



# Corporate Philanthropy Network

*A focused forum for peer exchange on governance, accountability, and responsible corporate giving*

**Date:** 07<sup>th</sup> May 2026 | **Time:** 11 AM - 12:30 PM GST | **Location:** Zoom

## **Session 1: Governing Through Uncertainty**

The role of the corporation has expanded. Businesses are no longer judged solely on financial performance; as key actors in society, they are expected to be responsible contributors to the communities and environments in which they operate. This responsibility goes beyond managing the environmental and social impact of operations; it increasingly calls on businesses to direct profits toward measurable social good.

Yet periods of disruption, whether driven by geopolitical, environmental, or humanitarian factors, have become a recurring feature of the global landscape. While these instances tend to mobilise significant goodwill and resources from the corporate sector, they also unsettle day-to-day operations and put internal pressure on the business.

In moments of uncertainty and crisis, corporate giving is often the first commitment to be reconsidered, and the easiest to quietly scale back. What builds resilience in organisations is not the size of budgets, but governance, clarity of mandates, and alignment of leadership. These are what carry philanthropic commitments through disruption rather than around it.

On May 7th 2026, Pearl Initiative convened an intimate group of corporate philanthropy leaders from the region for a peer exchange on governance strategies that secure continuity, credibility, and resilience in corporate giving, specifically in times of crisis and uncertainty. The session resulted in a productive dialogue, identifying key approaches for maintaining philanthropic commitments, strengthening internal governance, and enhancing collaboration under pressure.

### **Discussed topics:**

- Planning strategies for a crisis to allow for a rapid response when needed
  - Importance of building trust and ensuring management alignment
  - How to prioritise between long-term impact and immediate crisis response
  - Realities of cross-functional collaboration under pressure
  - Partner selection and due diligence when organisations are underfunded and overstressed
  - How organisations approach project implementation, monitoring, and impact measurement with the lack of standardised processes
  - How industry leaders are dealing with sector frustrations, humanitarian fatigue and opportunities for improvement
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## Key takeaways:

- In the absence of regulatory mandates requiring corporate giving, internal policies and governance are what sustain commitments under commercial pressure. Frameworks, board-endorsed mandates, and multi-year budgetary commitments convert philanthropy from a discretionary expense into an institutional obligation.
- An effective crisis response in corporate philanthropy requires clarity, quick decision-making, speedy action, coordination, and accountability. Organisations that respond well are those that have built the conditions for all four: frameworks, partner relationships, governance structures, and pre-aligned leadership long before the crisis arrives.
- Trust in crisis response is important for clarity in decision-making. Corporate philanthropy relies on trust on two fronts: internally, through mandates, delegated authorities, and leadership alignment; and externally, through due diligence, reporting processes and partner relationships.
- Organisations should prepare for potential crisis situations by planning anticipatory frameworks across global, regional, national, and internal scopes for crisis response. This is most effectively operationalised through an emergency budget; in its absence, a pre-approved response framework defining the thresholds, triggers, and scope of intervention provides the necessary authority to act at pace.
- Support partners and grantees in building the governance and functional systems required for sound day-to-day delivery, not only for crisis response. Strengthening these foundations institutionalises NGO partners and, by extension, safeguards the continuity and integrity of deployment under pressure. A constant gap across the sector is the absence of internal systems within NGO partners that meet donor governance and due diligence standards.
- Establishing a formal governance system for cross-functional collaboration in corporate philanthropy; for example, setting up a committee with defined representation from communications, legal, finance, and sustainability establishes shared ownership, aligns institutional language, and replaces approval flows with parallel decision-making, reducing response time. This is especially beneficial in a crisis response.
- Collaborative giving, including pooled funds, funder alliances, and results-based financing structures, can de-risk individual contributions in crisis contexts, reduce duplication across the philanthropic ecosystem, and unlock additional capital. These models shift philanthropy from isolated transactions to coordinated systems, in which outcomes are jointly underwritten, and resources are deployed at scale.

This convening was part of Pearl Initiative's ongoing commitment to building a peer-exchange space for corporate philanthropy leaders across the region. As the role of the corporation in society continues to expand, and as corporate philanthropy evolves, so does the need for shared governance standards, collective learning, and coordinated action grow. The Corporate Philanthropy Network will continue to convene this community in upcoming sessions, focusing on the practical governance questions that determine whether commitments hold under pressure.

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