

## **Clubbing in Slovakia – a model to develop local community philanthropy**

Community Foundations in Slovakia have had many opportunities to learn from overseas CFs on their models in cooperation with individual donors. The visible impact of individual donors on community development was always admired and “envied” by Slovak observers. They understood that individual donors become the most “faithful and sustainable” supporters of own community. But how to transfer this cooperation to countries in which people have nearly none or only bad experience with philanthropy?

The first inspiration came from the program “500 friends of Banská Bystrica” realized by CF Healthy City in 1995-97. Early after the Foundation’s start, it received a grant of 90,000 USD from C.S. Mott Foundation. The contribution for the first year was provided without any additional conditions, the second and the third part of the payment was fixed to the condition to raise matching amounts from local sources. They were supposed to raise 15,000 USD annually that was in that time a significant amount of money (aprox. 500,000 SK). Being new in this field, with no personal experience and almost no tradition of giving in the community, it seemed like a huge unrealizable task. But then the Board came with a great idea to break this huge amount down into smaller gifts and to find “500 friends of Banská Bystrica” who would contribute 1,000 Sk. Later on we found out that even 1,000 Sk was quite a high amount for the average person and we decreased the limit to 200 SK (which was the price of a good dinner). The Foundation’s goal was to create a mechanism that everybody could “afford” to donate and prove that also relatively small gifts given to the Community Foundation has a sense and together with other gifts can help to change our community.

Based on Healthy City CF’s experience, Lubos Tvrdon, an active leader and co-founder of the Bratislava Community Foundation, proposed to disseminate this model among all the members of the Association in 2004. He suggested to establish a Club of Donors. Every CF motivated individuals from their own community to donate based on matching principles. Lubos engaged with two corporations - Orange and Slovak Saving Banks - which committed to

contribute to all Clubs, 1 SKK to each SKK fundraised from local resources. The concept started to develop quite quickly. In the first years 20 - 30 individual donors contributed to every Club. Individual donors continuously started to be personally involved in the decision making process. CFs started to organize special events for individual donors to present community projects and to be involved in the selection. Meetings became a tradition and enabled personal contacts among individual donors and the particular CF. After 4 years of the program's existence, the corporations decided to stop their matching activities. Local leaders of Slovak CFs faced the challenge of how to continue the program without "strong" partnership with companies? The number of local individual donors contributing to the Club was not large enough to fundraise the resources required for grant making.

In 2013, the Nitra Community Foundation came up with the idea to support the Club of Donors with a PR campaign to make it better known and attractive within the local community. Three young well known people (a famous soccer player, a TV presenter and a singer) became the faces of the campaign and helped significantly to popularize the idea of the Club of Donors in the Nitra region. As a result the number of members in the Club of Donors at the Nitra Community Foundation rapidly increased, it jumped from 37 members in 2012 to 139 in 2013 and 227 in 2014. The Club of Donors is now realized by four CFs in Slovakia. Its main aim is to motivate individual donors to contribute to the development of their own community based on transparent and long term principles. Local individual donors are directly involved in the grant making process, they decide which community projects are supported by their funds. Around 350 people per year donate approximately €17,000 annually through the Club of Donors.

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