

Philanthropy Impact Forum

Wednesday, 6th March 2024

The Ritz-Carlton, DIFC, Dubai, UAE

Summary:

The full-day forum began with keynote remarks by [Barbara Ibrahim](#), Founding Executive Director of the Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement, Founding member of the Arab Foundations Forum and co-author of the book *From Charity to Social Change: Trends in Arab Philanthropy*. The keynote remarks focused on the key aspects that Barbara sees philanthropy moving – the 3 Cs in addition to community: Connection, Critical perspective, and Courage to transform philanthropy. The keynote address was followed by a presentation of the Circle's achievements since its inception, by Anissa Punjani, Programme Manager of the Governance in Philanthropy programme at the Pearl Initiative.

Following the presentation were three vibrant and engaging panel discussions featuring esteemed guest speakers from within the network and the wider regional philanthropic community. The first panel discussion on ***The Catalytic Role of Community in Philanthropy*** featured Lynn Zovighian, *Co-founder, and Managing Director of The Zovighian Partnership*; Nicolas Heard, *Acting Director General, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund*; and was moderated by Louise Redvers, *Managing Director at Philanthropy Age*. The second panel discussion on ***The Role of the Private Sector in Giving*** featured Ayla Bajwa, *Senior Vice President Sustainability, DP World*; Caroline Kiunga, *Community Relations Director, UPS Foundation*; Dimitra Theodoropoulos, *Director of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, talabat*; and Vimbai Midzi, *Associate Director, Careem*. The third panel discussion on ***The Role of Women in Philanthropy*** featured Muna AbuSulayman, *Partner, Transform VC*; Neha Hiranandani, *Author & Philanthropist*; Sana Jubaili, *Group HR Director, Jubaili Bros*; and was moderated by Danah Abboud, *Diversity and Inclusion Programme Manager, Pearl Initiative*.

Key Takeaways – Keynote Remarks by Barbara Ibrahim:

- The 'three Cs' in philanthropy can help forge effective, generous societies for future generations to inherit.
 - The first C is for Connection - while community looks inside at ourselves, connection asks us to reach outside of our usual comfort zone. It demands that we get away from our offices, memos, and staff meetings to engage in meaningful ways on the ground, with people - possibly unlike ourselves. Often what holds back good grantees is a deficit of connections – to information about better ways of doing things, or to champions who could open doors for them in policy circles, or an introduction to others struggling with the same issues but each operating in isolation.
 - The second C is for Critical Perspective - questioning relentlessly *ourselves*, not others. Is the way we have traditionally operated our philanthropy fit for purpose in the complex 21st century world? Could we stretch limited resources further with novel financial strategies?

- The third C is for Courage – the kind of bravery that allows some organisations and individuals to blaze new paths or defy the accepted status quo. What are we doing to make our organizations more courageous and enabling our staffs to take risks for important principles? Do we create a culture in which cutting corners or petty corruption is tolerated -- or banished? Are we pushing to address the big issues that confront us – inequality, discrimination, injustice, even if we do that with small gestures every day?

Key Takeaways – Presentation of Circle Achievements by Anissa Punjani:

- Presented the objectives of the Governance in Philanthropy programme which include enabling greater impact, stronger infrastructure, better resource mobilisation, and more strategic philanthropy.
- Some of the key achievements of the programme and Circle so far include:
 - Launched the refreshed Circle site, housing over 60+ resources available in both Arabic and English, accessed by over 2000+ users. Over 40 members have signed up to the platform.
 - Growth of the network to currently have 40+ individual donors and 70+ institutional donors with the hope of moving them from intent to action.
 - Hosted 25 workshops and convenings since October 2021 featuring key global thought leaders, including Valerie Rockefeller, Hadi Partovi, Dr Mariët Westermann, Kevin Starr, Laila Abdullatif, amongst others.
 - 26 key connections made between members of the Circle network (from both streams) as a result of Circle convenings and other network engagements.
 - Launched the Shaping Philanthropy podcast episodes, across streaming platforms.

Key Takeaways – Panel Discussion on *The Catalytic Role of Community in Philanthropy*:

- Community involvement in philanthropy empowers individuals to take ownership of local issues and solutions. It fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility within the community, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes whether this be in species conservation or humanitarian crisis response.
- Communities have unique cultures, histories, and challenges that require tailored approaches to philanthropy. Effective philanthropic efforts are grounded in an understanding of the local context and informed by the perspectives of community members.

Key Takeaways – Panel Discussion on *The Role of the Private Sector in Giving*:

- Giving back to communities and supporting social causes is not only a moral obligation but also contributes to long-term business success by enhancing reputation, employee engagement, and customer loyalty.
- Companies must align their philanthropic efforts with their core values, business objectives, and expertise to address pressing social and environmental challenges effectively.
- The private sector brings innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit to philanthropy.

Key Takeaways – Panel Discussion on *The Role of Women in Philanthropy*:

- Women's involvement in philanthropy serves as a catalyst for empowerment and leadership development, both within philanthropic organisations and in the broader community. Women-led philanthropic initiatives prioritise the advancement of women and girls, promoting their rights, opportunities, and representation.
- Women-led philanthropy intersects with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, and disability which results in intersectional giving and acknowledges the interconnected nature of social issues especially in marginalised and underserved communities.