

From: Brandon Hamber [mailto:brandonhamber.com] Sent: Tue 15/08/2006 10:40  
To: Monina Oprey; Patrick Canagasingham; Ami Nashon (E-mail); anams@manusher.org; Ashley Green Thompson (E-mail); Avila Kilmurray; Barry Centris (E-mail); Barry Knight (E-mail); Canagasingham Patrick (E-mail); Elaine Canavan; Indira (E-mail); Indira Jena (E-mail); manam@citech-bd.com; Oscar Rojas (E-mail); oscar rojaso; Santosh (E-mail); Santosh Samur (E-mail); Sithie (E-mail); sithie tir; Slavica (E-mail); Slavica Stojanovic (E-mail)  
Cc:  
Subject: Article on the Network  
Attachments:

[View As Web Page](#)

Dear All

As some of you know I write a bi-monthly column called "Look South" for a South African website and magazine called Polity, [www.polity.co.za](http://www.polity.co.za). One of my recent articles I wrote about the Network. Hope it helps a bit and feel free to distribute or use on the website if you think it will help.

Warm regards, Brandon

----- ARTICLE -----

Desperately seeking Bill Gates, South African-style

Brandon Hamber (Copyright)

"Look South" Column published on Polity, 14 July 2006

Last month, the second-richest man in the world, Warren Buffett, gave the richest man in the world, Bill Gates, \$31-billion. But this was no ordinary investment. Buffett was not investing in Microsoft but, rather, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which works to reduce inequities, largely through funding health and education work the world over. The result was that the world's largest charity doubled its value and the foundation is now worth an estimated \$60-billion.

At the same time, I was in New York attending the launch of a more modest philanthropic cause, namely the launch of the Foundations for Peace Network. The network brings together funding organisations from across the globe. Members include foundations from South Africa, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Bangladesh and India. The reach of the organisation is impressive, the core idea behind it significant. The network wants to ensure more funding for peacebuilding work and for this funding to be distributed by indigenous agencies like themselves rather than international organisations.

This sounds like a simple idea, but it is a novel one. The philanthropy of international foundations cannot be scoffed at, but there are criticisms of some international donors. The writer and activist, Arundhati Roy, argues that international funding can turn people into dependent victims and blunt political resistance rather than contribute to change. In addition, some foundations are criticised for not challenging those with resources locally, such as the business community, to contribute to development.

So what are the solutions for this? This is where the Foundations for

Peace Network provides some pointers. At its core is the belief that donor money should be coming not only from the international community and channelled by local funders, but that local sources should also provide funding. In South Africa, this is a radical concept because, let's face it, there is limited home-grown grant making for good causes. Many companies have corporate social responsibility programmes, but these are generally small and are not seen as essential to business. Larger domestic foundations in South Africa also tend to be supported from outside the country.

For example, Themba Lesizwe, which supports organisations helping victims of violence, distributed R22-million (about \$3-million) last year in South Africa. But almost all this money came from the European Union and the Irish government, with no domestic support. There are local funds that get support from some domestic corporations. In the 2004 financial year, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund committed R34-million (about \$5-million) to 82 organisations. The Business Trust, which aims to reduce unemployment and build capacity, has mobilised R1,2-billion from companies operating in South Africa since 1999. That is roughly the equivalent of R28-million a year. Although this is a start, given the wealth of the large corporations in South Africa, it is also an embarrassment.

I imagine that when the Buffett-Gates charity monopoly was announced all sorts of charitable causes in South Africa licked their lips. But, instead of simply looking to foreign donors, is it not time for South Africans to take the lead in their own country? Even at an expedient level, surely South Africa's largest corporations realise that investing in the social environment is necessary to ensure economic stability and help South Africa shake off its 'developing nation' label.

Bill Gates has vowed to give away 95% of his \$46-billion fortune before he dies, and Buffett about the same. This begs the question: where are the South African equivalents of Gates and Buffett? Perhaps the superrich would all do well to remember Buffett's maxim: A very rich person should leave his kids enough to do anything but not enough to do nothing. Or even more challenging, the words of Andrew Carnegie: The man who dies rich, dies disgraced.

For more information on Foundations for Peace Network, see [www.foundationsforpeace.org](http://www.foundationsforpeace.org)

Dr Brandon Hamber writes the column "Look South": an analysis of trends in global political, social and cultural life and its relevance to South Africa on Polity, see <http://www.polity.co.za/pol/opinion/brandon/>. He is a South African living in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He works internationally as an independent consultant on conflict resolution and political transition-related issues.

More details of his work can be found at <http://www.brandonhamber.com>.

To comment on this article or leave a message at <http://www.brandonhamber.com/comments.htm>

To get "Look South" by email each week visit <http://www.brandonhamber.com/subscribe.htm>