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Cover story

He's donating \$100 million to a university



eBay founder Pierre Omidyar

By Jim Hoptins USA TODAY



Success: Bhagyamma Vadla started a dairy with \$674.

She's the kind of entrepreneur he hopes to fund

Today's tech execs seek to change the world with their own form of philanthropy: Social entrepreneurship

THROW DOLLARS at programs meant to raise living standards for the world's 3 billion poor, many living on far less than \$1 a day. "We're talking about deep, intractable problems," says Gene Tempel, executive director of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

While Grameen Bank has been successful, few have tried what Omidyar seeks on such a big scale: luring risk-averse Wall Street to invest in entrepreneurs such as Bhagyamma Vadla, 26, in the Andhra Pradesh province of southern India.

She started a buffalo-milk dairy and clothes-making business with four loans totaling \$674 over the past four years, says Grameen Foundation USA. She now earns \$2.44 a day, nearly four times what she earned before the loans.

Driving social good

Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page are prime examples of the newly minted billionaires who also believe entrepreneurship can drive social good. Both 32, their wealth has soared to \$14 billion each in little more than a year. At the launch of the online giant's initial public offering last year, they said the Google Foundation might

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someday "eclipse Google itself" in world impact. Last month, they poured \$90 million into the newly launched foundation to be given to groups such as TechnoServe in Norwalk, Conn. Among its ventures, TechnoServe will sponsor a contest in Ghana whose winners will get start-up financing.

Microsoft's Gates is taking a different approach, investing money from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation into partnerships with pharmaceutical firms that otherwise might not pursue cures with little profit potential. This week's \$258 million in grants totals \$3.6 billion for global research and development since the foundation's launch in 2000.

Social entrepreneurship is also taking place in smaller ways.

Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen launched a \$5 million venture philanthropy arm in 2000 that's financing New England start-ups to boost the state's rural economy. The Barred Rock Fund's investments include Vermont Mystic Pie in Chester, Vt., a baker creating a market for Vermont apples, and jobs producing them.

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