

The Current Status and Strategies for the Sustainable Development of Contemporary Philanthropy in China: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective

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Abstract

In the context of social transformation and governance modernization, philanthropy has become an important institutional mechanism for promoting social equity and advancing sustainable development. However, achieving the long-term sustainability of the philanthropic sector remains a critical challenge, particularly in transitional societies experiencing rapid institutional change. Existing studies often adopt single or fragmented perspectives, limiting their ability to capture the systemic complexity of philanthropic development. Adopting a multi-dimensional analytical perspective, this study examines the development, key constraints, and sustainability mechanisms of contemporary philanthropy in China. Drawing on an integrated framework combining cultural dynamics and philanthropic economics, it analyzes how value transformation and resource allocation shape philanthropic sustainability. Using a qualitative research design based on literature review, policy analysis, and structured case examination, the study finds that philanthropic sustainability depends on the synergistic interaction of multiple structural elements, including public trust, institutional arrangements, corporate and community-based engagement, and digital governance. Based on these findings, the paper proposes governance-oriented strategies to strengthen trust mechanisms, optimize policy frameworks, and promote digitally enabled multi-stakeholder collaboration. This study contributes a multi-dimensional framework for understanding philanthropic sustainability and offers policy-relevant insights applicable to China and other emerging economies.

Keywords: philanthropy, sustainable development, public trust, multi-dimensional perspective, social governance

1. Introduction

In the context of global sustainable development and governance transformation, philanthropy has increasingly emerged as an important institutional supplement to public welfare systems, social security provision, and social

governance innovation. Beyond its traditional function of redistributing resources to vulnerable groups, contemporary philanthropy is now widely recognized as a key mechanism for mobilizing social resources, fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, and addressing

complex social challenges in a sustainable manner. Consequently, the question of how to achieve the sustainable development of philanthropy—defined not merely by short-term fundraising capacity, but by long-term institutional stability, social legitimacy, and governance effectiveness—has become a critical theoretical and practical concern.

Existing studies on philanthropic sustainability have primarily focused on specific dimensions such as organizational capacity, funding diversification, regulatory frameworks, or donor behavior. While these studies have generated valuable insights, they often adopt a single-dimensional or fragmented analytical perspective, which limits their ability to capture the structural complexity of philanthropic systems. In practice, the sustainability of philanthropy rarely hinges on isolated factors; rather, it is shaped by the dynamic interaction among institutional arrangements, organizational governance, sociocultural foundations, economic incentives, and technological conditions. This gap between the complexity of philanthropic practice and the relative fragmentation of existing analytical approaches calls for a more integrated and multi-dimensional framework.

China provides a particularly instructive context for examining this issue. With a long historical tradition of charitable practices and a rapidly evolving modern philanthropic sector, China represents a distinctive case of philanthropic development under conditions of profound social transformation. Historically, Chinese philanthropy evolved from a system deeply rooted in Confucian ethics and state–society interaction into a pluralistic structure encompassing state-led philanthropy, clan-based charity, religious philanthropy, and socially organized philanthropic initiatives. This historical legacy has not only shaped contemporary value orientations toward charitable behavior, but has also provided important cultural resources for the institutional reconstruction of philanthropy in modern China. However, the development of philanthropy in China has not been linear. From the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, philanthropic activities experienced a prolonged period of stagnation, as charitable institutions were marginalized under specific political and ideological conditions (Zhou, Q., & Wan, J., 2025; Zhou, Q., 2020). Since the reform and opening-up period, philanthropy

has gradually regained institutional legitimacy and undergone rapid expansion alongside economic growth, social structural transformation, and governance modernization. In recent decades, China’s philanthropic sector has exhibited notable progress in terms of organizational scale, resource mobilization, and public participation, while simultaneously facing persistent challenges related to public trust, institutional coordination, resource sustainability, organizational capacity, and governance effectiveness (Zhu, J. & Deng, H, 2024).

According to official statistics released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, as of December 2025, more than 16,000 registered charitable organizations were operating nationwide, with combined net assets exceeding RMB 240 billion, alongside 2,712 registered charitable trusts with contracted assets of over RMB 10 billion (Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2025). In addition, internet-based philanthropy has expanded rapidly, supported by government-designated online fundraising platforms and large-scale public participation. While these developments indicate the growing social significance of philanthropy in China, they also expose structural vulnerabilities. High-profile trust crises, event-driven donation patterns, uneven organizational professionalism, and regulatory fragmentation have repeatedly undermined the long-term sustainability of philanthropic activities. These challenges suggest that philanthropic sustainability in China cannot be adequately explained or addressed through single-factor interventions.

Against this backdrop, a multi-dimensional analytical perspective is essential for understanding the sustainability of contemporary philanthropy in China. Such a perspective recognizes philanthropy as a complex social system embedded in broader processes of governance transformation, economic development, cultural change, and technological innovation (Guo, Y. & Di, X, 2011). Rather than treating public trust, policy frameworks, corporate participation, community engagement, and digital governance as independent variables, a multi-dimensional approach emphasizes their interactive and mutually reinforcing relationships in shaping long-term philanthropic outcomes (Zhang, Y, 2014).

Accordingly, this study adopts an integrated

analytical framework that combines insights from cultural dynamics and philanthropic economics to examine the sustainable development of philanthropy in contemporary China. From the dimensions of value transformation and resource allocation, it systematically analyzes the key constraints and driving mechanisms affecting philanthropic sustainability, with particular attention to public trust formation, institutional and policy support, corporate economic participation, community-based philanthropic practices, and digitally enabled collaborative governance.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative research design integrating literature review, policy analysis, and structured case examination. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives with empirical observations drawn from China's philanthropic practice, the paper seeks to bridge normative analysis and practical governance concerns. The central argument advanced in this study is that the sustainable development of philanthropy does not depend on breakthroughs in any single dimension, but rather on the synergistic interaction of multiple structural elements. Public trust functions as the foundational condition for sustained participation; institutional and policy arrangements provide normative stability; corporate and community actors supply economic and social embeddedness; and digital technologies serve as integrative tools that enhance coordination, transparency, and governance efficiency (Chang, J. & Zhang, X, 2025).

This study contributes to the existing literature in three key ways. First, it advances a multi-dimensional analytical framework that moves beyond fragmented approaches to philanthropic sustainability, offering a more holistic understanding of the internal logic of philanthropic systems. Second, by situating philanthropy within the broader context of governance modernization and digital transformation, it highlights the integrative role of institutional and technological factors in sustaining philanthropic development. Third, through an in-depth examination of China's philanthropic experience, the study provides insights that are not only context-specific but also relevant to other transitional and emerging economies seeking to build resilient and sustainable philanthropic systems.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 identifies the major constraints confronting the sustainable development of philanthropy in contemporary China. Section 3 outlines the theoretical framework and research methods. Section 4 proposes targeted strategies and policy recommendations from a multi-dimensional perspective. Section 5 constructs a collaborative mechanism model for philanthropic sustainability, and Section 6 concludes with broader implications and directions for future research.

2. Problem Identification

From a sustainability perspective, philanthropy is not merely a form of short-term resource input, but rather a social mechanism that requires long-term support in terms of institutional stability, resource continuity, organizational capacity, and social recognition. Within the dual context of China's long-standing philanthropic traditions and the evolving demands of modern social governance, contemporary philanthropy has encountered significant opportunities for development. At the same time, however, the expansion in scale and the advancement of institutional frameworks have been accompanied by a series of practical challenges that constrain the sustainable development of the philanthropic sector.

Public trust constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the sustainable development of philanthropy; however, in practice, the trust foundation of the philanthropic sector remains fragile. Since China's entry into what is often described as the era of "mass philanthropy" around 2008, the rapid diffusion of online media has significantly expanded public participation in charitable activities. At the same time, a series of incidents that have undermined public trust in philanthropy have also emerged, posing persistent challenges to the credibility and long-term sustainability of charitable organizations. Insufficient information disclosure, inadequate transparency, and the amplifying effects of isolated negative incidents have collectively weakened public trust in charitable organizations (Wang, L., 2021). Once trust is compromised, the sustained supply of philanthropic resources and the willingness of the public to participate are directly affected, thereby creating a "trust bottleneck" that constrains sustainable development.

Table 1. Major Incidents Undermining Public Trust in Chinese Philanthropy in the Internet Era

Incident	Time	Description	Impact
Guo Meimei Incident	June 2011	A female microblog user known as “Guo Meimei Baby” frequently displayed luxury goods, luxury vehicles, and an extravagant lifestyle on social media. Due to her publicly claimed association with the Red Cross Society of China, the incident immediately triggered widespread public suspicion regarding the use of donations and resulted in a severe credibility crisis.	In July 2011, the total amount of social donations nationwide declined by more than 50% month-on-month, while donation receipts of local Red Cross branches in several regions fell by as much as 86.6%.
Yang Liujin Incident	June 2014	A teenager in Guangxi, Yang Liujin, was portrayed by the media as an extremely impoverished child who had lost both parents and survived alone by eating wild plants. Following extensive television coverage, substantial donations were raised in a short period. Subsequent investigations by media outlets and local authorities revealed that the reported living conditions had been exaggerated.	The incident led to public criticism of inaccurate media reporting and concerns over the manipulation of donations through emotionally charged narratives, sparking debate on media ethics and donation oversight.
Baise Educational Aid Sexual Assault Case	2009–2015	Wang Jie, founder of the “Baise Educational Aid Network,” exploited the pretext of educational assistance to sexually assault multiple female beneficiaries over an extended period and fraudulently obtained charitable donations totaling approximately RMB 15,000, with several victims being minors.	The case severely undermined public trust in grassroots philanthropy, particularly in education-related charitable projects.
Luo Er Incident	November 2016	Luo Er, a media professional in Shenzhen, solicited donations by publishing articles to raise funds for his seriously ill daughter, receiving substantial online contributions. Subsequent disclosures revealed that his family was relatively affluent and that most medical expenses were covered by health insurance, leading to widespread public suspicion of donation misuse.	The incident escalated into a major trust crisis, highlighting deficiencies in the regulation of online fundraising and controversies surrounding the exploitation of public sympathy. Donations were eventually refunded through original channels.
China Association for the Assistance of	August 2024	An employee of the CCAFC, surnamed Ke, used the “9958 Program” to solicit funds from	The Ministry of Civil Affairs imposed a three-month suspension on the

<p>Children with Congenital Heart Disease (CCAFC) Sexual Abuse Case</p>	<p>patients' families through personal accounts and fraudulently obtained nearly RMB 10 million.</p>	<p>organization and placed it on the list of severely illegal and dishonest social organizations, significantly damaging public confidence in charitable institutions.</p>
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Sources: Information in this table is compiled from official announcements of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China, public disclosures by the Red Cross Society of China, judicial documents, and reports from major Chinese media outlets (e.g., Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Caixin, and Southern Weekly), as well as findings summarized in existing academic literature on public trust in philanthropy. All incidents listed were cross-verified using at least two independent sources.

The relatively narrow structure of philanthropic resource sources in China, along with insufficient stability and long-term sustainability, constitutes a prominent constraint on sustainable philanthropic development. On the one hand, charitable funding continues to rely heavily on episodic donations or event-driven mobilization, lacking stable and institutionalized supply mechanisms. On the other hand, long-term commitments from corporate and individual donors remain limited, rendering philanthropic investment highly susceptible to macroeconomic fluctuations and social events. As a result, many charitable programs face difficulties in maintaining sustained and continuous operation.

Some charitable organizations continue to exhibit weaknesses in governance structures, internal management, and levels of professionalization, which undermines their capacity for long-term development. These shortcomings are manifested in insufficiently standardized decision-making mechanisms, inadequate reserves of professional talent, and relatively weak capacities in project evaluation and risk management (Zhang, Q. & Zhao, X, 2025). This lack of organizational capacity makes it difficult for charitable organizations to develop stable and replicable service models when addressing complex social problems and long-term public needs.

From the perspective of practical operation, contemporary philanthropy in China faces multiple challenges alongside its rapid expansion. At the institutional level, there remains considerable room for improvement in the legal framework and supporting policies for philanthropy, and the boundaries between administrative regulation and sectoral self-regulation have yet to be clearly defined. At the organizational level, some charitable

organizations continue to struggle with narrow resource structures, insufficient professional capacity, and underdeveloped governance mechanisms (Wang, S., 2024). At the social level, the depth and continuity of public participation remain limited, while social trust and information transparency continue to be key factors constraining the sustainable development of philanthropy (Li, D, 2026). At the technological and environmental levels, ongoing digital transformation, regional development imbalances, and the impacts of sudden public emergencies are continually testing the resilience and adaptive capacity of the philanthropic system. These issues are deeply intertwined, resulting in a pronounced level of complexity and multi-dimensionality in the sustainable development of philanthropy in China.

The above-mentioned issues do not exist in isolation; rather, they are interwoven and mutually reinforcing, giving rise to pronounced structural complexity in the sustainable development of contemporary philanthropy in China. This also indicates that analyses based on a single institutional perspective or isolated case studies are no longer sufficient to adequately address the challenges observed in practice. What is urgently needed is a systematic examination of the current state of philanthropic development in China from a multi-dimensional perspective, with a focus on uncovering its underlying operational mechanisms and key constraints, so as to provide both theoretical foundations and practical pathways for building a modern philanthropic system that is sustainable in the Chinese context.

3. Theoretical Framework and Research Methods

To systematically uncover the internal

mechanisms and practical pathways of sustainable philanthropic development in contemporary China, this study adopts an integrated analytical perspective that combines cultural dynamics and philanthropic economics. From the dual dimensions of value transformation and resource allocation mechanisms, the framework provides a multi-dimensional interpretation of philanthropic behavior and the institutional operation of the philanthropic sector.

At the theoretical level, cultural dynamics emphasize the endogenous driving role of cultural factors in processes of social structural transformation and institutional evolution (Zhu, H., 2014). Philanthropic development in China is deeply embedded in cultural traditions centered on ethics of benevolence, a strong sense of family–state responsibility, and social obligation. Against the backdrop of contemporary social transformation, traditional philanthropic culture has interacted with—and been reconfigured alongside—modern legal principles, public governance logics, and market mechanisms, giving rise to an important set of cultural dynamics that drive the sustainable development of philanthropy. From the perspective of cultural dynamics, this study focuses on how philanthropic values, behavioral norms, and forms of social recognition evolve across different historical periods and practical contexts, and how these transformations exert profound influences on philanthropic institutions and practices.

At the same time, philanthropic economics provides an important rational analytical tool for examining the sustainable development of philanthropy. This theoretical approach focuses on the motivations behind the supply of philanthropic resources, allocation efficiency, and incentive mechanisms, while emphasizing the interactive relationships among philanthropic activities across the nonprofit sector, the market, and government (Yang, F., 2014). Drawing on the analytical framework of philanthropic economics, this study examines donation motivations, mechanisms of multi-actor participation, the resource integration capacity of charitable organizations, and the effects of institutional incentives and constraints on philanthropic supply. Particular attention is devoted to analyzing existing problems in China’s philanthropic sector concerning the structure of funding sources, project operational efficiency, and long-term incentive mechanisms,

as well as the underlying causes of these challenges.

In terms of research methodology, this study adopts an approach that integrates normative analysis with empirical analysis. On the one hand, through literature review and policy text analysis, it systematically examines relevant theoretical contributions and the evolution of institutional arrangements related to philanthropic development in China. On the other hand, it analyzes the operational mechanisms and practical performance of charitable organizations in order to enhance the empirical relevance of the research findings.

On this basis, the study synthesizes insights derived from cultural dynamics and philanthropic economics to construct a multi-dimensional analytical framework capable of explaining the driving mechanisms underlying the sustainable development of contemporary philanthropy in China, thereby providing a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent formulation of policy and strategic recommendations.

4. Strategies and Policy Recommendations for Building Sustainable Philanthropy in China from a Multi-Dimensional Perspective

4.1 Building the Sustainability of Public Trust in Philanthropy

In contemporary philanthropic practice in China, insufficient public trust has emerged as a prominent constraint on the healthy development of the philanthropic sector (Miao, J., 2022). This challenge is rooted not only in practical factors such as information asymmetry and underdeveloped governance mechanisms, but is also closely related to the incomplete formation of philanthropic cultural identification and institutional trust structures. Therefore, adopting a systematic, multi-dimensional approach that integrates institutional, organizational, and social dimensions to advance the reconstruction of public trust in philanthropy is of significant practical importance.

At the institutional level, it is essential to further improve charitable laws, regulations, and supporting institutional arrangements, while strengthening their binding force and enforcement effectiveness. By clarifying the statutory obligations of charitable organizations regarding information disclosure and standardizing financial management and project operation procedures, philanthropic activities

can be more effectively guided to operate within a robust rule-of-law framework (Li, H., 2016). At the same time, regulatory approaches should be optimized by shifting from a model dominated by single administrative control toward a governance framework that combines rule-of-law-based regulation with sectoral self-regulation, thereby consolidating the institutional foundations of public trust in philanthropy.

At the organizational level, charitable organizations should focus on strengthening internal governance and enhancing professional capacity. On the one hand, by improving board governance systems and reinforcing internal oversight and risk prevention mechanisms, organizations can increase transparency in decision-making and standardize operational practices. On the other hand, greater emphasis should be placed on the cultivation and recruitment of professional talent to enhance capacities in project design, implementation, and evaluation, thereby responding to public concerns through tangible outcomes. The improvement of organizational governance capacity represents a critical step in transforming public trust in philanthropy from externally imposed constraints into an endogenous form of trust.

At the social level, it is essential to actively expand channels and forms of public participation in philanthropy and to build diversified, interactive mechanisms for the generation of trust. Through information disclosure platforms, digital tools, and mechanisms of social oversight, public access to—and participation in—the entire philanthropic process can be enhanced, enabling public trust to shift from one-way presentation to multi-actor co-construction. At the same time, greater attention should be given to cultivating philanthropic culture. Through public-interest education and value-oriented guidance, a stronger sense of identification with and responsibility for philanthropy can be fostered among social members, thereby providing a sustained social foundation for the reconstruction of public trust.

At the technological and environmental levels, it is essential to fully leverage digital technologies to enhance transparency and improve efficiency across philanthropic activities (Zhang, N. & Wang, M., 2018). By advancing the development of philanthropic information platforms and

standardizing data governance and information-sharing mechanisms, information asymmetry can be reduced while the traceability and evaluability of philanthropic operations are enhanced. In this way, digital support can strengthen the stability and resilience of public trust in philanthropy.

4.2 Ensuring the Sustainability of Philanthropic Policies

A sound policy system constitutes an important institutional safeguard for promoting the sustainable development of philanthropy. In contemporary philanthropic practice in China, relevant policies have played a positive role in regulating charitable activities, guiding the participation of social resources, and facilitating the growth of charitable organizations. However, there remains considerable room for further improvement in terms of policy coordination, incentive mechanisms, and implementation effectiveness (Han, X., Dou, S. & Zhang, N., 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to build on existing policy experience while continuously advancing the systematic safeguarding and structural reform of philanthropic policies.

At present, China's philanthropic policies involve multiple government departments, including civil affairs, finance, taxation, education, and health, resulting in a certain degree of fragmentation in policy objectives and implementation mechanisms. It is therefore necessary to strengthen cross-departmental coordination and to establish a philanthropic policy system characterized by coherent objectives, clearly defined responsibilities, and smooth operational processes, so as to avoid adverse effects on sustainable philanthropic development caused by policy overlap or implementation gaps. In addition, policy instruments centered on tax incentives, fiscal support, and institutional incentives should be further refined and strengthened (Lin, H., 2025). By optimizing pre-tax deduction policies for charitable donations and expanding diversified incentive mechanisms, it is possible to guide enterprises, social organizations, and individuals toward forming stable and sustained patterns of philanthropic engagement and investment (Qian, L., Lin, Y. & Ding, H., 2025). At the same time, greater attention should be paid to the fairness and precision of policy incentives, ensuring that policy resources are more effectively directed toward philanthropic fields characterized by urgent public needs and significant social

benefits, thereby enhancing policy effectiveness and the efficiency of resource allocation (Sun, S., 2025).

Establishing mechanisms for policy implementation feedback and effectiveness evaluation can help identify and correct deviations in policy execution in a timely manner, thereby enhancing the operability and adaptability of philanthropic policies. At the same time, encouraging the participation of third-party institutions and broader social actors in policy evaluation can enhance the transparency and scientific rigor of policy formulation and implementation, thereby providing an empirical basis for the continuous optimization of philanthropic policies (Hu, W. & Fang, H., 2025).

At the level of reform orientation, philanthropic policies should be shifted from a predominantly regulatory and normative approach toward a more supportive and development-oriented policy framework (Wan, Y. & Liu, Y., 2025). By providing institutional space, capacity-building support, and opportunities for innovative pilot programs for charitable organizations, philanthropic policies can activate the endogenous motivation of philanthropic actors, enabling regulation to be ensured while more effectively serving the long-term development goals of the philanthropic sector.

4.3 Strengthening the Sustainable Economic Support of Enterprises for Philanthropy

As a key actor within the modern philanthropic system, corporations play an irreplaceable role in resource provision, institutional innovation, and the practical fulfillment of social responsibility through their philanthropic activities (Li, N., 2024). With the sustained development of China's economy and the deepening of corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate philanthropy has gradually shifted from spontaneous donations toward more institutionalized and strategic forms. However, there remains considerable room for improvement in terms of participation depth, continuity, and synergistic effects. Therefore, fully leveraging the supportive role of corporate philanthropy in the sustainable development of contemporary philanthropy in China is of significant practical importance.

At the conceptual level, corporate philanthropy should be promoted to shift from an "event-driven" model toward a "long-term strategic" orientation (Yan, H. & Chen, Z.S., 2025). By

incorporating philanthropic practices into corporate development strategies and social responsibility frameworks, enterprises can be guided to place greater emphasis on the creation of social value while pursuing economic value, thereby forming a stable and sustainable mechanism for philanthropic investment (Qiao, Y.W., 2023). This transformation helps enhance the continuity and social impact of corporate philanthropy, while avoiding the short-termism and instrumentalization of philanthropic activities.

At the institutional and governance levels, policy support and cooperative mechanisms for corporate participation in philanthropy should be further improved. On the one hand, policy guidance and institutional incentives should be used to encourage enterprises to establish long-term cooperative relationships with philanthropic and social organizations. On the other hand, enterprises should be encouraged to leverage their professional advantages in project design, fund management, and performance evaluation, thereby improving the operational efficiency and social effectiveness of philanthropic projects and promoting an effective alignment between corporate philanthropy and societal needs (Zhu, J.G., 2025). Corporate philanthropy should be guided toward greater diversification and professionalization. Beyond traditional forms of monetary donations, enterprises should be encouraged to participate in philanthropic practices through multiple approaches, such as technical support, volunteer services, capacity building, and social innovation, thereby expanding the functional boundaries of corporate philanthropy. At the same time, by establishing information disclosure and evaluation mechanisms for corporate philanthropy, the transparency and social recognition of philanthropic activities can be enhanced, providing a favorable incentive environment for enterprises' sustained engagement in philanthropy (Chen, L., Yang, Y.W., Wu, Y.M., et al., 2023).

At the level of collaborative development, greater coordination should be promoted between corporate philanthropy, government policies, and the actions of social organizations. By constructing multi-stakeholder cooperation platforms, a collaborative model characterized by government guidance, corporate participation, and social organization implementation can be

formed, enabling corporate philanthropy to play a supportive role within broader systems of social governance and public service delivery, thereby contributing to the long-term, stable, and high-quality development of philanthropy in China.

4.4 From Acquaintance-Based Society to the Sustainable Development of Community Philanthropy

Within China's contemporary social governance system, communities serve not only as key units for the provision of public services but also as practical spaces where social mutual assistance and grassroots philanthropy are actively carried out. Promoting the development of community philanthropy helps achieve a more precise alignment between philanthropic resources and residents' actual needs, representing an important pathway toward the sustainable development of philanthropy and innovation in grassroots governance.

At the level of functional positioning, the foundational role of community philanthropy within the modern philanthropic system should be clearly defined. Compared with large-scale philanthropic projects, community philanthropy is more closely connected to people's livelihoods and everyday needs, and thus possesses inherent advantages in areas such as elderly care and assistance to vulnerable groups, community mutual aid, and the supplementation of public services (Wu, Z.Q., 2025). By incorporating community philanthropy into grassroots social governance frameworks, philanthropic resources can be effectively channeled downward, thereby enhancing the accessibility and practical effectiveness of philanthropic practices.

At the level of organizational mechanisms, diversified community-based philanthropic actors should be cultivated and supported. By fostering community social organizations, volunteer organizations, and resident self-governance bodies, a community-based and resident-centered mechanism for philanthropic participation can be established (Wang, S., 2025). At the same time, cooperation between communities and professional philanthropic organizations, enterprises, and public welfare platforms should be promoted to introduce external resources and professional expertise, thereby compensating for deficiencies in funding and capacity within community philanthropy and enhancing its operational sustainability. By

establishing mechanisms for project registration, public disclosure of fund usage, and resident-based participatory oversight, the transparency and standardization of community philanthropic activities can be strengthened, thereby consolidating their public credibility. Meanwhile, digital tools can be leveraged to facilitate the integration of community philanthropy information and the matching of services, improving the efficiency of resource allocation and enabling targeted assistance.

Finally, at the level of cultural cultivation, greater emphasis should be placed on the shaping and dissemination of a culture of community philanthropy. Through community public activities, volunteer services, and public-interest education, residents can be guided to develop shared value recognition centered on mutual assistance, co-construction, co-governance, and shared benefits, thereby transforming philanthropy from an "external intervention" into a form of everyday practice and conscious action among community members (Xie, Q., 2025). The accumulation of a culture of philanthropy at the community level will provide the most solid social foundation for the sustainable development of philanthropy in China.

4.5 Innovating Sustainable Philanthropic Governance Through Digital Empowerment and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Digitalization not only provides the technical conditions for the integration of philanthropic resources and the dissemination of information, but also creates new institutional spaces for multi-stakeholder participation in philanthropic governance. At the level of digital empowerment, the positive role of information technologies in enhancing transparency and operational efficiency in philanthropy should be fully leveraged (Qing, S.S., 2025). By building unified and standardized philanthropic information platforms, full-process disclosure of philanthropic projects, fund flows, and implementation outcomes can be promoted, thereby reducing information asymmetry and enhancing the traceability of philanthropic activities and social trust. At the same time, big data and intelligent analytics tools can be leveraged to improve the precision of philanthropic needs identification and resource matching, facilitating an effective alignment between philanthropic supply and social demand.

At the level of governance mechanisms, philanthropic governance should be promoted to shift from a single-actor-dominated model toward a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach. By constructing collaborative governance mechanisms involving governments, philanthropic organizations, enterprises, communities, and the public, the roles and responsibility boundaries of different actors can be clearly defined, forming a philanthropic governance structure characterized by a rational division of labor and orderly coordination. Such a multi-stakeholder collaborative model helps integrate the resource advantages of different actors, enhancing the overall effectiveness and systemic resilience of philanthropic governance. Digitalization-supported innovations in philanthropic governance should be actively encouraged (Zhang, J.M., 2025). On the premise of legal compliance, institutional pilot spaces should be provided for emerging philanthropic models, public welfare platforms, and social innovation projects. Through practical exploration, relevant regulatory frameworks and policy arrangements can be continuously refined, enabling a virtuous interaction between institutional development and technological advancement and providing sustained momentum for the sustainable development of philanthropy.

At the level of long-term sustainability, digital governance and multi-stakeholder collaborative mechanisms should be embedded within the broader process of China's social governance modernization. By promoting systematic upgrading of the philanthropic governance system, philanthropy can play a more proactive role in addressing social risks, mitigating social inequality, and enhancing public service provision, thereby achieving high-quality and sustainable development of the philanthropic sector.

5. Collaborative Mechanisms for Philanthropic Sustainability: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective

Building on the preceding analysis of the structural challenges confronting the sustainable development of philanthropy in China, it is necessary to adopt a multi-dimensional perspective to systematically construct philanthropic development mechanisms characterized by internal stability and long-term resilience. From the perspective of overall operational logic, philanthropy in China

represents a dynamic process that has gradually evolved through the interactive interplay of multiple factors, including public trust foundations, policy and institutional safeguards, economic resource provision, grassroots social structures, and innovations in governance practices. These five dimensions differ in their functional emphases yet are mutually embedded in their operational logic, jointly forming a composite structure that supports the long-term functioning of philanthropy.

As the core of the trust mechanism, philanthropic credibility directly affects whether resources can continuously flow into the philanthropic system by shaping the expectations and judgments of the public, enterprises, and communities toward philanthropic activities (Sun, L.J., 2025). Meanwhile, the stable provision of policy and institutional arrangements offers normative boundaries and institutional endorsement for such trust, enabling philanthropic participation to move beyond reliance on individual moral motivations and instead become embedded within a long-term and predictable institutional environment (Chen, B. & Cao, R., 2025).

On this basis, corporate economic participation and community-based philanthropic practices constitute two key pillars supporting the sustainable development of philanthropy. By incorporating philanthropy into strategic decision-making and corporate social responsibility frameworks, enterprises not only provide relatively stable resources and professional capacities for philanthropic endeavors, but also—under the combined influence of policy incentives and an environment of public trust—facilitate a shift from short-term donations toward long-term philanthropic investment. Meanwhile, communities, as the primary arenas where social needs are most concentrated, transform macro-level institutional arrangements and external resources into sustainable everyday practices of mutual assistance; by activating resident participation and social networks, they consolidate the social foundation underpinning the operation of philanthropy (Jiang, Y.Z. & Zhao, S.S., 2024). The support structures formed by enterprises and communities at different levels enable philanthropy to possess both resource continuity and sustained sensitivity to specific social needs.

Meanwhile, digital empowerment and multi-stakeholder collaborative governance play a

crucial integrative and amplifying role among the above-mentioned elements. By enhancing information transparency, reducing coordination costs, and optimizing resource allocation, digital technologies make the construction of public trust more verifiable, policy implementation more efficient, and provide platform-based conditions for precise matching in corporate

participation and community mobilization. In this process, collaborative relationships among governments, philanthropic organizations, enterprises, and communities are continuously deepened, and philanthropic governance gradually shifts from fragmented and ad hoc operations toward institutionalized, networked, and long-term modes of operation.

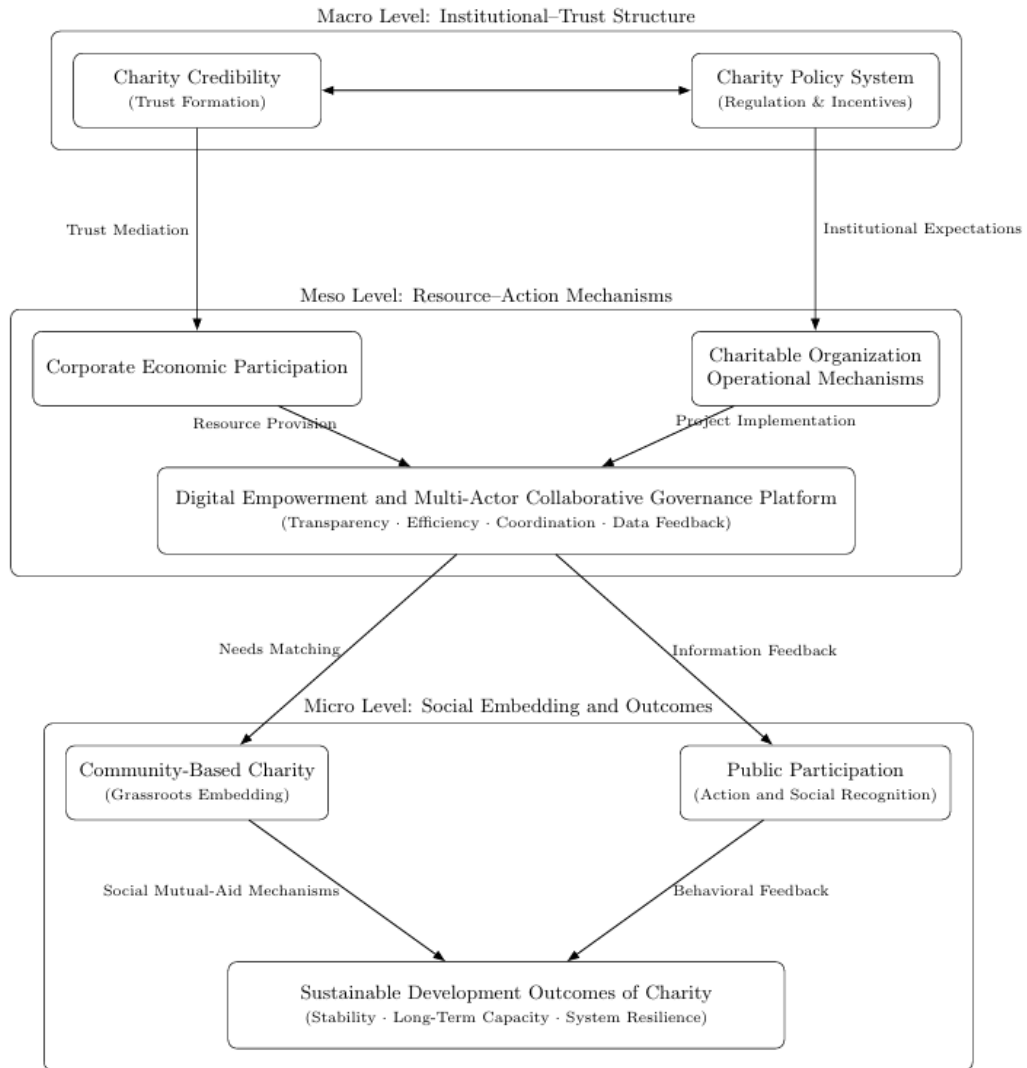


Figure 1. A Multi-Dimensional Collaborative Mechanism Model for the Sustainable Development of Philanthropy in China

Note: From a systems perspective, this model reveals the internal mechanisms underlying the sustainable development of philanthropy in China, highlighting the collaborative roles of public trust, policy and institutional arrangements, corporate participation, community social structures, and digital governance across different levels. These elements are not linearly related; rather, through dynamic interaction and feedback, they jointly shape the long-term stability and developmental resilience of philanthropy.

It can thus be concluded that the sustainability of philanthropy in China is a structural outcome that is continuously reinforced through sustained interactions among trust formation, institutional

safeguards, resource provision, social embeddedness, and governance innovation. It is precisely through the synergistic effects of these multi-dimensional elements that philanthropy

can transform from phase-based expansion toward high-quality and sustainable development.

6. Conclusions

This study adopts a multi-dimensional perspective to systematically examine the historical trajectory, current conditions, and core challenges of contemporary philanthropy in China, thereby exploring its internal logic, practical constraints, and pathways toward sustainable development. The findings indicate that, driven jointly by China's deep-rooted historical and cultural traditions and the profound social transformations following the Reform and Opening-up period, Chinese philanthropy has undergone a fundamental transition from traditional ethical practices toward institutionalized, professionalized, and socialized forms. Significant progress has been achieved in terms of organizational scale, resource mobilization, and public participation. However, alongside its rapid expansion, philanthropy in China continues to face multiple structural constraints, including weakened public trust, a relatively homogeneous resource structure, limited organizational capacity, an underdeveloped institutional environment, and fragile foundations of social trust. These interrelated challenges collectively contribute to the pronounced complexity and systemic nature of philanthropic sustainability in China.

By integrating theoretical insights from cultural dynamics and philanthropic economics, this study constructs a multi-dimensional analytical framework encompassing institutional structures, organizational governance, social culture, technological conditions, and external environments. The analysis reveals that the sustainable development of philanthropy in China does not depend on breakthroughs in any single dimension; rather, it is grounded in the dynamic synergy among multiple elements, including public trust mechanisms, policy and institutional safeguards, corporate economic participation, community social structures, and digitally enabled collaborative governance. Among these elements, public trust constitutes the precondition for the sustained inflow of resources; the institutional environment provides stable expectations and normative frameworks; enterprises and communities respectively offer critical support in terms of resource provision and social embeddedness; and digital technologies function as enabling and integrative

tools that enhance overall governance efficiency and systemic resilience.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in transcending the limitations of single-perspective approaches by employing a multi-dimensional framework to uncover the complex interactions among cultural traditions, institutional arrangements, economic rationality, and social structures in the context of China's philanthropic sustainability. This integrated perspective offers a valuable analytical tool for understanding both the particularities and the generalizable features of indigenous philanthropic development. At the practical level, the proposed policy recommendations are intended to provide actionable guidance for multiple stakeholders—including policymakers, philanthropic organizations, enterprises, and the broader public—by addressing deep-rooted bottlenecks in current philanthropic development and promoting the role of philanthropy in advancing social governance innovation, enhancing social equity, and contributing to the realization of common prosperity through high-quality development.

Looking ahead, the sustainable development of philanthropy in China will remain a long-term, dynamic process requiring continuous adjustment and adaptation. With the ongoing modernization of the national governance system, the iterative application of digital technologies, and the further evolution of social values, philanthropy in China is likely to encounter both new opportunities and emerging challenges. Future research may further explore frontier issues such as the interaction between philanthropy and the third distribution, the emergency response and recovery capacities of philanthropic systems in the context of public crises, and the international role of Chinese philanthropy under conditions of globalization, thereby enriching and refining the theoretical foundations and practical pathways of philanthropy with Chinese characteristics.

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