REFLECTIONS ON PHILANTHROPY
FROM THE 2017 PHILANTHROPY INNOVATION SUMMIT
ABOUT STANFORD PACS

Stanford PACS is a research center for students, scholars, leaders, and practitioners to explore and share ideas that create social change. Its primary participants are Stanford faculty, visiting scholars, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students, and philanthropists, nonprofit, and foundation practitioners.

Stanford PACS has relationships with five schools at Stanford University (Humanities & Sciences, Engineering, Education, Business, and Law) and more than 15 departments, and we leverage the intellectual assets of a diverse, world-class faculty across the university. This provides a unique platform to create knowledge and share it with the nonprofit and for-profit communities in Silicon Valley and globally.

Stanford PACS offers postdoctoral fellowships, PhD fellowships, and financial support for undergraduates completing honors thesis work. Additionally, Stanford PACS sponsors regular public speaker programs and symposia and philanthropy salons that include speakers who are well-known public intellectuals, philanthropists, and academic, foundation, and nonprofit leaders.

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Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR), published by Stanford PACS, informs, energizes, and motivates social change leaders from around the world and from all sectors of society—nonprofits, foundations, businesses, academia and government. Through an array of channels—daily online content, a quarterly print publication, monthly webinars, thematic conferences, podcasts, asynchronous learning assets, and more—SSIR bridges research, theory, and practice, and addresses a wide range of social issues (including economic development, human rights, public health, and education) and solutions (like impact investing, social entrepreneurship, and nonprofit business models). SSIR’s award-winning content is created for and by current and future social change leaders.

It is SSIR’s mission to advance, educate, and inspire the field of social innovation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every two years, the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society hosts a Philanthropy Innovation Summit. At this day-long event, peer philanthropists, Stanford faculty, scholars, and leaders share their inspiration and expertise, authentic stories of successes and struggles, and results-oriented approaches to social change.

At this international convening, individual and family philanthropists connect in order to brainstorm with one another, leverage Stanford PACS research to catalyze effective philanthropy, and take away actionable ideas, best practices, new strategies, and new networks with which to amplify one’s impact as a philanthropist.

This collection of articles, written by individuals at the Philanthropy Innovation Summit, expresses key themes, learnings, and questions that emerged throughout the day. By sharing these reflections, we hope philanthropists and social change leaders around the world will be better informed and even more motivated to leverage strategic philanthropy in tackling society’s most pressing challenges.

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Videos and additional materials from the Philanthropy Innovation Summit are available at: pacscenter.stanford.edu/summit2017learning
At a time of rising nationalism and cutbacks in foreign aid in countries around the world, philanthropists play a critical role, not just in providing money, but in fostering cooperation and goodwill between people and nations. That was the consensus outlook of a group of philanthropists who gathered at a salon held at Stanford PACS’ Philanthropy Innovation Summit at Stanford University on Sept. 19, 2017.

The salon, Globalization and Giving, was hosted by Simone Coxe, a member of the Philanthropy Innovation Summit Host Committee. I moderated a panel with Lata Krishnan, founder and chair of American India Foundation, and CFO of Shah Capital Partners; Jaff Shen, CEO of Leping Social Entrepreneur Foundation; and Anja Manuel, author of This Brave New World: India, China and the United States, and an affiliate of the Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation.

The critical role that philanthropists play globally can be seen in the response to the two hurricanes that recently swept over the Caribbean. Government relief—whether from the United Kingdom or the United States—has been inadequate to the task, and philanthropists have stepped into the breach. Virgin Group founder Richard Branson is playing an important role in galvanizing aid for the British Virgin Islands, where he has a home, and private equity investor Orlando Bravo has pledged $10 million in aid for his native Puerto Rico.

Philanthropists and NGOs have also played a critical role in many other areas around the world. Take global health, for example. Organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GAVI, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have helped reduce the number of people dying from malaria by 60 percent between 2000 and 2015, and since 1990 have helped cut in half the number of children worldwide who die before age 5.

Fortunately, philanthropy is on the rise around the world. In China, for example, there has been a dramatic increase in giving by the newly-minted wealthy. Take the example of Jaff Shen from Leping. Most of Leping’s giving takes place inside of China, where the foundation has funded many social entrepreneurs and social enterprises. But Leping also gives money outside of China, helping, for example, to create a network of social entrepreneurs in East Asia who can exchange ideas and lessons learned.

There is also a growing amount of philanthropy by diaspora populations, such as Indians living in the United States. Much of their giving goes to domestic issues in their adopted country, but a growing amount goes back to India. Lata Krishnan is a good example. She first became interested in giving back to her birthplace following the devastating earthquake that struck Gujarat in 2001. Frustrated by how difficult it was to provide aid to India from the United States, Krishnan formed the America India Foundation. By overcoming the legal obstacles to giving abroad and by vetting Indian nonprofits, the foundation makes it much easier for Indian-Americans to give to India.

At the same time that philanthropy is growing globally, there are efforts afoot by a growing number of governments to restrict cross-border giving. China, for example, recently passed new
laws making it more difficult for foreign philanthropist and NGOS to operate in the country. India has also selectively cracked down on foreign philanthropists, as have other countries such as Egypt and Russia. While these efforts are real and concerning, Anja Manuel believes that the long-term trend is toward greater interdependence among nations and peoples, not less. And that the result will be a growing network of philanthropists and NGOs, working closely with governments and business, to solve the world’s problems.

Eric Nee is the Managing Editor of the Stanford Social Innovation Review.

This article was originally published on Stanford Social Innovation Review’s website, ssir.org, on November 3, 2017.

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