



## World Export Development Forum (WEDF), 8 – 11 October 2008

Friday

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### SESSION SUMMARY: Friday, 10 October 2008

#### BREAKOUT SERIES 3

### **Scaling-up Social Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Solutions**

#### SPEAKERS:

Elizabeth A. Vazquez, Executive Director, Quantum Leaps, Inc., United States of America

Ronke Daniel, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Ladmok Company Ltd., Nigeria

Astrid Ruiz Thierry, President, Women in World Markets Ltd, Spain

MODERATOR: Parag Gupta, Associate Director and Head of South Asia, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, Switzerland

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The social entrepreneurship movement is on the rise across the world, stimulated both by local needs for more jobs and better living and working conditions in developing countries and by the rise of conscientious consumerism in the North. But entrepreneurs in the South face serious structural problems in getting their businesses off the ground and in establishing their products on major world markets.

It is vital for entrepreneurs to get involved from the start at the grassroots with producers and learn on the spot of the difficulties they face, said Ronke Daniel, of Ladmok. The company is a pioneer in providing financial and material support to rural women producing cassava in Nigeria, helping to turn it into a competitive export product through a cooperative.

But there is also a big role for governments to step in and act as enablers. "Governments have to be present," she said. They can help ensure access to microfinance when interest rates charged by commercial banks are too high for small producers.

For Astrid Ruiz Thierry of Women in World Markets, social entrepreneurship is "the practice of responding to market failures through innovations that transfer failures into successes and solve social problems at the same time". However, in many developing countries, social entrepreneurship is stifled by a range of bureaucratic barriers, from the failure to provide the information entrepreneurs need in developing their businesses to walls put up limiting their ability to export.

Ruiz and Elizabeth A. Vazquez of Quantum Leaps, which runs programmes training women in China and India to tap into export markets, agreed that women provide the core element in social entrepreneurship in developing countries. "Women have always had to be resourceful.



This has been going on forever,” said Vazquez. But now their importance had been recognized by the business sector.

A warning came from an audience participant, also from Nigeria, that care must be taken not to focus on women entrepreneurs to the extent that men who also engaged in social entrepreneurship found themselves facing discrimination. The same participant noted that often government officials see social entrepreneurs as competitors.

Key themes to emerge from the debate as summarized by moderator Parag Gupta were:

- 1) Potential exporters must be given access to technology to ensure they can produce on a scale that meets the requirements of big purchasers on international markets.
- 2) Social entrepreneurs must be able to create understanding among consumers in the outside world, and on local and national markets, for what they are trying to do in terms of combating poverty and creating the chance of a better life for small communities.
- 3) Governments need to step in as an enabler to support entrepreneurs to ensure that they have the finance needed as well as access to information and the technology required to ensure their businesses can grow.
- 4) The entrepreneurs themselves need to create networks across national boundaries – Ruiz Thierry suggested Latin American countries could offer support for African countries based on their own experiences – and set up South-South exchanges.