

## Forge: Helping to revitalize African communities

[Refugees revitalizing African communities](#) from [JD Lasica](#) on [Vimeo](#).



JD Lasica

One of the most impressive people I met at the recent [Social Capital Markets conference](#) in San Francisco was Kjersten Erickson, executive director of [Forge](#), who founded the international NGO six years ago when she was a junior at Stanford University. Forge works with refugees and war-affected populations in Africa to bring some stability to their lives.

“We provide a support system to allow refugees and post-conflict communities to rebuild and revitalize themselves,” Kjersten says in this 4-minute video interview.

Forge helps about 60,000 refugees a year by offering locally tailored solutions to help them achieve self-sufficiency. The Forge team helps runs libraries, solar-powered computer training centers, agricultural loan programs and income-generating activities that “contribute to a level of economic independence that has proven to be critical to break the cycle of war and poverty in Africa,” she says.



The [Forge site](#) lets you engage with specific refugee projects or social entrepreneurs and lets you chart their progress with blog updates directly from the field or with unfiltered monthly progress reports. FORGE primarily targets assistance to youths, preschool students, women, the elderly and vulnerable in such countries as Zambia, Botswana, the Congo, Rwanda, Angola, Burundi, Sudan and elsewhere.

Today the Jenzabar Foundation announced it was recognizing FORGE as the inaugural winner of the Social Media Leadership Award “due to their exceptional understanding and utilization of social media technologies to support their organization’s current and future endeavors.”

Apologies to Kjerstin, pronounced Sher-stin, whose pronunciation I muffed at the end.