

THE SAVILLE FOUNDATION (TSF)



CONSCIOUS PHILANTHROPY FOR A DIFFERENT OUTCOME

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A. Abstract

In a world that is struggling to re-invent itself, the role that independent free thinking organisations from within the Philanthropic and Corporate sector play is vital. To take part in potentially powerful initiatives but at the same time provide unbiased, uncluttered perspectives linked to sustained support after engagement, can contribute substantially to the possibility of long term success of projects or forums.

As a result, the support and promotion of free-thinking Foundations and Grantmakers with the ability and will to persuade organisations and the individuals that run them to consider out of the ordinary, conscious alternatives that can enhance the possibility of the desperately needed, deep long term systemic transformation change-agents dream of, is vital.

The content of this paper provides the rationale behind our approach, an overview of the playing field, and finally some of the experience gained through projects we have engaged with that demonstrate this approach

Based on the above paragraph, and from our own perspective, meaningful change seems to at last be starting to happen. We are seeing more and more new models of collaboration that lead to better innovation and higher performance, and more importantly, a new generation of young workers are entering the workforce – and bringing a new culture and driving more conscious consumer demands – forcing the business community to offer something better than what has been presented in the past.

And in order to stay ahead of the curve, and be relevant and prosperous in the future, individuals and companies will have to continue to develop and commit to these new realities – within business and philanthropy.

All of which requires organisations to have an internally generated capacity to evolve and change. To be adaptive, fluid and progressive in their operations, and be driven by a strong culture of education and enabling programs underpinned by creativity and innovation.

In a practical guide to the challenges and successes of global fundraising, written by an international team of highly respected philanthropy professionals and edited by two leading non-profit thinkers, the book *Global Fundraising* offers a global overview of philanthropy with an internationalist perspective.

Interestingly, they claim that as the world becomes more interdependent, and economies struggle, global philanthropy continues to increase. On top of that, non-profits are taking up roles that have traditionally been filled by the government—including social welfare, healthcare, and human rights. Some of the worldwide trends they identify are:

- There is a continuing growth of great wealth and an increasing amount of it is being diverted to philanthropy
- Non-profit innovations are no longer coming just from the United States or Europe
- Indigenous NGOs/NPOs continue to grow in number throughout the world, but there are some leviathans emerging
- There is considerable debate worldwide about the role of philanthropy and the role of the state
- Fundraising is becoming more professional and professionalized
- Everyone agrees that new and social technologies are important, but they disagree how
- Philanthropy thrives best when there are codified civil society structures and regulations for nonprofit agencies

A. THE ROLE OF TSF

In our journey over the last nine years, our willingness to engage deeply with each initiative has enabled us to learn new lessons and perspectives which we are also able to share regularly on platforms and forums.

Being a private a highly mobile Foundation 'who participate without ego to support what we feel is appropriate in each engagement' (*DS UCT Mar2014*), we are able to engage and back unusual or innovative programs that less flexible purpose driven organisations are unable to do.

Adding enormous depth and value, and closely linked to this approach is the Poverty Stoplight program which has substantially enhanced our access and assessment of the true requirements of individuals and communities from THEIR perspective rather than our own.

Of interest is our growing acceptance and presence on a national (and international!) level as a Foundation that takes on and supports innovative and unusual programs that will make a difference. As part of that we are increasingly requested to participate in panels or speak at forums, and some of the more meaningful ones that we accepted included:

- UCT GSB panels at The Bertha Centre for Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- CECD's Annual ECD Conference – a funding perspective
- IPASA Conference - Risk and Investment Perspective
- ETP4i Sustainable Schools Conference in Delhi

Future Focus

To retain clarity and longer term purpose as a Foundation, and considering the fact that Philanthropy etymologically means "love of humanity" in the sense of caring, nourishing, developing and enhancing "what it is to be human", it seems our target focus sectors are well aimed.

In addition, TSF's approach has borne out of trying to always look objectively at what is really required, and while charitable giving relieves the pains of social problems, true philanthropy attempts to solve those problems at their root causes (the difference between giving a hungry person a fish, and teaching them how to fish).

In our view, and to ensure that we continue to sustain each endeavour with focus and clarity, our drivers, the approach and language we use are vital, summed up well by a quote from the book *Global Philanthropy*:

'Philanthropy can often mean the difference between making a grant and making an impact'.

The Vehicle

The Saville Foundation (www.tsf.bm) is a private foundation committed to enabling significant and relevant social change. We seek out and engage with projects or institutions that provide innovative and appropriate alternatives to current challenges in education and community development.

Vital to these changes are the aspects of individual empowerment of everybody within any system, project, school or community. Linked to this is the promotion of heightened Awareness and Conscious actions on the part of donors, corporates and government to engage and assess each intervention deeply, stay involved to ensure project resilience, and ultimately replicate

proven solutions.

Instigating new approaches to donor participation is vital, as the current models of funding and support mostly don't achieve effective or lasting change. New approaches to connecting, assessing and then enabling genuine engagement to meet the real needs of people and communities is critical to the future – to achieve genuine empowerment of individuals, full enablement of communities or institutions, and ultimately significant social change.

Our Evolution

After almost a decade of activity, of excitement is that in the past few months a number of the initiatives and programmes we have engaged with have shown some real signs of traction. Not only are we finding an increased level of acceptance and awareness of our input at project level (with the relevant impact too), we are also receiving payments back on some loans made (part of the approach that promotes enablement through accountability rather than easy to provide hand-outs).

Our participation in forums or interventions on a macro level promises much – with positive engagement from local academic leadership, corporates, local foundations and even government - as well as organisations and grantmakers from the USA and elsewhere.

Involvement and partnerships with institutions such as Teach A Man to Fish based in the UK, Agricultural Schools in Paraguay and Chile, and interaction with US based foundations such as Kresge, World Stewardship, Organisation Unbound and others are confirmations of the r each we have achieved.

B. Statement of Purpose

As with so many of the systems, methodologies or entities in place around the world, philanthropy also does not always deliver or perform as it should. Undoubtedly a contentious statement that will be met with indignation and even anger amongst corporate or philanthropic practitioners!

But should it be? Why is there still so little real progress or change at the coalface? Why do so many people carry on living in challenged situations or “poverty”? And what is poverty all about? Is it purely financial? And are we listening more carefully to the progressive thinkers who claim that issues are not being addressed appropriately?

Of importance is the fact that when change is seen to occur, in many instances it does not address the hidden issues within the entity or community, and more often than not does not thrive (or even survive!) once the investment or human resource support is removed. As such part of the purpose of our Strategy Paper would be to take a deeper look at the real deliverables required to make genuine and long lasting systemic change on a macro level.

As a Foundation, our own medium and long term planning is being guided by the obvious need to find better ways to promote and deliver real change across the spectrum – with strategies around who to target, as well as how the need for change is accepted.

Linked to this, albeit the subject of an even deeper dialogue, is the urgent need to re-assess the systems and principles society currently employs within education and development – another powerful role independent, integritous Foundations and NGO's can play in this space.

Research Questions

Most of our perspectives as a Foundation have come from our active and varied role within projects on the ground, coupled to discussions, interactions and partnerships with large and small players from the Private Philanthropy Circle (now known as IPASA) forum that was initiated here in South Africa a few years ago. A common topic of conversation has been the lack of real delivery on the ground, often despite the amounts of funding involved.

Although there is good intent within the sector, the focus on buzzwords like 'measurable', 'cost-effective' and 'proven outcomes', linked to theoretically sound but often unrealistic concepts of 'sustainability, scalability and replication' too often drive the agenda. In our opinion, some of the main Questions that should be looked at urgently are:

- A better understanding of the beneficiaries, and their REAL requirements (most people just say 'YES' to any question which looks like it will provide something which promises some kind of deliverable and better life)
- A deeper engagement with the communities or institutions to identify their genuine requirements (without the Western 'we know what's best for you' ego driving the process), at the same time assessing their natural assets (the ABCD program offered in SA by The Gordon Institute (GIBS) and The Mott Foundation)
- Paying more attention to the underlying causes of the problems, be they financial, social, or health related (too many interventions don't dig deep enough and instead provide 'solutions', 'fixes' or sometimes their own models that don't address the real needs)
- Establishing clearer outcomes relating to the ability of the project to stand alone as soon as possible, and provide appropriate support for this to occur
- Changing the way proposals are structured by communities or NGO's looking for funds using negative slants around HIV, poverty etc. instead of looking for positive aspects to support

Time

Another ingredient that is the cause of undue tension is time. In general, often driven by donor demands, the NGO world is under pressure to deliver and make a discernible difference as quickly as possible. In most cases, visible measurables or external deliverables are the leading drivers, when more often than not, the underlying issues or problems having not really been addressed. We have all seen the half-finished projects or empty disused buildings that litter Africa that are the outcomes of so many failed interventions - and the people and issues on the ground continue as they always have despite all of this attention - but with growing disappointment, resignation and even a level of anger at the continuing status quo.

In addition, if enough depth and understanding of the real requirements within a region or project were focussed on at the start, and meaningful on-going interaction and feedback between all role-players was undertaken, expensive M&E post project interventions would not be necessary. Obviously a controversial statement too, but the rationality behind close continual engagement is obvious.

C. THE LOGICAL OUTCOME

Logically then, the success of any project hinges on the initial levels of engagement and understanding undertaken with ALL stakeholders - with the role Grantmakers play an ideal platform from which to influence this approach.

Linked to this, and critical to the long term success of any model is the empowerment of individuals across the whole entity. Although it is heartening to find more and more conscious interventions taking place, the true empowerment of individuals within organisations or communities being assisted is still not addressed or given the accord it requires.

No organism works well if the molecules in it are not nourished, and so many, if not most interventions, ever engage or look deeply enough – and again, Independent Grantmakers are ideally placed to promote/drive this impetus.

This, here and now, is the place to begin. If we all make conscious choices to look more intensely into all of the interventions we engage in, and allow enough time to make deeper and more considered assessments and prioritisations before engaging – providing the relevant support, and where possible unearth and utilise hidden assets– we can actively begin to effect the changes we all know are so badly needed in the world.

D. SUMMATION

From our interactions on the ground, it is evident that it is about individuals within systems. We continually find that organisations with empowered people are the ones that have the most effective delivery potential.

The truly effective way forward is around Consciousness Based Interventions. Organisations that we have been privileged to work with who have achieved this include The Maharishi Institute with Dr Blecher at the helm, and Fundacion Origen in Chile with Ms. Mary-Anne Muller at the head, who has people/inner growth at the core of her project, making more and more of an impact within the communities in which she operates. As a result of her incredible work, she has recently been awarded a five year \$2,000,000 grant to expand on her work in Chile.

As we keep finding, it is not about buildings, technology or funding. Over \$1Trillion has been spent in Africa in the last few decades. With very little change to show for it.

What is really required is effective Individual (and by default community/school/NGO) Empowerment: backed by clarity of vision and clear deliverables within organisations - which does include Financial Sustainability, but is not only about that.

A holistic approach uses four pillars of sustainability—social, cultural, environmental and economic— to create projects that work with, as well as within, an environment and lead to the growth of strong, integrated, healthy communities in every sense.

This paper proposes that Private Foundations be made more aware of the role that they can truly play to enable and assist organisations to re-invent themselves from the inside- out, supporting sustained interventions through Consciousness based mediations and empowerment programs that make dramatic differences within these organisations and the people they serve.

To end, a quote from practitioner Dr. Melveen Jackson:

'BUT I miss the humanitarian emphasis that TSF brings to the field of development in education'.