

Social Enterprise World Forum, SAP partner in connecting organisations with technology, talent

A major talking point at the recent Social Enterprise World Forum 2019 (SEWF) was the critical role social enterprises play in addressing many of the world's socio-economic challenges by uplifting communities, accelerating progress and creating job opportunities. Technology plays a key role in helping to increase their impact and scale.



Amonge Sinxoto, co-founder of Blackboard Africa on a mission to give young people an opportunity to understand their value and maximise their contribution to the development of the continent.

Since the first SEWF in 2008, the notion of social enterprise has grown into a truly global phenomenon. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's (GEM) Social Entrepreneurship Report, around 3.2% of the world's population is starting social ventures. In Africa, according to the British Council, co-operatives account for 45% of Kenya's GDP, generating more money than either public or private sectors.

Role of the private sector

While governments may be responsible for creating the right conditions and legislation to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, corporations like SAP are in a unique position to contribute, says Alexandra van der Ploeg. SEWF's partnership with SAP, which was announced at the 2018 world forum, aims to play a significant role in providing more social enterprises with technology platforms, skilled talent and access to markets that they need to be successful.

"Ethiopia, which hosted this year's SEWF, is a great example," adds van der Ploeg. "The social enterprise sector is a young and women-led movement. There are more than 55,000 social enterprises in the country and half of social enterprise leaders are aged under 35. Women lead over a quarter (28%) of social enterprises, compared to leading just 4.5% of mainstream Ethiopian businesses, so it's clear to see how this sector is addressing both youth and women employability."



Alexandra van der Floeg, global head of CSR for SAP and Cathy Smith, MD for SAP Africa hosted around 50 social entrepreneur partners at SEWF, including ten young entrepreneurs from across Africa who are part of the We Are Family Foundation.

SAP global social sabbatical programme

One way in which SAP has been demonstrating support for African social enterprises is through its global social sabbatical programme, a portfolio of pro-bono volunteering assignments where highly diverse teams of SAP employees provide their skills and business expertise in the service of social enterprises and non-profit organisations. Africa has been one of the largest recipients of this capacity building programme with 278 employees contributing over 88,000 hours across 13 countries, with an estimated impact on 1.4 million beneficiaries. Ahead of this year's forum, five teams of volunteers participated in the third social sabbatical in Ethiopia, with all teams supporting social enterprises - ranging from those addressing digital skills to infant nutrition to women empowerment.

Cathy Smith, the managing director of SAP Africa, speaking at SEWF in Addis Ababa, said social enterprises had a critical role to play on the African continent by tackling inequality, engaging traditional knowledge and indigenous resources, and connecting rural women to global markets.

Accelerating social impact

"It's significant for this year's SEWF to have been hosted in Africa. Social entrepreneurs are driving some of the most innovative approaches to solving socio-economic challenges on the continent, but they often lack market access, which limits their capacity to build thriving businesses and create a lasting positive impact. If we help them to run better businesses, we essentially accelerate the social impact they have," said Smith.

"While our focus has traditionally been on digital skills and capacity building, we are now turning our attention to social procurement. The global digital marketplace for B2B commerce is worth trillions of dollars annually, and the majority of these B2B transactions are managed through the SAP Ariba Network. This provides a unique opportunity for SAP to expand our approach in the social enterprise space and I am incredibly excited about how this will evolve on the continent".

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