



2014 SEN Awards nominee Susanne Schroff (YPO Zurich) grew up in a family for whom entrepreneurial success was a means to embolden important scientific and societal causes. Establishing The Schroff Foundations in 1984 with their private fortune, Gunther and Ingrid Schroff's philanthropic acumen taught Susanne the importance of philanthropy early on. After 14 years acting as CEO of their family company, Rotronic and arranging for godparents for needy children in Trivandrum, India, Susanne, who is the 2015 Europe Regional Chair for the Helping Disadvantaged Kids Network, realized she needed to do more and started SANNI Foundation.

“My father was a real entrepreneur who wanted to give back to the society that gave him the opportunity for success. My ‘aha’ moment happened 14 years ago when I went to the South of India to visit the St. John’s National Academy of Health Sciences. When I saw the direct impact charitable donations had on people’s lives, I wanted to enhance the effect.”



SANNI’s board is made up almost entirely of YPO and WPO members and their spouses or partners. With their support, SANNI has reached a number of impactful milestones; the foundation’s biggest project – a fully functional hospital at St. John’s that uses a sliding pay-scale model – currently supports 1,500 diabetes patients and 1,600 HIV infected people annually. Additionally, they have created an educational program for women and young adults from India’s lower castes to help eradicate the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS.

“The majority of the people in India still believe that simply by being in the same room with someone or touching them you can get the disease. When we started the hospital eight years ago these (mostly women and children) were excluded from their families and society and had nowhere to go. Some of the children were not accepted at local schools. When we help infected people get an education and jobs and they are able to live a normal life, society becomes aware that they are not dangerous.”



Despite everyone's good intentions, there are inherent difficulties on both sides of the charitable coin; as Susanne points out, "Donors often have the best of intentions but don't understand that their values and needs might not necessarily align with those to whom their money is going."

On the donor's end, weeding through the multitudes of charitable organizations and knowing which ones are most effective and transparent can be incredibly difficult.

In an April 2014 article in the New York Times, author Andrew Testa wrote, "Picking the right charity can be so complicated that it makes picking stocks look easy...The disappointing thing is that despite appearances or assurances, no amount of research can guarantee that a single organization will put charitable dollars to work doing the most good the most quickly."

In an attempt to do just this, two hedge-fund managers founded the Brooklyn-based organization GiveWell in 2007, in order to uncover which charities were most effective. Initially they thought they would obtain the data from the charities themselves.

"But collecting data is a social scientist's job, and it's something that charities are not very good at," says Co-Founder Alexander Berger in an interview in Forbes magazine. "What we can do is rely on published academic papers or academic journals to make a basic case that a certain type of program works. After evaluating methods, GiveWell then interviews charities employing that method to make sure that they are executing the work correctly."



Aware of these difficulties, SANNI Foundation has created an infrastructure of local workers who understand the territory. "It is essential that we have somebody we can trust locally. This person knows what the people really need and how to spend the donations efficiently and effectively."

Another reason for SANNI's success is that although it is a charitable foundation, it's run by an entrepreneur. "The most important thing is that the foundation is run by entrepreneurs who know how to manage a business," Susanne says.

Charitable giving has many models and these models are constantly evolving in an attempt to make a greater impact on the world. Whatever side of the coin you have found yourself on, Susanne offers this simple advice:

"Find a cause you want to support, make sure the money is not 'wasted' on too many administration costs and reaches the people. Some people think that they cannot make a difference, but with every child we help we make the biggest difference in their life."