



2023 Partnership Exchange

30 January 2023, 08.00 AM - 01.00 PM (EST) (virtually)

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Background

The 2023 ECOSOC Partnership Forum was held on 31 January 2023, under the main theme of the 2023 ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), “*Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels*”.

The 2023 [Partnership Exchange](#), organized by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs virtually on 30 January 2023, the day prior the ECOSOC Partnership Forum, provided a space for Member States and other stakeholders to share knowledge and expertise in the design and implementation of partnerships that will contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Partnership Exchange included an opening segment, three sessions on different aspects on partnering for the SDGs, and a closing segment.

Opening segment

Mr. Navid Hanif, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, opened the Partnership Exchange with a keynote address. Mr. Hanif expressed the urgency to rescue the SDGs as compounding crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the war in Ukraine, have pushed them into a critical state. Mr. Hanif such crises are worsening the inequalities between and within countries while disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable populations.

Mr. Hanif implored that financing for the SDGs is critical to their implementation, requiring \$4.2 trillion more per year. Mr. Hanif explained the Secretary-General’s proposed SDG Stimulus to tackle the high cost of debt and risk of debt distress; expand contingency financing to countries in need; and scale up long-term affordable financing for development and align financial flows with the SDGs.

Mr. Hanif highlighted that partnerships must be built and strengthened to unlock new and combine existing resources to drive implementation of the SDGs. The [Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance \(GISD Alliance\)](#) convened by the Secretary-General is a key example of a public-private partnership that will scale up investment and finance for sustainable development. In addition, DESA and ECOSOC work to highlight multi-stakeholder partnerships through the [SDG Investment Fair](#) and [Development Cooperation Forum](#). Mr. Hanif again expressed the importance of strengthened partnerships as a crucial step towards the implementation of the SDGs, calling for bold forward-looking actions by all stakeholders in attendance.

Session 1: Building Partnerships to unlock financing for the SDGs (08:30 – 09:45 AM EST)

Mr. Arif Neky, Senior Advisor, United Nations Strategic Partnerships Coordinator, SDG Partnership Platform, United Nations Kenya moderated the first session of the Partnership Exchange.

Ms. Serena Li, Research Lead, World Resources Institute (WRI) started the session with a presentation of the WRI's recently published report "[Unlocking Early-Stage Financing for SDG Partnerships](#)". Ms. Li explained that the report focused on the convergence of two main priorities for the global community: partnering for the Global Goals (SDG 17) and sustainable financing by researching partnerships with transformative ambitions working to transform market systems through innovative profit-generating business models.

Through this research, it was discovered that the majority of funding comes from grant funding less than \$2 million. In addition, partnerships typically see the most funding early on in the partnership and less as the partnership grows. This point, when the partnership is too large to be considered a start up and too small to be considered a high reward, low risk investment is coined as the "missing middle".

Ms. Li closed her presentation with four recommendations that came out of the research ; 1) funders should adopt financing strategies that are patient, flexible and risk tolerant to bridge the missing middle; 2) funders should be more open in their investment decisions and not prioritize strict requirements; 3) funders should increase transparency and accountability of their financing commitments and impact performance with set impact measurement and management processes; and finally 4) partnerships should secure 1-2 long-term funders, work with an acceleration platform and build from the success factors identified in WRI's report "[How Partnerships Accelerate Sustainable Development Goals: A Time for Transformative Partnerships](#)".

Mr. Neky asked the panel to consider barriers and opportunities for partnerships; promising innovative approaches; and their insights and learnings for successful sustained partnerships to unlock financing for the SDGs. Additionally, audience members submitted their questions to the panelists. **Mr. Lee Karuri, Trustee, KEPSA Foundation and Chairman of the Finance, Trade and Investments Network of Kenya FINTRINET** explained that in Kenya public-private partnerships are the key to achieving guaranteed funding for SDG implementation. **Ms. Lisa Kurbiel, Head of Secretariat, Joint SDG Fund**, identified the challenge for a large funder to find smaller projects to fund, something the SDG Fund tries to facilitate in blended finance. **Ms. Marianne Mwaniki, Board Trustee, The Partnership Initiative**, highlighted the need break down siloes, egos and conflicts to unlock investments for partnerships built on trust, transparency and mutual benefit. **Mr. Julio Worman, Programme Analyst, Global Engagement Partnerships and Resource Mobilization Division, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**, underscored the need to coordinate strategies, share knowledge, empower and listen to all

voices in order to avoid the cost of competing instead of collaborating. **Ms. Abha Thorat-Shah, Executive Director, Social Finance at British Asian Trust**, shared her experience of successful outcome-based finance to utilize resources in a partnership to increase education in India.

In addition, the audience submitted their questions to the panel. When asked “how to move from words into action?”, the panelists emphasized the need for legal contracts with specific measurements, timelines and accountability measures built in. The need for open communication and accountability was echoed throughout the session.

In closing, the panelists reinforced the benefit added by blended finance to create long-term sustainable partnerships for SDGs. Panelists called for more widely available technical assistance, impact measuring and education on the SDGs, particularly the language used when discussing them. Overall, the key to financing the SDGs is innovative, transformative, sustainable partnerships prioritizing collaboration over competition.

Session 2: Build partnerships at the country level to leverage resources from all sectors of society (10:00 – 11:15 AM EST)

Dr. Darian Stibbe, Executive Director, The Partnering Initiative, moderated the second session of the Partnership Exchange. Dr. Stibbe opened the session by emphasizing the importance of engaging all societal partners to combine resources to deliver on local and global goals. These partnerships require trust, an enabling environment, mechanisms and skills to turn aspirations into on-the-ground action. Throughout the session, Dr. Stibbe was incorporating questions from the audience.

Dr. Stibbe asked the panelists to reflect on their experiences building the trust needed to partner at scale. **Ms. Celeste Connors, Executive Director, Hawai'i Green Growth Local2030 Hub**, highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability which can be built by representing local needs; maintaining commitments longer than political cycles; impact measuring and including local communities, youth, and Indigenous cultures in processes. **Mr. Yunus Arikan, Director of Global Advocacy, ICLEI World Secretariat**, added the need to engage local, national, regional and international stakeholders in partnerships to create trust at each level. **Ms. Priscilla Jazmin Miranda Garcia, Development Coordination Officer, RCO Mexico**, underscored the benefit of flexible policies in partnerships, especially when there may be a history of distrust. **Ms. Florence Syevuo, Co-Chair, Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies Kenya**, stated that it is essential to include various stakeholders in national processes to build trust over time. **Ms. Danielle Jean-Pierre Figueroa, Research and Partnerships Director, ALIARSE**, shared that trust is usually diminished when there is lacking participation of key groups in partnerships, such as youth, civil society or private sector. **Mr. Carlos Applewhaite, Development Analyst, Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat, Planning Institute of Jamaica**, identified Voluntary Local Reviews as a way to build trust with communities and private sector as they can showcase work that may not always be recognized. **Ms. Shahamin**

Zaman, Executive Director, UN Global Compact Bangladesh, called for a mechanism for MSMEs in the private sector to report the work they do for the SDGs to increase the understanding of the private sector's engagement in SDG implementation.

All panelists repeatedly emphasized the absolute need for transparent, honest communication using a shared language. In addition, the need to consider resources beyond finances was highlighted. Furthermore, the need for accountability mechanisms within partnerships was underscored as essential. The panelists agreed on the need to include all sectors and stakeholders in partnerships in order to build long-lasting effective partnerships.

Session 3: Unleashing the creativity, knowledge and energy of youth for multi-stakeholder partnerships (11:30 AM – 12:45 PM EST)

Ms. Susanne Salz, Project Leader, Partnerships2030, moderated the final session of the Partnership Exchange.

Ms. Salz first asked each panelist what the key resources are that young people can bring to partnerships. **Ms. Inés Yábar, Lead Fellow, Next Generation Fellows, UN Foundation**, shared the benefit of youth's adaptability, resilience, inclusivity and ability to truly listen to what others have to say to build stronger partnerships. **Mr. Emmanuel Cosmas Msoka, UNICEF Youth Advocate**, expanded on the benefit of youth creativity, including new and varied perspectives that can break out of the traditional ways of thinking, such as the use of social media to mobilize development actors. **Mr. Kimbowa Richard, Programme Manager, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development**, emphasized the ability of youth to mobilize each other and increase action for the SDGs.

Next, Ms. Salz asked panelists to consider the barriers to youth involvement. **Mr. Satish Bidaisee, Professor, St. George's University, Grenada**, shared that age limitations and restrictions hinder youth's ability to be involved. **Ms. Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales**, highlighted that youth involvement can feel like it is "for show", leading to frustration as youth are being placated. **Ms. Christa Schweng, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** shared the ways that EESC is working to combat some of these obstacles, such as fostering peer exchanges, mentoring programmes and working to increase youth voices in decision making.

Panelists echoed the need for mechanisms and structures to be put in place to ensure successful participation of youth in decision-making, implementation and other processes. In addition, panelists highlighted the necessity of engaging youth on their platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok. In order to meaningfully engage youth in partnerships, there has to be increased awareness among youth. Furthermore, youth partnerships and organizations must be given the opportunity to receive funding.

Finally, Ms. Salz asked panelists how to avoid tokenism in order to create real, effective partnerships. Mr. Bidaisee identified the importance of engaging youth beyond consultation.

Ms. Msoka highlighted the need for youth-led partnerships to ensure their participation is valued. Ms. Howe emphasized the need to engage youth at all levels of development. Mr. Kimbowa added that there should be multiple opportunities at all levels to for youth participation. Ms. Schweng again highlighted the need to listen to what youth has to say. Ms. Yábar added that young people need to be brought in at the same level, as experts, not just as the youth representative.

Closing and launch of Partnership Campaign towards 2023 SDG Summit

To close the Partnership Exchange, Ms. Salz introduced the launch a **Partnership Campaign** in the lead up to the [2023 SDG Summit](#). The campaign will be a collaboration between the [2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator](#), an initiative by UN DESA and The Partnering Initiative, and [Partnerships2030](#), with generous funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Campaign will host in-person and virtual events aimed to raise awareness of partnership enabling factors and gain insights and experiences from sectors and stakeholders. The Campaign's objective is to inspire action for building new and strengthening existing partnerships for the SDGs.