

Social Entrepreneurs at the World Economic Forum on Africa 2009

Mitchell Besser and Gene Falk – mothers2mothers – Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia



mothers2mothers provides education, mentoring and support to HIV-positive pregnant women and new mothers. It focuses on preventing transmission of HIV from mother to child and teaching women to improve their health, the likelihood of their survival and the health of their babies. Its Mentor Mothers programme hires and trains new mothers living with HIV to inspire, mentor and counsel pregnant women diagnosed with HIV. In only seven years, it has become a multinational organization operating in 500 locations in seven countries, serving more than 150,000 women every month.

Martín Burt – Fundación Paraguaya – Paraguay



Martín Burt started the first microfinance programme in the country 25 years ago. Today, Fundación Paraguaya seeks to turn every Paraguayan into a potential entrepreneur. To that end, it has designed a national high-impact programme for grades kindergarten-12 in rural and urban schools, mobilizing over 1,000 members of the business community who have mentored more than 50,000 young people.

Jackie Gallagher – Sparrow Schools – South Africa



Sparrow Schools was founded in 1989 with the primary objective of providing access to appropriate education, vocational skills training and extensive learner support to marginalized and learning-disabled children and youth to improve their access to employment. Every year, it provides affordable quality private education, vocational skills training and extensive learner support to 600 disadvantaged children and youth who cannot cope in mainstream schools.

David Kuria – Ecotact – Kenya



After years of serving as a city planner and with non-profit organizations delivering basic services to the people of Kibera, the largest informal settlement in Africa, Kuria has created Ecotact as a social enterprise spearheading community service and environmental interventions with a business perspective. Ecotact has built “Ikotoilet” malls in places where municipalities cannot keep up with the rapid pace of urbanization, while their high profile social marketing campaigns raise awareness for hygiene and water conservation. With 14 functioning facilities that already serve 30,000 daily users, Ecotact is currently constructing another 20 malls across Kenya.

Garth Japhet – Heartlines – South Africa



After establishing the Soul City, the most evaluated “edutainment” programme in the world in 10 countries in Africa and Latin America, Garth Japhet is taking mass media to change the values of South Africa through Heartlines. Heartlines is a hybrid non-profit and for-profit organization that seeks to use the power of mass media, new technologies and social mobilization to bring about positive social change on a mass scale. Heartlines has produced eight feature length films, a new TV drama called Hopeville and the Movement For Good campaign.

Bertram Lubner – Ma’Afrika Tikkun – South Africa



Ma’Afrika Tikkun provides a holistic and integrated service empowering township communities to care for children born into poverty until they are at an age when they contribute positively to society. It provides home-based care services to shack residents (health and social services), establishes and operates early childhood development centres, and provides facilities for older children through after school youth development programmes in the townships of South Africa.

Shona McDonald – Shonaquip – South Africa



Shonaquip is a social business that provides support services that promote inclusion and equal opportunity employment for persons with disabilities. It designs and builds postural support mobility devices and body support equipment. It promotes and supports the distribution of appropriate mobility and other assistive devices as well as offers professional and clinical training on safe wheelchair provision for clinicians, therapists, rehabilitation workers, wheelchair users and their care providers and families.

Nick Moon – KickStart – Kenya, Tanzania, Mali, Burkina Faso



KickStart has created a new model of poverty eradication that harnesses the entrepreneurial spirit with the power of technology and the sustainability of the private sector. It designs, produces and sells appropriate technologies to rural entrepreneurs in some of the world's poorest markets, allowing them to start small-scale businesses. In 2005, KickStart helped 6,000 businesses, generating an additional US\$ 5.3 million in annual profits/wages for new businesses. By 2008, over 300,000 had been people moved out of poverty (significantly and permanently) at a cost of about US\$ 50 per person.

Bernard Njonga – Service d'Appui aux Initiatives Locales de Développement – Cameroon



By organizing farmers and building their capacity and links to markets, SAILD has empowered and benefited over 30,000 farmers in Cameroon, Chad, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, creating strong, well-structured farmers' cooperatives. It has also helped build markets for agricultural products it has popularized, and has encouraged diversified crop planting. Additionally, SAILD has developed seedbeds from which 10,000 plants are grafted annually.

Patrick Schofield – Streetwires Artists Collective – South Africa



Patrick Schofield has revolutionized and formalized the informal wire and bead market, not only growing the social business of Streetwires and its craftsmen and women, but lifting the status of the craft into an art form – thus providing true aesthetic and economic value. With innovative systems of craft development, cooperative manufacturing and distribution to local and international markets, Streetwires ensures the producers a fair price for their art, making it the first fair trade craft organization in South Africa. Its training programmes for wire artists and students empower individuals with the skills to create their own enterprises.

Rory Stear and Kristine Pearson – Freeplay Energy Group/Freeplay Foundation – UK, South Africa



Freeplay has distributed over 250,000 self-powered radios in sub-Saharan Africa, providing continuous access to information and education to more than 6 million people. Freeplay's patented wind-up technology has been used also for torches, water purifiers, cell phone chargers and fetal heart monitors. The popularity of its products in affluent markets allows the Foundation to buy the products at a subsidized rate for humanitarian and development efforts.

Noel de Villiers – Open Africa – Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia



Open Africa is a hybrid non-profit enterprise that uses the development of tourism routes with community participation as a tool for development, poverty alleviation and conservation. Routes development focuses on the biodiversity and cultural attractions of rural and marginalized areas so that the conservation of these attractions is encouraged. It has established 56 tourism routes in six countries, with 2,114 participating businesses employing 27,500 people in six countries.

Bart Weetjens – HeroRAT/Apopo International – Tanzania, Mozambique, the Great Lakes Region



55 million landmines and unexploded ordinance in over 84 countries cause thousands of casualties annually. Apopo trains sniffer rats to save human lives. The HeroRATs are primarily used for landmine and UXO clearance. This new technology has also been shown to detect TB bacteria in human sputum and can detect as many samples in seven minutes as a human technologist can in an entire day, with equal specificity. This method is receiving more international attention, and the pilots are being planned for roll-out in Africa.

Gisele Yitamben – Association pour le Soutien et l'Appui à la Femme Entrepreneur – Cameroon



ASAFE provides business training and development services, alternative financing and access to IT training to thousands of women entrepreneurs in Cameroon, Guinea, Benin, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 1992, over 5,000 women have benefited from ASAFE's work to bridge the digital divide.