



Donor's stories

ADM CAPITAL FOUNDATION

The partners of investment management firm ADM Capital created a Foundation to alleviate poverty, educate underprivileged children and protect the environment. Discover how they've engaged others in their mission.



"Million dollar donors can make a huge difference to the smaller organisations that a foundation supports. Secure funding opens the way for greater innovation, growth and ultimately greater impact.

At the same time, our long-term donors, including the ADM Capital partners, provide unwavering and vital support, allowing us to broaden our work, create partnerships, take risk and innovate. Without this, it is hard to see real and lasting change.



“Secure funding opens the way for greater innovation, growth and ultimately greater impact.”

As a foundation, much of our support is to a local organisation working on an environmental challenge or with a particular community's most at-risk children. This involves not just financial support but also boots-on-the-ground work by our staff to help sort out management and accounting challenges, as well as providing strategic or programmatic guidance.

Our commitments to our local partners are never solely project-based and rarely short-term. They are usually long, focused on seeing change and helping our partners figure out how to get there.



“Large gifts allow us to focus on impact, and to be more flexible in terms of how we work.”

Similarly, without our own essential core costs being paid - salaries, office space, training, accounting etc - we can't be as effective in helping an organisation build or widen its impact. Large gifts allow us to focus on impact, and to be more flexible in terms of how we work.

The partners of ADM Capital established the Foundation in 2006, after working in Asia for at least 15 years each. At the time, I was helping a Cambodian centre for street children, M'Lo Tapang, raise funding for a permanent home. The organisation was working with about 200 children at the time, was operating

out of a small, run-down house and had been asked to leave.

I approached the partners at ADM Capital to see if they would contribute to helping build a permanent home for the centre. Instead of writing a sizeable cheque, we set up a land holding company, purchased the land and built the centre. Many funders joined this effort so it was a wonderful, collaborative journey and the start of ADM Capital Foundation. M'Lop Tapang now works comprehensively with about 3,500 street-working children and their families.



“We believe that given the enormity of the social and environmental challenges Asia faces, philanthropy is best as a collaborative effort.”

The partners set up a foundation to be more strategic about their own giving – they wanted their philanthropy to be effective and impactful. In the same way that they looked for financial returns through their business, they were looking for social and environmental returns through their philanthropic giving.

In essence, ADM Capital Foundation is a hybrid of a foundation and a charity – an engaged or venture philanthropist. We will be the first to implement a programme when we see the need and are always fully engaged with local partners.

When establishing the foundation, the ADM partners chose to focus on two areas: Children at risk and the environment, both in Asia. We wanted to tackle the most pressing and urgent needs in these areas.

Now, our 28 local partners work with tens of thousands of children from the Philippines to India and environmentally, we have marine, forestry, air and water programmes with specific objectives. Our programmes have expanded as we have seen need and brought other donors along with us.

As an example of how our environmental programme has evolved, in 2006 we started working in Hong Kong on shark finning when very little was known about the consequences of

heavy consumption of endangered species.

We saw an opportunity to make a change in consumption habits by educating about the threats to marine biodiversity. We started this with intensive cultural, trade and market research and, with a pretty clear picture, forged ahead promoting discussion, awareness, eventually working with many organisations in Hong Kong and globally. Trade data showed an 18% decline in imports of shark fin last year. In Hong Kong, 62% of five-star hotels have taken shark fin off the menu or serve it only on request.

We do receive large gifts, most notably from the partners of ADM Capital who provide us with crucial support. We have leveraged these gifts to encourage other donors. Like the partners of ADM Capital, our donors want to make sure their philanthropic support is going to be effective and not just donate a significant amount of money without regard to the results.

Over the years, we have built a family of donors, and it's a pleasure to interact with them. We are happy to provide access to the organisations that we support and, they can accompany us on trips to understand just how important their contributions are locally. In terms of reporting and maintaining contact, each of our donors has specific interests and this determines the level of engagement.

As a major donor, it's important to develop a philanthropic strategy before beginning the journey. Donors should also remain open to the idea that sometimes smaller non-profit organisations might be more effective than larger non-profits and not be afraid to give in this way. There is much that donors could apply from their business lives to philanthropy – due diligence, thinking about results, supporting management, etc. Philanthropy can be based on both your heart and your mind.

I would also recommend that donors be creative in how they are giving – and allow creativity in their recipient charities. To be effective philanthropists, donors must be willing to innovate or provide the resources to innovate and they should consider their role as encouragers of philanthropic collaboration. Sometimes it might be worth funding several organisations working on a similar issue.

Charities seeking donations at this level must make sure the charity operates transparently. They should also allocate resources to fundraising and strong management, which are often overlooked. Donors certainly should buy into a charity's strategic vision and if possible work with them to achieve this. They have to be able to trust the charity and work with them constructively.”