2020 marks an ambitious new chapter in CIFF’s engagement in Africa, defined by a more systems-led approach to solution design and a resolute commitment to advancing African answers to African challenges. In outlining this dual vision and its implications, we seek opportunities for deep collaboration with committed governments, development funders, implementing organizations, the private sector, civil society and the African diaspora in the years ahead. We are impatient to embark upon this journey with partners – old and new – who share in this vision.

Africa lies at the heart of CIFF’s global mission to improve the lives of children living in poverty. We recently expanded our investment resources to $500m over the 2020-2025 period, re-envisioned our purpose and mission across the continent, and substantially expanded our local presence across our offices in Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

CIFF’s approach to development in Africa will take two forms:

- The first is to channel CIFF’s commitment to integrated, systemic solutions towards the pressing needs identified by African governments, institutions, NGOs, and community leaders as central impediments to the flourishing of Africa’s populations. We seek to push ourselves and our partners towards more integrated solutions addressing multiple issue areas symbiotically, at their nexus.

- Recognizing and harnessing African sources of knowledge, capital, growth, and leadership, to create more context-adapted solutions designed by Africa, with funding streams emanating from within the African landscape – in tandem with CIFF’s own financial commitments.

By design, CIFF resources are intended to tackle the most complicated and overlooked problems at their root, via sustainable financing models, with a distinct appetite for risk-taking, market-building, and co-financing to ensure enduring impact long into a post-CIFF future. Harnessing technology is central to our ambition to achieve this impact at scale, as well as our determination to find innovative solutions to the most complex challenges.

We are explicit in our intention to work in countries with highly engaged governments, and to ensure we have the approval and buy-in required (both financially and politically) to effectively address the complex issues we seek to resolve. As part of this, CIFF must ensure continuous alignment with the priorities of African partner governments, communities, and institutions through extensive and recurrent communication, advocacy, and goal setting.

Our vision in Africa is to ensure that a demographic dividend becomes possible, and is ultimately reaped, by focusing primarily on the needs of girls and young women. In sum, we advocate for a gender dividend as the strongest gateway to a demographic dividend. While we will not exclusively serve this group, we are clear that the primary gateway to a thriving and self-sustaining Africa is to ensure girls have the health, opportunities, and agency required to make autonomous choices, form realistic aspirations, and realize those aspirations. We will anchor our efforts in the realities of our priority geographies, focusing investments in the labour force or in human capital, where they promise the greatest potential to deliver impact.

While honouring our existing commitments, we will progressively evolve our portfolio towards the four pillars of our strategy detailed below. This will entail a series of initial exploratory investments, from which key learnings will be extracted to design a handful of later-stage investments, intended to address major systemic gaps over a long-term horizon. Investment scoping and design will be undertaken with willing partners over the months ahead:
1. ‘For Africa, By Africa’: supporting Africa’s self-determination via African giving, financing, and policy-making: Annual giving by Africans is estimated at $56b (inc. $46b in remittances). This is a vast untapped resource, significantly outsizing Overseas Development Assistance, Foreign Direct Investment, Western philanthropy, and impact investing. Supporting and leveraging African giving and government funding, and co-designing solutions with African communities, governments, and institutions to ensure accurate problem diagnosis is key to effective and self-sustaining impact. Without doing so, we lack the complete knowledge/context to effectively serve the populations we seek to empower. Most fundamentally, we risk being short-term in our thinking and ambition rather than seeking to build a legacy of ownership by Africans in their own agenda.

2. Resilient communities: strengthening communities’ ability to withstand climate impacts and to further community norms and behaviours that prevent critical and adverse illnesses. Focusing on the intersection of climate impacts and nutrition as well as WASH and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) is key to ensuring the basis for future thriving. Going forward, we must ensure that the food consumed is affordable, nutritious, safe, and sustainable. This means changing both the production and consumption patterns of food in Africa. In parallel, we intend to double down on the relationship between WASH and NTDs by developing solutions that acknowledge their mutually damaging impacts.

3. Girls’ choices: empower women and girls to manage their reproductive health and wider well-being proactively, effectively, and independently: Providing girls with the knowledge and tools they need to make independent, informed choices around fertility and health, is essential for girls to then have the opportunities to thrive, and for their children to have the opportunities to develop fully. We know that empowering girls to manage their fertility as they see fit is central to this aim. This work is likely to encompass both practical solutions via new products and delivery pathways as well as wider work to change norms that impact girls’ ability to make choices, such as around child marriage.

4. Girls’ opportunities: ensuring complete education, life skills, and access to sustainable livelihoods: Investing in holistic approaches to improving outlooks for girls will mean focusing on secondary school completion, fostering development of essential life skills that determine life outcomes (such as the ability to self-advocate, negotiate with partners, and reach independent decisions), and access to sustainable paid work. This investment area also provides a platform for integration with climate objectives around mitigation via a green economy, and creating economic opportunities for girls that will allow them to contribute to the wealth of the continent in the jobs of the future.

Geographic focus
For the 2020-2025 period our countries of greatest and most integrated activity will be Kenya and Ethiopia. In both of these countries we enjoy a sizeable and rapidly growing staff presence, strong relationships developed over an extended period, strong alignment by CIFF with governments’ development priorities, and target communities we understand well. In addition, we intend to explore narrower opportunities in Nigeria and parts of francophone West Africa, such that our strategy may represent the diverse realities that exist across Africa and give us the opportunity to demonstrate impact born out of responsiveness to diverse regional needs and contexts.

CIFF is excited to work with you to deliver on this next set of objectives. We thank those who join us in this journey towards more integrated and systemic solutions designed for Africa, by Africa.