



# SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR

Social innovations  
for a positive social and  
environmental impact

An offering by

**SENS**Suisse  
Social Entrepreneurship

**seif** DRIVING  
IMPACT  
INNOVATION

Made possible through

 **MIGROS**  
Pioneer Fund

**STIFTUNG  
MERCATOR  
SCHWEIZ**



# SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR

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The SIA-Family 2021

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## WHY ZEBRAS ARE THE NEW UNICORNS

The social entrepreneurship sector has grown in Switzerland in recent years. Addressing a social or environmental challenge with an entrepreneurial approach: this idea has become more and more widespread.

Despite this trend, social entrepreneurship is however not promoted enough and has thus not yet reached mainstream. The support ecosystem for social startups in Switzerland is still in its early stages and not fully developed. While there are currently some incubation programs available, accelerator programs for social startups in their growth phase are missing. Existing accelerator programs usually aim at maximization of financial profits. Those accelerators mostly exclude cooperatives, associations, foundations or other forms of enterprise without profit distribution.

The Social Impact Accelerator (SIA), launched in April 2021, fills this gap in the Swiss startup ecosystem: the program with a focus on societal impact supports startups over 12 weeks with several Accelerator Training Night on relevant topics as well as various networking events.

The focus of the Social Impact Accelerator is on the specific challenges and issues of social entrepreneurs. At the end of the program, a Social Impact Pitch Day takes place where the startups present their impact-oriented business ideas to interested investors, philanthropists, partners and the public.

Organizations participating at the SIA are Zebra Startups. Why Zebras? Until now, the mascot of the startup world has been the Unicorn: a fantasy creature, which meant fast growth & selling to big corporations at a high financial profit.

But today's social challenges call for an alternative form of entrepreneurship. A new generation of startups is therefore taking the zebra as its model. Unlike unicorns, zebras are part of the real world. Zebras are the exact opposite of Silicon Valley unicorns. Zebras are not about fast growth, monopoly, exit strategies & acquisitions.

What Zebras actually do is solve real problems while repairing social systems and profiting sustainably, hence the black&white pattern. They are about co-operation, mutualism, plurality, participation, regenerative growth and win-win strategies. They design for success that can be shared by many, not just a few.

Let's repopulate the business world with many zebras!

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"THE SIA IS THE FIRST SCALING PROGRAM FOR  
IMPACT-ORIENTED SOCIAL START-UPS.  
IT THUS NOT ONLY STRENGTHENS INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS,  
BUT ALSO THE INCREASINGLY RELEVANT ECOSYSTEM  
OF IMPACT-ORIENTED START-UPS.

THEREFORE, WE ARE HAPPY TO BRING OUR EXPERTISE  
IN IMPACT ORIENTATION TO THE JURY."

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**Katia Weibel**

Deputy Managing Director, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz

Addressing societal challenges with an entrepreneurial approach – this is the basic idea of social entrepreneurship. Accordingly, social entrepreneurs define their business purpose in terms of a positive social, ecological, or cultural impact.

The idea of social entrepreneurship emerged first in the anglo-saxon world and has since then spread into the rest of the world. But how widespread is social entrepreneurship in Switzerland? In which economic sectors are social entrepreneurs active? Is social entrepreneurship becoming the new normal?

It is challenging to answer these questions because until recently there was no comprehensive database on social entrepreneurship. For example, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office does not survey data in this sector.

For the first time, extensive data was collected with the Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2020 by SENS. They provide an insight into this sector and allow preliminary answers to the above-mentioned questions.

The following findings from the Monitor in particular describe the status quo of social entrepreneurship in Switzerland:

1. Social entrepreneurship is diverse, both in terms of economic sectors and impact objectives. The Monitor shows that social entrepreneurs operate in 17 different sectors, ranging from catering and health/social care to energy supply and financial services. In addition, social entrepreneurs address all Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The Swiss social entrepreneurship landscape is also diverse in terms of legal form: 36% are organized as limited liability companies, 19% as cooperatives and 15% as foundations and associations.

2. Almost half of the companies surveyed in the Monitor (47%) are in the early implementation and growth phase. This means they have left the early start-up phase behind and are now looking for new channels and markets.

3. Social entrepreneurs can address social challenges that are not (yet) being addressed by other organizations. For example, around 20% of the companies surveyed have a social impact that organizations without an entrepreneurial approach do not have. This is because, for example, the economic activity is inextricably linked to the impact or because the solution to the social challenge requires an entrepreneurial approach, as this is the only way to achieve the necessary scaling.

As this data was collected for the first time last year, it is difficult to make reliable statements about the development of the sector over a longer period of time. The next Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2022 will provide a first opportunity for longitudinal comparison.

“THE SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR SIA IS SUCH A GREAT PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL IMPACT BUSINESSES, NOT ONLY TO SUPPORT AND BOOST THEM, BUT ALSO TO INSPIRE OTHERS AND SHOW THEM THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT MODELS TO SOLVE PRESSING SOCIETAL CHALLENGES. WE AT SEIF HAVE REALIZED THAT IMPACT FIRST BUSINESS SOLUTIONS HAVE NOT BEEN SUPPORTED SO FAR IN SWITZERLAND AND I THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE WHOLE ECOSYSTEM TO CLOSE THIS GAP IN COLLABORATION WITH SENS. ”

**Prof. Mariana Christen Jakob**

Founder of SEIF innovation and Co-founder of SEIF invest

## SIA PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Social Impact Accelerator is an accelerator program for social entrepreneurs in Switzerland purely focused on maximizing societal impact. Startups with social innovation at their core and a self-sustaining business model receive resources and support to professionalize their impact and business model. Additionally, the program also offers growth opportunities and the possibility of access to finance.

### THE SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT SWISS BASED SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS / SOCIAL IMPACT STARTUPS / SOCIAL IMPACT INITIATIVES WHO:



take up a social challenge and thus contribute with innovative solutions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals



align their business model to scale, replicate or translate a social or societal innovation



want to keep the responsibility autonomously with the company and offer the stakeholders opportunities for participation and involvement



put the impact at the centre of their activities and can demonstrate this with a theory of change



are geared to the best possible business model with appropriate financing (financially self-sustaining), and do not pursue an exit strategy or focus on profit



have a convincing proof of concept

In order to achieve a profound and lasting societal impact, organizations need to think on three levels at the same time –systemic, organizational and individual. On the individual level, mental health and self-leadership is very important for entrepreneurs. Therefore, this aspect is a vital part of the program. The SIA approach involves activities on all three levels and therefore accelerates innovative impact solutions that are able to initiate systemic change “social innovations”.

### TIMELINE





Bruno Hadengue

## RegeMena Cooperative - Jerome Castan, Bruno Hadengue

Working in agriculture usually means we at RegeMena tackle both socio-economical and environmental challenges at the same time. In our case, we identify 3 main beneficiaries: farmers, unemployed youth, and the environment. We create free media content for farmers so as to provide them with contextualized, understandable, actionable information to enhance their economical and environmental resilience in the face of climate change. We also involve unemployed youth in a variety of fields in the development of our operations: they develop labor-market relevant skills by joining us in planning and managing experimental plots, setting up networks of sensors and/or collecting and processing data, among others. Furthermore, correspondingly to our slogan to “make regenerative agriculture profitable”, we research and develop incentives for people to improve their stewardship of the environment, by giving tangible value to the creation and protection of healthy soil, ecological niches, native forests, to name but a few.

We are absolutely thrilled to be a part of the SIA because what we have in hard knowledge, in local network and existing goodwill among our stakeholders, we lack in fields such as impact management, communication and advising networks in Switzerland or Europe. Defining, baselining and monitoring our impact is an essential part of the identity of RegeMena, and also one of the most difficult aspects of our work, since it involves a wealth of human and environmental parameters. The SIA provided us with references, standards, and contacts to advisors in order to tackle impact management systematically.



Dr. Sophia Ding

## SEET - Support Education, Empower Together - Dominique Ernst, Dr. Sophia Ding

SEET was developed with the firm conviction that education must never be a privilege. Our team has thus turned to the demographic that faces the steepest uphill battle towards higher education: female refugees. We are motivated to support and empower as many refugees as are interested in tertiary study in Switzerland. This is crucial not just because education is a human right, but also for successful integration into Swiss society and personal empowerment of the refugees.

CURRENTLY, ONLY 3 % OF REFUGEES  
WORLDWIDE HAVE ACCESS TO HIGHER  
EDUCATION.

Currently, only 3% of refugees worldwide have access to higher education. As an association, we aim to work towards the Global Higher Education Access Rate being 37%. To achieve that, we hope to create systemic change, so that prospective refugee students face less challenges on their path to studies. We aim to support as many talented and highly qualified refugees as possible, so that they can be involved in activities corresponding to their comparative advantage.

In order to grow sustainably, we need to gain knowledge and resources, and aim to establish a financial plan and long-term strategy. We need to be aware of our impact and theory of change, and optimize the services we offer accordingly. Measurement, scaling and communication of our impact is one of the areas in which the SIA has been able to support us and provide great input.



## INTERVIEWS WITH THE STARTUPS



Houda Bourbia

### **Backpack2School - Houda Bourbia, Nesrin Bourbia**

Our mission is to facilitate international teaching opportunities for education professionals around the world. The vision is to help teachers prepare for the increasingly diverse classroom. With inter-cultural competent teachers, we are able to create inclusive classrooms where everybody thrives. Our social impact is to foster inclusive classrooms where children's educational performance is not determined by social factors, such as cultural background or socio-economic resources.

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OUR SOCIAL IMPACT IS TO FOSTER  
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS WHERE  
CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL  
PERFORMANCE IS NOT DETERMINED  
BY SOCIAL FACTORS, SUCH AS CULTURAL  
BACKGROUND OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
RESOURCES.

—

We aim to become a competence center for impactful student mobility programs for Swiss universities as well as becoming the go-to-organization for Swiss teachers looking to do a teaching assignment in Morocco.

Financial sustainability as well as setting up coaching in financing & scaling are amongst our current challenges, which we try to tackle by participating in the SIA program.



Léon Bickel / Agri Ibrahim

### **Root & Branch - Markus Schneider, Léon Bickel, Nicole Ochsenbein, Agri Ibrahim**

With its three learning venues, the dual vocational training system offers an ideal approach for long-term and feasible labor market inclusion of long-term unemployed people, especially refugees. With our concept of inclusion, we also want to enable a perspective-oriented return assistance for people from the asylum and refugee sectors who are required to leave or are willing to leave Switzerland.

We are striving for a long-term performance contract with the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), but above all with the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI).

We have a lot of projects and activities going on and at the same time we are in the process of the development of our organization. A lot of responsibility, but work is also distributed to a few people. Also we lack basic funding, so only part of the team is really financed through the existing projects. We hope to receive support from SIA with our financing applications through professional coaching.





Vardon Hamdiu / Ninja Hoffmann

### **Butterfly – Vardon Hamdiu, Ninja Hoffmann**

Butterfly aims to democratize media with a new non-profit business model. We are trying to build an inclusive, constructive information environment to counter today's problems such as attention mining and societal polarization. An information environment with equal opportunity of getting heard, designed to incentivize new insight, empathy, and mental growth. Media is extremely powerful, let us reinvent it so that it paves the way for mutual understanding and continuous, lasting progress.

MEDIA IS EXTREMELY POWERFUL,  
LET US REINVENT IT SO THAT IT PAVES  
THE WAY FOR MUTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING AND CONTINUOUS,  
LASTING PROGRESS.

In five years, Butterfly will have a large and diverse set of people on all stages of the system, help marginalized voices get heard, create a less polarized, more constructive information environment as well as running independently and be close to financial self-sustainability.

Currently, we are working hard to find funding to complete the team and develop Butterfly sustainably and growing the community and test our hypotheses. This is where we are counting on the help of SIA.



Dr. Jonas Pollard

### **Hemolytics – Dr. Jonas Pollard**

Hemolytics aims to demonstrate that asymptomatic screening of malaria can substantially reduce the incidence of the disease and could join the arsenal of tools to speed up malaria elimination. Thanks to the novel diagnostic tool that we have developed, we seek to conduct an impact study which consists of two cycles of malaria screening and treatment in a malaria-endemic region and to monitor its effect on the number of malaria cases. With these data in hand, it will generate enthusiasm at NGO and governmental levels to extend campaigns to other regions.

In five years, we intend to have our intervention included in the WHO guideline as a strategy to speed malaria elimination. We expect to be assisting several malaria-endemic countries in their fight against malaria. We will be providing the diagnostic tool as well as know-how support based on previous experience to organization leading malaria elimination campaigns.

We are currently seeking funds to run our impact study which will bridge the gap between the validation of our diagnostic and the sustainable revenue generated by the sales of the diagnostic kits and consultancy thereafter. To achieve this, we would like to present our case to several impact investors or organizations.

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE STARTUPS



Pirmin Bütler

### **Solafrica – Pirmin Bütler**

With the Solarvignette, we want to accelerate the energy transition in Switzerland and make the electricity 100 percent climate-friendly as quickly as possible. We are convinced that only together we can save our climate.

In five years, the Solarvignette has enabled us to finance several major solar installations in Switzerland and make a real contribution to the energy transition. The revenues generated by the sale of solar power ensure the long-term and sustainable financing of the projects of Solafrica, the organization behind the Solarvignette.

WE ARE CONVINCED THAT ONLY  
TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE OUR CLIMATE.

There is a great need to work for more climate protection. However, we currently lack the financial means to make our offer known to a broader target group. The SIA offers us the opportunity to establish partnerships and discover new scaling methods.



Virginie Morel

### **Innovative Trauma Relief Access INNTRA – Virginie Morel, Silke Reiter Karam**

Our social impact aims to first and foremost facilitate the access of holistic, effective and measurable mental and emotional healthcare for children, adolescents and young adults to improve their overall mental and physical wellbeing. This aims to foster economic productivity and social integration, leading consequently to healthier and stronger communities. Our programs are also designed to impact and strengthen local mental health and psychosocial professionals' interdisciplinary and multisectoral treatment capacity to increase patient reach.

Defining the framework of our future social franchising system: which parts of our service or organization requires or calls for franchising and how to assess and structure its contractual monetization coherently and sustainably.

Funding is now the one decisive element for INNTRA to move to the execution stage: our 10-Day programs can be launched under a non-profit, as well as a for-profit model. The challenge lies in defining coherently the many and complex funding parameters at stakes, so the financial partnership we want to secure with foundations, as well as with social impact/SRI/ESG investors, remains coherent, feasible and within everyone's respective scope.



Aurel Vogel / Jörg Arnold

### Fairpicture – Aurel Vogel, Jörg Arnold

Creativity, bustling activity and the will to shape things: the Global South is more than hunger, poverty and dependence on aid. We want to change the perception of the Global South. Image after image – because it is images that shape our view of the world.

—

WE WANT TO CHANGE THE  
PERCEPTION OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH.  
IMAGE AFTER IMAGE – BECAUSE  
IT IS IMAGES THAT SHAPE OUR VIEW  
OF THE WORLD.

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Fairpicture is the industry label for fair photography and video. Consumers and donors can scan any photo, check if it is part of the Fairpicture database and verify its origin, context and authenticity. Fairpicture is also the one-stop platform for fair visual material, both for stock photography and commissioned assignments.

Combining impact and business is challenging and as a “Zebra” you have to find your own path between for-profit and nonprofit. This affects all dimensions of the organization: funding, product, organizational structure. The SIA has helped us balance out these sometimes contradicting forces and give us creative inputs in finding the “way of the Zebra”.



Marie Griesmar / Hanna Kuhfuss

### rrreefs – Ulrike Pfreundt, Hannah Kuhfuss, Marie Griesmar, Hannah Jasper, Josephine Graf

We aim to achieve a dual impact. Firstly, we seek to help rehabilitate coral reefs and increase biodiversity by providing new homes for coral larvae. Besides this ecological dimension, our reef systems further function as wave breakers, which makes them valuable for national coastal protection and development efforts. They also create new diving and educational sites, and therefore can help boost eco-tourism and raise awareness on coral reef degradation among tourists.

In five years from now, we see rrreefs as an organization with a global reach, having implemented multiple, successful reef systems across the world, which have a measurable impact on the restoration of vital ecosystem functions. We will be working closely together with partners – from NGOs and research institutions to international organizations and governments – and use these synergies to steadily improve our green barriers and living shorelines concept.

Currently, we face different challenges. Most predominantly, financial stability and the growth of our business including the automatising of our 3D-printing production are key concerns for us. For the future, it will be crucial to align our business model to scale and secure partnerships with important stakeholders such as governments, eco-tourism resorts, other NGOs and insurance companies. The participation at the SIA program already helped us to optimize our business model. Moreover, with its explicit focus on impact, the program teaches us the necessary tools to develop our impact strategy, and measure and communicate our impact effectively.

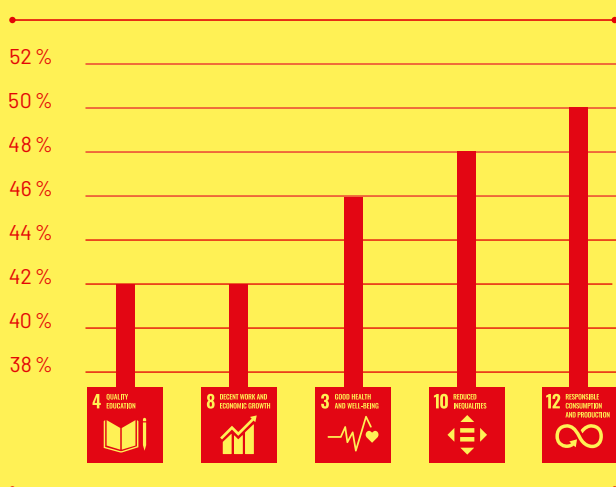
The launch of the Social Impact Accelerator created a great deal of interest within the Swiss impact ecosystem. In total, there were 50 completed applications submitted to the SIA, a clear indication that this program is filling an important gap in the social impact ecosystem.

### SECTOR & IMPACT

Both Retail/Consumer Goods (18%) and Education (18%) were prominent sectors among the applicants to the SIA. Other popular sectors included Other (14%), Government/NGO/NOP (10%) and Life Science/Healthcare (10%).

Given the applicants and the sectors that they comprise, it is no surprise that the most represented Sustainable Development Goals include SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production (50%), SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities (48%), SDG 3 – Good Health & Wellbeing (46%), SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth (42%) and SDG 4 – Quality Education (42%).

**GRAPH 1**  
Top 5 SDGs represented by the SIA applicants

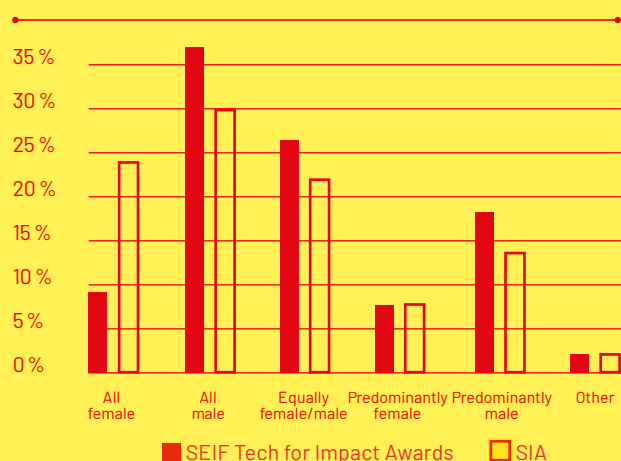


### TEAM GENDER DIVERSITY

A particular point of interest is the topic of gender diversity. According to Startup Campus, female founders only account for 20% of the startups in Switzerland, and female founders in tech comprise even less – 10%. These numbers follow the SEIF Tech for Impact Awards quite closely, with only 9% of applicants being all-female founders and 8% being predominantly female. For comparison purposes, we have provided applicant numbers for the SEIF Tech for Impact Awards alongside the applicant numbers for the SIA in the graphs below.

For the SIA, female representation is higher compared to Swiss female-founders, but they are still not equally represented. 24% of the SIA applicants had an all-female co-founding team with 8% being predominantly female. 30% of applicants had an all-male founding team with 14% being predominantly male.

**GRAPH 2**  
Co-Founding Team Gender Diversity



“FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY, WE NEED TO RADICALLY SHIFT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES – NOT PROFIT SHOULD BE AT THE HEART OF A COMPANY’S WORTH, BUT THE VALUE IT ADDS FOR SOCIETY.”

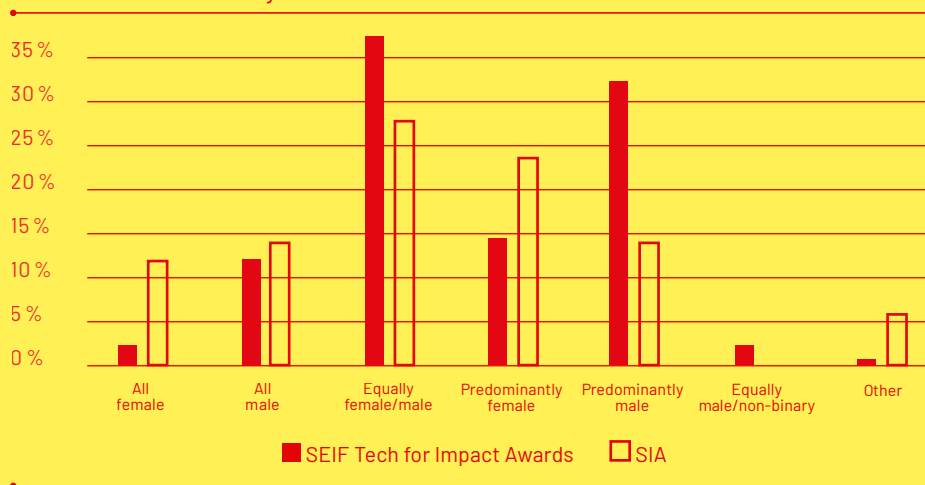
Linda Sulzer

Project Manager, Migros Pioneer Fund

Within the general team, the ratio between male and female became more equal. All-female teams make up 12% whereas all-male teams make up 14%. 28% of applicants have an equally female/male team, and 24% have a predominately female team compared to predominately male with just 14%.

The topic of social entrepreneurship is not new, but it is becoming more mainstream and accepted. We are pleased to see such a positive response with the launch of this program and aim to provide the support necessary for social entrepreneurs to professionalize their business and scale their impact.

**GRAPH 3**  
Team Gender Diversity



Though the number of female co-founders in this program is higher compared to female founders in general and in tech, there is still a gap. This is a clear reminder that the SDGs are relevant, and the SIA should be a driver for change in this area and others.

“OVERCOMING THE MISLEADING ASSUMPTION OF AN UNAVOIDABLE GAP BETWEEN THE LOGIC OF ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION ON THE ONE HAND AND SOCIETALLY RELEVANT AND ‘USABLE’ KNOWLEDGE ON THE OTHER HAND IS KEY TO INCENTIVISING IMPACT FOR SUSTAINABILITY. THERE IS A TWO-WAY STREET IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO OBJECTIVES, AND THE SOCIAL IMPACT ACCELERATOR OFFERS A SUPERB OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THIS PATH.”

**Prof. Dr. Dirk Lehmkuhl**

Managing Director, Competence Center for Social Innovation, University of St. Gallen

## THE CHALLENGING JOURNEY OF FINANCING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

One of the key challenges for social entrepreneurs is financing. There are various reasons why this is an especially major challenge, all of them connected to the uniqueness of their business.

Social enterprises often have a legal form such as cooperatives, associations, foundations without financial profit distribution and put their social impact at the center of the purpose and not financial profit. This can make it difficult to raise funding from traditional, profit seeking funders. On the other hand, social entrepreneurs also have a hard time getting funding from foundations because proving non-profit status can be very complex. It is precisely this hybrid model of being that poses additional challenges for funding.

However, the impact-orientation of social entrepreneurs can also be an advantage for their funding. Results of the survey in the Social Entrepreneurship Monitor show that impact orientation has tended to make initial financing somewhat easier. Generally, however, social entrepreneurship is on an equal footing with other companies when it comes to raising capital. This shows that impact orientation is generally well received by investors, shareholders or crowdfunding, although the companies have of

course also sought impact-oriented financing. Nevertheless, philanthropic financing, in which business angels invest specifically in impact-oriented start-ups, has so far been the exception.

**GRAPH #4**

Incorporating impact into the business has helped make initial funding



The SIA puts emphasis on questions of financing: at the end of the SIA, a Social Impact Pitch Night takes place where the startups present their impact-oriented business ideas to interested investors, philanthropists, partners and the public.

“THE CHALLENGES FOR NEW SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROJECTS BEGIN WHEN A CONCEPT PROVES ITSELF, BECAUSE NOW IT IS TIME TO ROLL IT OUT - AND THIS IS MORE COMPLEX THAN STARTING A PILOT PHASE. SUPPORTING THE YOUNG SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS RIGHT HERE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT”

**Robert Schmuki**

Head Executive Education & Knowledge Transfer, Center for Philanthropy Studies CEPS, University of Basel



## INTERVIEW WITH LINDA SULZER, PROJECT MANAGER AT MIGROS PIONEER FUND

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Linda Sulzer (Foto: Jasmin Frei)

***Linda, as Project Manager for the Migros Pioneer Funds, thank you for taking the time to speak to me today. My first question to you: What do you like the most about your job?***

**Linda Sulzer:** My work brings me into contact with many extremely interesting people every day. The pioneers supported by the Pioneer Funds are inquisitive, innovative and highly motivated. Ultimately, they won't settle for anything less than changing the world for the better. It's very inspiring to accompany them on their journey.

***The Migros Pioneer Funds looks for and supports ideas with social potential, as well as projects that break new ground and seek out unconventional solutions. The Social Impact Accelerator supports social entrepreneurs in Switzerland who focus on maximising their social impact. To what extent does this understanding of entrepreneurship overlap with the values of the Pioneer Fund and its funding areas?***

**LS:** A focus on positive social impact is common to all the projects we fund. At the same time, we place great value on the financial sustainability of the projects we support, so that they can develop their positive social impact over a long period of time. Impact and economic viability always go hand in hand: a motto shared by the social entrepreneurs who apply for the Social Impact Accelerator.

***Social entrepreneurship is still a niche area in Switzerland, whereas other European countries are more advanced in terms of funding. Do you think this trend will gain more momentum in Switzerland, too?***

**LS:** Yes, I think we're currently witnessing a kind of positive reciprocal effect: the increased interest in this type of entrepreneurship means both improved expertise and more and more examples of best practice. In turn, this heightens interest in the topic, drives it forward and channels it from a niche into the mainstream. We haven't quite got there yet, but I am convinced that it's already impossible for the economy to simply exclude the idea of social entrepreneurship.

***What advice would you give to social entrepreneurs participating in the Social Impact Accelerator?***

**LS:** Social entrepreneurs should have a clear vision in mind when setting their goals, but also remain agile and flexible when implementing them. The first step is to define your vision: Why are we doing what we are doing? What changes do I want to bring about in the group I am targeting with my project? During the subsequent implementation, on the other hand, you need to be open to experimentation. The key is to try things out, test, evaluate, improve, and then do it all over again. It's as if you're on a ship sailing towards the future: you must always keep your eyes on the goal, but also be able to react flexibly to the constantly changing wind and weather conditions along the way.

***The goal of the Migros Pioneer Funds is to provide moral support for the pioneers and accompany them on their journey into the unknown. To wrap up: if you were to imagine a real utopia, a society where the Pioneer Funds were no longer needed, what would this utopian society look like?***

**LS:** I don't think we will ever live in a utopia, so we'll always need the Migros Pioneer Funds (laughs). Seriously, though, we are constantly advancing as a society – and that's vital. If everything around us is constantly changing, we would be going backwards if we were to stay still. So if we ever do manage to reach that utopia, I think we would need to set a new course straight away. For now, my utopia would be a sustainable, fair and caring society where we view ourselves as citizens of humanity and our planet, and we shape our lives in accordance with this understanding.





The SIA Team (from left to right: Amanda Weilenmann, Project Manager SEIF; Sarah Linder, Managing Partner SEIF; Stephanie Frick, SIA Lead and Startup and Innovation Co-Lead SENS; Lea Hürlimann, Junior Project Manager SENS; Florian Wieser, Startup and Innovation Co-Lead SENS)

The Social Impact Accelerator is unique in that it supports impact entrepreneurs who do not identify as the traditional for-profit startups. They are innovative, creative, thoughtful, and are striving to grow their positive impact towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It has been a refreshing and exciting experience to engage with these ten social impact startups. Observing the participants challenge one another, think creatively and learn from the program has been a very rewarding experience.

**Amanda Weilenmann**, Core Team Member SIA

Startups with a main impact focus are often caught in the tension between financial profit and impact creation driven by external expectations. It was time to develop a program that captures these startups' needs in order to grow and maximize their social impact. I'm deeply impressed by these founders' strong commitment and passion to foster change by means of a viable business model. We need more of these!

**Sarah Linder**, Core Team Member SIA

To enable sustainable development, we need to renew society's definition of business and entrepreneurial success and the associated value systems and norms. Positive social impact creation catalyzing systemic change, collaboration and participation should be at the heart of this. My enthusiasm for driving this change and embedding social entrepreneurship as the new status quo has motivated me to co-initiate and co-develop SIA. My passion is to accompany and empower changemakers and to promote entrepreneurial solutions that are actively part of this change.

**Stephanie Frick**, Co-Founder and SIA Lead

In a world where complexity, uncertainty and interdependence between stakeholders becomes ever stronger, organizations addressing the sustainable development goals need to engage in new ways of collaboration in order to be effective - within and beyond their organizational boundaries. This is where the Social Impact Accelerator can support new ventures with new ways of entrepreneurial thinking and by fostering self-sustaining business models for solutions to our most pressing problems. Being part of this learning journey with the participating startups is what drives me to be part of the SIA team.

**Florian Wieser**, Core Team Member SIA

The high demand in a program focused on accelerating impact instead of profit is what drives me most. It is empowering to work collectively with all the strongly engaged startups towards the same vision. I'm thrilled and very grateful to offer a platform for social entrepreneurs, which encourages this change. Let's walk the talk!

**Lea Hürlimann**, Core Team Member SIA

"I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PROJECTS  
OF THE IMPACT ACCELERATOR PROGRAM, AS I APPRECIATE  
ACCOMPANYING NEW INITIATIVES  
AND SHARING MY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE".

**Pia Tschannen**

Member of the Board of SENS and Managing Director and co-owner of fairness at work gmbh

The Social Impact Accelerator is co-initiated by SENS and SEIF.



As a national platform, **SENS** represents and promotes impact-oriented companies in Switzerland, connecting them across sectors and with the European environment.

[www.sens-suisse.ch](http://www.sens-suisse.ch)



**SEIF** offers specialized coaching, trainings, consulting and impact investment opportunities to support impact entrepreneurs to advance their businesses, enter the market, grow and scale successfully.

[www.seif.org](http://www.seif.org)



The **Migros Pioneer Fund** looks for and supports ideas with social potential. It enables pioneering projects that break new ground and seek out forward-looking solutions. Its impact-oriented funding approach combines financial support with coaching services. The Migros Pioneer Fund is part of the Migros Group's social engagement and is enabled by the Migros Group with around CHF 15 million annually. For further information:

[www.migros-pionierfonds.ch](http://www.migros-pionierfonds.ch)



The **Mercator Switzerland Foundation** is committed to an open, solidary and ecologically sustainable society that opens up equitable opportunities and possibilities for participation for all people. To this end, it initiates, promotes and implements projects in the fields of society and the environment. It also strengthens civil society organizations and facilitates alliances to advance common causes and initiate social change.

[www.stiftung-mercator.ch](http://www.stiftung-mercator.ch)

"I AM REALLY EXCITED TO MEET PASSIONATE CHANGEMAKERS THROUGH THIS NEW PROGRAM AND HOPE TO SUPPORT THEM FURTHER THROUGH THE NETWORK BY ESTABLISHING A STRONG COLLABORATION BETWEEN IMPACT HUB, SEIF AND SENS."

Connie Low

Co-founder of Impact Hub Basel



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**SENS**Suisse  
Social Entrepreneurship

Kalkbreitestrasse 10  
8003 Zürich  
[www.sens-suisse.ch](http://www.sens-suisse.ch)

**seif** DRIVING  
IMPACT  
INNOVATION

Hardturmstrasse 161  
8005 Zürich  
[www.seif.org](http://www.seif.org)

Contact: [info@socialimpactaccelerator.ch](mailto:info@socialimpactaccelerator.ch)