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## Silicon Valley Retirees Build New Careers With Social Projects

By Ryan Flinn

March 22 (Bloomberg) -- Marauding elephants were a problem in the Sri Lankan town of Endagalayaya. The solution came from halfway around the globe, as former Silicon Valley software executive Charly Kleissner helped furnish electric lights that villagers use to scare off the interlopers.

“Our goal is to provide electricity to at least 100,000 people in the next five years,” said Kleissner, 50. He left his job at Ariba Inc. five years ago to work on providing renewable energy to impoverished corners of the world.

Silicon Valley is rife with people like Kleissner who got rich working for technology companies or arranging mergers. They're leaving their jobs while still relatively young and starting new careers where they can use their skills to help people in need.

“It's not just about writing a check and walking away,” said Doug Bauer, a senior vice president of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors in New York, which counsels clients on charitable giving. “It's about rolling up their sleeves.”

The trend, known as social entrepreneurship, is especially apparent in Silicon Valley and other parts of California, Bauer said. California had more millionaire residents than any other state in 2003, the most recent year for which figures are available, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The number of non-profit, private foundations in California has surged 81 percent in the past decade to 11,367.

### Sri Lanka Biomass

Social entrepreneurship expanded during the 1990s because of the wealth created by the booming economy, Bauer said. The number of millionaires in the U.S. more than tripled to 193,230 in that decade, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

In Sri Lanka, Kleissner has two organizations that back biomass energy projects -- growing crops to be used as fuel in a power generator. A third of the South Asian nation's population of 20 million has no electricity and another third has only intermittent service. His group helps remote villages restore forests with gliricidia trees and other vegetation, which in turn are used to fuel a power plant.

“These people had a hands-on approach for their businesses, and they want to see results for their charitable investments,” said Andrew Hastings, 41, vice president of the National Philanthropic Trust in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, which helps donors establish charitable funds.

George Yandell switched to full-time philanthropy in San Francisco after working as an investment banker for First Boston and Montgomery Securities. He negotiates land purchases for the Arlington, Virginia-based Nature Conservancy, which works to protect the ecology around the world.

Garcia River



One of his more prominent projects is the Garcia River Forest in Northern California, a 24,000-acre (9,700-hectare) property used as both a preserve and for commercial purposes. The public-private partnership raised \$18 million to set aside the parcel of land.

``I'm buying land and trying to get the best bang for the donor's buck," Yandell, 49, said of his job. ``Conservation is very similar to investment banking. A remarkable number of skills are transferable."

Many of the new breed of philanthropists are baby boomers who worked for years to support their families, and in the process made enough money to quit and to do something they're passionate about, said author David Bornstein. He profiled the trend in a 2004 book, ``How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas" (Oxford University Press, 336 pages, \$30).

``They think, `I'm 54 years old, extremely healthy, kids are in college, so now what do I do?'" said Bornstein, 43. ``People can spend years working for Procter & Gamble and think, `Does the world really need another type of toothpaste?'"

#### New Model

The paragon of philanthropy may be Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft Corp., whose foundation gave away \$1.36 billion in 2005. Gates has said he will reduce his role at the world's largest software maker next year to spend more time working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Another entrepreneur recognized for his philanthropy is Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, whose Grameen Bank has doled out micro-credit loans to more than 7 million borrowers.

``I believe the old model of giving away large donations not only doesn't do good, it can actually do harm," Kleissner said.

Donating big sums of money can cause dependency on handouts, he said. If no local capital is involved in the project, chances are it won't be successful, he said.

Another convert is Olana Hirsch Khan, 31. As head of sales at Google Inc., she enjoyed good pay and office perks such as gourmet meals, massages and doctor visits. In her new job as chief operating officer of San Francisco-based Kiva Microfunds, she works in a tiny office with second-hand furniture.

She's delighted with the change she made after six years at the Internet search engine, which is ranked the best place to work in the U.S. by Fortune Magazine. Now she helps entrepreneurs in developing nations obtain loans, something she has wanted to do for a long time.

``I love working for Kiva," Khan said.

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