

Success story – by Etibar Khidirov



Solving social or environmental problems is not only the responsibility of the state! Many of us believe that only the state should and can solve these problems. This is not the case. Of course, the state must solve the social problems in the country, but it is also our duty as a society, as a business world, and as citizens.

Sometimes the state does not solve problems effectively and sustainably, and this does not bring a permanent solution, and the problem continues, or there are issues that the state or the government is not at all interested in solving. In such a case, we should not just sit around complaining and cursing, but take action ourselves.

“We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference”

Nelson Mandela



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As Nelson Mandela said, it is in our hands to make a difference. We can do something to solve the problems and issues that concern us in our society, not just complain about them. We can do this both individually and as a community.

Since my childhood, I always wanted to help others, to do something useful for society, and I tried to do it as individually as possible, and then I set myself a broader goal. Since my university years, I have observed that active young people are working to solve various social and environmental problems as I am, who are unable to achieve their goals due to lack of necessary support and resources, especially at an early stage.

I introduced the concept of social entrepreneurship during my first and second years at university. At that time there was an organization called the Social Business Youth Center. They held seminars about social entrepreneurship and related topics. At that time, I was participating in their seminars. With those seminars, I acknowledge social entrepreneurship. When I started to think about my career and what I wanted to do, I started to survey myself: my wishes, goals, and values. And I realized that I did not want only to earn money. I wanted to do something good in society.

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That is why I started my career as an intern at the 1st crowdfunding platform in Azerbaijan called Toxum.org based on a social business model in November 2020. When I completed the 3 months' internship program there I continued to work there as project manager till May 2022 about 2 years. I can say that Toxum.org was a school for me. I get a chance to learn social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding in new spheres in our country. It was my first career step, however, I got a chance to show my ability there.

I can cite the following as examples of my main successes there:

- Executed the “Toxum School” training initiative with remarkable success across 4 diverse regions: Sheki, Ganja, Barda, and Lankaran.
- Spearheaded the creation and publication of the pioneering “Toxum Book,” the inaugural guide on local language social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding.
- Offered expert crowdfunding consultancy to approximately 20 distinct social and social entrepreneurship projects.
- Delivered comprehensive crowdfunding training to over 10 organizations encompassing NGOs and CSOs.

When I dived into this sphere and got experience, I decided to start my own initiative. The first step was to realize my goal. I started raising the amount needed to build the web version of the platform through the crowdfunding method. Because very few

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people do crowdfunding campaigns in our country, and in a country like ours it is not easy to convince people of an idea. However, I was able to convince them of the importance of this project for the development of my community and our future.

For me, the first way to the development of society is the way of unity. As a society, we can design a better future by supporting each other. Exactly two years ago, the idea of a Destekchi Platform was born after thinking about solving this problem.

In February 2022 I founded Destekchi.org Crowdfunding and Social Entrepreneurship platform with the support of 60 supporters. I continue my career as founder and director of Destekchi platform and also work as social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding trainer and mentor.

As a society why do we need social entrepreneurship?

I have 4 answers to this question:

1. To fill the gap between needs that are not met by the government, the state and the private sector
2. To ensure the adaptation of socially excluded groups to society (the disabled, the poor, widows, convicted persons, boarding school graduates)
3. To support the reduction of poverty, unemployment, marginalization and vulnerability
4. To ensure sustainable growth and development

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