



Philanthropy in the first person

Millennial business women want to be more than just a name on a check, says **KATE ROBERTS**, Co-Founder of Maverick Collective

THE NEWEST PHILANTHROPISTS ARE USED to designing companies and creating solutions that change the landscape for investors, customers and employees. These young entrepreneurs and executives want to be engaged in solving the world's biggest problems. They want measurable success – and for their own skills, not simply their money, to be put to work to achieve it.

The need is there. At today's levels of investment, an additional \$2.5 trillion is needed annually to achieve the UN's broad Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries, according to the UN's World Investment Report 2014.

In addition to more investment, the UN has said that addressing the challenges facing women and girls around the world is absolutely critical to ending extreme poverty. Yet such programs receive less than 2 cents of every development dollar, according to the UN Foundation.

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Clearly, it is important not only to catalyze more investments and donations, but also to make better use of those we have already.

In 2016, I co-founded Maverick Collective with Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway. Our goal is to end extreme poverty by investing in women and girls. To do that, we set about creating a new model of giving, one that engages philanthropists and harnesses their experience, networks and skills. Melinda Gates, who co-chairs Maverick Collective, shared our belief that many looking to give, especially women, “want to think hard about what – in addition to money – they have to add to the cause.”

Great strides have been made in alleviating poverty globally, yet more than 700 million people still live on less than \$1.90 a day. Most of them are women and girls. This disparity remains true even as poverty rates on the whole decline, according to the UN.

When they have jobs, women are paid less and are more likely to lack fundamental rights as employees. Meanwhile, preventable childbirth mortality rates in developing countries are still tragically high – 303,000 women die each year from pregnancy complications, according to the World Health Organization. An unmet need for family planning stubbornly persists, with the greatest need in Sub-Saharan Africa. In too many parts of the world, girls remain less educated than boys and have less access to higher levels of education.

When we founded Maverick, we invited a core group of 14 women to join us not simply as financial supporters, but as team members. Each member applies their skills, technical expertise and experience to work directly on a cause that personally matters to them. Our members are tackling a host of issues plaguing women and girls around the globe, including violence against women in India, maternal care in childbirth in Uganda (see “Making it safe to give birth” below), the creation of safe spaces for girls in Honduras, and family planning in Nicaragua, where a full quarter of teenage women have given birth.

Critics of our work try to paint our initiative as a vanity project for a group of wealthy women. But our results speak for themselves. While our Collective is still relatively new and small, it has already leveraged \$60 million to reach more than 300,000 women in the developing world. As we continue to learn, share lessons, adapt, implement tested solutions and scale our initiatives with large institutional donors, this impact will only increase.

KATE ROBERTS

Kate Roberts is Senior Vice President of Corporate Partnerships & Philanthropy for Population Services International (PSI), a global health network dedicated to improving the health of people in the developing world.

She is also Co-Founder of **Maverick Collective**, a partnership between PSI and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, whose mission is to build a global community of philanthropists and informed advocates who use their intellectual and financial resources to create change.

From discussions with our members and our meetings with next-generation philanthropists, we have found a growing appetite for this kind of hands-on philanthropy.

Philanthropists today come from all kinds of backgrounds, but more and more of them, especially among the younger generations, see themselves not as donors, but as partners.

They prefer to support a cause rather than an organization, and will draw on their broad social networks to find the right channels for their charitable work. They want to innovate new solutions, lead implementation on the ground, measure the results they produce and influence others to join them in the cause. They are much more comfortable taking risks and are more willing to see failure as a learning experience that can help others adapt faster and better succeed.

This may even be a movement that transcends generational divides. The members in the Maverick Collective include Millennials, Gen X-ers and Baby Boomers, and all share a common interest in doing more than affixing their names to the bottom of checks or the front of buildings.

These are disruptive trends – in the best sense of the word. It is time we disrupted the idea that the most valuable contribution philanthropists, especially women, can make, is financial. Just as it is time that we disrupted – or better yet, ended – the trend of women and girls receiving only a fraction of development assistance.

Kate Roberts spoke with **JAMIE FORREST**, an Executive in Brunswick’s New York office.

MAKING IT SAFE TO GIVE BIRTH

MAVERICK COLLECTIVE MEMBER SARA Ojeh is Director of Philanthropy at New York investment firm Athos II Holdings and daughter of Mansour Ojeh, CEO of TAG Group. Also a trained doula – a person who assists before, during and after childbirth – Ojeh is an advocate for maternal health.

Maverick approached Ojeh to find ways her training and experience could benefit the crisis in childbirth safety in Uganda, a country where 6,000 women and 41,000 newborns die each year in the weeks after birth.

Recruiting her friends, Ojeh created a “giving circle” that financially supports her work and brings the group’s collective skills and experiences to improve maternal health in Uganda. So far, the program’s



Sara Ojeh (right) speaks with Annette, a Ugandan mother of two who almost died from post-partum hemorrhaging

advocacy work has won the Ugandan government’s approval to use chlorhexidine, a disinfectant, to wash umbilical cords

and prevent infections. The disinfectant, a UN-designated life-saving drug, is now included in a “Maama Kit,” a low-cost birthing package that contains a plastic sheet, a sterile blade, umbilical cord clamps, cotton, gloves, soap and instructions about safe births.

Ojeh is now working to have another drug added to the Maama Kit: misoprostol, which helps stop post-partum hemorrhaging, a leading cause of maternal mortality in Uganda.

“A clean delivery kit has been around for a long time,” Ojeh says. “It’s not about reinventing something. These are simple solutions and simple interventions and simple medications. We just need to be innovative in how we use them.”