Counting the benefits – tracking reach at the BoP

Changing lives for people at the base of the pyramid: easy to say, tough to deliver, and very tough to define and measure. Although nearly all inclusive businesses and social investors aim to benefit clients at the Base of the Pyramid (BoP), there is huge diversity in how the BoP or ‘underserved’ are defined, their numbers are tracked, impact measured and their feedback gleaned.

This month we launch a new Checklist on how to tally reach at the BoP and we feature a new discussion paper from the Impact Programme on defining and tracking clients or ‘beneficiaries; three successful businesses share their approaches; impact investment experts weigh in on the different measurement tools available, while our Editor’s Choice tells us to raise our eyes well beyond those directly reached.

- **NEW CHECKLIST! Can you count what counts? How to tally numbers reached at the BoP:** This new publication lays out four basic steps to follow when tracking reach, drawing on the experiences of companies in the BCtA and Impact Programme portfolios. Co-Author Joe Shamash introduces the guide.

- **Tracking reach to the Base of the Pyramid through impact investing:** This new Discussion Paper from the DFID Impact Programme looks at the myriad of definitions and assumptions used by investors and businesses when tracking BoP reach. Co-Author Caroline Ashley gives us an overview in her blog.

- **Using mobile-enabled technologies for collecting data and managing client relationships:** For Juhudi Kilimo, a social enterprise that provides finance to smallholders in Kenya, communication with its clients is a critical part of social performance. Juhudi’s Kulsoom Ally explains how they use mobile technology to trace their impact and develop client relationships.

- **Consumer insights on sanitation:** Engaging effectively with its clients is something that has worked very well for another Kenyan business, Sanergy. They undertook extensive research and data collection to come up with several key consumer insights about their business, explains Edith Karimi.

- **‘Creating value through measuring impact’:** In this video excerpt from the BCtA annual Forum 2014, Shaffi Mather, Founder of low-cost ambulance provider Ziquita Health Care Limited (ZHL), talks about how a client study with the Grameen Foundation helped them understand their market segments and better target key users.
More measurement among impact investors in India: Acumen Fund has pioneered impact measurement in India and helped ZHL and their other investees improve their processes. Here, Acumen’s Wei Wei Hsing looks at the different measurement methods used by funds in India for the pre-investment impact analysis, understanding end-users and post-investment impact acceleration.

Impact assessment approaches – observations on some changes in the last three years: Impact investment expert Alice Chapple looks at how impact assessment tools have developed in the three years since she wrote a comprehensive paper on the subject.

EDITOR’S CHOICE AND OTHER NEWS

Our Editor’s Choice this month, ‘Innovators and Pinballs’ by Mike Kubzansky and Paul Breloff, tells us to focus on how innovation changes markets and competitors. It’s not just about direct results at the level of a single firm.

Other contributors explore how inclusive businesses and markets are evolving and interacting:

- Towards a unifying theory of everything: Does business innovation and a market system approach ever collide? Inspired by Stephen Hawking, Tom Harrison looks inside and outside in at inclusive business and market systems.
- Supporting social entrepreneurship in Bangladesh: The team at Future Startup interview the founders of Tindercapital, an inspirational firm that is mentoring promising rural entrepreneurs in Bangladesh and connecting them to investors.
- Mobile money and farmers at the BoP: Could 2015 see the next generation of mobile money moving into rural areas? Lee Babcock explores.
- Enjoy your stay, make a difference: A new study by GIZ and Endeva shows how tourism can create mutual benefits for companies and people in poverty.

The inclusive business calendar for 2015 is filling up fast! Check out these events, courses and job announcements...

- 2nd edition of the Sankalp Africa Summit: Be part of the impact investment transformation in Africa. Join 400+ others in Nairobi this February.
- Online bootcamp about marketing and distribution: Looking to build demand at the BoP? Join this online course from the IB Accelerator.
- Ashoka: Changemakers day on youth employment in Africa: Join the Ashoka Changemakers day in South Africa, dedicated to change the employment ecosystem for Africa’s youth.
- GIIN position announcement: The Global Impact Investing Network is looking to hire two consultants to be there West Africa and East Africa liaisons. Apply now!

Pass on the news! The hub newsletter reaches all of you who have signed up to the Hub. Pass it on to many more. The 3,000th member to join will get special mention next month.

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