



Report



IGNITE! CONFERENCE **ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR STABILITY IN FRAGILE STATES**

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INTRODUCTION

On 19 November 2014, SPARK organised for the second time its international IGNITE! Conference, a platform to develop and improve the living standard of marginalised people from fragile and conflict affected regions through entrepreneurship. Creating jobs, especially for youth, women, and internally displaced people, is key to establishing a sustainable economic and political stable environment in these societies.

From entrepreneurs to NGO professionals, from policy makers to academic researchers, IGNITE! 2014 brought together an inspiring group of participants to focus on creating economic stability in fragile and conflict affected environments around the world.

Speakers from UNDP, ILO, Silatech, Heineken/Brarudi, IFC, CASA, Clingendael Institute, THIGJ, UN Global Compact, Fairphone, Cordaid, SpringFactor, XSMML, NABC, PUM and many more came together to discuss how to best create economic opportunities for marginalised people in these fragile regions.

Concluding that creating a culture of entrepreneurship is a key factor for sustainable success, the IGNITE! Conference marked SPARK's 20th anniversary working in regions which are grappling with the complex effects of (current) conflicts, including high levels of unemployment and limited educational opportunities. SPARK is active in South-East Europe, East and West Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and remains determined to increase the number of sustainable job opportunities and economic prospects for marginalised groups in these societies – through development of higher education, the public sector, and the local private sector. SPARK is convinced that the creation of economic opportunities in these regions contributes to social cohesion and eventually peace.

This Report

This report consists of the summaries of 9 keynote speeches and the 10 workshops which took place during the conference. For more insight into the keynote speeches of this event we refer to our website where most PowerPoint presentations (if used by the speakers) can be found. Registration of most keynotes is also online and the speeches can be viewed in their entirety on the [IGNITE! 2014 event page](#).

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KEYNOTES ROUND 1

Lilianne Ploumen

Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Minister Ploumen makes a clear plea in her opening statement of this conference to ensure that economic growth benefits everyone, that economic growth is inclusive growth, which can bring stability and development to countries and people, who have been deprived of that for far too long. The private sector plays a crucial role in this, since it was shown that 9 out of 10 jobs are created in the private sector. Key to success are strong partnerships between governments, NGOs and the private sector, which can create opportunities for entrepreneurs in fragile and conflict affected regions.



Bas van Abel

Fairphone

Disrupting the mobile phone industry through values

Fairphone is a social enterprise with the goal of creating a fairer economy. By creating a smart phone, Fairphone opens up the supply chain and stimulates discussions about what is truly fair. It's impossible to completely change existing practices across the entire system in a short span of time. Instead, Fairphone is working step by step, focusing on activities and interventions within five core action areas: Mining, Design, Manufacturing, Lifecycle and Social Entrepreneurship. Together with partners from research groups, NGOs, civil society, media, and business, Fairphone is working to create positive, tangible impact. Fairphone is



100% independently financed (no donations or venture capital) and, since the launch of the campaign in 2010, have sold almost 60,000 ethically sourced phones.

Moammar M. Al-Eryani

Yemeni Minister of Tourism

Moammar M. Al-Eryani acted as Minister of Youth and Sports until beginning of November 2014. He has been awarded several times for his efforts for the Arab youth. In his speech minister Al-Eryani asserts that the youth act as a 'main engine' in developing countries where, often times, they represent over 60% of the population. He shares several examples of how youth engagement is leading to economic transformation, for instance: the Republic of India invested in youth in the field of computer and information technology in a city which now generates over 50 billion dollars. Al-Eryani says after the Arab Spring in Yemen (for which unemployment was one of the main catalysts) youth used their newfound opportunities to participate in the system and create constructive changes. The youth who led the revolution in 2011 highlight the importance of supporting sustainable (local and international) youth programmes, because youth have the power to counter major issues like, high illiteracy rates, too few women entrepreneurs, and political instability.

Dahlia Khalifa

IFC, E4E Initiative for Arab Youth

Educate, engage, enable, and earn

In 2010 the IFC – the private sector arm of the World Bank Group – investigated the main cause of unemployment, and found that the education system has failed to keep pace with the needs of the job market. Education has, for the most part, failed in equipping youth with the soft and hard skills needed in the labour market. In fact the highest rates of unemployment in the region are among university graduates: 'it pays to not get educated in the Middle East.' The E4E Initiative for Arab Youth focuses on employability rather than job creation. To lessen the mismatch between youth skills and the labour market, the E4E initiative invests in education providers in growth sectors specific to each country. Dahlia sums up the lessons learned since the E4E launch such as: taking a sector approach works, diagnostics helps, crosscutting enablers are important and engagement with government is necessary. In the near future, the initiative will branch out to Africa and South Asia as well.

Axel M. Addy

Liberian Minister of Commerce & Industry

Opportunities for inclusive growth

In 2013, Liberia celebrated 10 years of peace and stability. Yet while Liberia's unemployment rate is just over 3 percent, over 70 percent of the population suffers from vulnerable unemployment. Minister Addy says entrepreneurs in Liberia – mainly youth who make up 60% of the population – are the real engines of growth who ignite the real economy and impact the most vulnerable segments of the population. Addy shares his 'Inclusive Growth Agenda' with the audience. Addy praises the private sector for its potential to

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achieve post Ebola recovery in Liberia. He affirms that the programmes which Liberia has put in to place foster an entrepreneurial culture, can lead to economic transformation that is equitable and inclusive.



KEYNOTES ROUND 2

Abraham Miro

Minister of Finance and Economy of Syrian Interim Government

Essential Services and Entrepreneurship in Syria after 3 Years of War

Miro touches upon the devastating effects of the conflict on the Syrian economy and on entrepreneurs in particular. He shares perspectives on various opportunities to deal with the present situation. He mentions the rehabilitation of the Syrian Public Establishment of Grains and the opening of 14 centres through which wheat is distributed – and the impact this has on local farmers. He also talks about the need of safe zones to prevent the spill-over of the war to become even worse. ‘Are we going to watch it? Until it gets worse and worse? No. This is the time to engage, reach out to your contacts, come to Gaziantep, talk to Syrian locals, built relationships. I and my colleagues will be there.’

Wim Naudé

Dean, Maastricht School of Management

Business under fire: violent conflict and entrepreneurship

Researcher Wim Naudé specialises in the relationship between conflict and entrepreneurship. He explains that we need to understand better how to manage risks, instead of just trying to take them away which is not always possible. Also realising that risky activities often have the best returns rates as well as the highest productivity growth. Naudé presents 8 lessons, drawn from recent quantitative work, on linkages

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between conflict and entrepreneurship, supply chains, the role of family, women, investment in human capital after the conflict, etc. He encourages the audience to keep searching for the magic bullet(s), so that entrepreneur can contribute to stability in their societies.



Alexandra Sindahera

Secretary General Brarudi (Heineken) in Burundi

A new journey: local sourcing

Despite challenging times, local beer brewery Brarudi stayed operational in Burundi since 1955, even increasing its impact on the Burundian economy. In 2009 Brarudi began a new journey, following Heineken's commitment for a sustainable sourcing of raw material. Alexandra Sindahera shares ingredients for success in selling agricultural products such as: an attractive price per kilo, a highly productive crop, and a secure income which allows the producer to plan ahead. Equally important, says Sindahera, is achieving a secured value chain through the involvement of a local entrepreneur. This is why Brarudi employs Burundian entrepreneurs to collect and transport white sorghum – a local crop and key component to brewing – to Brarudi's brewery in Gitega, Burundi.

Stephen Marshall

ILO, Liaison Officer – Myanmar

Economic development and peace: the Myanmar story

Stephen Marshall shares his expertise on what it means to bring a democratic process to a country like Myanmar which has endured 5 decades of military dictatorship and civil war. For the past two years, a new government has been moving towards a more open environment, but this implies tackling complex situations such as negotiations between the government and 17 non-state ethnic armies. Marshall holds that entrepreneurship is one of the central tools for supporting people in the reconciliation process as it creates a peace dividend which can be used to break out of a cycle of dependence and subsistence living.



Also entrepreneurship, specifically trade and barter, helps break down barriers of distrust and discrimination. For Myanmar to achieve sustainable entrepreneurship there is a critical need for business development services, which are at present non-existent. Small businesses do not have the benefit of commercial support in the area of business planning, product, market development, access to finance etc.

WORKSHOPS ROUND 1

Strengthening the Resilience of Local Entrepreneurs in Crisis Contexts

Moderator: Dr. Levi Zangai

Speakers: Glaucia Boyer (UNDP), Lauren Servin (SPARK), William R. Dennis II (BSC Monrovia)

Special guests: Minister Axel M. Abby (Liberian Ministry of Commerce and Industry), Peter Meijer (Single Spark), Mahmud Johnson (entrepreneur)

Liberia (Ebola), and also South Sudan (violent conflict), are going through devastating crises at the moment. In this workshop the focus was on how local enterprises can play a role in the actual crisis response, for instance through filling a market gap in service delivery, transportation, health services etc. Secondly, how can we support affected local entrepreneurs in these crisis situations? SPARK (engaging private sector) and UNDP (supporting private sector) shed light on their experiences in both countries.

The workshop is kicked off with brief overview of the spreading of Ebola in different countries, the efforts needed to stop Ebola from spreading, the importance of supporting economic growth and stability via entrepreneurship, and the need for the collaboration between humanitarian, and development organisations, and local governments. The catastrophic consequences of Ebola to the economy of Liberia are also mentioned. In particular women are hit by Ebola, and therefore their many businesses. Then, attention is paid to the response strategy of BSC Monrovia and SPARK, which work together with UNDP and other organisations: they are looking at relevant sectors for capacity building at the moment, such as garment (scrubs, etc.), construction (crisis centers), food staples (demand for rice, oil, sugar), pharmaceuticals (registered nurses who are entrepreneurs themselves). Businesses, it is pointed out clearly, can attempt to adjust to the crisis situation which has changed demand.

Different speakers stress the importance to continue to invest in local entrepreneurs and businesses, also in these times of crisis, in order to create the jobs needed. Cooperation between Angel Networks and local entrepreneurs is mentioned as well in this context. Most crucial however is that fear is taken away from (international) investors, as this is the main reason for not investing in countries in crises, like Liberia and also South Sudan, at the moment. The media needs to play a more positive role in this, it is said. And also: the whole value chain needs to be looked at in these countries, since many supplies are lacking, and many gaps are noticed.



It is explained that there was no crisis response mechanism in Liberia prior to the crisis and the need for more awareness raising campaigns is clear. Higher awareness has helped more people to walk out of the recovery centers – and reduce the fear of the people in general. Also explained: the UNDP emergency employment scheme (3 by 6 scheme), which consists of cash for work programmes and health brigade/construction brigades. The goal is a transition to a long-term impact.

What about the role of US Diaspora? It seems too difficult to support local economic development for them, unless they see some changes on the ground. Creating incentives for Liberians abroad, could be a solution, and working with families and communities. Someone says that US Diaspora could help, if they were to be hired at an UN rate as technical help.

The workshop closes with the urgent message that existing enterprises need to look creatively into ways of fulfilling the new market demand that emerges during crisis. SMEs programmes should remain in the country and support these efforts. However, it is necessary to be conscious and avoid engaging and supporting war economies.

From Norms to Action: Strategic Entrepreneurship in Fragile Environments

Moderator: Manuella Appiah (The Hague Institute for Global Justice)

Speakers: Jeffrey French (UN Global Compact), Mohamed Mutahar (Bin Al-Mutahar Trading & Oil Services), Bob van der Bijl (Netherlands-African Business Council, NABC), Joris Larik (The Hague Institute for Global Justice)

The aim of this session was to address the particular challenges that entrepreneurs face in doing business in fragile environments, and in promoting global norms within the scope of their operations. From the UN Global Compact perspective, companies increasingly apply Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles out of a consideration to make a positive contribution to human security whilst promoting their brands. However, whereas it is relatively easy for Western companies to implement these principles at home, it is difficult for them to adhere to them in conflict situations. Offering a business sector perspective, Mr. Mutahar stated that a gap exists in acquired skills and an enabling business environment. Entrepreneurship education is introduced at universities, but lacks sufficient capacity to become sustainable. He stressed that more local initiatives are needed in his country, Yemen, to enable entrepreneurs to implement human rights norms regardless of the size or maturity of the businesses concerned. Representing NABC, Mr. van der Bijl marked the tension between strategic entrepreneurship that is conditioned by profit making vs. abiding by CSR norms and principles. For companies, manufacturing your product or delivering your service is the core business, not promoting CSR. However, NABC notices the trend in which more alignment is being sought amongst private sector, general public and governments. Finally, Dr. Larik stressed that The Hague Institute developed an approach with six principles for building sustainable peace in conflict affected countries in which the crucial role of the private sector is



acknowledged. Questioning the need for any additional or more detailed norms, he spoke out in favour of reinforced efforts in streamlining, implementation and taking action. He also pointed out that while it may be difficult to implement CSR norms and principles in fragile environments through SMEs, one can expect more from multinationals in this respect.

The discussion between speakers and participants led to identification of a gap between training for jobs vs. training for gaps in the market, for example soft skills, with Yemen as a case in point. A conclusion is that we do need to create knowledge transfer and invest in skills development (Technical and Vocational Education and Training, shortened TVET) including soft skills training, which should also be used to streamline CSR into business curricula early on.

The theme of the workshop builds on earlier discussions at the Business and Human Security Conference organised by The Hague Institute and SPARK, as well as the Hague Institute's contribution to the Inaugural UN Business for Peace Annual Meeting in Istanbul in September. Follow-up activities include a Hague Business Roundtable to be held next spring and the publication of a number policy briefs.

Handle with Care: Job Creation in Fragile Settings

Moderator: Donato Kiniger-Passigli (ILO)

Guest speakers: Ange Muyumbira (Kaz'o'zah Art), Alexandra Sindahera (Brarudi, Heineken subsidiary), Stephen Marshall (ILO), Michel Richter (SPARK)

This workshop explores the nexus between employment, decent work and fragility. It acts as part of the 'consultation phase' of ILO's current research on 'Employment and Decent Work Creation in Fragile Situations.' For this report it is essential to assess how employment – which contributes to peace building – is generated. Donato Kiniger-Passigli opens the session by stating that, to support decent work in fragile states it is necessary to have informed knowledge of the specific delicate terrain and to always 'handle with care.'

Ange Muyumbira, a Burundian entrepreneur who founded a social enterprise employing over 100 artisans, responds by emphasizing the important role of social entrepreneurship. On an individual level, Muyumbira says, "if people are busy with doing what they like to do and able to support their families, then this reduces the incentive to engage into illicit activities and ultimately this becomes a bulwark against instability".

In contrast, Alexandra Sindahera gives the perspective of a multinational company. She says that with effort and patience international business can make a clear positive contribution. For example, Brarudi began to develop a sustainable supply chain of raw materials in 2009 and this project has only recently come into full swing. It is worth the wait, though, as Brarudi now has near to a thousand local employees and indirectly generates an additional 48,000 jobs in the trade and distribution sector.

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From his experience on the ground in Myanmar, Stephen Marshall stresses the importance of focusing on the community level. A fieldworker must ask, “What are the aspirations of local communities?” Instead of either or, Steven Marshall recommends working top-down and bottom-up to meet on a fertile middle ground. To do this effectively, he holds that it is essential to build the trust and confidence of local populations first.

Michel Richter adds that, contrary to popular belief, individuals often trust international actors before local institutions. When it comes to job creation, Richter says, studies and SPARK projects show that generating employment is usually more sustainable when supporting existing businesses rather than start-ups.

The audience gives input during the session on the need not just for quick jobs, but for sustainable occupations. Audience members also make the point that ultimately creation of jobs often comes down to access to finance which can be increased with instruments like Loan Guarantee Funds. All in all, it was a telling workshop with perspectives from varied angles. You can read more from this session and on this topic in the ILO’s upcoming report on ‘Employment and Decent Work Creation in Fragile Situations.’

On the Edge: Doing Business in Fragile States

Moderator: Josette Dijkhuizen (entrepreneur)

Speakers: Steven Schoofs (Clingendael Institute); Marije Balt (independent consultant at SpringFactor)

Special guests: Hugo Verkuijl (Dutch Entrepreneur in Mali), Maurits van der Ven (senior expert at PUM), Peter Davis (independent consultant)

Steven Schoofs focused on the operating conditions of SMEs in fragile settings. According to Schoofs fragile states are in fact SME economies. While there seems to be growing attention for SMEs in international policy discourse, there also is limited understanding of how SMEs operate within the context of conflict and fragility. Recent research by Clingendael aims to shed light on this issue. According to this research, fragility seems to be the norm rather than a state of exception and the concept of fragility does not resonate with entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs perceive conflict in terms of general uncertainty and a direct physical threat to personnel and assets. The operating conditions for SMEs in fragile environments are defined by power relations, social networks and non-state actors more than by business constraints and weak governance. Insecurity and long-term uncertainty are the key obstacles for SMEs. Entrepreneurs rely on informal arrangements and social networks to deal with security threats. Non-state actors and social networks fill the gap of missing institutions. Business behaviour is shaped by informal institutions. Community relations and social networks are critical for SME survival. What constitutes business success in such contexts? Clingendael argues that the focus should lie on building resilience as a means to mitigate risk rather than growth.



Marije Balt from SpringFactor, with support of Peter Davis, researched 27 Dutch SMEs in fragile states. Balt argues that development agencies increasingly focus on job creation in fragile states. However, most jobs in such environments seem to disappear when the external financing stops. For this reason, Balt and Davis advocate for a focus on durable job creation. One way of doing so for development agencies is to provide direct support to foreign-run SMEs in fragile states. Among other obstacles, the examined Dutch entrepreneurs are facing a geopolitical risk, including aspects like violence, weak institutions, fears of insecurity, fear of Ebola and financial instability. In their development, SMEs repeatedly face critical junctures where their resilience and the effectiveness of their coping mechanisms are put to a severe test by surging business obstacles and political risk. At critical junctures, support by development agencies can make a critical difference to the success of SMEs. Balt and Davis propose the provision of niche service packages. These packages consist partly of financing, but more importantly of diplomacy in support of SMEs. Balt and Davis coin the term geo political support diplomacy (GPSD), addressing SME needs in geo political risk situations. GPSD is based on the “building of coalitions of the willing around shared interests between companies and other stakeholders.” More than providing finance, GPSD helps SMEs to build their resilience at critical junctures and to improve the operational conditions in risk situations.

Financing Against the Stream

Moderator: Christian Steinbarth

Speakers: Jarl Heijstee (XSML Capital, managing investments in Central African Republic, Burundi, Uganda, and DR Congo), Joyce Liyan (Head of Unit Policy and Business Development Operations Directorate European Investment Bank), Marc de Klerk (Programme Manager at SPARK, and representative of IGNITE Fund, a private equity investment fund focused on conflict affected states)

Businesses in post conflict, fragile environments have little access to financing as most institutions are staying away or are not offering attainable financing products. Who finances against the stream by continuing to offer applicable financing to businesses in these markets, and how can we increase the opportunities?

SPARK’s IGNITE Fund is focusing on small growing businesses with a financing need of 50 to 150 thousand Euro, occasionally moving up to maximum 750 thousand. XSML is investing larger tickets, usually around 250 thousand and preferably around a million. Their new fund will focus even larger. EIB is investing much larger and is also financing investment funds such as the first two.

The impact strategy of the funds is slightly different between them. XSML is focusing on job creation and sustainable businesses that have impact on the community, such as health services and education. EIB is dependent on the investment strategy of their fund managers. However, general economic development

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focus of the investments is essential. IGNITE Fund aims at creating jobs, improving the quality of jobs, and indirect jobs created through value/supply chains. Finally, on the long term, government legitimacy and inclusive business development is an important factor to measure the funds' achievements.

There are many challenges in working such markets and these can be overcome with innovative constructions and additional services. Collaboration between various institutions is essential, both in terms of risk management and in terms of future development perspectives of the investees. Non-financial services (or technical assistance) are needed in the perspective of increasing financing opportunities and decreasing financing risks.

The audience, although enthusiastic and applauding, also showed some doubts whether these markets were ready for such strategies, especially considering the fact that local banks are having difficulties to be sustainable. Response formulated that this is not dismissing but rather requesting such strategy. These markets are in need to get introduced with sustainable and fair financing opportunities. Local banks are having difficulties due to their strategies and products they offer to clients, not (always) due to the markets where they operate.

WORKSHOPS ROUND 2





A Regional Perspective to the Syria Crisis and the Resilience of Entrepreneurs

Moderator: Glauca Boyer, UNDP/Sub-regional Facility for the Syria Crisis Response in Jordan

Speakers: Nadine Saba (Akka Network for Development, Lebanon), Jean Abi Fadel (National Employment Office, Lebanon), Nada Sharif (Women Employment Programme, Jordan)

Special guests: Martina Sedlakova (SPARK in Gaziantep), Juan Jose Garcia-Agullo (Migrate, Spain and Jordan)

This workshop examined some of the economic challenges and opportunities involved in the regional response to the Syria crisis. There are now some 7.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria and more than 3.2 million refugees from Syria in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, numbers that are growing every month due to the continued armed conflict. In addition, the crisis has brought about 'double' displacement for some 460,000 Palestinian refugees. The crisis has had unprecedented social and economic impacts, setting back hard-won development gains by years.

Together, speakers and participants recognized the limits of humanitarian assistance. The scale and protracted nature of the crisis is challenging the ability of the international community to meet essential, life-saving humanitarian aid, and address the socio-economic impacts in Syria and the neighbouring countries. It is imperative that these efforts are coupled with a development-oriented approach that builds the resilience of individuals, households, communities and institutions in affected countries. This is the approach being introduced by the UNDP in the 2015 Syria Response Plan (SRP) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

Displaced persons should be enabled to play a role as economic actors together with the local private sector. Doing this means that they will not only become more resilient to cope with the crisis and recover from it, but also to get out of it transformed, strengthened and having brought economic opportunities for the affected countries and communities. Strengthening the resilience of the local economies and entrepreneurs and creating opportunities for all to contribute to economic growth and become self-reliant is crucial.

Some key points discussed during the workshop:

- Jordanian host communities were already vulnerable before the influx of refugees but have been asked to support the incoming refugees. Unskilled labor in these communities has to compete with additional unskilled refugee labor from Syria. All this creates major tension. It is not just an economic development problem, but also a social cohesion problem.
- Employers in Lebanon usually look for cheap labor force and hire Syrians for lower salary and more hours, displacing in this way Lebanese in the economy (although legally Syrians are not allowed to work there, nor have a business). In other words, Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese

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are all competing for jobs in Lebanon which causes tremendous employment challenges in the country.

- International NGOs and donors need to be involved more and better together with the private sector. At the moment everyone involved is just putting a 'band-aid' on the issue, instead of really solving them. The damage and risks are clear: unemployed youth with no job opportunities are easily lead them into the arms of extremism.
- Public-private partnerships are extremely important. The outsourcing industry is underdeveloped in many Arab countries and the focus should be on job creation programs. The challenges are so daunting that this requires the combined efforts of local authorities, national governmental policies, the private sector, those affected by displacement and hosting communities and the international community.

Female Entrepreneurship in the Middle East

Guest speakers: Dahlia Khalifa (IFC E4E), Manal Elattir (Anarouzz), Vanessa Branson (Marrakech Biennale), Razan Atiya (Sukkar Cakes)

Moderator: Elaine Gold (Silatech)

Elaine Gold begins the session with her belief that entrepreneurial barriers which men and women face are similar with a different emphasis. For example, financial barriers are more comparable than say setbacks due to cultural implications and a lack of non-material resources (i.e.: education and network). Another point which holds back potential entrepreneurs and has a different emphasis for women is the fear of failure.

Dahlia Khalifa shares her position that at the root of barriers for business women in the region are legal issues. She shows a long list of simple actions women cannot commit without husband's approval in most Middle-Eastern countries such as: signing a contract, obtaining a national identity card, having ownership rights over property, and so on. Dahlia states that in these Middle Eastern countries there would be a staggering 35% increase per capita just by removing legal restrictions and helping women achieve economic parity.

Manal, owner of a social enterprise which aims "to achieve sustainable women's economic empowerment in some of the most impoverished regions in the country", presents her practical experiences in villages in Morocco. Essentially, Manal visits women in small, closed villages and shows them what it's like to feel powerful by doing things like celebrating small steps and exposing women to other women who are independent entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, in the locations where she works domestic violence is a norm but rather than educate women on human rights, Manal focuses on providing tools for independence i.e.: money. Economic gain is also often the best way to convince husbands that women should join her



programme. “Little does he know that as a breadwinner she will also be a bigger negotiator in the household.”

Vanessa Branson shares her experiences hosting the Marrakech Biennale, a one-month-long event which spreads over 50 venues in Morocco and enjoys 77,000 visitors. She says the municipality isn't always easy to work with but they bear with her as the biennale rebrands Marrakesh as a city that looks towards the future and is willing to take risks. An audience member asks why governments don't preach women empowerment and Dahlia responds by saying that even if 90% schools and 85% higher education is owned by the public sector, the government has vested interested in perpetuating “the way things are” i.e.: outdated curricula.

Finally, someone asks what it takes to be a female entrepreneur, Dahlia reaffirms that legal and financial possibilities are what matter most (e.g.: access to credit and secured lending frameworks). Razan says you must know what you want and be patient of the process. Manal says positive outlook is essential. Vanessa says, “Imagination is one of the most important factors for an entrepreneur.”

Agricultural Value Chains for Economic Development

Moderator: Pol de Greve (Context, international cooperation)

Speakers: Karlijn van Arkel (Cordaid), Lauren Servin (SPARK)

Co-referent: Michel Botzung (IFC/CASA)

Ms. Van Arkel explains Cordaid's Food Security 'From Conflict to Markets' approach in fragile, post-conflict areas to create economic opportunities for local communities. In an environment where the local market is disrupted, rural communities are often deprived of basic amenities and the agricultural system falls back to self-sufficiency. Therefore, Cordaid works with local (farmers) organisations to restore the production and organisation of producers (economies of scale). Farmers are supported so that they re-integrate into the local and national economy. Trade relations are important. They can maintain or worsen conflict but can also serve as bridge builders. By working with various stakeholders in supply chains around common interests and by creating platforms for exchange of information, mutual trust grows again. Cordaid Food Security operates in 5 countries: South Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti, Congo DR, Sierra Leone, and N-Uganda. Because of the open conflict in three states within South Sudan, Cordaid had to close down regular programmes and concentrate on Emergency programmes in the affected states, but is still continuing food security programs in the non-affected states. It is important that financial support for more long term development instead of only emergency support remains available for organisations working in South Sudan.

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Ms Servin zooms into the South Sudan case, confirming that operating and implementing programmes in this country got more difficult as the conflict reoccurred. Beside the security barriers, it is hard to find farmers that are ready for the next step (business enlargement for example), or even have knowledge about farming and agricultural development. Furthermore, there is no surplus, no electricity and no packaging process in South Sudan, while the country is competing with neighbours that have strong markets with better infrastructure. On top of everything, banks stop lending. Nevertheless, SPARK continues with its efforts in finding capable entrepreneurs that will go through SPARK's selection and training process, becoming farmers in the end and adding to the value chain.

Mr. Botzung reflects on the two presentations by adding if value chain development can be achieved without having greater companies as Heineken in the picture. IFC/CASA sees a lot benefit in working together with a company like Heineken/Brarudi, as they focus on existing businesses. Also, it is sometimes needed to pull the value chain, instead of only pushing it from bottom up.

Discussion touches upon themes such the role of the government, concluding that government needs to develop regulations that help farmers. Two other interesting questions from the audience are on pricing and exporting to Western markets. Regarding pricing, the prices are often too high in South Sudan, in spite farmer's efforts to make it competitive. Entrepreneurs have to understand how to set prices (add transportation costs to the end chain for example). Production is low, so they have to import chickens from Brazil, for example. Government would have some regulations, if the farmers are able to produce enough. Regarding export to US or EU markets, there is potential, but it's quite challenging as conflict affected countries have more difficulties meeting these export standards. Ghana meets them easily for cacao and coffee, for example. Another success story is Afghanistan exporting raw materials to Germany and Austria.

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These two countries built Afghanistan's whole supply chain, and supported it, so the materials are competitive enough on the market.



Migrant Entrepreneurs Pitch

Moderator: Pieter van den Wall Bake

Speakers: Fatima Mohamud Abukar, Jean-Seraphin Kεpguep

This workshop is inspired by SPARK's Migrant Entrepreneurship Programme which offers training and coaching packages for Diaspora in the Netherlands who want to start a business in the following countries of origin: Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq/Kurdistan, Ghana, Morocco, Suriname, Burundi, Rwanda and Liberia. Within the Diaspora group there is often an urge to contribute to the home country. This is strengthened by the concept of the global village, which means that people who have migrated, might live in a new country, but are more engaged with what happens in their country of origin. SPARK supports migrant and Diaspora entrepreneurs by providing training, loans, business coaching, and market research as well as local support from our local offices and network.

During this workshop two participants of the programme pitch their business plan and ask the audience to help them with their final questions. The first presentation is given by Fatima. Fatima has lived in the Netherlands for 14 years now, but has always been involved with Somalia, home country. Fatima's business plan arose, when she spent a year in Hargeisa, Somalia with her children to let them experience the culture. During her stay she visited a playground with her children and was surprised by the limited amount of play sets. As a result, a business plan of starting a playground developed. However, she did not know how to start. With the help of SPARK, Fatima is able to start her business in 2016. The audience helps her with answering questions as to how to find the right partner, how to supervise her business in Somalia from the Netherlands.



Jean, also a participant of the programme, pitches his business plan. His business idea developed while studying in Europe. As soon as he returned to his home country of Ghana he realized that the common use of kerosene lamps had to change, as they pose a great danger and often burn down houses with people inside. An idea developed inspired by vending machines. The plan is that a lamp can be recharged on such a machine and then used for 10 days. This machine would also be able to charge mobile phones. His questions were concerning maintenance and funding issues.

Then the audience is split into two groups to give focused feedback to Fatima and Jean respectively for the remainder of the session. The entrepreneurs receive valuable input during the session and they will continue to work towards establishing their businesses in their countries of origin over the next year.

Special Economic Zones for Social Enterprises

Guest Speakers: Axel Addy (Liberian Ministry of Commerce and Industry), Anne-Cecile Souhaid (World Bank Group), Laure Gendron (Credit Suisse), Bob Haywood (World Economic Processing Zones Association), James Brathwaite (Drenl Ltd.), Richard van Hoolwerff (SPARK)
Moderator: Christian Steinbarth (LBBF & SPARK)

In this workshop Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and Social Enterprise experts give their views on the concept of the Liberian Social Enterprise Special Economic Zone.

According to Bob Haywood, it is better to talk about zones less as economic zones or growth incubators and more as 'alternate policy frameworks' with the capacity to function as tools in achieving sustainable, social and economic growth – a persistent tool. Zones are often seen as the second best solution, because they do not open up the whole country for trade. However zone programmes have the potential to bring a large number of people out of poverty.

In less developed countries which have more challenges than only trade (good governance, infrastructure, and policies a.o.) creating an economic zone alone will not solve the issues. However creating a zone that acts as an alternate policy framework, where policy reforms can be implemented and obstacles addressed in an autonomous and controlled way, can contribute to a targeted improvement of the country. Zones can be very powerful, if they have a clear objective in terms of geographical, industry, performance objectives, and policy objectives. At the same time it is important to make the design of the zone not too complex, otherwise it will fail during implementation.

All businesses in the Liberian zone will have a social and economic impact beyond the gates of the zone. For example Arcelor Mittal is sending young Liberians abroad for an oil and gas study, so that after they return they may work on a higher level. These programmes are executed with the help of NGO's and the government. By facilitating an agri-processing plant inside the zone – that accesses an out-grower network



of small holders throughout Liberia – the SESEZ can generate massive employment spill overs and encourage the inclusion of unemployed and informally employed Liberians, in formal economic activity.

The last discussion in this workshop introduces the SESEZ anchor tenant and energy partner; their capacity, intention and more. An audience member asks how to demonstrate to the private sector the value of investing in social goals. Besides proving private and commercial interests, it is also important to sell the idea to people in the government who do not see the social and economical benefits of a zone. Axel Addy responds saying there are 3 years to work on this in Liberia and his expectations are very high, but he is keen to see the SESEZ programme develop and be implemented.

RESEARCH COMPETITION

During this year's IGNITE Conference SPARK organised its first [Research Competition](#). Research proposals had to focus on the conference's theme. SPARK was deeply impressed with the amount, the diversity and the level of the applications, which we received for our Research Competition. Based on the jury's assessment, three top names were selected and given the opportunity to pitch their proposals during the IGNITE! Conference 2014.

Roxana Romanica and Bogdan Romanica authored the winning research proposal on *Personal Social Networks Management for Business Development in Conflict Affected States*. Their Research Project will focus on the importance of considering and stimulating personal social capital of entrepreneurs in business development programmes in conflict affected states. The researchers will conduct 10 case studies in Kosovo covering 10 small businesses started during or after conflict.

Roxana and Bogdan receive 5000 euro in funding from SPARK and monitoring from the Amsterdam Business School, University of Amsterdam to cover costs to realise their Research Project. Roxana and Bogdan will complete their Research Project in September 2015 and present their findings during the third IGNITE! Conference.

Overall the Research Competition was an enriching experience for SPARK, and we hope to host another one next year!