



THE DANISH FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY NEIGHBORHOOD MOTHERS – WOMEN IN JOB

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Public finances are under pressure, and there is a great need to rethink both the development and financing of new welfare models. In Denmark, many refugee and immigrant women live in isolation, without contact with the public system, without networks outside the family and without job and education. Several of these are also exposed to domestic violence or negative social control. This affects not only the woman but the whole family and the Danish society. A Danish study points out that up to 80,000 refugee and immigrant women in Denmark need a Neighborhood Mother.

In the Danish Foundation for Social Responsibility, we help refugee and immigrant women through our peer to peer program “Neighborhood Mothers” to become part of the Danish society, so that we can improve their and next generation’s opportunities to become well integrated and self-supporting. We work with empowerment, family structure, health, cultural differences, education gap and job preparation.

The initiative is run professionally in the Danish Foundation for Social Responsibility and is supported by 800 volunteers (Danish-

speaking immigrant women) organized in local communities across the country.

The initiative acts as a social enzyme between the public, private and civil society and cooperate with the municipalities, the state and the private companies and the initiative has both human and socio-economic perspectives.

We have worked with our concept “Neighborhood Mothers” for the last ten years and therefore we have in-depth knowledge of the target group. For the past two years, we have worked purposefully to build a social impact bond, which must specifically get the women into work. We aim to start this program in as many municipalities as possible 1/9 2019.

The concept “Neighborhood Mothers” itself was developed, on the basis of a request from the Danish Ministry of Integration.

Our goal was to create a community-based program that was driven primarily by volunteers. We wanted our education and training to allow the women to participate actively in their communities, get in touch with the public system, get closer to jobs and education, and not least enable them to help other women who come to the country.

We work according to the following model:

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Building up the personal foundation for the vulnerable women through empowerment:

- Building up network – social and professional
- Building up knowledge about society
- Encouraging the women to take action
- Creating safe spaces for reflection - Reflection on all kinds of dilemmas due to be a woman, a mother and a citizen.

It is the secretariat of the Danish Foundation for Social Responsibility who educates and train the women and subsequently it is also the secretariat that is the back office for all the local associations that carry out the daily volunteer work.

From the start, the biggest challenges have been to recruit volunteers and to make the local associations work independently. However, this is exactly what we have become super good at - after 10 years. Our Neighborhood Mothers are now organized in 50 associations in 30 municipalities and they speak together in addition to Danish - 56 different languages.

In our social impact bond job program, it is the Danish Foundation for Social Responsibility that builds a bridge between the companies, the municipality, the women and the investors. The job program is based on the Neighborhood Mothers' basic education, which, however, has been expanded with job-oriented teaching and internship. In

addition, anchoring and retaining the women is ensured through the voluntary concept that job seekers become part of locally. The biggest challenge in the job program has been the municipalities' willingness to invest. Not because there is no money for it or because they do not think the program is good, but because they find it difficult to understand the thinking behind social investment, and also think it is a bit difficult. One of the biggest barriers is that the savings occur in one department in the municipality but must be paid from another.

Social investments as a concept and method is new in Denmark, and most municipalities are still talking about the social investment programs as an expense instead of as a saving. Many municipalities also do not understand the idea that an investor runs the financial risk for them. They are accustomed to taking responsibility themselves - even for all those they do not succeed in - and whatever it costs.

Our Neighborhood Mothers will continue to work as a voluntary organization. Our large social impact bond job project is also being launched but initially on a much smaller scale than we first had ambitions for. Our pilot projects that precede the actual start-up of our ordinary job processes have gone really well which means that we have got 20-30% of the women in the job program in work. These women have never been to the labor market before and several of the municipalities, we cooperate with, have a hit rate of 0 with the same target group. It is easy to measure the effect of the program. Either the women come in jobs

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or they don't. Our initiative changes normal practice by combining a job-oriented effort with voluntary community-based work, as well as adding an investor who runs the risk for Danish municipalities. This gives (if the municipalities say yes) the possibility of a previously unseen scale which in the long term can really remedy many kinds of welfare challenges

As previously stated, we have to start less ambitious than we first thought (because of the municipalities), but we will get started and there is no doubt that the program in the long term is scalable either as a social investment or as a second player offer to the municipalities. We recommend that, if you are an NGO or another kind of entrepreneur outside the public system, ask for advice from us or someone who has tried it before and ask the municipalities up front to check if they are really interested in the product / method and in social investments before you build a big project, otherwise it will be both expensive and resource-intensive to build a social impact bond and you have to be aware that most investors are not willing to pay for development, start-up and transaction costs as well as they would like to see concrete results before they invest. Maybe you will need philanthropic financing in the beginning, which further delays the process. It takes up to 2 years to build a social impact bond.

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Biography of Author

Thit Aaris-Høeg

CEO, Fonden for Social Ansvar

Thit Aaris-Høeg has extensive experience in setting up and executing on intervention programmes. Thit has been the CEO of Fonden for Socialt Ansvar for the last 4,5 years and specializes in building and rebuilding organizations. In addition, for many years she has worked as a manager/leader with both development, financing and operation of major projects both in the private and public sector. She is highly entrepreneurial and has many years of experience in cooperation between the public sector, the private sector and civil society. She has previously worked for many years as a manager/leader in both the private, the public and the civil sector.

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