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Special Focus

## **PHILANTHROPISTS FORUM 2011; The art of winning over the philanthropists**

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REJECTED hundreds of times over while seeking capital for Carbon Conservation, Dorjee Sun knows well the difficulty of convincing investors of the potential of ideas - in his case, ones to protect global rainforests and biodiversity.

He has since learnt to communicate to grant-makers the possibility of structuring investments to their advantage, while driving the carbon finance projects Carbon Conservation runs.

'There can be conditions set, it can be tough love, not just traditional philanthropy,' said Mr Sun, one of four speakers at a Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum plenary session, moderated by Singapore's Ambassador-At-Large, Professor Tommy Koh.

Conditions often involve evaluation and impact measurement, but these need funding too.

John Wood, founder of Room to Read and formerly a Microsoft executive, said that one of the best things philanthropists can do is to ask the causes they support where the need is.

He shared how the Gates Foundation's asking what would 'move the dial' for Room to Read led to funding of cross-programme, cross-country evaluations of its libraries, schools and scholarship schemes, enabling it to prove what works and scale that up more quickly.

Leaders in the private sector can also apply their instincts to risk management, said Margareta Wahlstrom, special representative, UNISDR - International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

She gave the example of a leading cement producer advocating for higher standards within its own industry, to prevent unnecessary destruction of buildings and lives in a disaster.

Somsook Boonyabancha, director of the Community Organisation Development Institute, involved in slum upgrading, low-income housing and land-sharing projects, was keen to bridge people resources and change system, to ensure that philanthropic dollars effect real change.

'The world is moving, problems are emerging faster than the existing systems are able to deliver new solutions,' she said.

Mr Wood also sought to rally the more than 100 participants - including global clients of Credit Suisse - to action.

'Every day we lose, is a day we don't get back. Let's not over-think this, the world is in need,' he said.

'We can change this crazy world. We're among the luckiest one per cent in this world and the poorest 10 per cent need us to take action,' he said.

Rallying the participants: At the Credit Suisse Philanthropists Forum plenary session are (from left) Mr Wood, Ms Wahlstrom, Prof Koh, Ms Boonyabancha, and Mr Sun

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