Panel Overview.

The focus of the panel will be African models of financial support to rural communities compared with the dominant Western models of grant-making and fund-raising. Some of African models such as "harambee" -which is a concept and a practice - embody ideas of mutual assistance, joint effort and community self-reliance, which is basically an informal development strategy of the people, by the people in partnership with other stakeholders both internally and externally - as well as other forms of self-help like the merry-go-round or Tontines will be analyzed through theoretical and practical examples based on case studies and on comparative analysis. All these practices despite their different models involve social groups at the village level, such as work mates, women groups, youth groups. With the aim of raising a specific amount of money on the basis of an articulated membership system.

An additional goal is to ask the participants to think about similar models that are retraceable in the Western world as non dominant patterns of economic behavior - and compare these experiences and their mental maps, anthropological and cultural implications - with the African case studies and scenarios. A final and complementary aim is to analyze the multiple effects of these models might have in different sectors of social life as a pattern of response to the challenges of the economic crisis of the present.

The participants and the audience will be asked to focus on financing models that are strictly related to culture and anthropological contexts and to be prepared to discuss innovation while dealing with long term traditions. The participants will be involved in a "de-paysement" process vis a vis the traditional concepts and practices of the Western world. The speakers will share an experience of de-constructing and re-constructing the relation between tradition and innovation non only through the presentation of case studies, through statistics and numbers but also by experimenting "old-new" financial models and tools in action but also through the voices of people who have experienced them and generated social movements as well as education and research programs - case studies. We can define this experience as "the circle of life", since knowledge and action are inextricably linked. The outcome will be not only a publication but the implementation of a research center on harambee which will enhance international cooperation as well as the programs of research and professional development at the level of the international Master program in Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship in collaboration with Indiana University Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University as well as with the University of Eldoret in Kenya where the Harambee Center is located. The Center will be part of a larger project o in the framework of an International Doctoral Program in Global Studies in Philanthropy at the University of Bologna, whose aim is to attract new energies in this field of research.

The relevance of this session concerns basically the active role of comparative knowledge in the framework of complex relations between traditional models and innovative tools, with a specific focus on evolutionary African models and experiences whose outcome is the empowerment and the increasing consciousness of people involved in this process. The long-term perspective which characterized the approach of the proposed panel is of crucial importance for the strategic involvement and participation of grant-makers and foundations. In this context they are no more the only decision makers and the unique drivers of innovation but also the catalysts of new-old forms of energy that are already at work in these experiences and can play the role of engines of innovation through the empowerment of long term rooted traditions. this is the reason why not only scholars but also experts and executives from Foundations, working in Africa are invited to participate.

Paper abstracts.
This paper will present the constraints and opportunities of the institutional development of the Harambee Center at the Moi University highlighting the potential of a program aimed to enhance community collaboration while developing large scale partnerships. The paper will trace the roots of the center in the local context as well as the historical roots and model of this practice that is strictly related to the history of Kenyan historical development along many centuries.

This paper presents harambee as a Kenyan indigenous strategy for self-help practices. The term will be defined on the basis of its origin and finally its contribution to development in modern times. Harambee in the last decade has faced many “tribulations” due to its misuse and abuse drawing to a lot of criticism. The argument will be that despite the many problems that have been associated with harambee, it is a positive economic tool and cultural practices that can strengthen community identities. This paper will present positive case studies and models of application of the harambee in several fields like public health and health care, sustainable tourism community development and productivity. The case studies will be related to the institutional development of the center in the articulation between local need and international collaboration.

The author will discuss Alternative Welfare in Multicultural Lebanon and analyze the constraints and the limits of harambee and other similar practices. In both cases the traditional risk pooling mechanisms (Tontines in West Africa and Harambee in Kenya) will be analyzed and discussed. The aim of conceptualizing a model of welfare which is in no way rudimentary: the actors involved are actively engaging with the developmental discourse building bridges between “traditional” and “modern”.

Visions of social justice, between religious and “sectarian” welfare and credit networks and labor-sharing systems that transcend the religious discourse. The questions addressed to the audience will be related to main issues how to find a way to shift private donations? How to articulate positively the relation between tradition and innovation avoiding manipulation and misuse of practices that are basically participative and “horizontal”.