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Spark Expert Seminar
Youth Entrepreneurship Development in Conflict Affected Environments

SPEAKER PROFILES

Marije Balt

Marije Balt is an entrepreneur in peace building and a former diplomat for the Dutch government and the European Union. Since 1995 she has been working on post-conflict reconstruction, initially in Kosovo, the wider Balkans, and later in Kenya during the post-election violence of 2007. Currently, her main geographical expertise is Africa, from the Sahel to Somalia. As a result of her work as a diplomat in crisis areas, Marije discovered her drive: young people, against all odds, connecting globally to shape their futures together. She quit her diplomatic career in 2012 and started her firm SpringFactor. Marije now advises and trains organizations, like SPARK, on how to work in complex environments and build on opportunities such as youth and their entrepreneurial potential.

William Reide Dennis, II

William R. Dennis works for the Business Start-up Centre (BSC) Monrovia as Project Coordinator, a local entity established by SPARK, BiD Network & Association of Liberia Universities (ALU) for supporting Small Medium Enterprise (SME) and Entrepreneurship Development by delivering business skills training; coaching and mentoring program as well as access to finance so young people can create jobs. William has extensive experience on Supporting Entrepreneurship and Business Development from the University of Twente, and International Entrepreneurship from the University of Tilburg, both in the Netherlands and participated in several capacity development programs organized by MDF, Triodos Facet, ADB, WAIFEM, GTZ, etc. around Africa. He is a certified BiD Network and Business Edge SME trainer from Foundation BiD and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) a World Bank Group, with over 3 years experience in private sector development.

Pandora Hodge

Pandora Hodge is an entrepreneur who is currently leading two projects: Pandora's Basket and Kriterion Monrovia. *Pandora's Basket* is a restaurant initiative and a 'basket' full of the diversity that one can find in the bustling city of Monrovia. The restaurant wishes to enhance the quality of dishes and services offered in the capital of Liberia through the usage of its natural resources and the promotion of local products for customers. *Kriterion Monrovia* is a not-for-profit organization and will be an independent that focuses on culture in the city by screening art house movies and organizing cultural events. It will also provide new opportunities, allowing the youth in Liberia to run a cinema and have a platform to express themselves. By being independent and innovative, Kriterion Monrovia will also enrich and strengthen Liberia's civil society and democracy, and promote local filmmakers.

Dora Karani

Dora Karani is an entrepreneur and the founder of the *Garden City* in Bujumbura, Burundi. As the conflict left her country vulnerable and separated, Ms. Dora committed herself to the empowerment of women and youth through job creations. She went into agri-business and started to grow vegetables and mushrooms.

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Artin Namoni

Artin Namoni works for ASK Foods, an agri-business company based in Gjilan, Kosovo. With new focus on the development of the company, Artin is heavily involved in all aspects of the company. Exports are the largest revenue stream for ASK Foods and this is a result of continual product development and co-operation with existing and new partners all over the world. This has been achieved with having a stable product base and finding new partners in new markets. ASK Foods has several ongoing projects with new partners, some domestic and some international. There are plans to establish a new organic food and drink processing factory. ASK Foods is also working with a Filipino based company on setting up an Agri-Bank in Kosovo. ASK Foods plans to expand and re-structure itself and its business to a Holding Company in the coming years. As the Project and Export manager, Artin oversees all aspects of the company in terms of its development.

Jane Qureitem

Jane Qureitem is the founder and owner of the *Scholarship for Training and University Services* project. She holds a diploma Certificate in SME and Bachelor Degree in Finance, and is now completing a Master's degree in Business Administration at the Birzeit University. She has previously worked at the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) as the Administrative and Financial Officer. After this, Jane worked at the Birzeit University as Project Coordinator for two projects funded by the World Bank and European Commission through the Quality Improvement Fund (QIF), Ministry of Education and High Education. Ms. Qureitem participated in Mentoring Women in Business Program with the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women through Business Development Centre – Business Women Forum for one year from July 2010 to July 2011 and is currently participating in the Grow Fellowship: 2013 MENA Cohort with the Vital Voices organization.

Ibrahim Abu Kteish

Ibrahim Abu Kteish is the managing director of the IT Centre of Excellence at Birzeit University, Palestine. The centre's goal is to cultivate a nurturing environment that promotes the productive flow of critical thinking, creative ideas, and innovation. Ibrahim is responsible for the centre's strategy, sustainability and management. Ibrahim is also a founder of Peek, a community-based grassroots organization with more than 3000 members that contributes to the development of a sustainable knowledge-based economy in Palestine and focused on empowering technology entrepreneurship by engaging students, professionals, industry experts, and ex-pats through events and activities that are widely accessible and highly-collaborative. Before joining Birzeit University, Ibrahim had more than 7 years of experience in all phases of software development and management while working with Accenture and Siemens for major clients in Europe. Ibrahim holds a BA and MA in Computer Science from Czech technical University, in the Czech Republic.

Muhamed Rexhepi

Muhamed Rexhepi works as Deputy Director at the Business Support Centre Kosovo (BSCK), in Pristina, Kosovo since May 2008. Muhamed completed university degree in Communications and Public Relations

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and currently is at the end of MBA studies at the Staffordshire University in Pristina. Mr. Rexhepi has experience in Marketing and Communications, Management field, and Entrepreneurship and Economic Development field. At the BSCK, Muhamed is responsible for managing media and stakeholder relations, developing start-up plans, managing activities of the centre in main and field offices, and leading the realization of business trainings and business plan competitions. Mr. Rexhepi is mostly engaged in projects on youth employability in Kosovo.

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