

THE SYNAPSE MARKET ACCESS FUND

The Synapse Market Access Fund addresses the problem of global poverty by funding trading networks to bridge the gap between poor producers and markets. Synapse makes investment-grade grants and cultivates long-term financial relationships with scalable initiatives, helping to build the strength and capacity of grassroots producers and rural communities.

Synapse operates on the cutting edge of philanthropy by applying investment strategies to charitable giving, identifying organizations with viable business models and innovative approaches to opening new markets and cultivating opportunities for grassroots producer products.

Candidates for funding in this new model of venture philanthropy are measured by three fundamental criteria:

- Scalability
- Sustainability
- Impact

With these pillars in place, modest initiatives grow into robust and far-reaching market access solutions. And once funded, investments are carefully monitored, guided and supported by Synapse in order to achieve long term success and self sufficiency

Identifying the Needs: Grassroots Producers and Trading Networks

There are currently over one billion self-employed workers in the global informal economy, operating without a social safety net and almost totally disengaged from their nation's formal structures of taxation and regulation. Yet these workers are an integral part of a globalizing economy. "Grassroots producers" are the working poor in the informal economy.

Throughout the developing world, grassroots producers have banded together to form grassroots producer organizations (GPOs), which build the collective capacity of poor producers to leverage capital and facilitate trade.

The advent of microcredit investment has made capital available to GPOs around the world. GPOs have used this capital to invest in productive assets and to produce an array of consumer and commodity goods. Yet while microcredit has addressed fundamental financing issues, it remains inadequate to meet the broader needs of market development. So, despite the powerful growth engine of microcredit, GPOs have not fulfilled their commercial potential due to their lack of market access.

Trade Barriers

GPOs face numerous barriers to market participation, including a lack of market information, inadequate technical capacities, serious policy barriers, exploitative relationships, and the under-capitalization of infrastructure. The formal business sector circumvents these challenges through trade associations, chambers of commerce and special interest groups that facilitate global trade and investment. No such support exists for poor producers.

Reliable access to regional and global markets is critical to long-term income growth and the alleviation of poverty and subsistence living.

The Synapse Value Proposition

Despite the great potential of trading networks, multilateral organizations and other donor sources are

only just beginning to explore trading networks as a tool in the fight against poverty.

There are currently no substantial funding mechanisms for projects that build trade infrastructure and trading networks that directly benefit grassroots producer groups. The Synapse Market Access Fund aims to fill the funding gap by raising funds to invest in trading networks for poor producers.

Synapse Founders and Sponsors

The Synapse Market Access Fund was founded in 2005 by The Global Fairness Initiative, an international NGO dedicated to nurturing innovative, scalable models that extend the benefits of globalization to poor communities. The Fund is supported and sponsored by Calvert Group Ltd, an innovative family of asset management products, including the nation's largest selection of socially responsible mutual funds; NextPoint Partners, a seed and early-stage venture capital fund based in Washington DC, and the Hawthorne Group, a private equity consulting group advising large financial institutions in the development of private equity funds and funds products. The Synapse Market Access Fund is actively soliciting more partners to join in its efforts to build markets for the working poor worldwide.

In July 2006, Synapse received a substantial gift from the Draper Richards Foundation. Synapse's Executive Director Bharat Kakkad is a Draper Richards Fellow. The organization expresses its profound appreciation to DRF for their support. (Read the press release...)

For more information, or for a full prospectus, please visit the Synapse MAF website or contact Synapse at:

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Synapse in the news

The Synapse Market Access Fund is a registered nonprofit corporation with 501(c)(3) status under fiscal sponsorship of the Global Fairness Initiative. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law