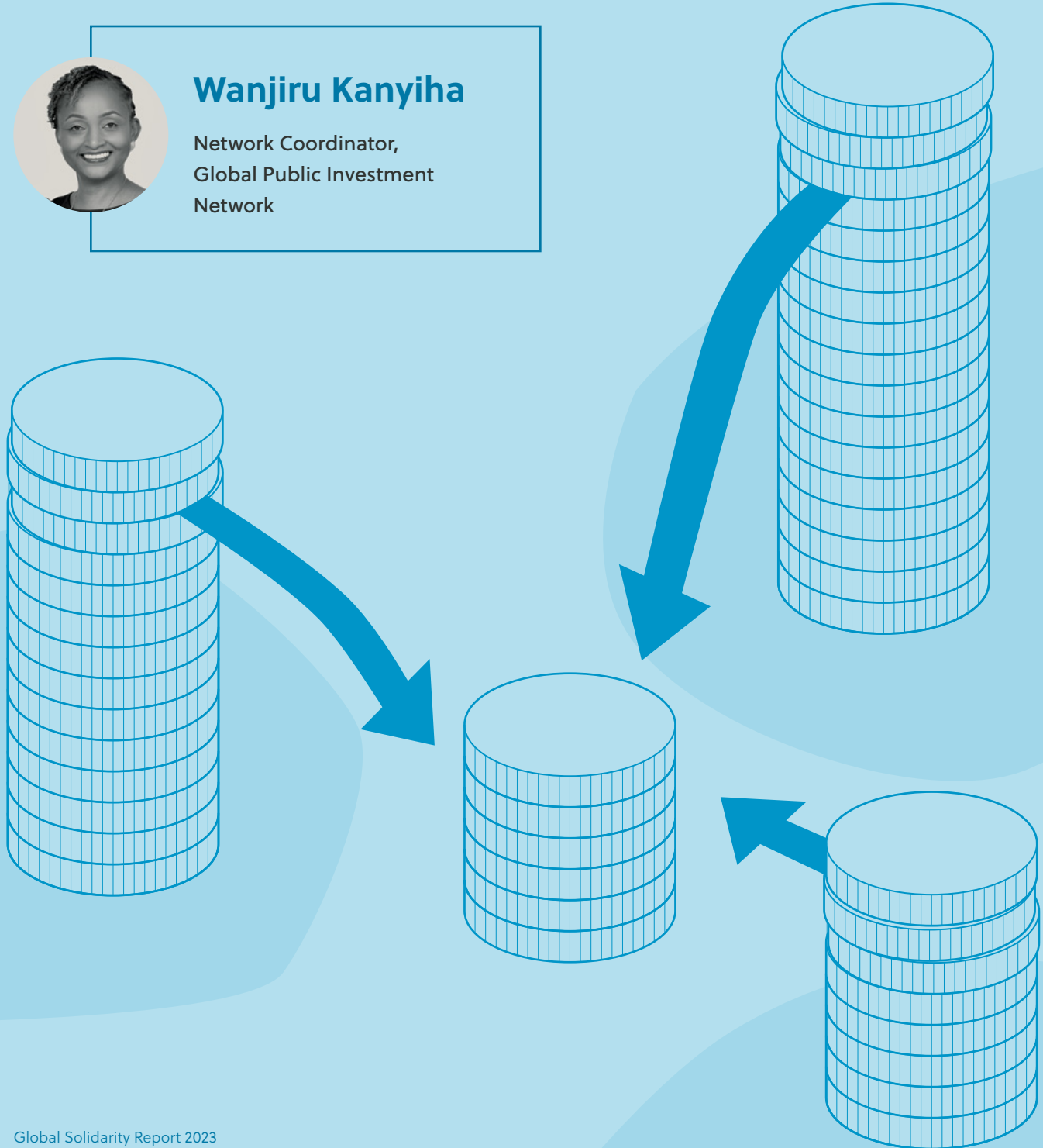


Rethink foreign aid as Global Public Investment



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● Solidarity is a concept deeply ingrained in me, and which I have experienced throughout my journey. For several years, I actively coordinated community action in Kilimani, a neighbourhood in Nairobi, Kenya’s capital. In the African context, it was easy to show up in various ways, welcoming a new member to the community, sharing meals, and celebrating various life’s milestones. We learned it from watching our mothers and aunts, and carried it with us as we transitioned into adulthood. *Ubuntu*, the famous African adage, **I am because we are**, resonated deeply for many of us.

That mindset is applicable to how we solve global challenges, but it is still not how we finance them. Instead, the prevailing structure is that of “foreign aid.” In this paradigm, a few rich countries are expected to foot the bill, and demand in return the power to decide how money is spent. A number of very poor countries are expected to benefit, but have limited power to decide. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the world’s population live in countries which are hardly expected to contribute, or benefit, or decide on much at all.

This is the logic of charity, not solidarity. It is hard to see how problems like climate change, and pandemics, to which all countries are vulnerable, and which demand vast resources to tackle them, can be solved in this way. That is why I am so proud to support a global network dedicated to reimagining development financing and challenging existing donor-dependent models that overlook community-led solutions.

The Global Public Investment (GPI) Network¹⁸ proposes a new set of principles for funding global goals, whereby:

- all countries benefit, according to need
- all countries decide, through inclusive processes
- all countries contribute, according to capacity

GPI is a bold re-imagining, but it has practical implementation at its core. As the current funding system is increasingly seen to be inadequate, GPI can be an attractive model for countries at different income levels.

Donor countries are expected to give up much of their power over funding decisions, but in return they will have a far better-funded system where others contribute alongside them, and they can benefit far more directly from multilateral efforts than previously. Middle-income countries are expected to greatly increase their contributions—most of the world’s economy now sits with them. But they will also stand to benefit far more in a system that no longer cuts them out. From the poorest countries, to whom most foreign aid is channelled, a very small contribution would be required. For them, the benefit would be a system that provides them not just with resources, but also with agency and dignity. No longer the people for whom international spending is “done to,” they would be, like all other countries, contributors, beneficiaries, and deciders.

Some development cooperation models, like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, already align quite well with GPI principles, but most do not. To build a system capable of funding the Global Goals, all international agencies and funds should review their approach to embed Global Public Investment principles; meanwhile governments, particularly upper-middle-income countries, should offer new funding in exchange for this shift. ■