

Philanthropy – the ‘leveraged giving’ way

Matching donations from governments is one way to attract new donors, says Assisi Hospice chairman Anita Fam. **BY FRANCIS KAN**

ORGANISATIONS that rely on donations to finance their activities need to go beyond just holding fund-raising events and work towards cultivating long-term supporters.

Anita Fam, chairman of Assisi Hospice, believes that one way to do this is to promote the concept of “leveraged giving”, where the government matches private funds on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

As today’s philanthropists are keen to maximise the impact of their donations, a model that produces two dollars for every dollar they give is an attractive one, she argues.

She cites the example of Assisi Hospice, which needs to raise about S\$17 million every year to plug the gap in its funding. However as the government’s Community Silver Trust initiative provides matching donations, the amount required is reduced to just S\$8.5 million.

“We used to just give with the heart, but donors today want to see their funds stretched in terms of impact and also in dollar terms. That’s where the leveraged model comes in. I believe that is the way forward for philanthropy,” says Ms Fam in an interview with *The Business Times* ahead of the Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum 2017 held on Nov 16.

Ms Fam, who is also the vice-president of the National Council of Social Service, spoke on a panel on healthcare giving at the forum. A former lawyer, she sits on various boards and committees including Caregivers Alliance, National Healthcare Group, SAS Foundation, SG Cares, Singapore Totalisator Board and St Andrew’s Autism Centre.

A bigger role

With growing healthcare needs, she believes that philanthropists have to play a bigger role in this space. “Gone are the days that we can be totally reliant on the government for funding. The reality is we can’t get all the resources we need from one place; there is a space for for-profits, social enterprises and philanthropists to support the innovative work in this space.”

Ms Fam also touched on the importance of giving support to caregivers. “If you talked about caregivers 10 years ago, it was a fairly alien topic; they got very little support. But people are recognising more and more that if you support the caregiver well, then they can give better care to the recipient,” she said.



Panelists at the 7th Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum. (From left) David Zuellig, trustee, Zuellig Family Foundation; Anita Fam, vice-president, National Council of Social Service; Professor Tommy Koh, chairman, SymAsia Foundation Limited; Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore; Philip Ma, director, Tai Sang Land Development, Tai Sang Bank and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals; and Dr Gerardo Legaspi, director, Philippine General Hospital.

For the philanthropic sector to develop in Singapore, Ms Fam urges donors to allocate more of their dollars to investing in professional talent for the agencies they support. In the longer run, this would result in more effective outcomes for their money.

“In the past, it was mostly the management and boards of charitable agencies that would raise funds. But that is an area that needs to be professionalised. Getting higher quality people in this space would mean

more value,” she explains. She cites an example of an agency which hired a senior fundraiser whose key performance indicator included not only raising enough funds to cover the organisation’s deficit, but also to cover the person’s own salary. She says: “This is the kind of thinking we need going forward.”

On a personal note, she is heartened by the generosity of donors she encounters in her work. Earlier this year, for instance, a Brit-

ish couple living in Singapore left a S\$6 million legacy to be divided equally among three charities here: Assisi Hospice, National Kidney Foundation and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

“It was a really heartwarming gesture from people who are extremely generous,” she says. The hospice has named a hall used for staff clinical training, talks and seminars Esery Hall in appreciation of the couple’s generosity.

Ms Fam is urging donors to allocate more of their dollars to investing in professional talent for the agencies they support.

Bridging the gap in the needs of health care

Gerardo Legaspi, director of the Philippine General Hospital, talks about the importance of private funding in sustaining government institutions

AT the Philippine General Hospital (PGH), a government-funded institution, charity patients receive free medical services. However, with increasing costs and growing healthcare needs, philanthropy is playing a vital role in supporting the institution’s ability to subsidise costs, says Gerardo Legaspi, director at PGH.

The neurosurgeon was speaking at a panel session at the Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum 2017 held on Nov 16. Moderated by Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the panel also included Anita Fam, vice-president of the National Council of Social Service; Philip Ma, director, Tai Sang Land Development, Tai Sang Bank and Tung Wah Group of Hospitals; and David Zuellig, a Trustee of the Philippines-based Zuellig Family Foundation.

“The biggest role that philanthropy plays in a government institution is the availability of funds when we need it. Although we get money from the govern-

ment, the inefficiencies don’t allow us to use it properly,” says Dr Legaspi.

One of his biggest concerns is how to improve services to charity patients, specifically to those in neurosurgery. To that end, he was involved in the establishment of the Pediatric Neurosurgical and Craniofacial Unit, supported largely by private donations. This has enabled operations to be performed for more than 300 children and helped to ease the backlog at the PGH.

Dr Legaspi also notes that while 60 per cent of health care is delivered by private hospitals in the Philippines, only 30 per cent of the population can afford it. “So you can see the inequality. We want to equalise opportunities for our patients so that they get the same level of care as private patients.”

Around 400 beds of the 1,500-bed PGH are dedicated to private patients, and this private wing generates revenue that helps to fund the subsidised patients in the rest of the hospital. Dr Legaspi hopes to further develop the private portion of PGH so that it is equal in quality to its peers and able to attract more patients.

He says: “I believe that you should invest in something that gives continuously.”

By Francis Kan

The challenge of healthcare philanthropy

David Zuellig, a Trustee of the Zuellig Family Foundation, shares his views on giving to healthcare causes in Asia

AS many people in Asia believe that delivery of healthcare services is the government’s role, philanthropic organisations in this sector may face obstacles in carrying out their mission.

“In most Asian countries, governments attempt to provide universal healthcare coverage with the state subsidising the cost of hospitalisations, medicines, vaccines or elderly nursing care. Some philanthropic organisations would hesitate on engaging political leaders or dealing with bureaucratic red tape,” says David Zuellig, a trustee of the Philippines-based Zuellig Family Foundation, in an interview with *The Business Times* ahead of the Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum 2017 held on Nov 16.

“Public health is also tied with issues of poverty, inequality, security, infra-

structure, cultural, religious bias and lack of education. Some donor organisations find these interrelationships quite complicated and almost impossible to break through,” he adds.

The Zuellig Family Foundation focuses on improving health outcomes through sustainable healthcare programmes and services, with a focus on health inequalities in the rural areas of the Philippines.

He notes that local donor organisations in the Philippines are limited and not very organised. Instead, healthcare philanthropy in the country is mostly carried out by international agencies such as UNICEF, USAID, Oxfam and Save the Children.

“There is a lot of duplication in the programmes, though only a few are scaled up on a regional or national level. There is not much private philanthropy being done alongside the Health Department. Healthcare philanthropy is also often done only as a component of bigger programmes such as poverty alleviation, community development, and education,” he says.

The Philippines can do better in im-

proving healthcare facilities in rural areas by training more healthcare professionals to serve in the countryside, implementing programmes on preventive medicine particularly for cardiovascular disorders, diabetes and obesity, he explains.

Mr Zuellig believes that maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition and stunting, and vaccination are probably the most urgent problems for Asians, as intervention in these areas would create the greatest social impact.

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