

The logo for Pollinate POTLUCK features the word "Pollinate" in a white serif font, with a red dashed arc above it. Below it, the word "POTLUCK" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

# Pollinate POTLUCK

FOOD FOR IMPACT: SHARE SOME, TAKE SOME

## Post-Potluck Report & Insights

HOSTED BY:

The logo for Pollinate Impact features the words "Pollinate" and "Impact" stacked in a white serif font, with a red dashed arc above them.

Pollinate  
Impact

ENABLING IMPACT ENABLERS

DATES: 19th to 28th September 2023

**Prepared by:** Anindita Sharma, Abha Dasgupta, Arielle Molino, Tahasin Atar, and Shami Rao

## WELCOME NOTE

When we set out to launch a member-led network of incubators and accelerators across the Global South, it was a daunting task ahead! There are so many challenges that incubators face in their efforts to support impact entrepreneurs – and those challenges cut across geographies from Dakar, Senegal all the way to Manila, The Philippines, and everywhere in between. We see that common challenges across the Global South offer an immense opportunity for incubators and accelerators to share, learn, deepen their impact, and improve the delivery of their services to entrepreneurs.

A huge opportunity indeed, but the question remained, how do we begin to tackle so many common challenges across such a vast geographic spread? A virtual event seemed to be the most obvious solution to avoid too much geographic bias that comes with in-person events. We also knew that the most effective networks are built on trust and we wanted to set the tone for our community to be casual, familial, and comfortable. That is where the idea of a Potluck was born – it was the exact embodiment of the tone we wanted to set where individuals not only participate, but also contribute to the feast “on the table” by sharing their knowledge and experiences.

As far as which challenges and topics to tackle first, we listened. For nearly a year, we’d had our eyes and ears to the ground to understand what were the most pressing and consistent challenges we heard from incubators.

What we heard resoundingly were three main areas:

- Talent for incubators
- Access to funding and sustainability strategies for incubators
- The need for tools and resources to their jobs effectively and efficiently

We started crafting the themes for the agenda around these three areas in order to validate what we'd been hearing, gain a deeper understanding of these pain points, and understand the role that Pollinate Impact could play in addressing them. With nearly 90 incubators participating from 36 countries, I think we hit on a clear need and opportunity for change. With the Potluck, we wanted to offer a sampling of what Pollinate Impact has in store for incubators, and the broader ecosystem. In case you missed it, you can read all the insights in this report, or catch the recordings on our YouTube channel.

I invite you all to become Pollinators so we can build the impact incubation industry together. As this community of impact incubators comes together to amplify our impact, there'll be no stopping the progress we can make collectively!

Warmly,



Arielle Molino  
Chief Convener  
Pollinate Impact



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# 01

## INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT US

Pollinate Impact is a member-led network of impact incubators and accelerators across the Global South. We support these enablers by offering avenues for staff at all levels to collaborate and co-create with other incubators and accelerators across the Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. We help share resources, and encourage the co-creation of new tools. We will go where our members lead, and support them to co-create solutions to their biggest challenges.

We are connecting and building this community in order to:

- Mature and integrate the impact incubation industry,
- Celebrate and scale tangible outcomes, and
- Foster peer collaborations

We do this by offering avenues for staff at all levels to collaborate and co-create with other incubators and accelerators across the Global South. We will help share resources, and facilitate the co-creation of new tools. We will go where our members lead, and support them to co-create solutions to their biggest challenges.

## WHY A POTLUCK?

**Potluck (n):** A flavourful adventure where vibrant communities gather to share food, ideas, and inspiration.

As Pollinate Impact launched, we didn't want to host just another virtual conference. A Potluck was the best analogy of what we intended to build as a network organization! An informal setting of friends and family who share ideas, stories, and inspiration – this is the community that we want to build for impact enablers. We wanted to set the right tone from the beginning to build trust, engagement, learn, and most importantly to have fun while we're doing it.

With the Pollinate Potluck launch series, we set out to whet the palates of participants for what the Network has in store for incubators, accelerators, and ESOs in the Global South. This virtual feast was designed around the spirit of collaboration, where ideas were the main course, and new connections were the delightful desserts! We wanted to offer safe spaces for participants to share, engage, and help us understand what's most important to them. Participants dove into a flavorful adventure where vibrant communities gathered to share food for thought, ignite inspiration, and foster collaborative learning.

Catch the recordings of all the sessions from the Pollinate Potluck on our [YouTube channel](#).

# THE POTLUCK IN NUMBERS



**160**  
Participants



**10**  
Funders



**26**  
Speakers



**09**  
Sessions



**36**  
Countries



**87**  
Incubators



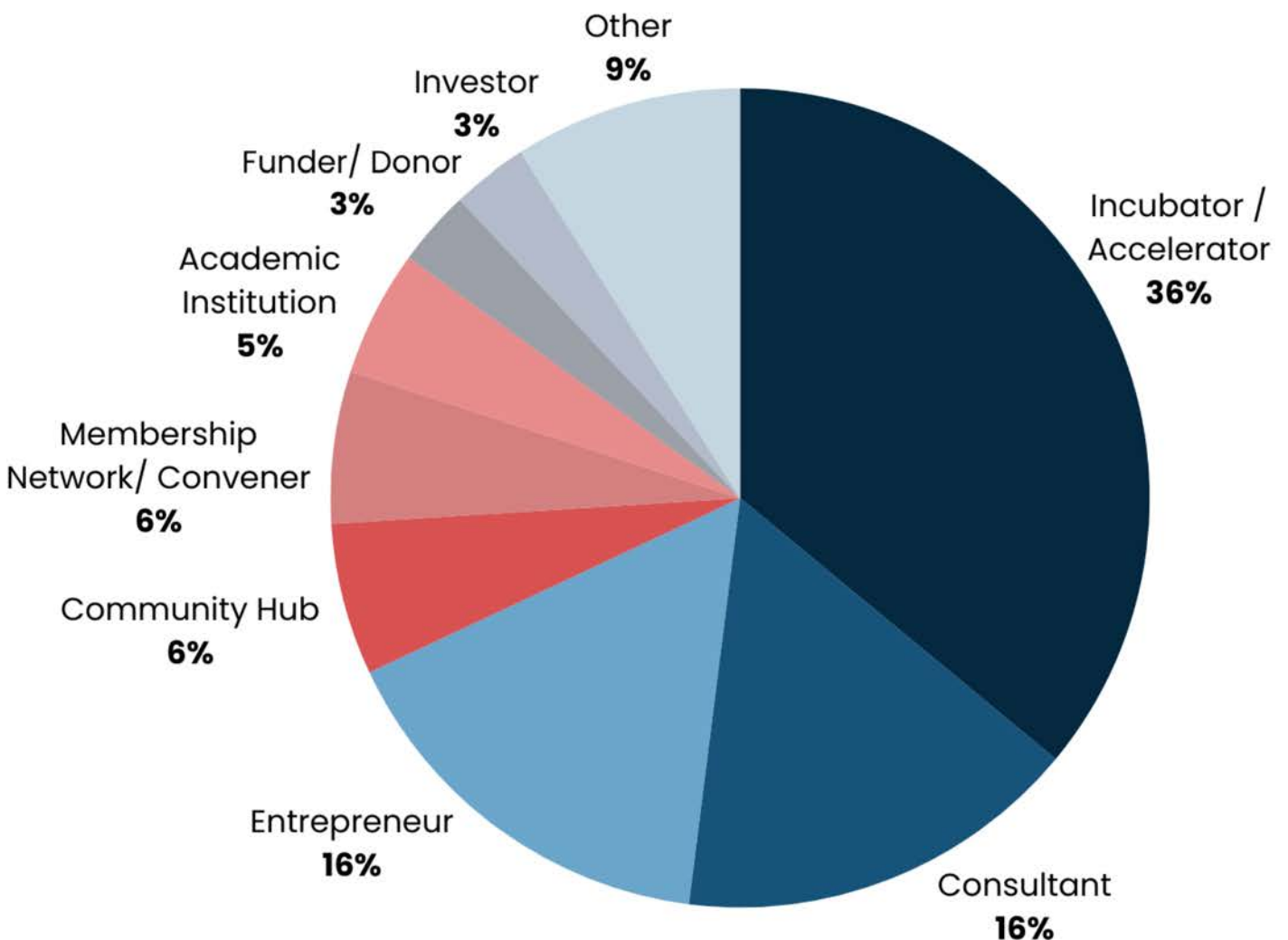
**02**  
Weeks



## WHO ATTENDED THE POTLUCK?

While impact enablers are at the core of Pollinate Impact’s work, we grow as an ecosystem and welcome participation from across the impact entrepreneurship space. We were delighted to host a wide range of stakeholders from across the globe.

### ATTENDEE PROFILE



# WHERE DID PARTICIPANTS JOIN US FROM?





# 02

## THE POTLUCK MENU

## AGENDA OVERVIEW

When building the agenda for the Potluck, we were keen to incorporate some of the biggest challenges that we heard from ESOs across the Global South. The Pollinate Potluck provided a forum for impact enablers to connect directly to share experiences, resources, and learnings through workshops, sessions and networking lounges spread across 2 weeks. The sessions were broadly divided into the following 3 categories.

### 1. SKILL BUILDING & LEARNING

- Bridging Borders, Building Impact: Amplifying Social Impact through Collaborative Connections
- Building a Talent Pipeline for Social Impact: Attracting and Retaining Mission-Driven Professionals
- The Power of Storytelling: Communicating Impact, Inspiring Action

### 2. FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

- Measuring What Matters: The Funder's Perspective
- Social Impact Investment: Strategies for Funding and Financial Sustainability
- More Than Money: A Dialogue Between Incubators & Funders On Unlocking Non-Financial Support

## AGENDA OVERVIEW

### 3. NETWORKING LOUNGE

- Funder Mythbusters Lounge
- Incubators: Perfect your Pitch to Funders
- No Nonsense Advice: Incubator to Incubator



# 03

## FLAVOURS FROM THE POTLUCK

19TH SEPTEMBER 2023

# Session 1: Bridging Borders, Building Impact: Amplifying Social Impact through Collaborative Connections

## SPEAKERS



**Maeva Amarger**  
Global Steering Group for  
Impact Investment  
(Moderator)



**Priya Thachadi**  
Villgro Philippines



**Robert Karanja**  
ASSEK



**Nanko Madu**  
Afrilabs



“Bringing people together is really powerful, especially in this sector where we are driven by mission, and working towards the same thing.”

– **Priya Thachadi**

## SESSION SUMMARY

The concept of impact networks is not a new one, and newer networks are emerging all over the world, ranging from localised incubation networks and entrepreneur alumni groups to investor-focused networks on both the local and global levels, as well as global multi-stakeholder networks.

This increasing community and network base demonstrates the strength and effect that networks have when members pool their efforts to create something bigger than themselves in order to double their impact.

It is also critical to recognise that these networks serve their communities in a variety of ways due to differences in context and membership. Networks provide the potential for learning, sharing, and collaborating across impact-focused incubators and accelerators, which is a potential powerhouse.

Networks that enable and facilitate ESOs can unleash great progress.

**Audience Poll:** What flavor are you adding to the potluck today?

**A NETWORKING**  
**WE CURIOSITY**  
**FRUIT SALAD**  
**SPICY UMAMI SWEET**  
**GRAPES MANDAZI**



## KEY THEMES

- **Inclusivity and Diversity in Problem-Solving:** Listening to the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders are crucial in developing context-specific solutions, and for creating global solutions that also work at the local level.
- **Active Member Contributions lead to Network Success:** The pivotal role of engaged members and the need to balance individual and collective efforts for a unified network voice.
- **Ecosystem Development and Network Power:** Recognizing the significance of systemic thinking, active engagement in ecosystem development, and the value of networking in driving impact.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Inclusivity and Diversity in Problem-Solving:** Promoting inclusivity and celebrating diversity helps to harness the power of diverse perspectives in problem-solving and creating global solutions that work locally, fostering a strong sense of community and importance among network members.
- **Leveraging Existing Networks:** Utilizing existing networks is often a more effective approach than creating new ones as it is both a time-saving and value-adding.
- **The Power of Networking:** Members can harness the power of networking by actively forging connections and commonalities within networks, emphasizing active participation in shaping the ecosystem rather than passive observation, and collaborating with those expanding networks on the ground for maximum benefit.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Member Engagement and Return on Investment:** Members should consider their return on investment in terms of time and effort when participating in a network. Measuring success is linked to understanding the dynamics of various conversations and accessing opportunities within a network. They can also make their voices heard by finding smaller groups in larger settings where they can play to their strength.
- **Policy Influence:** The influence of organizations on policy may be limited, but understanding how to access decision-makers is crucial for success.
- **Ecosystem Development:** Operating within dynamic ecosystems, requires systemic thinking. Collaboration with key actors is vital for effective impact, recognizing the formative stage of the ecosystem.
- **Funding Challenges:** Access to resources and funding can be challenging, particularly in young and growing entrepreneurial ecosystems. Even though competition for core funding is inevitable, there are many opportunities for collaboration in various other aspects.
- **Encouraging Collaboration Over Competition:** Collaboration in fundraising can be more effective than competing for limited resources. Encouraging members to partner on opportunities rather than pursuing individual interests can lead to more significant impact and fundraising success.

DATE: 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

# Building a Talent Pipeline for Social Impact: Attracting and Retaining Mission-Driven Professionals

## SPEAKERS



**Stephanie  
Arrowsmith**

Impact Hub (Moderator)



**Lea Klein**

Make Sense Asia



**Jonas Yawovi  
Dzinekou**

Tangaza University College



**Shehzia Lilani**

Amani Institute

“

“We have a responsibility to spread the word about the sector, the roles and the fulfillment in work. When purpose becomes the prime purpose, it becomes an enviable thing where you're happy to wake up and come to work. We all have a role to play to be ambassadors.”

**-Shehzia Lilani**

## SESSION SUMMARY

Some of the most common and persistent challenges in attracting and retaining talent in the social impact sector are talent attraction, development, and retention. The persistent issues faced by the Social Impact sector are identifying and retaining mission-aligned talent, developing essential skills, and bridging the gap between academia and practice.

The importance of raising career awareness and emphasizing purpose needs to be stressed, while collective solutions like mainstreaming skill development, reintroducing apprenticeships, and building a collaborative ecosystem can help address these challenges effectively.

The need for a unified voice and shared communication campaign can also emerge as a game-changing approach to attract talent and enhance the sector's understanding and visibility.

**Audience poll: What might collective solutions, as ESOs in this sector, look like to address the shared challenge of improving talent acquisition and development?**

**APPRENTICESHIPS** HIRE RIGHT OUT OF UNIVERSITY  
**NETWORKS**  
**RECRUITMENT FAIRS** IMMERSION EVENTS  
**FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS** GROUND LEVEL IMPACT  
**BUILD PRACTICAL SKILLS**  
**EXCHANGE PROGRAMS**  
**COLLEGE INTERNSHIPS**

## KEY THEMES

- **Talent Challenges and Retention:** Identifying and retaining talent with the right skill set and mission alignment is a common challenge in the social impact sector. High turnover rates hinder the sector's impact and effectiveness.
- **Core Skills and Adaptability:** Developing core skills, including problem-solving, effective questioning, and social empathy, is vital for success in the sector. These skills must align with the evolving demands of the field, especially in impact investment.
- **Collaboration between Academia and Social Sector:** Collaborative solutions for talent development in the social impact sector encompass mainstreaming skill development within education, reintroducing apprenticeships, and creating opportunities for experimentation, with a strong emphasis on fostering a talent pipeline and aligning skills with real-world needs. The collaboration between academic institutions and social entrepreneurs is essential in bridging the gap between theory and practice, ultimately ensuring the effective preparation of young talent and the cultivation of a robust talent pipeline for the sector.
- **Career Awareness and Purpose-Driven Work:** Raising awareness about career opportunities in the sector and emphasizing the importance of finding purpose in one's work is essential. It helps attract talent and counter societal pressures that favor traditional career paths.
- **Unified Communication and Resource Sharing:** Collaboration among ESOs and stakeholders should focus on developing common terminology, sharing resources and opportunities, and launching unified communication campaigns.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Challenges in Talent Acquisition:** The social impact sector faces a fundamental challenge in identifying individuals with the precise skills and qualifications required for specific roles. This challenge often leads to a mismatch between talent and job positions, impacting organizational effectiveness.
- **Mission Alignment and Talent Retention:** Mission alignment is a pressing concern in the sector. Retaining and developing talent becomes crucial due to the high turnover rate. The sector's success heavily relies on ensuring that employees are not only skilled but also deeply committed to the organization's mission.
- **Leadership and Adaptability:** Leadership skills are paramount, given the constant change in the sector. Adaptability is a prerequisite for managing the evolving landscape of social impact work. Resilient leadership, both in organizational culture and individual staff members, is essential to navigate change successfully.
- **Core Skills for Success:** Core skills for success in the social impact sector include problem-solving, effective questioning, and social empathy. These skills are foundational for addressing complex social issues and driving positive change in the community.
- **Undervalued Skills:** Convening skills, posture development, and confidence building are often overlooked but are vital for thriving in social impact careers. These skills enable professionals to connect with diverse stakeholders, build trust, and empower entrepreneurs effectively.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Mainstreaming Skill Development:** Mainstreaming skill development within education systems is crucial to eliminate barriers and provide essential skills from an early age. Reintroducing apprenticeships is a practical approach to foster hands-on skill development and build confidence and posture in individuals.
- **Nurturing Academic Talent:** The social impact sector often overlooks the untapped potential of academic talent. Recognizing and nurturing this talent is a missed opportunity. Collaborative efforts between academia and the sector are essential for talent development, and academic institutions can serve as a significant source of fresh talent and innovation.
- **Capacity Building in Impact Investment:** Continuous capacity building is essential in the dynamic field of impact investment, given the ever-evolving nature of impact metrics. It supports talent development and attracts professionals to the sector by demonstrating a commitment to ongoing learning and growth opportunities.
- **Intentional Career Choices:** Transitioning to intentional career choices is a significant shift, as many individuals initially stumble into the sector. Recognizing the profound impact of their work, they become committed to improving the sector's conditions.
- **Addressing Challenges and Fostering Career Awareness:** The Global South encounters distinct challenges, such as resource limitations for sector branding, a lack of clarity regarding roles like community managers, and a shortage of localized content and documentation.

DATE: 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

## Funder Mythbusters Lounge

### SPEAKERS



**Sarah Makena**

Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
(GIZ) GmbH



**Rob Schneider**

Executive Director  
The Lemelson Foundation



“Don't follow the money. There's a difference between framing your work and changing your strategy to follow where the funding is. Understand what your mission is. It's more about mission than strategy.”

– **Rob Schneider**



## SESSION SUMMARY

In the world of funding, there are a number of myths that are prevalent and this session was an attempt to dismantle some of these while shedding light on the multifaceted support donors provide, such as credibility, visibility, and coaching, beyond the misconception of limited assistance to mere funding.

The discourse championed an alignment between the organizational needs and donor preferences, debunking biases favoring larger entities. Collaborative funding emerged as a dominant theme, encouraging synchronization in reporting for amplified impact. The conversation challenged stereotypes, highlighting donor concerns for impactful outcomes over financial returns. Dispelling myths around flawless business plans, the focus shifted to iterative conversations and continuous learning.

**Audience poll: What is one emotion that would describe how you feel when you first approach an investor?**

UNCERTAINTY  
FEAR OF REJECTION  
UNCERTAINTY  
NERVOUS  
ANXIOUS

## KEY THEMES

- **Establish your own organization's priorities:** There's a partner for everyone, but not everyone is the right partner. Organizations should ensure that their activities are not overly-influenced by donors and not to solely chase funding. They should be careful not to change strategies to align with potential donors' strategies. Instead, organizations looking for funding should stay true to their mission and find donors that directly align to the organization's strategic direction.
- **Holistic Donor Engagement:** Donors play a multifaceted role, extending support beyond just funding to foster sustainability. The emphasis is on comprehensive assistance, including business development and coaching, showcasing a holistic approach to organizational growth. Donors have lots of resources available to them, beyond just money – they can help your organization with visibility, credibility, and gaining access to networks.
- **Two-Way Communication is Key:** Effective communication is crucial; organizations must express their needs and priorities, avoiding solely donor-driven decision-making. Donors want to see the organizations they're supporting thrive as much as possible. But you need to ask for help when you need it; the donors aren't mind-readers! Keep an open dialogue to help the donor understand your organization's thinking, approach, and perspective.
- **Collaborative Partnership for Adaptive Growth:** Recognizing the multifaceted challenges associated with securing funding, organizations are encouraged to cultivate strategic collaborations, fostering flexibility and a dynamic learning environment.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Partnership Dynamics for Smaller Entities:** The discussion highlights the shift in donor focus to organizations and underscores the importance of smaller entities aligning with donor preferences. Advocating through intermediaries and finding common ground amplifies their unique contributions, emphasizing the significance of strategic partnerships.
- **Harmonizing Goals for Sustainable Impact:** The discussion encourages organizations to be clear with their priorities, fostering a two-way communication process with donors. The emphasis lies in strategically aligning objectives with donors to achieve a balance between financial success and broader societal impact while remaining true to the organization's mission.
- **Iterative Collaboration for Learning Impact:** The discussion underscores the significance of flexibility in approaching milestones and a collaborative learning approach, challenging the myth of rigid business plans. Donors advocate for an iterative process, where organizations can embrace adjustments and actively contribute to a collective learning environment, prioritizing adjustments, adaptability over strict planning.
- **Efficient Reporting and Collaborative Dynamics:** Recognizing the reciprocal nature of donor-grantee relationships, systematic record-keeping is emphasized for streamlined reporting. The discussion also advocates for nuanced and collaborative approaches in funding conversations, acknowledging the power dynamics highlighting the importance of finding the right partner for effective engagement.

DATE: 21ST SEPTEMBER 2023

# Measuring What Matters: The Funder's Perspective

## SPEAKERS



**Paul Hamlin**

USAID DIV



**Vineeth Menon**

British International  
Investment (BII)



**Maithili Rege**

Villgro Innovations  
Foundation



“We're so used to speaking in our donor lingo, we lose sight of what terms other organizations use, what they call them, and how they use them...Sometimes it is a matter of using the same language.”

– **Paul Hamlin**

## SESSION SUMMARY

In a dynamic dialogue centered around impact measurement, key players in the realms of impact investing, incubation, and evaluation convened to share insights and strategies. The process of measuring and reporting metrics demands significant time and effort from incubators, often straining the resources of smaller teams and diverting their attention from the core programmatic efforts of the organization.

The conversation unveiled a strategic focus on achieving organizational objectives, emphasizing the nuanced transition from measuring inputs and outputs to prioritizing outcomes and impacts. Diverse and adaptive measurement strategies emerged as organizations recognized the need for tailored approaches, considering instruments, company size, and technological challenges. The implementation of a results-based financing model, rooted in trust and accountability, took center stage, offering a structured framework for financial support.

**Audience poll: What are some ideas that you have to make impact measurement easier for ESOS yet still effective for funders?**

CAPTURE DIVERSITY  
 MUTUAL LEARNING  
 AGGREGATED DATA  
 FRAMEWORKS TO SELF-ASSESS  
 KEEP IT SIMPLE  
 OPEN SOURCE RESOURCES  
 FAILURE FESTIVALS  
 OPEN COMMUNICATION  
 STANDARDISED METRICS  
 CURATION OF DATABASE  
 GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTERS

## KEY THEMES

- **Align Impact Metrics & Organization Metrics to Benefit Everyone:** The real focus on measuring impact is to understand the ultimate impact of our work. It's crucial for donors to understand the internal management processes of their grantees or partners and to speak the same language. It's of critical importance to align indicators relevant to both parties, ensuring that the reporting requirements satisfy both the needs of the donor and the internal needs of the entrepreneur or organization. This alignment helps avoid unnecessary time and expense, fostering a more collaborative and effective partnership.
- **Continuous Improvement in Impact Measurement:** Within the realm of impact measurement, organizations are recognizing the significance of adopting a continuous improvement model integrated into their business operations. This approach underscores the ongoing nature of refinement, collaboration, and risk identification as fundamental components. By embedding impact measurement into their business model, organizations ensure not only transparency and accountability but also a commitment to learning and adapting over time. This serves as a proactive framework, aligning organizational goals in a dynamic and evolving landscape.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Diverse and Adaptive Impact Measurement Approaches:** Organizations navigate the diverse landscape of impact measurement by tailoring their approaches to different instruments, company sizes, and the challenges posed by new technologies. The key lies in balancing standardization and adaptability to ensure effective impact assessment.
- **Quality-Centric Transition to Outcomes:** The collective shift from measuring inputs and outputs to outcomes and impacts underscores a pivotal transition. Emphasizing quality over quantity in outcomes becomes indispensable for meaningful impact measurement.
- **Challenges in New Technologies:** Acknowledging challenges in understanding and measuring the impact of new technologies, organizations should actively work on standardizing methodologies and aligning with universal standards like IRIS to reduce the burden and increase the efficiency of measurement.
- **Strategic Impact Focus with Adaptive Approaches:** Achieving a delicate equilibrium between standardized methodologies and flexible, context-specific strategies is paramount in impact measurement. Organizations, notably impact investors, highlight the strategic alignment with country-driven, sector-driven, or theme-driven objectives. This dual emphasis reinforces the importance of impactful, country-specific outcomes while maintaining the agility needed for effective impact measurement.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Impact Measurement Requires Investment:** Many incubators, innovators and entrepreneurs are not impact measurement specialists, nor should they be. If a donor desires hardcore impact measurement, they should be prepared to fund it rather than expecting investees or grantees to bear the burden. Each funder needs to decide the level of impact evidence that is sufficient for them. Similarly, if an incubator is requiring a certain level of measurement from their entrepreneurs, they should be willing to invest the resources for the enterprise to collect the data.
- **Trust and Results-Based Financing Framework:** The implementation of a results-based financing model, supported by milestones, establishes a structured approach to accountability and financial support, emphasizing achievement over input-driven reimbursement. Trust underpins the due diligence process, highlighting the significance of transparency and accurate reporting. False claims about achievements are not only detrimental to the organization but can result in severe consequences, emphasizing the importance of transparency and accuracy.
- **Mitigating Greenwashing Risks:** Robust assessment methodologies, including benchmarks, triangulation exercises, and external verification, are employed to mitigate the risk of greenwashing, ensuring reported metrics align with reality.



DATE: 22ND SEPTEMBER 2023

# The Power of Storytelling: Communicating Impact, Inspiring Action

## SPEAKERS



**Aditi Seshadri**

Unlock Impact



**Simunza Muyangana**

BongoHive

“

“There's no secret sauce to storytelling. There's no being a wizard, waving a wand and being good. Being authentic is key.”

– **Aditi Seshadri**

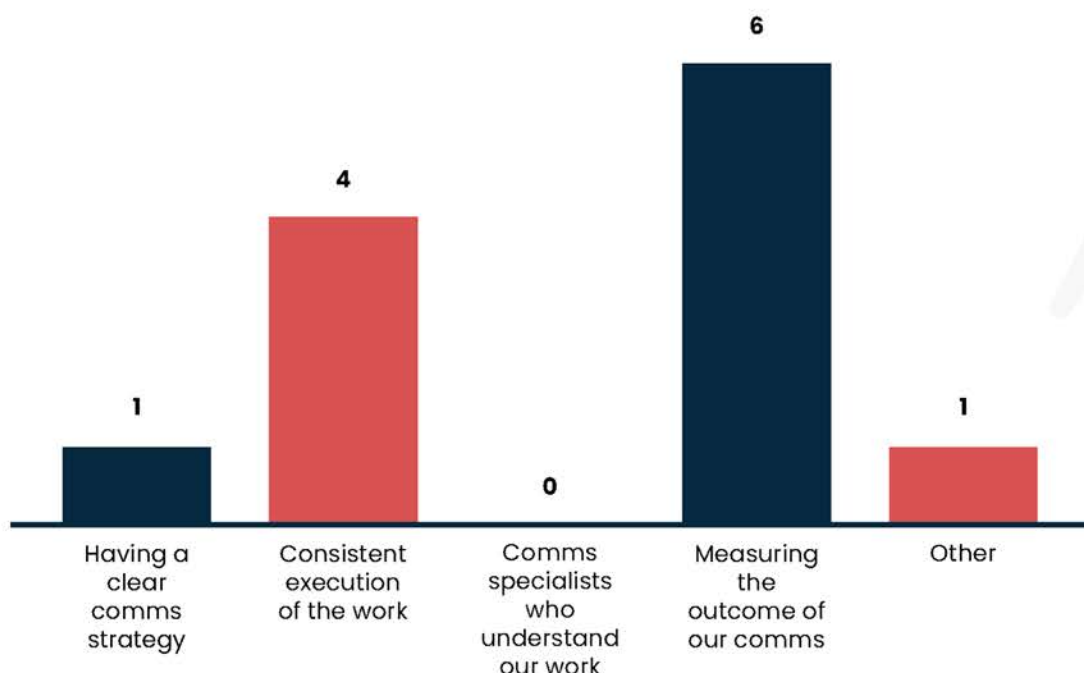
## SESSION SUMMARY

Telling and listening to stories evokes emotions. They can change the way we see the world and move us in the way facts and figures cannot. And they inspire us to believe that change is possible. For incubators and accelerators who work in small teams and need to engage with multiple stakeholders, this becomes harder as they try to prioritize the best and most efficient way to utilize resources.

Rooted in the recognition that storytelling is not merely a creative pursuit but a strategic tool to address challenges, this session unfolded in two key segments. It provided a comprehensive exploration of the nuanced dynamics involved in effective communication and storytelling within organizational contexts.

As the insights unfolded, it delved into the essence of simplicity, underscored the critical role of consistency, explored the empowering dynamics of peer learning, and highlighted the pivotal importance of aligning strategies with organizational objectives.

### **Audience poll: What is your biggest communications challenge?**



## KEY THEMES

- **Balancing Stakeholder Messaging for Consistency:** Striking a balance in messaging for diverse stakeholders is crucial, highlighting the importance of maintaining consistency. This challenge involves nuancing messaging for each audience and channel, requiring strategic revisions based on feedback. The goal is to ensure everyone within the organization conveys a consistent and cohesive narrative.
- **Consistency and Evolution in Brand Narrative:** The enduring purpose and mission of your organization should remain constant, serving as a steadfast anchor amid external changes. Simplifying storytelling into fundamental structures enhances effectiveness, emphasizing the power of simplicity and consistent communication.
- **Achieving Impact through Planning:** Meticulous planning, clear communication goals, and strategic alignment are integral components of effective communication, especially in diverse program contexts. Recognizing storytelling is essential to good business. Organizations should adopt thoughtful strategies, execution plans, and continuous evaluation for sustained impact. This involves breaking communication goals into quarters, aligning outreach and education efforts, and ensuring that communication efforts are well-coordinated and aligned with overarching objectives.
- **Simplicity and Consistency:** Simplifying storytelling into fundamental structures enhances effectiveness. Consistent communication, aligned with a clear tagline, ensures everyone within the organization conveys a unified message. The power of simplicity and consistency cannot be overstated, as it aids in building a strong and memorable brand image.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Segmentation:** The importance of tailoring messages for diverse stakeholders cannot be overstated. While clarity is essential, understanding the audience and adapting narratives for specific recipients is equally vital. Acknowledging and addressing the unique needs and perspectives of different stakeholder groups ensures that communication resonates effectively.
- **Crafting Captivating Narratives with Archetypes:** Leveraging narrative archetypes offers a versatile framework, providing timeless and universally understood structures for captivating storytelling. Whether it's the classic "Overcoming the Monsters" or the compelling "Rags to Riches," these storytelling archetypes serve as powerful tools to craft narratives that resonate across diverse contexts and demographics.
- **Continuous Refinement:** The core mission should endure, serving as a steadfast anchor amid external changes. While execution and messaging may adapt to market responses, the enduring purpose provides consistency and direction. Organizations should be open to evolution, but the fundamental mission remains constant, providing stability and coherence.
- **Peer-to-Peer Impact:** Allowing communities to grow organically through peer interactions enhances authenticity and becomes a powerful tool for referrals. This shift acknowledges the effectiveness of community-driven storytelling. Brands and organizations should embrace a more informal and community-driven approach, relinquishing some control to foster genuine connections.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Optimizing Communication through Digital-Centric Strategies:** Embracing a digital-centric approach, characterized by a minimal reliance on traditional media, enables organizations to tailor their communication to diverse audience segments. This strategy aligns with the preferences of modern audiences, emphasizing clear calls to action and targeting primary audiences effectively.
- **Automation and Collaboration:** Implementing automated responses and fostering a collaborative approach within the team, where members take turns responding and understanding various aspects of the organization, ensures consistent communication. This streamlines communication efforts, maintains clarity, and enables team members to gain a holistic understanding of the brand.
- **Storytelling as Business Imperative:** Beyond being a mere communication tactic, storytelling is integral to good business. It necessitates thoughtful strategy, execution, and continuous evaluation for sustained impact on diverse audiences. Organizations should recognize that storytelling is not just a nice-to-have; it is a fundamental aspect of building a brand, fostering connections, and driving meaningful impact.

DATE: 26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

# Social Impact Investment: Strategies for Funding and Financial Sustainability

## SPEAKERS



**Joshua Murima**  
Briter (Moderator)



**Wilfred Njagi**  
Villgro Africa



**Esther Ndeti**  
UNCAP



**Patricia Jumi**  
Growth Africa

“

“Entrepreneurs are not poor, they can afford services and they are willing to pay for services.”

– **Wilfred Njagi**

## SESSION SUMMARY

In response to the ever-evolving landscape of entrepreneurship support ecosystems in the social impact sector, there is a need to strategically address the pressing challenge of sustainable funding models for social impact incubators. This conversation hosted a deep dive into navigating the complexities of financial sustainability, exploring diverse revenue streams, and fostering adaptive charging models. There also arises a need to delve into the challenges inherent in securing funding for social impact organisations and propose strategic approaches to overcome these hurdles.

With a focus on long-term commitment, data-driven impact assessment, and collaborative engagement with governmental bodies, this session aimed to equip incubators and accelerators with the knowledge needed to navigate and thrive in the ever-changing entrepreneurial support landscape.

**Audience poll: What emotion best describes how you feel when a funder inquires about your sustainability model?**

**STRESSED** **WORK IN PROGRESS** **FEAR**  
**FRUSTRATION**  
**TENSION** **ANXIETY**

## KEY THEMES

- **Strategic Evolution and Monetization Models:** The key focus lies in adapting support programs strategically and moving from traditional consultancy to innovative approaches such as "Acceleration as a Service." Success factors include specialization, effective packaging of expertise, and a shift in the consultancy model to ensure flexibility and holistic program administration.
- **Entrepreneurial Willingness to Pay and Adaptation:** Flexible pricing for entrepreneur support is crucial, considering factors such as tailored needs, transparent communication about value, and adaptable fee structures. A nuanced approach is necessary for charging entrepreneurs effectively. To ensure the success of paid services, focus on selecting committed entrepreneurs, prioritizing maturity, and aligning with program goals.
- **Geographical Variances and Market Adaptation:** Implementation challenges and successes in diverse geographical locations stress the importance of testing models in new markets. The emphasis should be on adapting fee structures and approaches based on market dynamics, acknowledging differences in sectors such as the tech sector versus more traditional sectors and strategies considering cultural and ecosystem differences.
- **Collaboration, Reflection, and Advocacy:** Advocacy for collaboration among accelerators, incubators, and other stakeholders helps address sustainability challenges collectively and advocating a tailored approach to funding programs. Reflection on past experiences encourages a shift from transactional to relational interactions, highlighting the need for a unified voice and perspective to engage with government, politicians, funders, and donors for sustainable progress.



## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Funding Alignment:** Ensuring alignment between organizations' strategic priorities and funding sources is paramount while underscoring the importance of organizations staying true to their mission and seeking donors that align directly with their strategic direction to avoid mission drift.
- **Diversified Revenue Streams for Long-Term Viability:** Sustainability extends beyond fees charged to entrepreneurs, emphasizing the need for multiple revenue streams. Acknowledging the imperative for sustained viability, incubators and accelerators should develop multiple revenue streams beyond donor funding, and entrepreneur fees, such as acceleration-as-a-service, or customized support for more advanced entrepreneurs.
- **Market-Adaptive Charging Models:** Implementing flexible pricing models that consider factors like the entrepreneur's stage, market dynamics, and financial health is crucial. This stresses the need for nuanced charging strategies that adapt to different markets, dispelling the assumption that entrepreneurs universally lack financial capabilities.
- **Collaborative Capacity-Building:** Collaborative approaches to capacity-building and open innovation are essential. The importance of strengthening incubators across diverse regions through collaborative efforts, enabling a networked ecosystem that leverages the strengths of various organizations, becomes more emphasised.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Long-Term Commitment to Entrepreneurs:** Beyond financial considerations, the commitment to entrepreneurs extends beyond program durations. This is important to induce an environment of sustained support, fostering lasting relationships, and contributing to the personal and business development of entrepreneurs over the long term.
- **Data-Driven Impact Assessment:** Employing a data-driven approach for assessing the impact of incubation and acceleration programs is crucial. The need for evidence-based decision-making helps to measure the success and effectiveness of support initiatives, providing valuable insights for continuous improvement.
- **Cultural Considerations in Scaling:** Scaling support services across different cultures requires a strategic and adaptable approach. It is imperative to test organizational models in new markets and collaborate with existing hubs to tailor programs that resonate with local entrepreneurs.
- **Strategic Government Engagement:** Advocating for government involvement and policies supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem is crucial. A systemic approach, including policies that allocate a percentage of CSR funding to incubation, helps in fostering collaboration between public and private sectors for sustainable impact.
- **Unified Voice for Sustainability:** Creating a unified voice among incubators, accelerators, and donors is essential for sustainability and so is the need for common platforms, such as Pollinate Impact, to facilitate honest conversations, share successful models, and advocate for sustainable practices collectively.

DATE: 26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

# More than Money: A dialogue between incubators & funders on unlocking non-financial support

## SPEAKERS



**Rachel  
Macauley**  
DRK Foundation



**Brigit Helms**  
Miller Center for Social  
Entrepreneurship



**Priya Thachadi**  
Villgro Philippines



**Peng Zhong**  
Bayer Foundation



“As incubators and leaders of entrepreneur support organizations, don't be afraid to ask for help and support from your funders.”

– **Rachel Macauley**

## SESSION SUMMARY

Amidst the traditional reliance on financial support, incubators and accelerators navigate a shifting landscape where support beyond just money can indeed bolster success. This session was all about taking a closer look at the multifaceted realm of non-financial support, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping and sustaining incubation programs.

Moving beyond the conventional narrative of monetary contributions, the eminent panel of speakers shared authentic examples illustrating the impact of diverse forms of non-financial support on incubators. The conversation served as an invitation to explore ideas, transcending the notion of "money, honey" by unlocking the untapped potential for donors to catalyze change through strategic collaboration and shared resources.

**Audience poll: Apart from money, what other kinds of support can donors and funders offer to advance your work as ESOs?**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**  
**KNOWLEDGE**  
**ACCESS TO NETWORKS**  
**VOLUNTEERISM**  
**A SEAT AT THE TABLE**  
**AMPLIFY VOICE**  
**CONNECTIONS TO PARTNERS**  
**CAPACITY BUILDING**

**NETWORK**  
**ENDORSEMENT**  
**IMPACT MEASUREMENT**

## KEY THEMES

- **Ecosystem Collaboration and Integration:** Collaboration among impact organizations, funders, and global networks is vital. An integrated ecosystem that streamlines support, access to capital, and knowledge-sharing is essential for fostering sustainable impact. While motivations are often to secure additional co-funding to make projects more substantial, the value of collaboration goes beyond just the financial contribution.
- **Visibility and Storytelling Carry Weight:** Donors can offer organizations the ability to share their work through lending PR and Communications support, or offering them visibility through speaking opportunities at major conferences. These engagements, though seemingly simple, have proven to be powerful ways for incubators to build credibility and advocate for new thematic areas.
- **Engaging Funders as Mentors and Experts:** For incubators that have high net-worth individuals and family officers, the incubator can leverage on the skills and insights by engaging them as mentors. Corporate Foundations also offer a unique opportunity for employee engagements, and offer connections to social procurement efforts, thereby facilitating entrepreneurs' entry into corporate supply chains. However, these engagements must be handled carefully to ensure mutual and genuine benefit.
- **Global Perspectives and Local Impact:** On-the-ground presence is vital for grasping local nuances and engaging a diverse set of entrepreneurs, particularly those lacking access to specific networks or resources. Funders can enhance local impact by leveraging global perspectives and networks, promoting cross-border collaborations, and fostering inclusive problem-solving.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Collaboration for Ecosystem Strengthening:** Strategic collaboration among impact organizations, facilitated by global networks, strengthens the ecosystem by providing comprehensive support, unlocking new opportunities, and bridging geographical gaps.
- **Shared Due Diligence and Knowledge Exchange:** The concept of shared due diligence and knowledge exchange between funders and impact organizations enhances efficiency, reduces duplication of efforts, and contributes to a more streamlined and effective ecosystem.
- **Corporate Employee Engagement Must be Delivered with Care:** Any engagement between employees and the entrepreneur must be a mutual match and a mutual commitment, avoiding random matches that may not align with the genuine needs of entrepreneurs. For employee engagement initiatives, the Bayer Foundation emphasizes curated and hand-picked matching, ensuring that the technical assistance provided aligns with the actual needs of entrepreneurs. This approach prioritizes generating value for entrepreneurs rather than implementing initiatives for the sake of employee engagement.
- **Entrepreneur-Centric Ecosystems:** Shifting towards more entrepreneur-centric ecosystems requires aligning strategies, streamlining support structures, and fostering a collaborative approach among funders, impact organizations, and global networks.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Short-termism Create Complications:** Shorter program durations pose challenges in traditional outcome measurement, whereas flexible solutions, such as a three-year impact window and continuous support for alumni, offer alternatives to assess long-term success. In order for incubation programs to deliver long-term support, they must explore flexible funding structures and long-term impact assessments to provide an accurate representation of an organization's impact.
- Trust-Based Philanthropy Principles:** Embracing trust-based philanthropy involves unrestricted multi-year grant giving, emphasizing building relationships, and prioritizing impact improvement over rigid reporting metrics. Trust-based philanthropy recognizes the importance of flexible funding models, emphasizing the need for non-financial support such as mentorship and strategic guidance, ensuring a holistic approach to organizational development.

### On a lighter note: A surprise photo with the audience



DATE: 27TH SEPTEMBER 2023

## Incubators – Perfect your Pitch to Funders

### PANELISTS



**Michael  
Thompson**  
Small Foundation



**Zach Kolp**  
Triple Jump



**Pervenche Aliman**  
COMMAN-YA



**Matt Wallace**  
ONOW

“

“As a quick sneak attack for you when you reach out to public funds: if you do see that your country already has a lot of activity with ecosystem activities [supported by the fund], know how you’re going to differentiate yourself in that portfolio: What’s it missing? How am I unique?”

– **Zach Kolp**



## SESSION SUMMARY

To achieve greatness, social impact incubators and accelerators must embark on a transformative journey. This journey involves firsthand exploration of how innovation intersects with impact, where resilient minds converge to shape the trajectory of organizational success. Facilitated by a seasoned panel, this space became a golden opportunity to provide visionary leaders with essential tools, guidance, a unique opportunity to hone their pitches, and to understand the donor's point of view.

The stage was set for honest revelations, strategic pivots, and visionary discussions that played a pivotal role in shaping the future of the impact-driven initiatives that pitched. Two organizations had the opportunity to pitch their work to donors: ONOW from Cambodia, and COMMAN YA from Cote d'Ivoire.

**Audience poll: What is one emotion that would describe how you feel when you're presenting your organization to a funder?**

**EXCITED** **DRIVEN** **SMART** **NERVOUS** **UNPREPARED** **HOPEFUL**  
**JUST GIVE US THE MONEY** **ANXIOUS** **WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY**

## KEY THEMES

- **Understand Your Funding Needs:** Understanding your funding needs is crucial. Identify whether it's for scaling, startup, or expansion into new territories and markets. Once you pinpoint the funding needs, you can then determine which avenues will support your business. It's important to distinguish between grant providers, impact investors, and commercial investors. Some investors bridge both categories, considering both impact and financial returns. Therefore, align your approach with the investor type that suits your business model and goals—whether it's prioritizing impact return or a combination of impact and financial returns.
- **Strategic Shifts Towards Sustainability:** Sustainability and commercial viability are critical aspects to prioritize. While many incubators focus on raising grant capital, it's essential to address the question of long-term sustainability in the absence of grant funding. Incubators should articulate and demonstrate how their business model can sustain itself over time without relying solely on grants. This involves exploring private capital, CSR budgets, and events for financial support. The aim is to establish stability in staff, reduce turnover, and ensure the long-term viability of programs.
- **Demonstrated Impact Creation:** Funders look for a broad range of categories that demonstrate the catalytic effect an organization has on its entrepreneurs, including access to finance, talent, and development relevance. Other metrics focus on selection and service quality, survivorship rates, demand for services, satisfaction scores, cost-effectiveness, and financial sustainability. These metrics offer a comprehensive view of an organization's impact beyond basic indicators like jobs created and revenue raised per company.

## KEY THEMES

- **People Matter:** Funders are keen to understand who are the team members behind your organization: Where are they based? Are they local founders or international founders? How well do they know the local industry and ecosystem? Ultimately it is the people behind the organization that are creating the impact and catalytic change. Funders want to have confidence that the team can deliver the intended impact.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Ensuring Effectiveness at Scale:** When pitching for funds, particularly to scale an intervention to support more entrepreneurs, donors want to understand how the organization can indeed deliver quality support at scale, while managing resource capabilities and constraints.
- **Transparent Data Presentation for Impact Assessment:** The importance of transparent data presentation is emphasized, showcasing specific metrics on dashboards to demonstrate program effectiveness, impact, and outcomes, contributing to accountability and assessment.
- **Importance of Alignment with Funders:** When engaging with funders, it's crucial to identify the right type of funder that aligns with the organization's goals. Finding a funder whose objectives match the needs of the incubator or accelerator helps avoid conflicts and ensures a more fruitful partnership. These insights emphasize the importance of a robust and sustainable business model and the strategic alignment with funders for long-term success. Funders seek a clear rationale for why their specific funding source aligns with the organization's needs and goals.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Emphasize the Unique Value Proposition:** The pitching organizations were questioned about the innovative elements that differentiate them in the market and their scalability. Funders wanted to better understand the markets in which the organizations are operating, who the other players are, and what distinguishes the organization pitching. This underscores the importance of innovation and scalability for attracting support and standing out in the entrepreneurial support landscape.
- Local Expertise for Tailored Solutions:** Enterprise Support Organizations should highlight the strength of their local expertise, emphasizing the importance of understanding local contexts and challenges. Local teams with deep roots in the regions they serve are considered assets for crafting effective and tailored solutions.
- Challenges and Opportunities in Diverse Entrepreneurial Audiences:** Acknowledgment of challenges in acquiring a diverse entrepreneurial audience, especially in rural areas, bring attention to the complexities of reaching and supporting entrepreneurs with varied backgrounds and needs.



DATE: 28TH SEPTEMBER 2023

# No Nonsense Advice: Incubator to Incubator

## SPEAKERS



**Ian Jones**  
Agile DG



**Joram Mwinamo**  
SNDBX



**Benedicta  
Ablateye**  
Kumasi Hive



**Keisha Gani**  
She Investments

“

“This is where the controversy starts. Is it about quality or quantity? We much prefer long-term and high touch programs.”

– **Keisha Gani**

## SESSION SUMMARY

Embarking on an incubation journey can be both daunting and exhilarating, especially in the ever-evolving landscape of entrepreneurship. This session went beyond conventional narratives, where fellow incubators provided unfiltered advice to other incubators. More than mere inspiration, it aimed to foster practical engagement by sharing recommendations, ideas, and stories among incubators.

Set against the backdrop of strategic networking, adaptability, and the importance of making tough decisions, these conversations were not mere dialogues but a window into the intricate world of supporting entrepreneurs. Covering the challenges, victories, and the ongoing pursuit of long-term impact, this immersive exploration delved into the core of entrepreneurship. And it is these difficult yet important discussions that promise to reshape the entrepreneurial landscape of tomorrow.

### A screen grab from the session

**Tips for Incubators**

1. We tell Startups and entrepreneurs to solve problems people are willing to pay for, lets do the same as incubators
2. Incubators need multiple revenue streams if they are to be sustainable and profitable
3. Incubators need revenue streams that solve a lasting problem, not a short term fad
4. The entrepreneurship ecosystem is made up of entrepreneurs, their suppliers and service providers, their investors , financiers and funders , the government and academia. You can create value for some or all of them to interact with each other
5. Don't kill yourself doing stuff that doesn't pay off, its not sustainable. Do stuff that works for you.

AN INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT PLATFORM FOR AFRICA 8

Zoom Meeting Participants:

- Joram Mwinamo SNO...
- Tahasin Altar
- Shami Rao, Pollinate L...
- Keesha Gani - Support ...
- Ian - Agile Developme...
- Benedicta Ablateye
- Arielle Molino
- Shriadi Satsiangi
- Catherine Kabaki
- Lethage Mochadibane
- Henning Ringholz
- Maia Gedde

## KEY THEMES

- **Strategic Adaptability in Funding Dynamics:** Navigating the ever-evolving funding landscape demands organizations to stay responsive to trends, avoid fads, and effectively leverage networks for sustained success. This entails addressing the challenge of navigating industry fads while staying true to the organization's core mission, emphasizing the importance of discernment in embracing opportunities aligned with long-term goals.
- **Balancing Growth and Mission:** Navigating the delicate balance between organizational growth and staying true to the mission, showcasing the importance of maintaining focus and resisting the temptation to deviate for short-term gains. Achieving equilibrium between organizational growth and maintaining a stable, skilled team is crucial. Thoughtful expansion strategies are necessary to prevent common pitfalls in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- **Long-term Sustainability Strategies:** Implementing long-term sustainability strategies involves meticulous financial management, strategic networking, and a project-focused approach aligned with the organization's mission for enduring impact.
- **Incubators as Advocates and Influencers:** Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) hold a pivotal role in shaping funding priorities by championing the needs and challenges of entrepreneurs. Beyond mere advocacy, their very existence highlights societal issues and reminds funders of persistent challenges, contributing to the creation of a more responsive and impactful funding landscape.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Networking and Relationship Building:** Highlighting the importance of strategic networking, not only for securing funding but also for building relationships that extend beyond transactions, contributing to long-term sustainability.
- **Funding Dynamics and Long-Term Impact:** Exploring the complex dynamics of funding, from leveraging initial support to building long-term relationships, and understanding that sustained impact often requires strategic engagement with funders.
- **Adaptability and Course Correction:** Advocating for a mindset of adaptability and the ability to course-correct, recognizing that the entrepreneurial journey is dynamic, and flexibility is key to navigating challenges and opportunities.
- **Intersectionality in Entrepreneurship:** Recognizing the importance of addressing intersectionality, understanding that entrepreneurs' challenges are often shaped by multiple factors such as gender, disability, and socioeconomic background.
- **Balancing Mission and Opportunities:** Navigate the tension between staying true to your mission and meeting funder expectations by recognizing when opportunities align better with other incubators' goals. Share opportunities with counterparts whose vision aligns more closely, ensuring a collaborative approach to fulfilling diverse goals within the ecosystem.



## KEY INSIGHTS

- **Strategic Problem Solving:** As incubators, focus on addressing specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs during their business journey. Provide high-quality solutions that entrepreneurs are willing to invest in, enhancing their commitment levels to learning and implementation. Whether through paid services or subsidized programs, emphasizing value creation fosters a deeper engagement and commitment from entrepreneurs.
- **Sustainable Revenue Diversity:** Incubators should establish multiple revenue streams for stability. Relying on one or two larger projects can lead to periods of fundraising uncertainty. A diversified revenue approach, addressing lasting problems rather than short-term fads, reduces anxiety, allowing for smoother operations and adaptability to changing circumstances.
- **Focus on What Works:** Don't kill yourself doing stuff that doesn't pay off. If it's not sustainable, just do stuff that works for you. Figure out your philosophy or values, what you're comfortable doing, what you want to keep doing. Sometimes what you're doing takes off five, ten years later, so you kind of have to balance out all the different needs versus offers.
- **Fostering Inclusive Entrepreneurship:** Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, emphasizing the necessity for gender-centric approaches and tailored strategies. The focus is on empowering women through support structures that address gender-based challenges within diverse cultural contexts, fostering inclusivity in the entrepreneurial landscape.



# 04

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRY

## FOR INCUBATORS & ACCELERATORS

### **Identify Your Value Proposition**

We've heard a lot of pain points around fuzziness or fog in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It's often hard to see who's doing what in a particular sector, or for a particular stage of entrepreneur. There's no clear articulation of where one organization's responsibility ends and another begins. We are creating this ambiguity for ourselves by not clearly articulating our own individual value propositions. As an incubator or accelerator, what sets you apart in the marketplace of entrepreneur support organizations? We all can't be everything for everyone.

"Solve problems that people are willing to pay for" is an advice that probably every incubator tells its entrepreneurs, and that every incubator also needs to take to heart. As an incubator, it's crucial to lead by example, adhering to the principles we advocate for startups. If incubators are able to define the specific type of entrepreneur you support, and what benefits that entrepreneur will receive from participating in its programming, we'll begin to start seeing fewer hub-hoppers, more engaged (and quality!) entrepreneurs, and better strategic linkages between incubators and accelerators. We shouldn't try to do everything and serve everyone, just because we're afraid we might lose out on some funding opportunities. Better articulated value propositions will actually result in working with more aligned and strategic funders.

### **Stay True to the Cause**

Once incubators have defined their niche in the market with a clear target group of entrepreneurs and strong benefits, stick to it!

## FOR INCUBATORS & ACCELERATORS

We know that accessing funding and your own sustainability strategy as an incubator or an accelerator is a top challenge, but don't compromise what you do best for the sake of funding. Incubators should not be overly-influenced by donors to chase funding and they should not change their own strategies to align with donors' strategies.

Mission drift is a very real challenge for all incubators and accelerators, and while it is not the intention of funders to distract incubators from their core work, each incubator and accelerator is responsible for finding alignment with the right funders. There's a partner for everyone, but not every partner is right for your organization. If a particular project or RFP isn't directly supporting your mission, your target entrepreneurs, or the services you offer, let it go. Be selective, stick with what works for you, and don't compromise.

### **Collaboration Gets Us Further than Competition**

All incubators are not created equal. Some are in more mature ecosystems than others; some have more experience than others; some target high-growth entrepreneurs, and others support lower-growth entrepreneurs. All of them add value to the ecosystem, and each should embrace its own uniqueness. We know that funders have biases, and that many are looking for impressive track records, in order to demonstrate the ability of incubators and accelerators to carry out the assignment. In this paradigm, smaller or younger incubators will often be left out of the equation – despite the fact that they may have a unique value proposition – unless they can tie up with a more established organization and offer complementarity.

## FOR FUNDERS & DONORS

### **Blend Global Perspective with Local Solutions**

In the Global South, there's a lot of narrative around "decolonizing aid," which I think could be simply summed up instead with "embracing trust." Listen to the organizations who are on-ground, who know their constituents, and who know their markets. Appreciate and incorporate their feedback wherever possible. Allow for cultural and contextual latitudes in the implementation of work, because though there are many connections across the Global South, each unique country, market, and city has its own distinctions.

Achieving a balanced equilibrium between global standards and flexible, context-specific strategies is of paramount importance.

### **Support Incubators Strategically**

Many incubators or accelerators may not know that they can ask for more than money. Know what your organization is good at, and where you can lend support to your grantees and partners. As a donor, the credibility and visibility that you can offer these incubators and accelerators is often just as valuable as the money you're giving them. It might be a speaking slot in a major conference, communications support to publish some key insights on their work, or a positive reference to another funder. You won't be able to read their minds, but remember they might not know what to ask for, so an offer for support may be welcome.

When it comes to impact measurement, try to co-create metrics that are mutually valuable and not overly burdensome. Have an open conversation, knowing that you might have some difference in semantics and trusting that you will find common ground.

## FOR FUNDERS & DONORS

### **Support Sustainability Strategies**

Acknowledge the power-play that you have as a funder or donor in this space. Often, when a donor says, “Jump!” the incubators, accelerators, and other entrepreneur support organizations will respond with, “How high?” Incubators are responding to the market dynamics that are shaped not only by entrepreneurs, but also by funders’ programmatic and project-based approaches.

Most, if not all, incubators and accelerators have multiple different revenue streams to ensure the longevity of their own work. You might find that an incubator is running its customized programming and charging entrepreneurs for the service, while at the same time running a program on behalf of a donor and giving it for free to the entrepreneurs. By its very nature, this undercuts the sustainability of that incubator’s services in the market.

The impact that incubators and accelerators are working towards is a long-term play, and short-term programming may have its place, but ultimately these organizations need long-term support to move the needle of entrepreneurship in the right direction. They need the flexibility to experiment, to engage deeply and long-term with the entrepreneurs they support. Short-term programmatic funding creates a small burst of activity, rather than a systemic change in these markets.



# 05

## LOOKING AHEAD

## WHAT'S NEXT AT POLLINATE IMPACT?

Post the Potluck, Pollinate Impact is open for memberships, and we invite incubators and accelerators from Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia to join us. While incubators and accelerators are our target constituents, the ecosystem is large and we welcome other impact-oriented organizations to join us as partners and allies. We invite you all to become Pollinators so we can build the impact incubation industry together.

As a member, you and your staff would gain the opportunity to:

- Regularly engage with donors and ecosystem support organizations to understand their funding priorities
- Receive our list of funding opportunities weekly in your inbox
- Gain access to shared tools and resources
- Drive action in our Collective Action Teams
- Learn and share insights from other incubators across the Global South

We have a full calendar of events for incubators to connect with each other, to co-create solutions, and to drive research and insights that will collectively move the incubation industry ahead.

Don't be left behind, become a Pollinator today!





# 06

## APPENDIX

## LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- Academic City Technology and Entrepreneurship Center
- Action Without Borders - Idealist.org
- Africa Raising Ventures
- Afrilabs
- Agile DG
- Agri Frontier
- AIC Banasthali
- AIC-JKLU Foundation
- Amani Institute
- ANDE
- Ashoka
- Aspire Impact
- Atal Incubation Centre Banasthali Vidyapith
- Aveti Learning
- Bayer Foundation
- BongoHive
- Bridgepoint Agri-Consult Ltd
- Briter Bridges
- British International Investment
- CASE SMARTFARM
- Catalyst for Women Entrepreneurship
- Centre for Social Studies
- Challenge Fund for Youth Employment
- CheckUps
- Coaching for Impact
- Cognota
- Comman Ya
- Community Women Enterprise Network Uganda Limited
- Creative Metier
- Creativity Lab for Empowerment and Innovation
- Crescent Innovation and Incubation council
- CWEN
- DRK Foundation
- Duncan Wachira Nyairacha
- Dutch Fund for Climate and Development
- EarthJust Ecosystem
- edge
- EYElliance
- FairChange
- GIZ
- Green Dreams Women
- Growth Africa
- GSG
- Idealist.org
- iHub
- IIM Calcutta Innovation Park
- IIMV FIELD
- IIT Mandi Catalyst

## LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- Impact Hub
- Impact Hub Abidjan
- Impact Hub Nairobi
- Impact Investing Ghana
- Individual Consultant
- Information Systems
- Ingenious City
- Innovation & Tech Hub – IT KOLA
- Innovation Spark
- Instructional Leadership Institute
- Intelicap Advisory Services
- Invest In Africa
- iSpace Foundation
- Jaza Rift Ventures
- Jazz 4 Social Transformation & Empowerment Platform
- Jhpiego
- Kole Project
- Kumasi Hive
- Kwangu Kwako Limited
- Lake Farms and Fishing Lodge Limited
- Makeba Consulting
- Makesense
- Menterra
- Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship
- MoWA/GIZ
- Oasis Capital
- OH MY! SERVICES
- Ongoza
- Ongoza Institute
- ONOW
- OoRange – Centre of Business Incubator in Padjadjaran University
- Pak Mission Society
- Pind Foundation
- PipalMajik
- Relevant Ventures
- Rural Reconstruction and Development Society
- Sahara Ventures
- SEQUENCE APPAREL LLC
- SFF
- Shortlist
- Sinapis
- Small Foundation
- SNDBX International
- Solidaridad Network
- Spring Impact
- SRI-Technology Business Incubator, SHRIRAM INSTITUTE FOR INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH, DELHI
- Support Her Enterprise Co., Ltd
- Synergy Haven
- Tangaza University College

## LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- The Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs
- The Games Arena
- The Human Edge
- The Lemelson Foundation
- Triple Jump
- UnCap
- University Mohamed VI Polytechnic (UM6P)
- Unlock Impact
- UNU
- Unwind Hyderabad
- USAID
- Vertuelab
- Villgro Africa
- Villgro Innovations Foundation
- Villgro Philippines
- Visa Foundation
- Volta River Authority
- WeavingImpact
- WeLearn Ghana
- WYLDE International
- YALI RLC EA



# Pollinate Impact

ENABLING IMPACT ENABLERS

[www.pollinateimpact.org](http://www.pollinateimpact.org)