

2009 SESSION REPORT

20th Annual General Assembly (AGA) and Conference | 14 – 16 May 2009
Rome Cavalieri | Rome, Italy

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Innovative ways for foundations fighting poverty in Europe

Moderator: Mats Rolén, Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond

Speakers: Nicholas McKinlay, Aga Khan Foundation, Portugal; Ratna Omidvar, The Maytree Foundation; Ekkehard Thümler, Centre for Social Investment

Designed by: Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Centre for Social Investment

Mr. Mats Rolén, Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, opened the discussion explaining that the concept of poverty should be used as an umbrella and should include issues such as education, social exclusion, unemployment, housing, and dependence of social welfare.

The Project director of the Centre for Social Investment, **Mr. Ekkehard Thümler**, discussed the research project his organisation is undertaking. The aim in the research project is to identify ways organisations can develop programs that yield maximum impact with the resources that are available to them as foundations. The research started in 2007 and the results are due at the end of 2009. visit: http://www.csi.uni-heidelberg.de/projekte_sip.htm

He explained that the research project consisted of identifying 20 programs or projects undertaken by organisations in 7 European countries that yielded high impacts. They examined the strategies and mechanisms that drive these high impact projects to try and find commonalities that can be used as guides for future programs.

Mr. Thümler said that his organisation formulated a blueprint model as a first step in data analysis. In this model you can see similar patterns and structures that were employed in all the high impact programs examined. Particularly, there are 4 areas of central significance to all the projects:

1. Ideology: DNA of the organisation, this relates to the fact that some foundations are able to do high impact work
2. Content area: Must truly understand and have extensive knowledge about the fields you work in and issues you work on
3. Organisation: Use the individual strengths you have as a foundation
4. Project/Program: Relates to the concrete design, it is important to design the program in a way that it is probable that high impact is achieved. Mr. Thümler explained that this can be achieved by utilising 4 comparative advantages that foundations have:
 - I. Social entrepreneurs: foundations are able to actively look for areas that are neglected by the state or civil society and actively address issues that nobody else wants to
 - II. Institution building: can build an institution, network, or fund a new organisation
 - III. Honest broker: foundations do not try to foster our mottos or ideas but provide a neutral platform for discussion and help provide a safe forum to tackle difficult issues
 - IV. Risk absorber: foundations can afford to lose money where others cannot, they can try approaches that others may not want to try because of high risk

Mr. Thümler went on to explain that their research showed that more impact was seen when the programs combined the comparative advantages. He concluded by commenting that it is more beneficial to invest in programs that will continue to be beneficial long after the program is finished. This can be achieved

through mechanisms such as capacity building, influencing politics, and framing public issues.

Nicholas McKinlay, [Aga Khan Foundation](#) began by stating that there are 3 major areas which his organisation centres their strategy around in Europe: inclusion of immigrants and minorities, development of young children, and the aging population.

He then began explaining the program they started in 2004 in Lisbon, Portugal with a main focus on the African community. The program focused on 4 main areas including families in the community, education in children, life long learning and employment, and building civil society. After 5 years the program has made a small step forward in the issues they are dealing with. Mr. McKinlay explained that the next couple of years will be crucial in seeing the wider impact. Having a long term vision is important and it is important to achieve a sustainable route and that you are strengthening the people you are trying to help.

He concluded by saying that self reflecting and learning are important and that staff should be continually trained and self reflecting.

Ms Ratna Omidvar, [The Maytree Foundation](#) started by explaining that foundations do not play as big of a role in Canada as they do in Europe. She continued by saying that she believes you can improve situations by finding new ways of solving old problems. This can be done by taking risks where government cannot, because they are accountable to the tax payer, and when successful replicating the solutions and scaling them up to public policy. Public policy is where you can have the greatest impact on the largest numbers of people.

Ms Omidvar explained that when looking to start a program you should focus on an area where there can be an impact, take financial risks, and imbed them into public policy so that they can have a much greater impact. Another option is to fund leaders who have ideas and capacity, broker relationships of power with allies and social activists and collaborate through associations.

She concluded by saying that we need to abandon the old model of philanthropy which is when “we give to people that do not have because we do have” and adopt the new model of philanthropy which is, “I have something I need to give you, and you have something you need to make for yourself, lets make a deal”.