

5th Annual First Givers Summit

20th Sept

Dawn of a new day



The 5th Annual First Givers Club Summit took place in the morning of 20th September at the Four Seasons hotel in Mumbai. The summit witnessed more than double the size of gathering than that seen in the previous events, with over 140 philanthropists, primarily comprising of professionals from different sectors including corporate, private equity funds, law and consulting firms. It was heartening to see young boys and girls in their teens who had come down with their parents to listen and to learn about the giving philosophy.

Mr. N. Vaghul, Chairman, GiveIndia, set the pace for the day with an impassioned talk about how compassion plays an important role in philanthropy. He emphasized the need to stand up and take action to the problems faced by society and not just depend on the government to help solve them. This was followed by a panel discussion on Lessons in philanthropy. It was a star studded panel comprising of Mr. Ashish Dhawan, Co-Founder, Chryscapital and Founder, Central Square Foundation, Ms. Zia Mody, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, AZB & Partners, Mr. R. Sundar, Executive Director, Mastek and was moderated by Mr. Venkat Krishnan N, Director, GiveIndia. Zia Mody shared her insights on the value of giving money versus value of providing networks/connections to raise funds, when and at what stage of their life can one decide to give at a significant level. Ashish Dhawan shared his learnings that shaped his ultra-fine focus in Education and the importance of maintaining focus, while R Sundar spoke about how he arrived at the right fit for himself with Sankara Eye Care.

Topping this eclectic panel would have been hard for anyone but not for our next speaker as he did it with aplomb. An inspiration to many, Mr. Bill Gates, Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation came on the stage in conversation with Mr. Amit Chandra, who himself gives close to 75% of his earnings to charity, took the audience through his philanthropic journey. Mr Gates further shared with the gathering his thoughts on how one can have the greatest impact in their investments of time & money.

The summit was unique in the sense that it was a highly participative and interactive affair with the panel discussion getting interspersed with questions which spoke about the audiences' affinity with the various causes and their method of giving. Philanthropists from Dasra, Caring Friends, Samhita and Social Venture Partners also joined the meeting displaying active collaboration between nonprofits working in the philanthropy space.

GiveIndia also organised a quiz which tested the Social Quotient of the audience. Mr. Ramesh Mangaleswaran, Director, McKinsey India, won the quiz and Rs.2 lakh from GiveIndia which will be donated to MBA Foundation, the charity he supports. There were also many valuable contributions made by other FGC members. The gathering stirred up several riveting discussions and lived up to its promise of improving the understanding of philanthropy, leaving the business glitterati better from the experience.

Speakers at the Summit

In conversation with..

Mr. Bill Gates, Co-Chair Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Mr. Gates stated that it was only post the age of forty that he and Melinda began giving in a structured manner. Initially he felt that all the good causes were taken. However on digging deeper he realised that it is not the case, "In this role I realised that I have to begin learning again, only then would you be able to make a difference and enjoy the journey". On the issues of healthcare and education, Mr. Gates linked the two by noting that "In India about half of the kids never develop mentally due to malnutrition," he opined, "If you think that you can change education in your country you need to build a far bigger personnel base of teachers. How do you find the better teachers? In healthcare, it is far easier in terms of the resource base required. In India about half of the kids never develop mentally due to malnutrition. He spoke about the potential legacy of his philanthropic work, saying "If we are successful in getting rid of a disease (like polio) then people in the future won't be able to understand what that disease was all about." Mr. Gates also engaged in dialogue with the audience around some of their key questions.



Lessons in philanthropy



Mr. Ashish Dhawan, Co-Founder, Chryscapital & Founder, Central Square Foundation

Talking about his single minded focus towards the education sector, Ashish said "The scale of problem is immense. I was stumped at the fact that there are close to 240 million children in school but more than 80% are left behind. I wanted to have true knowledge and understand the complexity of the issue. If I focus on multiple problems I would not be able to do that." He further added how he believes he ports his business skills to the not for profit space, "One way to add value as opposed to doing ten different things is to focus on one area and then you can genuinely try to provide some value."

Ms. Zia Mody, Co Founder & Managing Partner, AZB & Partners

Zia, who follows the Bahai religion, mentioned that for her having rules meant it was a bit easier. One of the tenets of the Bahai religion is that you have to give back to the faith 19.2% of net savings. On the definition of net savings, Zia follows the principle that "one has to give enough so that it would pain you". On being asked about how she helps people with good causes with their outreach efforts she said "I am more than happy to make more than one call; my mother used to say, it's not for you so why don't you ask and never deny people the privilege of giving." She also highlighted the need to inculcate the giving culture at an early age.

Mr. R. Sundar, Executive Director, Mastek

At the beginning of his foray in philanthropy, Mr. Sundar was associated with many causes. When asked about how to find the right fit with respect to the NGO you wish to support he said "Most NGOs have enormous passion & commitment power towards their cause, you have to be respectful of how you can really make a difference." He now focuses on collaborating with Sankara Eye Care. Sanakara was running one hospital; Sundar's input was that they should probably open 20 such hospitals and the promoter was open to that. Sankara now operates 9 hospitals on a fully standalone and independent basis. The fund raising side (aided by Sundar) and the operational side (run by the promoter) should be in sync to truly make the partnership worthwhile. Since most NGOs hate fund raising one simple way of adding value is to help them raise funds.

Poll Results

