

VIRTUAL SUMMIT ON IMPACT

What is the best way to measure the impact of a programme or project? How and when is impact best measured? What are the best practices? What is the impact of different measurement strategies themselves? Can new applications of technology improve impact measurement?

The Virtual Summit on Impact 2020 brought together more than 30 speakers over 4 days and 8 sessions to build a common framework for assessing, understanding and maximizing impact.

HIGHLIGHTS | DAY 3

Designing long-term strategies to promote impactful research on pressing global challenges

Day 3 began with a panel, moderated by **Emmanuel Kattan**, Columbia University, and featuring speakers from the US and Europe on **the value of the Humanities and the impact of a high-quality Liberal Arts education**. Despite a long-term decline in the number of humanities majors the value of a humanities education has long been recognized within American society. Humanities play a key role in nurturing a democratic culture and in building personal character through literary narratives and the interpretation of works of art, noted **Amy Hungerford**, Columbia University.

In western society, many employers recognize the importance of “soft skills” (critical thinking, oral and written communication, creative thinking, interpersonal skills and an appreciation of different cultures). However, soft skills can also be taught through science and technology, observed **Pedro Cunha**, Gulbenkian Foundation, who finds hope in the advent of AI-driven growth, which promises to open a pathway for jobs that only human beings can perform and for which the humanities offer a good preparation.

In this context, **Dominic Regester**, Salzburg Global Seminar, highlighted the number of tools that measure social and emotional skills and underlined the role of Karanga (The Global Alliance for Social Emotional Learning and Life Skills) in providing new methodologies for teaching and evaluating soft skills.

The second roundtable of the day was moderated by **Hal Plotkin**, ISKME, and featured panelists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and the US. The exchange focused on **the need to improve and support the research sector and individual researchers in the MENA region to build capacity as a patient and effective way to increase impact**. Capacity building is a long-term process that succeeds by “infusion,” as standards for public service and policy improve. One of the key elements

is to cultivate and support producers of regional knowledge and local research, added **Safwan Masri**, Columbia University. The most productive efforts empower the local community in ways that build sustainable influence respected as indigenous. Knowledge production that comes from the region often has the most impact, **Hillary Wiesner**, Carnegie Corporation, noted.

The issues in the MENA region are huge and complex and require donors to think together, added **Moushira Elgezeri**, Arab Council for Social Sciences. Capacity building must provide scholars in the region with different tools (methodology, publishing, networking) in ways that build a durable infrastructure that promotes inquiry, rather than focus primarily on individual projects. In a region where interactions can be scarce and infrastructures can be under-developed, building communities beyond borders, developing local infrastructures, creating new opportunities for the young researchers are of paramount importance and necessary steps to achieve impact, according to **Ragui Assad**, Economic Research Forum. H. Wiesner concluded the session with a reminder that research can have an impact on policies and the transformation of knowledge into policies.

The final panel of the day was moderated by **Lisa Petrides**, Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education. It convened **Jeff Ubois**, MacArthur Foundation, **Shelley Whelpton**, Arabella Advisors and **LaVerne Evans Srinivasan**, Carnegie Corporation of New York.

The panel delved into strategies for **managing and sharing knowledge to support high impact philanthropy**. No one funder has the capital (financial, human, political) to solve problems at scale. Achieving an impact on major challenges requires collaboration. The final panel highlighted the powerful opportunity that exists to develop new partnerships and alliances across silos, including issues (e.g. education funders collaborating with partners working on economic opportunity), segments (e.g. individuals/family foundations, institutions, corporate partners) and approaches (e.g. policy/advocacy, impact investing) which when combined can more reliably achieve impact at scale.

The social sector does not incentivize collaboration, cooperation, mergers, and acquisitions. Funders who develop their strategy informed by these dynamics can be particularly impactful particularly when they are willing to share data sharing across grantees.

More information on
<https://virtual-summit-on-impact.canalchat.fr/>