

Report from contact trip regarding a Swedish/East African social business programme

- Purpose of the contact trip

The purpose of the contact trip was to conduct a pre-study regarding the preconditions for setting up a joint East African/Swedish sustainable business management education programme, focused on social entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses.

- Partner organisation

Organisation: Ashoka East Africa ("Ashoka") – www.ashoka.org

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- Activities

SE Forum was represented by the members *Harry Mcneil*, *Åse Botha* and *Jakob Sundberg*. The SE Forum Team was present in Nairobi during the period 18th-26th of April 2009. The pre-study was conducted by visiting a number of organisations and persons that were assumed to be of relevance to The Programme, to learn about their organisations and experiences and to ask them specific questions in relation to The Programme. The organisations and persons interviewed were social entrepreneurship ventures, social businesses, businesses of importance to the Kenyan economy, NGO:s, business associations, development cooperation organisations, business experts, journalists and media sector representatives. The pre-study contact trip in Kenya was concluded by a half-day workshop focusing solely on The Programme, conducted by The SE Forum Team, including people interviewed previously as well as a few new people.

- Results in relation to purpose

The most important result of the pre-study is the positive feedback and concrete input that The SE Forum Team received from the organisations and people interviewed regarding The Programme.

In summary the feedback stated that there is a genuine need and sincere interest from key actors within sustainable business and social entrepreneurship in Nairobi for the launch of a joint East African/Swedish sustainable business management education programme, focused on social entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses.

The interest and need seems to include knowledge enhancement and capacity development within sustainable leadership, business management, marketing, innovations, human resource management as well as basic sales-, strategic planning- and finance skills. Also, entrepreneurs seem to face challenges in how to deal with Kenyan business and trade legislation. Another important challenge expressed by the interviewees is how to enable small enterprises to grow to medium and large enterprises, where the management and business challenges differ. The SE Forum Team also learned that there are great business opportunities for small enterprises in increasing the value addition of their products. Lastly, an important conclusion in terms of feedback is that The Programme could contribute to entrepreneurs thinking "Big Picture".

Also there is great interest in sharing Kenyan experiences and knowledge within

social innovation with Swedish counterparts as well as an interest in taking part of Swedish companies' and organisations' experience and expertise amongst issues such as CSR, management and innovation. Furthermore, the potential of The Programme contributing to opening up the Swedish market for Kenyan exports and vice versa as well as creating local business opportunities was an aspect that the interviewees were very interested in. The interviewees also emphasised that both business CEO:s and social entrepreneurs should take part, thereby increasing the learning process between the two.

The importance of initiatives such as The Programme and creating sustainable cooperation within business as a strong complement/alternative to dependency-creating aid was stressed, much due to "donor fatigue". All the interviewees expressed a genuine belief in addressing poverty alleviation and development through the increased support of sustainable businesses, rather than by exclusively focusing on issuing grants to NGO:s or not for profit ventures that tend to not have long-lasting impacts on the societies they target.

The workshop and the following reflection session with Ashoka provided concrete input to The Programme. In anticipation of the workshop, The SE Forum Team and Ashoka had conducted a best practice study, investigating lessons learned from other similar management programmes. The SE Forum Team's conclusions from the interviews were presented and discussed at the workshop, together with; 1) General content for The Programme; 2) Form and programme design and; 3) Collaborations and finance issues. The main conclusions from the workshop were that SE Forum, together with Ashoka and another local partner should aim at setting up a pilot version of The Programme. The pilot, who in the future should be scalable, would cover Kenya and Sweden, containing outreach components, whereby the participants spread their findings and network within their networks, to scholars and other interested parties. The pilot would draw speakers and input providers in the form of top business executives, cutting edge social entrepreneurs, professors, journalists etc. The programme would be as interactive and concrete as possible, with strong elements of common problem-solving and assignments relating to the participants' day-to-day business practice. The pilot would also draw upon "methodological knowledge" from the academic sector. The pilot would be financed from different sources, including corporate sponsors, government agencies and participant fees.

- Gender equality aspect

Out of the 25 people interviewed, 11 were women. Most people interviewed brought forward the importance of addressing the lack of gender equality within Kenyan business life and society at large. The Programme would include as many female as male participants and would include specific gender equality elements, such as workshops specifically addressing female entrepreneurship and conditions for increasing the presence of female business leaders. Gender equality aspects were discussed as a specific topic during the workshop.

Apart from the gender equality aspect, other diversity aspects having a bearing upon sustainable business, such as ethnicity, were discussed during the interviews, and would also be topics integrated into the Programme.

- Long term effects of the contact trip

The long term effects of the pre-study remain to be seen but as mentioned in the above, based on the positive feedback and rich findings from the pre-study, SE Forum now intends to attempt to launch a pilot version of The Programme. The next step of the process is to interview key Swedish actors to gauge the interest, resource base and potential for funding on the Swedish side. Ideally a pilot version would be launched in 2010.

The contact trip was planned and conducted in close cooperation between SE Forum and Ashoka. Peter Ongera from HomeStay (see contact list) also took part in the planning. The cooperation has laid the foundation for further work together. The trip also led to establishing contact with Enablis (an NGO supporting local entrepreneurs, see contact list) that could be an important partner in The Programme. The trip has also generated contacts to and interest among potential participants of The Programme.

Apart from the input to The Programme, the visit generated extremely interesting knowledge about social entrepreneurship and business in Kenya, a rich network of contacts for all participants, very interesting and thought-provoking discussions and last but not least, a fantastic experience for The SE Forum Team.”