

**Academy of Givers
Annual Conference and Impact Fair 2025
Report - Recommendations and Outcomes**

The Academy of Givers' Annual Conference and Impact Fair 2025 marked its 4th edition on 25th March 2025 at Corinthia, St George's Bay. Bringing together businesses, NGOs, social enterprises, and corporate foundations, the event served as a dynamic platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and meaningful connections.

With a focus on corporate responsibility, philanthropy, and giving, the event featured insightful discussions, hands-on workshops, and networking opportunities, fostering impactful partnerships between the private and voluntary sectors. Highlights included the Impact Fair, where social purpose organisations showcased their initiatives, and the NGO Pitch Fest, which offered changemakers a stage to present their ideas to potential supporters.

During the event, the 2nd edition of the Giving Report in Malta was launched, presented by Academy of Givers' Chairman, Nathan Farrugia. This report explores the evolving landscape of philanthropy and how businesses are engaging with the NGO sector. Building on last year's findings, this year's report delves into giving trends, challenges, and opportunities in 2025, with a strong focus on the growing alignment between businesses and ESG principles.

The aim of this report is to gather key insights, outcomes, and recommendations emerging from the 2025 edition, providing businesses with actionable strategies to enhance their approaches to corporate responsibility, sustainability, and philanthropy. By fostering more effective collaborations with the NGO sector, businesses can contribute to meaningful advancements within Malta's social and environmental landscape.

The event's overarching theme, "Make it Happen!" underscored the importance of transforming ideas into action. Through engaging discussions, practical workshops, and real-world case studies, participants explored tangible methods to drive positive change.

STRATEGIES THAT WORKED

Experts in different fields were brought together for a panel discussion highlighting the strategic value of purpose-driven leadership and cross-sector collaboration in tackling pressing social challenges, while unlocking long-term economic benefits.

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca emphasised that social responsibility must be embedded in business thinking. Not an act of charity, but a shared obligation with measurable returns. To prove this fundamental point, she presented compelling data showing how inaction on issues such as child poverty, mental health, disability inclusion, and child participation costs Malta up to €2 billion annually, while proactive investment in these areas could generate approximately €1.3 billion each year in added national wealth. To drive meaningful change, leaders were urged to adopt a collaborative approach: engaging stakeholders from the outset, setting clear goals and timelines, using evidence-based planning, and continuously monitoring and evaluating outcomes.

Keith Marshall, Chief Philanthropy Officer at the SIGMA Foundation, stressed the importance of building credible partnerships based on consistent action, a clear mission, and measurable impact. Reputation, he noted, is built through delivery, not intention.

He and Olympic Athlete Neil Agius both highlighted the need to empower individuals through confidence and building experiences, such as structured training and shared challenges, to increase both engagement and resilience. Agius also underscored the importance of careful planning, mental preparation, and celebrating progress along the way to sustain momentum.

Finally, Her Excellency called for stronger collaboration between policymakers, businesses, and civil society. Governments, she argued, should act as enablers: ensuring transparency, good governance, and frameworks that allow both private and third sectors to deliver effectively. Businesses were encouraged to see social investment as a strategic imperative: one that reduces welfare dependency, builds future-ready workforces, and enhances long-term sustainability and brand value.

THE WAY FORWARD

A Fireside Chat between Academy of Givers' President Mark Weingard and Board Member Josh O'Cock focused on how Maltese businesses can play a leading role in driving meaningful social impact through strategic giving and community engagement. Mark emphasised the importance of building companies that empower employees not only professionally but also personally, through a shared sense of purpose and contribution to society.

Business leaders were encouraged to begin their journey into corporate giving by connecting with NGOs, learning from their expertise, and forming authentic, value-driven partnerships. Rather than ticking a box, giving should be intentional and impactful. Companies were also urged to support staff involvement by offering time off for volunteering, and to invest in the growth of organisations, not just causes, by providing funding and trust. Finally, the discussion called for more inclusive policies and supportive government schemes, such as tax incentives, to encourage sustained corporate social responsibility across Malta.

In the last part of the morning Conference, Fatma Samba Diouf Samoura, Secretary General of FIFA, delivered a pre-recorded speech, bringing to the audience a powerful message on inclusive leadership and the responsibility to uplift those without a voice. She defined leadership as a commitment to breaking barriers, building others up, and making tangible change.

Effective leadership, she noted, requires resilience, compassion, and strong partnerships. Crucially, Madame Samoura emphasised that real change occurs when people are empowered to take action for themselves. She called on businesses to prioritise diversity and, more importantly, inclusion, stating that while diversity brings strength, it is inclusion that drives innovation. Investing in women and underrepresented groups was highlighted as both a moral and strategic imperative. She encouraged companies to take bold risks, partner with NGOs, mentor future leaders, and embed social impact at the heart of their mission.

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

The Insight Swap workshop reinforced the importance of meaningful collaboration between NGOs and businesses. It became evident that while both sectors share the desire to create positive change, misunderstandings and differing priorities often hinder effective partnerships. Through structured discussions, the session highlighted the need for better communication, transparency, and long-term commitment to build impactful relationships.

A key takeaway was the necessity of funding NGO operational costs. Businesses often hesitate to invest in areas such as salaries and administrative expenses, despite these being crucial for NGOs to function effectively. The discussion emphasised the importance of shifting perspectives, viewing NGOs not just as recipients of aid but as experts with valuable insights that can support businesses in achieving their sustainability and ESG goals.

Another challenge identified was the competitive funding landscape. While larger NGOs tend to attract corporate support, smaller organisations often struggle with visibility and resources. The workshop encouraged businesses to seek out and engage with grassroots organisations that align with their values, fostering partnerships that are not only strategic but also deeply impactful.

Moreover, long-term partnerships emerged as a critical factor for success. Rather than one-off donations, NGOs benefit significantly from sustained support that allows for consistent impact. Businesses were encouraged to move beyond transactional relationships and invest in deeper engagement, such as volunteering opportunities, collaborative projects, and continuous dialogue.

By fostering open and honest exchanges, the Insight Swap workshop demonstrated that NGOs and businesses can work together to create shared value. Strengthening these partnerships requires mutual understanding, trust, and the willingness to recognise NGOs as essential partners in driving meaningful social and environmental change.

Conclusions.

The Academy of Givers' Annual Conference and Impact Fair 2025 reaffirmed the vital role that collaboration between businesses, NGOs, and policymakers plays in building a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable Malta. The event successfully brought together diverse voices and perspectives, generating actionable insights and inspiring examples of leadership, resilience, and innovation. From high-level discussions on the economic value of social investment to grassroots conversations around inclusive partnerships, the message was clear: meaningful change requires intention, accountability, and collective effort.

Participants were urged to move beyond transactional approaches to giving, and instead embrace strategies rooted in shared purpose, long-term engagement, and mutual trust. The importance of investing in people within businesses, NGOs, and underrepresented communities was a recurring theme, as was the call to embed diversity, inclusion, and impact at the heart of corporate culture. Government was also recognised as a key enabler, with policies and incentives that can accelerate the private sector's role in social transformation.

Ultimately, the 2025 edition of the Conference served not only as a platform for dialogue but as a launchpad for action. As Malta continues to navigate complex social and environmental challenges, the outcomes of this event provide a roadmap for how businesses can lead with purpose, partner with empathy, and contribute to a more resilient and compassionate society. Now, more than ever, it is time to move from intention to implementation and truly “Make it Happen.”