

## **Letter from the Founder**

I can divide my life into roughly three parts so far. The first decade of my life was filled with great luxury in Tehran, which came to a screeching halt when the 1979 Revolution forced my family to flee without preparation and without belongings. During the second decade of my life I faced financial adversity, first sharing a small studio in Paris for several years with six members of my family -- spanning three generations -- and then moving to a life of subsistence and loans in Los Angeles. The third and current part of my life, comprising almost two decades, is once again filled with life's comforts and successes and the ultimate in personal happiness: a loving, hardworking, generous husband and two wonderful healthy children. This time, however, I am armed with the knowledge of how unpredictable life can be despite education, good health, friends, wealth, and other advantages that can make one feel secure. I now believe it is mere happenstance that we are in a particular place in life, and that everything can change in the blink of an eye.

In addition, I believe we are part of the global human family. Our shared humanity knows nothing of borders or blood lines, geography or genealogy. Science has demonstrated we are all truly one people, that our supposed differences are genetically insignificant – mere shadings of the same human essence. We are each other's extended family, and still, half the world lives on less than 2 dollars a day and millions of children die of preventable and treatable diseases. Inequality abounds.

No one is protected against poverty and adversity until everyone is protected against them. Extreme poverty affects every one of us, even if we are geographically removed from the source. Disease and social unrest know no boundaries. The well-being of humanity is the joint responsibility of all humans.

So I decided to invest in those who have always been and still remain in a vulnerable place in life, the ones who suffer the most from inequality and extreme poverty. I don't believe in charitable donations. I believe in thoughtful, specific investments. In the words of the great economist Jeffrey Sachs, I want to help them “get a foot on the first rung of the development ladder” and at the same time, document their hard realities and reliable progress so that I can share them with you.

I was looking for ways to begin my work when I met President Clinton, who had just launched the Clinton Global Initiative. I asked him to allow me to be a part of his epic movement so that I may use my resources wisely. He invited me to become a CGI member. Within weeks, I met some of the most amazing leaders of the world in lengthy working sessions, started this Foundation and began forming strong partnerships with key individuals and expert organizations.

In 2007, I traveled to Kenya, where SVQF was supporting a village in its movement toward sustainable development. I felt that since we are inviting you to participate in SVQF's work, I needed to be on the ground to witness first-hand the improvements and to see the faces of the people whose lives are being affected -- for the better and, I hope, forever. It was on this first trip to Africa that I realized “tangible philanthropy” really benefits everyone involved: measurable results for the communities striving to remove themselves from extreme poverty, and the opportunity to see it, touch it, and feel it for you.

Sanam Vaziri Quraishi