

Acanthus and the European Venture Philanthropy Association

Acanthus is actively involved in a charity called the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) which aims to help charities become stronger and more sustainable.

The EVPA organised a fund raising trek to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in January 2005. One of our partners, Armando D'Amico, participated on behalf of Acanthus along with a number of other private equity professionals and interested parties.

Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, reaches a height of 5,895 metres or 19,340 feet. The trek was organised to promote awareness and raise funding for two charitable causes: (i) the newly created European Venture Philanthropy Association and (ii) a new water supply pipeline and the refurbishment of the school in the village of Tinga Tinga near Mount Kilimanjaro.

Each participant paid his/her part of the total cost of the trek so that all the money raised could go directly to support the chosen causes, which makes this initiative different from the usual sponsored challenges.

The European Venture Philanthropy Association

The EVPA was founded to foster venture philanthropy, still in its infancy in Europe. Venture philanthropy consists in investing in a charity and matching that money with hands-on help whereby the charity can better market itself and raise money more effectively, manage its costs more efficiently and thereby grow and expand its coverage and ability to help. Investment of this kind can have a bigger and more lasting impact on a charity's ability to do good than simple donations. In essence venture philanthropy is rather like the old adage that if you give someone a fish they have food for a day; give them fishing tackle and they have the means to become self-sustaining. The first venture philanthropy charity set up in the UK, [Impetus](#), was founded by Stephen Dawson, one of the founders of ECI.

The EVPA has made very significant progress since its initial formation early 2004. It has received formal endorsement from the EVCA, financial sponsorship from 3i, Barclays Private Equity and recently, KPMG. Further sponsor discussions are underway with very high profile groups which have excellent networks that will assist the EVPA members. The first EVPA conference was held on 1st December 04 in Amsterdam with over 70 groups and individuals from over 10 European countries attending. The EVPA has also initiated a research project entitled "Opportunities and Obstacles for Venture Philanthropy in Europe". This is being done in conjunction with several prominent European universities and the results will be presented at the EVPA Annual Conference to be held in London on 15th June 2005, in conjunction with the Annual EVCA Meeting. For more information please refer to the [EVPA website](#).

The water supply pipeline

The other objective of the initiative was to fund equipment for a local school and the refurbishment of the water supply pipeline serving a group of villages at the foot of Mt Kilimanjaro. The existing pipeline dates from British colonial times and, unsurprisingly, has now corroded away reducing the water supply to a trickle. As a result the people of the village are literally drinking mud. The water currently drawn is the colour of gravy; it is unfit for human consumption because the water source is also used by cattle and it is extremely dangerous as a result of bacterial and parasitic pollution.

The villagers have had a technical survey done by the Regional Water Engineer and we have involved Water Aid, a specialised UK charity, to ensure the proposed works are correctly specified. Water Aid has confirmed that there are no major technical issues that could lead it to fail. The participants to the trek advanced funding to start equipping the school and start the work on the water supply pipeline. This means the villagers did not have to wait until after the trek to start deriving benefit from our effort.

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The initiative was a success: our group of 17 successfully completed the trek up Mount Kilimanjaro. Current estimates put the total amount raised by all participants as approaching €300,000. This will go towards the EVPA, the Masai village of Tinga Tinga through Friends of Tanzania and charities chosen by the participants individually.

Please read more in the section of this website "News & Research/Press Releases and Articles".