's groups, cooperatives, and kinship networks, to adopt, manage, and sustain transformational philanthropy models? This question examines the institutional foundations that underpin program implementation. Second, how do specific patterns of socio-economic inequality, including disparities between groups and access to resources, influence benefit distribution and impede the realization of social justice within philanthropic programs? This question highlights the need for an inclusive and context-sensitive approach to inequality. Third, how can living cultural values and collective norms, such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), *musyawarah untuk mufakat* (deliberation and consensus), and kinship solidarity, be integrated into the design and implementation of transformational philanthropy? Comprehensive answers to these questions will offer a grounded and contextually nuanced understanding of how to formulate a culturally resonant model of transformational philanthropy, one that is technically strategic, socially embedded, and capable of maximizing its contribution to sustainable community development in Indonesia.

This study rests upon a central argument that the incompatibility between traditional philanthropy and sustainable development stems from their fundamentally divergent logics. Charity-based philanthropy operates on a symptomatic, short-term logic of assistance, whereas sustainable development requires a systemic, long-term logic of empowerment. This argument is reinforced by the understanding that Indonesian society is not inherently

passive; rather, it possesses a deeply ingrained orientation toward communal life and collective values, embodied in practices of cooperation and social solidarity. These values represent a rich reservoir of social capital that can be harmonized with the principles of transformational philanthropy, provided the approach is participatory, dignity-based, and grounded in local assets and potentials. Conversely, the logic of charity-based philanthropy, which prioritizes immediate needs, risks eroding communalism by establishing hierarchical donor–recipient relations. Transformational philanthropy, in contrast, requires robust community institutions and participatory governance to ensure accountability and sustainability. It also calls for more egalitarian social structures and collaborative mechanisms that guarantee equitable access and participation for all members of society, regardless of background. Ultimately, local norms, values, and wisdom must serve as the moral compass guiding the adaptation of this philanthropic model. Thus, the inevitable conclusion is that achieving sustainable development through philanthropy requires an intelligent and culturally sensitive form of social engineering, a Transformational Philanthropy Model, consciously and systematically aligned with the social pulse and cultural character of Indonesian communities.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a literature review as its primary research methodology, specifically structured as a systematic qualitative review of existing scholarly works on philanthropy, community development, and socio-cultural values in Indonesia. This approach is chosen for its ability to comprehensively gather, analyze, and synthesize secondary data from credible academic sources, enabling a deep exploration of conceptual, institutional, and value-based dimensions without the need for primary data collection (Snyder, 2019). The process began with an extensive search across established academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, using a carefully selected set of keywords such as “transformational philanthropy,” “Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia,” “gotong royong,” “community empowerment,” and “social inequality.” The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and relevant research reports published within the last two decades to ensure contemporary relevance while acknowledging foundational texts.

The selected literature underwent a rigorous screening process based on predefined inclusion criteria: relevance to the research topic, academic credibility, and contribution to theoretical or empirical understanding. Following the selection, thematic analysis was employed to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns, concepts, and insights across the literature (Braun & Clarke,

2006). This involved several stages: initial familiarization with the texts, systematic coding of key ideas, grouping codes into broader themes, such as the role of local institutions, dynamics of inequality, integration of cultural values, and digital transformation, and finally, synthesizing these themes into a coherent narrative that addresses the research questions. The analytical process not only summarized existing findings but also highlighted relationships, contradictions, and gaps in the current discourse, thereby providing a robust foundation for developing a contextualized model of transformational philanthropy (Ridley, 2012). Through this systematic and interpretive approach, the study aims to offer a nuanced, evidence-based understanding of how philanthropic practices in Indonesia can evolve from traditional charity to sustainable, community-driven empowerment.

Social and Institutional Foundations: The Tacit Infrastructure of Transformational Philanthropy

Examining the social and institutional foundations that constitute the tacit infrastructure of transformational philanthropy in Indonesia reveals that practices of generosity and social empowerment do not emerge in a culturally neutral context. Rather, philanthropy in Indonesia develops within a social environment deeply embedded in religious values, cultural norms, and the interconnected structures of both traditional and modern institutions. Hence, any analysis of Islamic philanthropy must account for how social organizations, religious institutions, and cultural practices collectively shape philanthropic behaviors and initiatives that are distinctively Indonesian, a synthesis of spirituality, communal solidarity, and modern innovation. A central actor in this transformation is Muhammadiyah, a modernist Islamic organization with a long-standing tradition in education, healthcare, and social service. Beyond managing zakat, infak, and sadaqah, Muhammadiyah has developed a philanthropy model oriented toward empowerment and sustainable social development. Recent studies (Pamungkas, 2023; Ulfahadi, 2023) show that Muhammadiyah pioneered a transparent, professional, and technologically innovative management system for Islamic philanthropy. Its commitment to accountable governance, particularly in zakat administration, has increased public participation and strengthened societal trust in Islamic philanthropic institutions. This approach redefines philanthropy from an act of charity to a measurable and sustainable instrument of social transformation.

To clarify the paradigm shift from charitable to transformational philanthropy, Table 1 below compares the key characteristics of both models within the Indonesian institutional and practical context.

Table 1

Comparative Analysis of Charitable and Transformational Philanthropy Models in the Indonesian Context.

Aspect of Comparison	Charitable (Traditional) Philanthropy Model	Transformational Philanthropy Model
Primary Objective	Provide direct aid to meet immediate basic needs.	Empower communities to achieve self-reliance and sustainable development.
Approach	Reactive, symptom-based (response to urgent needs).	Proactive and systemic (addresses root causes of inequality).
Community Role	Passive recipients (objects of aid).	Active agents and partners in planning, implementation, and evaluation.
Time Orientation	Short-term (immediate relief).	Long-term (sustainable social investment).
Value Basis	Often individualistic; driven by obligation or sympathy.	Rooted in collective values (<i>gotong royong, musyawarah</i> , solidarity).
Institutional Structure	Hierarchical (donor → intermediary institution → recipient).	Participatory and collaborative (multi-stakeholder networks).
Success Indicators	Volume of aid distributed (quantitative).	Increased capacity, resilience, and equitable access (qualitative & structural).
Example Instruments	Cash donations, staple food aid, physical infrastructure projects.	Productive <i>waqf</i> , social entrepreneurship, capacity mentoring, participatory digital philanthropy.
Main Risks	Fosters dependency and overlooks structural root causes.	Requires long-term commitment and complex inclusive governance.

Source: Developed by the author based on literature synthesis, 2025.

Table 1 underscores that the transition toward transformational philanthropy is not merely a technical shift but a fundamental transformation in logic, relationships, and impact orientation. The transformational model emphasizes strengthening community agency, leveraging collective values as social capital, and adopting a systemic approach aligned with Indonesia's socio-cultural context. Its successful implementation depends on the capacity of institutions, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, to function not only as fund distributors but as empowerment facilitators that integrate religious resources, local wisdom, and modern innovation into an inclusive and sustainable philanthropic ecosystem.

Muhammadiyah's transformation represents a paradigmatic shift in Islamic philanthropy, from charitable to transformational. While traditional philanthropy emphasized direct relief for the poor, an increasing awareness has emerged that long-term empowerment and capacity-building offer more effective solutions to structural poverty. This long-term giving approach underscores independence and sustainability rather than short-term assistance. Within this framework, institutions such as Lazismu (Lembaga Amil Zakat, Infak, dan Sedekah Muhammadiyah) serve as vital intermediaries connecting

religious values with managerial innovation. More broadly, the evolution of philanthropic practice in Indonesia mirrors an ongoing process of modernization and digital adaptation. The rise of digital philanthropy signals a new phase in the mobilization and distribution of social funds. This innovation broadens civic participation, especially among younger generations engaged through social media and digital technologies. Digital platforms, crowdfunding initiatives, and online donation systems have expanded outreach and fostered new forms of social engagement. As noted by (Triantoro et al., 2021), digitalization enhances fundraising efficiency, accelerates aid delivery, and promotes a culture of transparency by making financial and activity data publicly accessible in real time, thereby reinforcing accountability, the cornerstone of trust in Islamic philanthropy.

Yet, the transformation of Islamic philanthropy depends not only on technology or managerial reform but also on the strength of its institutional ecosystem. In this regard, Islamic social enterprises bridge religious ethics and modern economic practices. Grounded in spiritual values such as justice, barakah (blessing), and amanah (trustworthiness), Islamic social entrepreneurship aspires to create businesses with measurable social impact. Nevertheless, Indonesia's current legal framework poses limitations. Many social enterprises operate under *yayasan* (foundation) status, which restricts their market flexibility and institutional legitimacy (Lontoh & Oktariani, 2021). As a result, their growth and competitiveness remain constrained by structural barriers. Despite these challenges, several initiatives demonstrate the potential of integrating Islamic values with social entrepreneurship. (Fahmi & Panorama, 2025) show how Islamic social enterprises can strengthen village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) by simultaneously fostering local economic growth and community empowerment. This integrative approach enhances welfare while reinforcing social networks, solidarity, and collective ownership. In essence, Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia is entering a new phase in which charity and empowerment converge within a sustainable development paradigm.

Beyond *zakat* and *infak*, *waqf* has also become a strategic pillar of contemporary Islamic philanthropy. No longer viewed merely as static land or buildings, *waqf* is increasingly recognized as a productive financial instrument supporting social and economic infrastructure. Qadri et al. (2024) highlight the potential of blended finance, combining Islamic finance with modern investment mechanisms, to enhance *waqf*'s developmental utility. Through such models, *waqf* funds can be invested in education, agriculture, and renewable energy, with returns allocated for public benefit. Nonetheless, the implementation of productive *waqf* in Indonesia continues to face managerial, accountability, and

regulatory challenges. Comprehensive reforms and robust policy support are therefore crucial to realizing its full potential. The cultural dimension remains central to understanding Indonesian philanthropy. The socio-cultural ethos of Islam, emphasizing generosity, *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and social solidarity, constitutes the moral foundation of philanthropic action. In Indonesia's collectivist society, giving functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a manifestation of social identity and shared humanity. Norms such as *musyawarah mufakat* (deliberation and consensus), mutual aid, and kinship shape perceptions of assistance and empowerment, making Indonesian philanthropy unique: community-based, socially grounded, and oriented toward harmony rather than mere efficiency.

Collaboration between major Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) further strengthens this philanthropic ecosystem. Despite differing theological orientations, both share a commitment to social welfare. Their cooperation cultivates productive dialogue between modern and traditional values and between professional management and cultural rootedness. Studies by (Meidina et al., 2023; Sanusi, 2023) affirm that such synergy expands the reach of philanthropy, enriches social policy perspectives, and fosters mutual respect in managing diversity. Ultimately, the transformational landscape of Indonesian philanthropy is shaped by the interaction of three interdependent forces: adaptive institutional structures, technological innovation enabling broad participation, and the enduring vitality of Islamic ethical and cultural values. Together, these elements sustain a philanthropic ecosystem that is both efficient and culturally resonant. As poverty, inequality, and environmental crises grow more complex, Indonesian philanthropy must continue to innovate. Philanthropic institutions are no longer mere distributors of aid but agents of change advancing community-based social and economic transformation. The success of transformational philanthropy, therefore, depends on balancing modern efficiency with cultural authenticity, religious principles with managerial professionalism, and individual aspirations with collective responsibility. In conclusion, Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia is evolving toward a more contextualized, sustainable, and culturally grounded model. It functions not only as a mechanism for welfare redistribution but also as a locus for constructing the social and spiritual identity of Indonesian Muslims amid modernization and digitalization. The true strength of Indonesia's transformational philanthropy lies in the synergy of values, structures, and innovation, a synthesis that nurtures social self-reliance while reinforcing the moral foundations of a just and compassionate civilization.

Deep-Rooted Inequality: Socio-Economic Dynamics and the Distribution of Philanthropic Benefits

Philanthropic practices in Indonesia can generally be classified into two major forms, religious philanthropy and social philanthropy, both reflecting the deeply embedded cultural ethos of giving within Indonesian society. Traditional philanthropy often originates from religious principles, particularly within Islamic teachings, where the concepts of *sadaqah* (voluntary almsgiving) and support for others are integral to religious life. This inclination toward religious philanthropy has profoundly shaped communal attitudes and behaviors surrounding generosity, emphasizing mutual aid as a highly valued social norm (Kurniati et al., 2023; Mardiyah et al., 2021). Consequently, many organizations that mobilize resources for social needs possess religious affiliations, influencing both the motivation and implementation of philanthropic initiatives across different social groups. When tracing how social inequality shapes philanthropic practices, it becomes evident that wealth disparities directly affect the motivations underlying philanthropic engagement. Wealthy individuals often participate in philanthropy not only to support communities but also to maintain or expand their social power and influence (Glucksberg & Russell-Prywata, 2022; Maclean et al., 2021). This phenomenon, known as philanthrocapitalism, illustrates how the super-rich attempt to legitimize their wealth through charitable acts, revealing a complex moral and structural paradox. In certain cases, such practices may reinforce rather than reduce existing inequalities ((Kohl-Arenas, 2015; Sklair & Glucksberg, 2021). This dynamic suggests that elite philanthropy can reproduce hierarchical structures in which affluent donors dictate the terms and forms of assistance, while the voices of beneficiaries are often marginalized (Bird & Aninat, 2023).

Beyond economic factors, local power dynamics also play a crucial role in shaping Indonesia's philanthropic landscape. For instance, the Yayasan Sahabat Ibu (YSI) in Yogyakarta exemplifies how grassroots movements operate within local contexts to address the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women (Widianto, 2018; Widianto et al., 2018). Local philanthropic actors such as YSI seek to challenge entrenched power structures and promote social justice by redistributing resources to marginalized communities affected by systemic inequities (Herro & Obeng-Odoom, 2019). Women's activism has become part of a growing awareness of the need for intersectional approaches in philanthropy, acknowledging how gender, economic status, and social inequality intersect to demand more inclusive and equitable models of support (Widianto, 2018; Widianto et al., 2018). Nevertheless, despite good intentions, philanthropic initiatives sometimes inadvertently reinforce existing power relations. As Kohl-

(Kohl-Arenas, 2015) argues, philanthropic practice often involves negotiated consensus between donors and beneficiaries, which may obscure structural injustices and divert attention from more transformative change. This raises critical questions about the extent to which philanthropy can be genuinely accountable and effective in addressing the root causes of social inequality. Thus, a new framework is needed, one that moves beyond temporary charity or short-term welfare provision toward fostering systemic and sustainable transformation.

To systematically map how various dimensions of inequality influence philanthropic practices and benefit distribution in Indonesia, Table 2 below presents an analysis of key factors, their impacts, and strategic implications.

Table 2

Analysis of Inequality Dimensions in Indonesian Philanthropy: Impacts and Implications

Inequality Dimension	Characteristics in Philanthropic Context	Impact on Benefit Distribution	Implications for a Transformational Model
Economic (Wealth Disparity)	Large donors tend to dominate resources and agendas (<i>philanthrocapitalism</i>).	Benefits concentrate on popular or donor-aligned projects; marginalized communities are underserved.	Need for <i>participatory grantmaking</i> mechanisms; strengthening <i>community philanthropy</i> .
Social (Gender, Class, Ethnicity)	Access to philanthropic resources is often biased by gender and class.	Women, indigenous groups, and urban poor communities are marginalized in aid schemes.	<i>Intersectional</i> approach in program design; increased representation of marginalized groups in decision-making.
Geographic (Urban vs. Rural)	Philanthropic infrastructure (NGOs, digital platforms) is more concentrated in urban areas.	Remote and rural areas have limited access to both donations and empowerment programs.	Use of inclusive <i>digital</i> technology; collaboration with grassroots community-based organizations.
Digital Access (Digital Divide)	Disparities in internet access, devices, and digital literacy.	Digital philanthropy may reinforce inequality if not designed inclusively.	<i>Capacity-building</i> programs in digital literacy; user-friendly and <i>low-tech</i> platform design.

Source: Developed by the author based on literature synthesis, 2025.

Table 2 confirms that inequality not only serves as the object of philanthropic intervention but fundamentally shapes philanthropic practice itself. Without an

approach conscious of these dimensions, philanthropy risks reproducing or even exacerbating existing disparities. A transformational model must actively deconstruct donor-recipient hierarchies by prioritizing horizontal accountability, inclusive design, and asset-based community empowerment. Policy and practical implications include strengthening regulations that promote transparency, investing in philanthropic and digital literacy for marginalized communities, and creating equitable dialogue spaces among donors, intermediaries, and beneficiaries. Only then can philanthropy become an effective tool for social justice, rather than merely a temporary form of charity that perpetuates structural inequities.

Amid increasingly complex inequality structures, the rise of digital philanthropy in Indonesia presents both opportunities and challenges. The expansion of Islamic economic practices and the proliferation of digital platforms have created new spaces for charitable participation, allowing broader social involvement beyond traditional donor circles. Recent studies suggest that this digital shift has the potential to enhance social inclusion and empower marginalized communities through fairer resource distribution (Syahrir et al., 2023; Triantoro et al., 2021). However, caution is necessary to ensure that digital transformation does not reproduce or exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly for those lacking adequate access to digital technology. Digital philanthropy also introduces new forms of social participation characterized by greater dynamism and transparency. Platforms such as Kitabisa.com, Dompot Dhuafa Digital, and Baznas Online enable the public to contribute to social and humanitarian programs with unprecedented ease and immediacy. Yet, these systems also raise ethical challenges related to fund transparency, institutional accountability, and the risk of transforming charitable giving into a form of social performance rather than genuine solidarity. Without an accompanying commitment to justice and empowerment, digital philanthropy risks becoming a “moral expression in cyberspace” with limited tangible social impact.

Therefore, the central challenge for philanthropy in Indonesia today lies in constructing a model that is not merely assistance-oriented but transformation-driven. Philanthropy must extend beyond charity and donation toward building the capacity of communities to break free from cycles of inequality. The development of participatory philanthropy, in which beneficiaries act as active subjects rather than passive recipients, becomes essential in this context. Such an approach can also dismantle the dominant narrative of “giver versus receiver,” replacing it with more egalitarian and collaborative relationships between both parties. In conclusion, the interrelations among social class, access to resources, gender roles, and local power dynamics

significantly influence philanthropic practice in Indonesia. While traditional forms of philanthropy rooted in religious and communal values remain strong, there is a pressing need for critical reflection on the implications of modern philanthropic structures that may perpetuate systemic inequality. An inclusive, justice-oriented, and socially grounded model of philanthropy must therefore be developed to transform Indonesia's philanthropic ecosystem into one that is more progressive and empowering for all segments of society. Ultimately, philanthropy should not merely symbolize generosity but function as a genuine instrument of social change.

Mutual Cooperation and Deliberation: Collective Values as the Spirit of Civilized Philanthropy

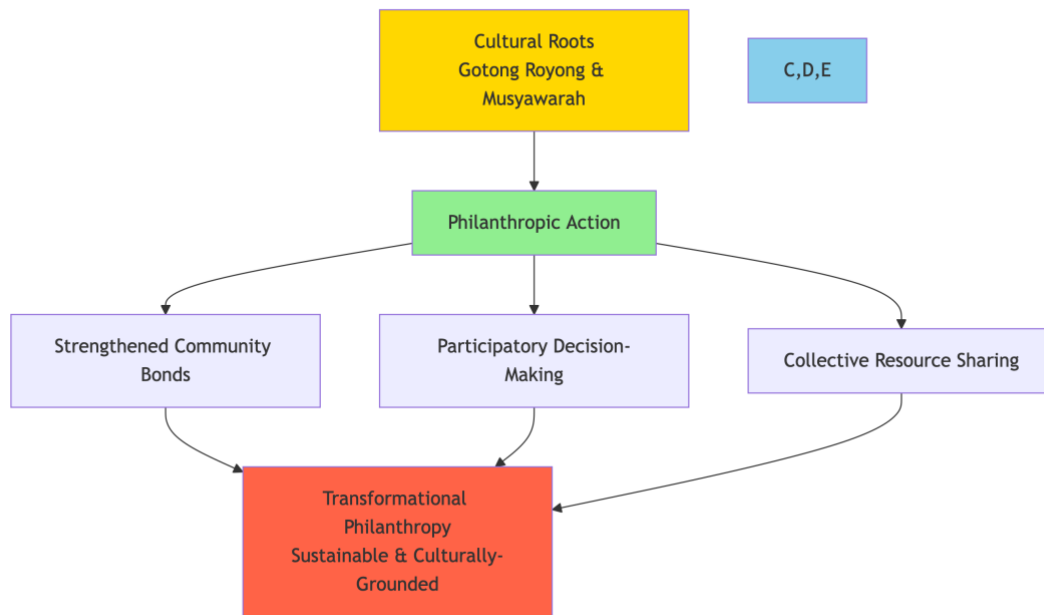
Cultural values such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation), solidarity, and musyawarah (deliberation) play a crucial role in shaping and guiding philanthropic practices in Indonesia. In a society characterized by a strong sense of communalism, acts of giving and mutual assistance are not merely expressions of charity, but also manifestations of social and spiritual identity passed down through generations. This tradition demonstrates that philanthropy in Indonesia cannot be separated from the cultural and religious foundations that surround it. It is not an isolated activity, but part of a moral system that reinforces togetherness, social responsibility, and moral interconnectedness between individuals and the community. One of the most prominent values in Indonesian culture is gotong royong, a concept that transcends mere collective labor. It embodies the spirit of mutual assistance, equality, and solidarity in facing life's challenges. This value underpins the moral foundation of a society that believes individual well-being depends on collective welfare. In philanthropic practice, gotong royong serves as the social basis that enables communities to organize aid spontaneously and participatorily. It becomes an active form of solidarity, where community members contribute not only materially, but also through time, energy, and care for others.

In Indonesia, philanthropy is not merely an act of giving; it is a profound expression of shared identity and communal responsibility. Rooted in the nation's sociocultural fabric, practices such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and musyawarah (deliberative consensus) have long defined how communities organize, support one another, and make collective decisions. These values represent more than tradition, they are living principles that shape how generosity is understood, enacted, and sustained. In the context of modern philanthropy, they provide a vital bridge between charitable intent and transformative impact. This framework visualizes how these core values inspire

and guide philanthropic action, fostering stronger communities, participatory governance, and shared resources, ultimately leading to a form of philanthropy that is not only effective but also deeply rooted in Indonesian culture and collective spirit.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: From Values to Transformational Philanthropy.



Source: Developed by the author based on literature synthesis, 2025.

Figure 1 illustrates a dynamic and cyclical relationship between Indonesia's cultural values and the practice of transformational philanthropy. It begins with Cultural Roots, gotong royong and musyawarah, which are not passive ideals but active drivers of Philanthropic Action. These actions naturally foster three interrelated outcomes:

- a. Strengthened Community Bonds, where trust and solidarity are deepened through shared endeavors;
- b. Participatory Decision-Making, which ensures that community voices guide philanthropic initiatives;
- c. Collective Resource Sharing, moving beyond one-way giving to mutual support and co-ownership of resources.

Together, these outcomes converge to realize Transformational Philanthropy, a sustainable, culturally-grounded model where communities are not recipients but co-creators of their own development. This framework emphasizes that the success of philanthropy in Indonesia depends not on importing external models,

but on activating and adapting the deeply held values of cooperation, dialogue, and shared responsibility. It is through this value-driven process that philanthropy becomes a genuine force for long-term community empowerment and social resilience.

Research by (Putra, Afandi, et al., 2024; Putra, Fadilla, et al., 2024) shows that communities upholding values of solidarity and mutual help tend to be more active in mobilizing and distributing zakat and sadaqah. Activities such as community fundraisers, social arisan, or collective efforts to build public facilities exemplify how cultural values operate in social giving. In many areas, these philanthropic practices often occur outside formal institutions, embedded instead in kinship, customary, and religious networks. This illustrates that philanthropy in Indonesia functions upon an “informal social infrastructure”, a web of values and norms deeply rooted in society. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the spirit of gotong royong became a vital form of social capital for community resilience. As many people lost jobs or access to basic services, local communities independently initiated communal kitchens, food drives, and online solidarity movements. (Yuhertiana et al., 2022) note that gotong royong in times of crisis not only served as a survival mechanism but also strengthened collective humanity, a defining characteristic of Indonesian society. In this context, cultural values act as adaptive mechanisms enabling communities to remain resilient and supportive even when formal systems fail to meet public needs. Furthermore, the framework of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia is closely intertwined with cultural values of musyawarah and collective responsibility. Practices such as zakat, infak, sadaqah, and waqf represent not only individual religious compliance but also the embodiment of social justice within a communal context. Zakat, for instance, functions as an instrument for wealth redistribution grounded in compassion and shared welfare. Yet, in the Indonesian context, it is often accompanied by musyawarah, a process of communal deliberation ensuring that decisions about aid distribution reflect collective interests and local wisdom.

(Meidina & Moka, 2023) observe that reinterpretations of Islamic philanthropy have introduced new understandings of social relationships emphasizing accountability and cooperation. They highlight how Islamic philanthropic institutions such as Lazismu and LAZISNU have developed participatory models where communities are not merely beneficiaries but active participants in program design and oversight. Within this framework, musyawarah serves as a social mechanism that strengthens collective responsibility and ensures that philanthropic activities align with community aspirations. Cultural values also shape how individuals perceive and engage in

philanthropic acts. Cross-cultural studies indicate that societies with high levels of collectivism, such as Indonesia, display a stronger propensity for charitable behavior. This is largely driven by social norms and communal expectations regarding individual conduct. (Mushtaq & Siddiqui, 2020) note that in collectivist cultures, giving is not a purely personal decision but a form of social responsibility internalized from an early age. In Indonesia, moral pressure to participate in social activities strengthens inter-community solidarity and fosters a vibrant, sustainable philanthropic ecosystem.

Local norms such as the saying “it is shameful not to help” (*malu kalau tidak ikut membantu*) serve as forms of social control that encourage active participation in communal activities. In rural areas, *gotong royong* for building homes, repairing roads, or preparing religious events remains common, reinforcing social bonds. In urban settings, the same values appear in digital forms, such as crowdfunding through platforms like *Kitabisa.com* or community-based online campaigns. These phenomena demonstrate that cultural values do not disappear but rather transform, adapting to technological and social changes. Moreover, the motivations behind philanthropic actions are deeply shaped by cultural narratives. According to (Massi et al., 2025), each society interprets giving differently. In Indonesia, philanthropy is often understood not merely as a moral duty but also as a means of strengthening social and spiritual ties. Initiatives that incorporate local cultural messages, such as communal harmony, sincerity, and social balance, tend to foster deeper emotional connections with donors. When philanthropy is framed as part of cultural ethics, giving becomes an integral aspect of everyday life rather than a sporadic act of charity.

The interaction between cultural values and philanthropic behavior also fosters a more sustainable approach to social welfare. Unlike Western models that often emphasize individual achievement and prestige, Indonesian philanthropy prioritizes collective participation and social continuity. Here, *gotong royong* functions as a social mechanism ensuring program sustainability, as communities feel a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. As cultural values evolve, so too do the methods and motivations for giving, shifting from one-time aid toward capacity building and community empowerment. These values further reinforce the ethos of equality and social justice in philanthropy. The concept of solidarity asserts that every individual plays a role in ensuring collective welfare. Consequently, philanthropy in Indonesia tends to be inclusive, transcending boundaries of religion, ethnicity, and social class. For example, in times of natural disaster, people from diverse backgrounds unite to help without regard to identity differences. Such practices illustrate how cultural values act as

bridges that bind diverse social groups in pursuit of common humanitarian goals. Nevertheless, challenges arise as these cultural values adapt to modern and digital forms of philanthropy. The emergence of online platforms, digital Islamic finance, and social media-based movements demands new modes of engagement. Yet, research indicates that while the medium has changed, the essence of cultural values endures. Gotong royong now manifests as “digital solidarity,” where communities collaborate virtually to assist others. This transformation proves that cultural values are not static, they evolve and adapt without losing their foundational meaning.

Overall, the growing engagement in philanthropy across Indonesian society is profoundly influenced by the enduring strength of cultural values such as gotong royong, solidarity, and musyawarah. These values not only fortify social relations but also shape a philanthropic landscape that fuses religious obligation with social responsibility.

Toward a Grounded Philanthropic Model: Integrating Values, Structure, and Social Transformation

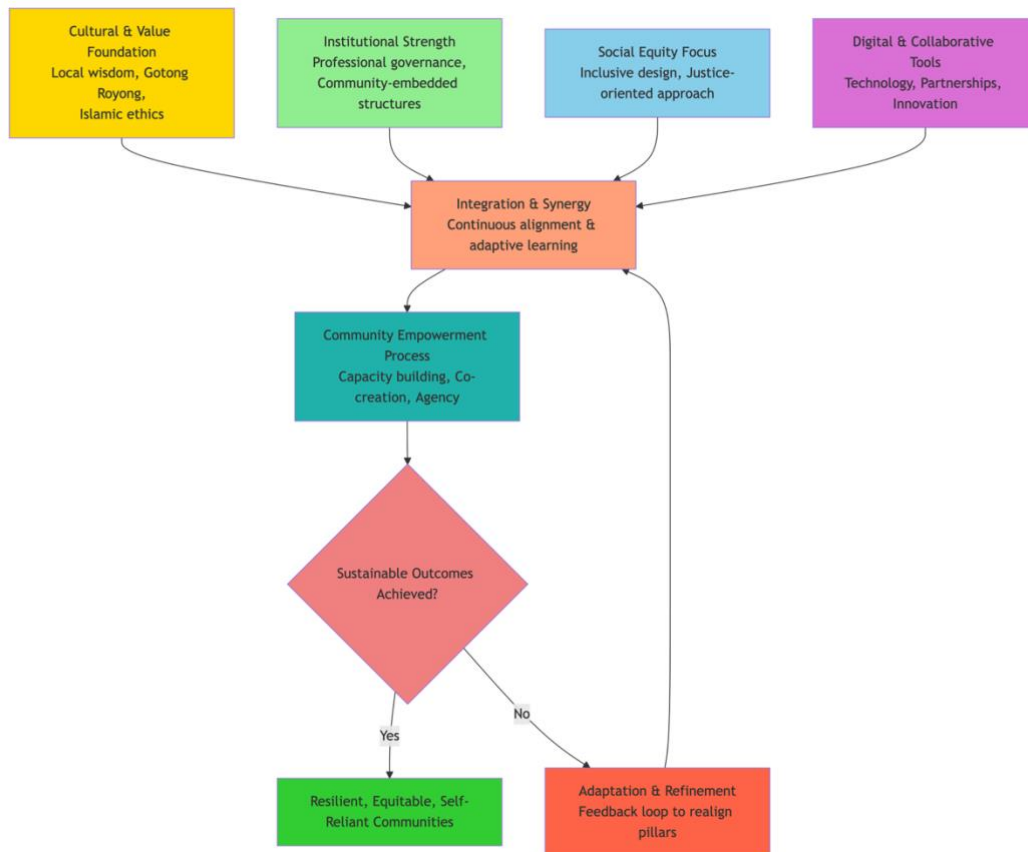
The concept of a sustainable and contextually grounded philanthropic model in Indonesia rests on three central pillars: cultural values, institutional strength, and sensitivity to social inequality. These three elements together form a philanthropic framework that is not only effective but also deeply rooted in the local context and responsive to the needs of society. Traditional philanthropic practices in Indonesia have long drawn from religious and cultural values, particularly Islamic principles such as zakat, infak, sadaqah, and waqf, which emphasize social justice, solidarity, and collective welfare (Fikri & Andrean, 2023; Kurniati et al., 2023). These values position philanthropy not merely as an act of individual charity, but as a social mechanism for maintaining balance and harmony within the community. In the Indonesian cultural context, values such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and communal solidarity serve as moral foundations shaping generosity and social compassion. These align with the philosophical underpinnings of Pancasila, the state ideology and ethical compass of the Indonesian nation. Pancasila emphasizes just and civilized humanity, unity, and social justice for all. These values are not only normative ideals but also carry the potential to be translated into participatory and contextualized philanthropic practices.

The pursuit of a truly grounded and sustainable philanthropic model in Indonesia requires more than good intentions, it demands a thoughtful integration of deep-seated cultural values, robust institutional structures, and a conscious commitment to social equity. Traditional giving practices, while rooted

in religious and communal ethics, often operate in isolation from the systemic realities of inequality and institutional capacity. To transform philanthropy from a charitable impulse into a force for lasting social change, a holistic framework is needed, one that harmonizes local wisdom with institutional professionalism, participatory governance with digital innovation, and community agency with systemic justice. This conceptual model illustrates how these interconnected elements converge to create a philanthropic practice that is not only impactful but also culturally resonant, institutionally sustainable, and socially inclusive.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework: The Pillars of Grounded Transformational Philanthropy



Source: Developed by the author based on literature synthesis,2025.

The framework on figure 2 presented above visualizes a dynamic, non-linear process for building a Grounded Philanthropic Model in Indonesia. It is structured around four foundational pillars:

- a. Cultural & Value Foundation: drawing from local wisdom, gotong royong, Islamic ethics, and Pancasila to ensure cultural resonance and moral legitimacy.
- b. Institutional Strength: emphasizing professional governance, transparency, and community-embedded structures to ensure sustainability and trust.
- c. Social Equity Focus: centering inclusion, justice, and sensitivity to inequality in design and implementation.
- d. Digital & Collaborative Tools: leveraging technology, partnerships, and innovative platforms to widen participation and enhance impact.

These pillars continuously interact through a process of Integration & Synergy, where values inform structure, equity guides tools, and collaboration strengthens cultural grounding. This synergy fuels a Community Empowerment Process, where communities are not beneficiaries but active agents in capacity building, co-creation, and ownership of development initiatives. The model incorporates a critical feedback loop: if sustainable outcomes are not yet realized, learnings are used to adapt and refine strategies, ensuring the approach remains responsive and iterative. This reflects the understanding that transformational philanthropy is not a one-time project but a continuous, learning-oriented commitment to fostering self-reliant, equitable, and resilient communities.

(Kurniati et al., 2023) highlight how Pancasila values can be actualized through the philanthropic engagement of Indonesia's younger generation, particularly millennials. They point to a generational shift toward more active, creative, and socially aware forms of philanthropy. This transformation signals a reorientation of values, where philanthropy is no longer viewed solely as traditional benevolence but also as an expression of active citizenship. When the younger generation integrates Pancasila principles with global humanitarian ideals, new philanthropic models emerge that are more adaptive to contemporary challenges, such as economic inequality, climate change, and social inclusivity. The sustainability of philanthropic practice also depends heavily on the institutional frameworks supporting it.

Social philanthropic institutions in Indonesia need to strengthen governance and strategic capacity to address social challenges more effectively. A SWOT analysis of these organizations reveals that, despite their strong community reach and moral legitimacy rooted in religion, weaknesses persist in areas such as resource diversification, digital innovation, and professional governance (Sastrawan et al., 2023). By optimizing local resources and leveraging cultural values embedded within society, these institutions can broaden their

reach and develop more sustainable empowerment models. A concrete example of an effective institutional model is productive waqf, which has long served as a key instrument in socio-economic development within Islamic frameworks. Through waqf, communities not only contribute material assets but also create systems of collective ownership over economic resources (Fikri & Andrean, 2023; Suryanto (Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia) et al., 2020). This model reflects the principle of sustainability, as its benefits are long-term and foster a sense of shared ownership among beneficiaries. Thus, productive waqf can serve as a reference point for developing philanthropic models that integrate institutional effectiveness with local cultural values.

Addressing social inequality requires a high degree of sensitivity to socio-economic realities. (Hayati et al., 2023) asserts that community-based philanthropy is more effective in reducing poverty and hunger than top-down approaches. By involving communities directly, such initiatives cultivate solidarity and social networks that foster economic independence. This form of philanthropy does not merely distribute aid but builds social resilience and transforms the power dynamics between donors and recipients into more equitable relationships. In this way, philanthropy becomes an instrument for social justice rather than a temporary act of charity. The rise of digital technology has also opened a new chapter in Indonesia's philanthropic landscape. Digital philanthropy has become an essential tool for broadening public participation and improving transparency in managing social funds. Through social media, crowdfunding, and Islamic financial technology platforms, people can now contribute to social causes anytime and anywhere (Triantoro et al., 2021). This digital transformation fosters wider inclusivity, enabling young people, women, and the middle class to become active agents in national philanthropic movements. However, digital innovation must be accompanied by supportive government policies that ensure transparency and accountability. Clear regulatory frameworks are needed to prevent digital philanthropy from becoming a mere trend and to ensure that it functions as a system capable of reducing social and economic disparities (Iskandar et al., 2021; Mukhlisin et al., 2022). Collaboration among government institutions, the private sector, and civil society is thus essential to create an inclusive, equitable, and impact-oriented philanthropic ecosystem.

Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration is a prerequisite for sustainable philanthropic transformation. (Musa, 2024) notes that the growth of philanthropic initiatives across sectors indicates the need for collaborative models that integrate cultural values with institutional mechanisms. Synergies among government agencies, religious institutions, businesses, and local

communities can build a strong support system to expand philanthropy's social impact. In practice, such models can be realized through community-based projects or socially responsible financing integrated with Islamic finance, emphasizing community participation and economic sustainability (Aisyah, 2024; Syahrir et al., 2023). This collaborative model allows the emergence of a dynamic and complementary philanthropic ecosystem. The government can act as a facilitator, the private sector as an innovator and driver of social investment, and communities as the primary implementers. In this configuration, philanthropy becomes an integral component of national development strategies rather than a separate domain of social welfare. Ultimately, the synergy among cultural values, institutional capacity, and social awareness forms the foundation of a sustainable and transformational philanthropic model in Indonesia. This model not only acknowledges the nation's long history of generosity but also adapts it to modern demands for inclusivity and justice. Rooted in local traditions and spiritual values, supported by institutional innovation and digital technology, philanthropy in Indonesia holds great potential to serve as a moral and social force capable of transforming structural inequalities into spaces of equitable participation. Sustainably transformative philanthropy is not merely about redistributing wealth, it is about building trust, solidarity, and shared responsibility. It becomes a means of reaffirming humanity in the public sphere and bridging divides between the rich and the poor, the center and the periphery, tradition and modernity. Therefore, the future of Indonesian philanthropy depends on the nation's capacity to harmonize local cultural wisdom with modern institutional innovation, a synthesis that promises a new direction for social justice and collective well-being.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, it is concluded that the transformational philanthropy model offers a more strategic and sustainable approach to community development in Indonesia compared to traditional charity-based models. The success of this model largely depends on its alignment with local socio-cultural characteristics, particularly collective values such as *gotong royong* and *musyawarah*, which function as vital informal social infrastructure. Furthermore, the strength of local institutions and sensitivity to inequality dynamics are key pillars in ensuring the fair and inclusive distribution of philanthropic benefits. The core of this model is a paradigm shift from viewing communities as passive recipients to active agents of development. By integrating local wisdom, digital innovation, and participatory governance, transformational philanthropy has the potential to build long-term community

self-reliance and resilience. The synergy between values, adaptive institutional structures, and context-aware social consciousness creates a philanthropic ecosystem that is not only efficient but also deeply culturally resonant. Therefore, the future of Indonesian philanthropy lies in its ability to harmonize modern efficiency with cultural authenticity, enabling it to function as a genuine moral and social force in transforming structural inequalities towards equitable collective well-being.

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