

## ALUMNI STORIES

### Oxford Impact Investing Programme

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## A non-profit heart combined with a for-profit mind

My professional background has been purely first world and for profit: with an MBA and LLM, I have been working all my career in consultancy, business development and finance. About three years ago, however, I started thinking about how I could use my skill-set in a way that would be more meaningful to me personally. I was interested in the idea of social entrepreneurship and impact investing but eventually realised that I would need to learn a different language to better understand and further explore a field that is still developing and defining itself.

I looked around for something to teach me more and came across the Oxford Impact Investing Programme. As a week-long, intensive executive education programme at a leading business school I was confident it would provide me with the grounding I wanted, so I applied and – after just having missed the 2016 start – found myself in Oxford in 2017.

The most striking thing about the programme for me was its great variety in terms of faculty and speakers, participants and teaching methods (lectures, case studies, individual vs. group exercises etc.). I am a big fan of bringing people together from diverse backgrounds: if you can make the communication and collaboration work, the results are better by far. So

to have people there from a wide range of countries, and from the business, academic and the social worlds, was really important, and it gave everyone a chance to understand each other's approach. For example, words such as 'responsible', 'sustainable', and 'impact' have different meanings and connotations depending on your location and the type of organisation you are working in. So this programme helped us all to develop a common understanding.

Moreover, it demonstrated the vast spectrum of impact investing – 'purely profit-driven' on the one side vs. 'purely impact-driven' on the other side – and the related thinking, skills and practice involved. To find my own place on that spectrum was a major step forward for me.

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What also made the programme stand out for me were the people I met, both participants and faculty. As my geographical focus happens to be Southern Africa, and one of the lecturers, Annie Patton Power, also advises Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Cape Town, I ended up flying to South Africa participating in the annual 'Do-ference' that Bertha organises for local social entrepreneurs, putting them in touch with finance experts and other advisers.

I also spent a couple of weeks in Harare, Zimbabwe, working with Rufaro Maunze, whom I met during the programme, to help conceptualise an impact fund focused on local female social entrepreneurs and we were able to call on other OIIP participants for feedback on our concept.

All these valuable experiences helped me to find my particular niche in the market and to increase my impact by using my business expertise and teaming up with social entrepreneurs to complement their skills. In that way I feel I can make the most of my for-profit mind and my non-profit heart.

Consequently, I have just set up my own company called BooSoBiz – Boosting your Social Business ([www.boosobiz.com](http://www.boosobiz.com)), through which I consult, coach and work with social entrepreneurs in developing countries, with a specific focus on ventures with an impact on women and children in Southern Africa.

Keeping a foot in the for-profit camp via my second occupation, my family office job, is an important factor in my business model. Though my direct customers (the social entrepreneurs) don't necessarily have the financial means to afford a consultant, other key players and stakeholders, namely philanthropists and impact investors, do. Their funds are essential in growing social enterprises, but they are often only part of the solution. In combination



with business knowhow, their impact can be even greater.

After all, impact investing is a lot about trust, collaboration and networks. So another key part of what I do is help make the links between the two, as I straddle both worlds.

I continue literally to straddle the two worlds. My office is based in Munich but I spend an extensive amount of time in Southern Africa to work actively with social entrepreneurs on their projects. The key success factor of these projects for me is my relationship with the entrepreneur, my belief in their approach and the urgency of the social problems they are tackling. If I can get into a project early, I can help to get the business right, and that will have an enormous effect on its impact.

It's still early days, obviously, but I am excited to be working in this field. The Oxford Impact Investing Programme played a huge part in getting me to where I am now, and introducing me to a network of really interesting people who are committed to making a difference in tackling some of the world's most important social problems.

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[www.sbs.oxford.edu/impact](http://www.sbs.oxford.edu/impact)

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