

From social entrepreneurship to systems entrepreneurship

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Social entrepreneurship has grown from a niche concept, to trend in South Africa and on the continent. But what can social entrepreneurs do when they have reached the limits of their organisational impact? The Bertha Centre believes that "systems Entrepreneurship" - an integrated approach to effecting positive change, while harnessing the power of both markets and movements - is the next chapter for social entrepreneurship.

The field of social entrepreneurship is grappling with the challenge of responding to large-scale, systemic issues in sectors as diverse as education, health and the environment. Seasoned social entrepreneurs have begun to realise that there are limits to scaling operations, particularly when social issues are affecting hundreds of millions of people worldwide. This question, 'What can social entrepreneurs do beyond scale to impact social systems globally?', is the next challenge for the current generation of social entrepreneurs.

Over the last year, the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, a specialised unit at UCT Graduate School of Business, with support from the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the Motsepe Foundation, has conducted detailed interviews and research with leading systems entrepreneurs from around the world. This, combined with the Bertha Centre's five years of experience working with social entrepreneurs and innovators, has led to a unique perspective in the field.

Through their new Executive Education management short course, Leading Social Entrepreneurship, the Bertha Centre hopes to equip senior leaders and managers, policymakers, funders and senior-level stakeholders in the social enterprise system to look beyond their immediate operations and to influence entire social systems to work better for the long term. These strategies for systems entrepreneurship include advocacy, policy reform, multi-stakeholder partnerships, participatory program models, and even social activism.

"At the Bertha Centre, we have been partnering with entrepreneurs and networks to understand best practices of leading social benefit organisations. This course offers an opportunity to learn from and participate in a community of practice that we hope will assist social entrepreneurs in reaching a pivotal level of impact," says Dr François Bonnici, Director of the Bertha Centre.

The course is designed to go beyond the current thinking in the social and civil society sectors, to challenge and promote new ways of framing the debate between impact and scale. Non-profit leaders and those operating in the social enterprise space will be given tools to strategically grow the impact of their organisations and businesses, while also exploring models to positively influence the systems within which they operate.

Through a series of case studies highlighting leading social entrepreneurs from around the globe, who are engaged in scaling impact and shifting systems for social change founders, CEOs and senior managers of established social enterprises will gain practical skills in order to achieve maximum impact through their social enterprises.

Both for-profit and non-profit organisations are welcome to apply, and organisations such as the Institute for Justice & Reconciliation, Save the Children, Green Building Design Group NPC and the British Council have already showed an interest.

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