



## GIVE – The Concept

### BACKGROUND:

The disparity between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ in our society is constantly increasing. Such wide inequalities are undesirable and unsustainable in society. With free market economics increasingly becoming the only viable model, this gap is bound to grow even more. In this scenario, one ameliorating factor is the practice of “giving”, i.e., the practice of the well-to-do voluntarily sharing part of their wealth for the betterment of the poor. The “giving” itself can be for what are nowadays called “enabling” projects, that work on empowering the hungry to feed themselves, rather than just feeding them. If we could develop vigorous support for ‘giving’ in our society, it could go a long way to eliminate human suffering.

### HYPOTHESIS:

There are many Indians (and esp. NRIs) who would be surprised to know that for as little as \$1,000-\$2,000 given ONCE, a whole village in India (of a few hundred people) can achieve near 100% literacy, through a small school and various community learning programmes. If you knew this, AND you knew/trusted the people who would spend the money you give, AND you knew that at least 80% of the money you give actually REACHES the end-user, YOU WOULD GIVE GLADLY.

If this surmise is right, then what it means is very simple: the "giving industry" as I call it (although it is a not-for-profit industry), needs to be professionalised, just as the give-and-take industry (stock markets, etc.) do. Let us illustrate this using the Financial Services sector as an example.

1. Like stock exchanges where buyers “meet” sellers, we need places where donors and recipients can meet and transact. “Fairs”, seminars, etc. for corporate-NGO partnerships are occasionally organised to meet this need, but this “exchange” mechanism is not really developed well in India.
2. Like financial information services, databases, websites, etc. for INVESTING, we need INFORMATION databases on NGOs and voluntary organisations, for GIVING. This availability/access is also currently very limited. One site is designed by Jayesh Parekh, one of the promoters of SONY Entertainment. It is called [www.propoor.org](http://www.propoor.org).
3. Like mutual funds and venture funds who pool resources of small investors to get meaningful investment funds, we need FOUNDATIONS who can collect small contributions from various donors, to get meaningful “donatable” funds. CRY is one such organisation, but we need more. One example is the United Way in the USA. Every city and small town has its local United Way, and people contribute to it, whatever they can, often \$10-100 a month.
4. Like small retail financiers, we need organisations that penetrate all walks of life to claim a small share of money. For example, we could convince writers to donate Re 1 per book from their royalties to a cause. Singers could donate Re 1 per cassette, employees could donate Rs 10 per month from their salaries,... the potential is huge. To a certain extent we see this in shops like Akbarally’s in Mumbai, where a small box at the cash counter collects money for Cancer Relief or CRY, etc.



What I would like to do is to set up an organisation whose basic job is to "professionalise giving". That basically means ensuring that recipient organisations are transparent in their reporting, keep records and document evidence, and make these available to givers (donors) regularly. Donors should have the satisfaction of knowing that their money was WELL UTILISED. To begin with, GIVE will focus its activities in education.

Such an organisation would offer a host of "paid for services". For example:

1. A company which wants to do charity can hire us to do it "for them". They specify what they want to do and how it should be done, only we execute it for them. This should be cheaper because we would have lesser overheads. For example, if Outlook/India Today/ToI collects Rs 5crore as relief fund for, say, earthquake victims, if they want to build houses, we will get it done for them, for a fee of, say 2.5%. Note that we will also not do the work ourselves. Our role is to identify the right people to do it, and implement and monitor progress.
2. For large organisations, we can "manage their charity portfolio", so to say.
3. Develop a culture of "giving". For example, I remember that when I was in the US, during the run up to Clinton's re-election as President, there was a lot of talk about how much he had contributed to charity, based on his tax returns. the "giving" business in USA is worth \$180 billion!! Ted Turner gave 1 billion to UN, Bill Gates has given 10billion to his Foundation. Warren Buffet has gone on record that he will give away everything before he dies. People should feel proud of giving. One idea is, anyone who gives, should get a badge saying "I GIVE!", which is well-designed.
4. Set up a "rating agency" like CRISIL and ICRA, who rate bonds and stocks, to rate NGOs who are fund-recipients. This rating agency should build such a high credibility for itself, that after 8-10 years, the government, UN, etc. should make it mandatory for a recipient NGO to meet its rating criteria (more on this idea can be seen at the site of the NCIB,USA at [www.give.org](http://www.give.org) )
5. Raise funds (both in India and abroad). Through programmes & events, through UNITED WAY style campaigns, through retail outlets... One way is to build a team of volunteers like AIESEC, ROTARACT or SPIC-MACAY, committed, young college-going students, who have good presentation skills, would like to do something good, and get something to put on their bio-data, plus a reward scheme that starts with badges, T-shirts, caps and so on.

While thinking of the name of this organisation, I felt "GIVE" was a very good name, because it describes the basic idea in one word. Like they say, sometimes everything seems to fall in place and this seemed to be it for me: NGOs are also called VOLUNTARY organisations, and GIVE works out as a nice acronym for GIVING IMPETUS to VOLUNTARY EFFORTS.

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