

# **Powerful and Innovative Approaches for Financing Development**

## **Commons: Social and Solidarity Economies, Shared Societies, Cooperatives and the Internet**

**New York, UN Headquarters, February 10, 2015**

Summary report of the outcomes from the side event sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Brazil and France, the Mont-Blanc Meetings Association, International Forum of the Social and Solidarity Economy Entrepreneurs, the International Cooperative Alliance, and the Commons Cluster of the United Nations Non Governmental Organizations Major Group.

### **Report Prepared by The Commons Cluster**

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## Executive Summary

These summary descriptions provide brief highlights of the key information and ideas presented by each panelist during the workshop. For more details, please see the full report that follows this summary. You can also watch a video of the Workshop by going to: <http://webtv.un.org/search/powerful-and-innovative-approaches-for-financing-development-workshop/4043522839001?term=2015-02-10>

On February 10, 2015, a workshop was held at UN headquarters in New York City to highlight a variety of innovative, 'commons-based' approaches for financing development of the Post-2015 Agenda. During the event, representatives from each of the sponsoring organizations shared their practical experience and unique perspectives on ways of ending poverty in all its forms and by engaging the innovation, knowledge and expertise of civil society around the world.

This commons approach to financing sustainable development includes the development of Social and Solidarity Economies (SSE), Shared Societies, Cooperatives, the Internet, the Sharing Economy and other innovative means of developing, managing and equitably sharing resources.

These focus on methods of financing by and for people and communities at the grassroots level and are a crucial aspect of the larger *paradigm shift* now occurring *socially, economically and environmentally* throughout the world. This is characterized by a growing acknowledgement of the importance of individual people and an emerging culture, based on sharing, caring and community. But in order to live up to their full potential of providing important and urgently needed innovative sources of financing for sustainable development, they will need to be better supported by governments and by the UN system in partnership around the globe.

Following are summary highlights of each presentation. The full report (beginning on page 10) contains a wealth of specific insights into the value of the various means of finance that our presenters have described. The sponsoring organizations of this workshop encourage the inclusion of these powerful and innovative complementary financing approaches into the Final Agreement on Financing for Development to be adopted in Addis Ababa in July, 2015.

### **Introduction**—Lisinka Ulatowska: *Coordinator, Commons Cluster*

The UN has set itself the task to adopt a Final Agreement on Financing the ending of poverty everywhere within the coming 4 months. This workshop was held to:

1. Draw attention to powerful forms of financing to end poverty that come largely from civil society and that can be used ***in addition to ODA***, and other means of financing already being considered at the UN;
2. Clarify how governments can enable these to flourish each in their own right;

3. Ensure these are explicitly mentioned in both the Final Agreement on Financing and in the programme of work of the High Level Political Forum that will oversee our progression to a sustainable world by 2030.

It is critical that we involve financing by people and communities from the bottom up, because a paradigm shift is emerging from a power structure dominated by ownership by a few to one where all people count. The latter is based on caring, sharing and a sense of community. By embracing the power and creativity inherent in grass roots sharing, we are unleashing the wherewithal for all to help to alleviate poverty everywhere and regenerate nature.

**Five Reasons to support the Social and Solidarity Economy in the Post-2015 Agenda**—François Gave, *First Councilor for Development, Permanent Mission of France*

François Gave, speaking for the French Government pointed to ways the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) complemented the market economy in ways that could be game-changing: 1) It is not profit driven; 2) it is bottom-up and people-centered; and 3) it seeks to address the plague of poverty in an environmentally-friendly manner.

Therefore, it can

1. Help to deal with extreme poverty and give the poor power over their own lives;
2. Build a sense of shared agenda, ownership and trust;
3. Handle public goods and commons with great expertise for the public good;
4. Ensure all have access to the types of technologies they need;
5. Make a real difference for those most in need through community-based lending.

The SSE can and is already making a great difference in environmentally friendly practices; creating decent jobs via cooperatives; providing access to energy to the poor; building sustainable cities, creating gender equity, food security, universal health coverage and innovative financing. The post-2015 agenda can bring the SSE forward.

**The Role of Government in Shared Societies: Means of Implementing the Social and Solidarity Economy**—Marilyn Fowler, *Professor of Consciousness and Sustainable Development, John F. Kennedy University*

The term *Shared Society* originates with the *World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid*, a distinguished group of over ninety former Heads of State and Government. These world leaders agreed on ten broad commitments that delineate ways in which governments can create enabling environments for a Shared Society at national and regional levels, which can serve as catalysts for long-term change.

*Commitments II and V read (in part) Create opportunities for marginalized groups to give input about their needs; Deal with economic disadvantages and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources.* Providing universal access to the Internet is one of the most effective ways governments can enable dialogue with all segments of society and ensure that all people have access to available resources for education, communications, innovation, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building.

*Commitment VI reads (in part) Ensure an equal-opportunity education system that develops the 21st century knowledge, skills, capacities children most need; To prepare children to become productive, peaceful, aware citizens, three types of education are urgently needed, beginning at the earliest levels: Education in peaceful conflict resolution, technology-related education, and sustainability-related education.*

*Commitments VIII and X read (in part) Create a shared vision of society at local and national level; Ensure all communities are protected from abuse, and violence.* Creating a shared vision for the Post-2015 era requires rethinking old values that no longer serve the new desired reality. The new goal of balanced *sustainable* development requires an equal valuing of *all* forms of capital—including human and natural capital—as well as financial capital. If we truly value natural capital, we also must strengthen legal structures at all levels to protect and steward Earth resources.

### **Finance as a ‘Common’: The Role of the Social and Solidarity Economy—**

Nicole Alix, *Board Member, Mont Blanc Meetings Association*

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) has developed powerful collective action in finance through cooperative banks, cooperatives, mutual societies and associations. But while SSE is ‘an economic giant’ it is still ‘a political dwarf’, particularly on the financial level. Their specific role should be more largely recognized.

SSE finance has a long tradition of using innovative means to finance the real economy and local development, based on the needs of people, and has been very resilient during the financial crises since 2008. Unfortunately, innovative finance promoted by social and solidarity economy cannot scale up easily because the financial regulation and types of financial tools used in finance today are more and more short-term oriented.

To increase finance for development, we need not only new and innovative means of finance, but also a sustainable financial regulation—other ways of valuing than fixing prices where financial prices are not good indicators.

Mont Blanc Meetings proposes building an action plan to promote finance as a ‘common’ with the UN Major Group Commons Cluster and the two Leading Groups, dedicated respectively to SSE and to Innovative Financing for Development.

### **Financing and Implementing Sustainable Development:**

**Contributions of the Co-operative Movement**—Rodrigo Gouveia,  
*Director of Policy, International Co-operative Alliance*

Rodrigo Gouveia stressed that cooperatives are based on values and principles. They are owned and democratically controlled by their members (one billion worldwide). The income they generate for their members, workers and clients, stays within the communities where they are located, for they are locally owned. They thus foster development by addressing the real economic and social needs of members in the real economy. The 300 largest co-operatives alone have combined annual revenues of USD 2.2 trillion. In this way, they create *virtuous circles* as economic activity generates wealth that leads to development of people and their communities which further generates increasing economic activity.

Co-operatives educate their members and are active in all sectors of the economy. They can thereby help to implement all of the sustainable development goals. By recognizing co-operatives as a well-suited model to finance and implement sustainable development, the UN will encourage national governments, to create the adequate legal, economic and social conditions for them to help implement their national sustainable development strategies.

**Creating Sufficient Means to Finance Sustainable Development**—Rob Wheeler,  
*UN Representative, Global Ecovillage Network and the Commons Cluster*

Rob Wheeler described a number of innovative means to provide the resources needed to scale up Financing for Development and achieve the SDGs and Post 2015 Agenda. He suggested that the UN Member States develop a Matrix of Financing Options such as were included in the Annex of the Elements Paper, and including especially Innovative Means, that governments could then choose from to develop a financing strategy that is sufficient for each of them to be able to achieve the SDGs and other agreements made to date.

One of the best means to finance development in cities, particularly in developing countries, would be to tax property rather than buildings, sales or income. Because the value of land increases dramatically as cities develop they can provide much revenue that can then be used to provide public services and transition to a sustainability. Mr. Wheeler said that in Doha the Leading Group on Innovative Means of Finance called for a change in scale in implementing innovative financing mechanisms for development. Now all countries ought to begin to use such innovative means and they ought to be greatly scaled up and rolled out around the world.

A global protocol, convention, or some type of a partnership initiative also ought to be established to assist all countries in phasing out all harmful and unsustainable subsidies as soon as possible.

The Global Ecovillage Network is calling for the international community to support and fund the development of a global network of regional resource and service centers to provide support, resources and training to local communities in the area. This would provide a great means to support capacity development, infrastructure, and technology transfer in rural and impoverished urban areas and should thus be included as a primary means to scale up resources and implementation in the FfD and Post 2015 processes.

**The Role of Internet Communications Technologies as a Means of Delivering Sustainable Development**—Maurício Fávero, *Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Brazil*

The Brazilian representative, Counsellor Maurício Fávero, called for access to ICTs, and particularly the internet, to be mainstreamed and up-scaled throughout the SDGs, and especially Goal 17 on means of implementation. The social and economic gains stemming from their phenomenal global expansion still eludes the poorest populations of the world, who are precisely the ones who could benefit from it the most.

Internet access is key in mobilizing resources to finance sustainable development, particularly when related to Science, Technology, Innovation and Capacity Building. Brazil is thus calling on the UN to adopt a stand-alone chapter on STI and capacity building in Addis Ababa to more fully support the structural and systemic impact of ICTs on development, as is already done with trade, debt, global governance and other systemic issues.

As stated in the Tunez Agenda, the UN Member States must focus on measures to enhance the involvement of the UN in overcoming the lack of effective financial mechanisms to support the development of and infrastructure for ICTs.

**Rwanda: Providing Universal Access to the Internet**—*Jeanne d’Arc Byaje, Deputy Permanent Representative of Rwanda*

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is crucially important for Rwanda and is enshrined in its Vision 2020 plan, adopted in 2000 in an effort to shift from an agricultural based economy to a knowledge based economy, with ICT at its core. Rwanda is a landlocked country and its lack of access to the sea has resulted in it having a poor transportation system thus making access to the Internet particularly important.

Business, government, and banking are now conducted largely through the use of the Internet; and service delivery is a key priority as Rwanda does not have oil and other mineral resources on which to base its national economy. Thus, forty percent of the income in Rwanda comes from service delivery, making access to information through the Internet especially important.

Rwanda has installed fiber optics, but the needed investment in smart phones will probably still be a long time coming. However Rwanda already has universal health coverage and now with mobile phones health workers can even reach people in remote areas. In Rwanda access to the Internet is thus as much a valued public service as is access to energy and water; and Wifi services are provided free in public places and on public transportation.

**Valuing Contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Sustainable Development—**  
Roberto Mukaro Borrero (Taino), *UN Programs Consultant, International Indian Treaty Council; Organizing Partner, Focal Point for Indigenous Peoples Major Group*

Indigenous Peoples are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups; however, they are, as well, active participants and partners who are making important contributions to sustainable development. Indigenous peoples are identified as custodians of many of the world's most biologically diverse areas and verifiably hold a wealth of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices on ecosystem management and technologies, traditional health systems and medicinal plants; agricultural production and food systems, local crops and seeds.

While these realities are increasingly recognized among mainstream sectors, indigenous peoples seldom share in the benefits of the commercialization of their knowledge. Indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, have a proven track record of responsible management of natural resources. Their contributions to sustainable development should not only be recognized and respected, but also celebrated as models of good practices that have a huge potential to benefit all mankind.

**Summary Statement—***Lisinka Ulatowska, Coordinator, Commons Cluster*

In summary Lisinka Ulatowska pointed to the enormous power that could be unleashed if all of the approaches discussed could cross-fertilize one another.

This could be done by expanding the concept of the Online Global Platform suggested by the UN Secretary General in para. 125 of his Synthesis Report. Instead of being dedicated to technology transfer alone, it would be dedicated to the sustainable wellbeing of all people and nature. It would focus on the worldwide exchange of know-how, education, best practices, goods and services for free or for a fee.

All people, organizations, governments and UN Agencies could have a web page on this Platform. Here all would outline their individual sustainable development strategies, what they need from others to implement it; and any contributions they can make. A search engine would be constantly active connecting those in need with those with something to contribute.



This *synergetic action would create an ever more powerful engine for economic growth directed at the well-being of all people and nature..* Such a structure based on caring, sharing and community is likely to look somewhat like –and also have the stability of—a global ecosystem in which all parts support one another.

# Introduction to the Full Report

Lisinka Ulatowska  
Coordinator, Commons Cluster

On February 10, 2015, a workshop was held at UN headquarters in New York City to highlight a variety of innovative, ‘commons-based’ approaches for financing development of the Post-2015 Agenda. This timely workshop was sponsored by the *Permanent Missions of Brazil and France, The Mont-Blanc Meetings Association, International Forum of the Social and Solidarity Economy Entrepreneurs, the International Cooperative Alliance, and the Commons Cluster of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organizations Major Group.*

During the event, representatives from each of the sponsoring organizations were asked to share their practical experience and unique perspectives on ways of ending poverty in all its forms by engaging the innovation, knowledge and expertise of the civil society around the world, discussed here as *Commons*, comprising Social Solidarity Economies (SSE), Shared Societies, Cooperatives and the Internet. One of the major outcomes of that event has been the creation of this report, intended to accomplish three objectives:

1. To draw attention to powerful forms of financing to end poverty that come largely *from civil society, and that can benefit from governmental support in addition to ODA and other means of financing already being considered at the UN.*
2. To clarify how governments can support these additional forms of financing while allowing each approach to flourish in its own right.
3. To ensure these innovative approaches are explicitly mentioned in the Final Agreement on Financing Development to be adopted in Addis Ababa in July of this year so that they may play a central role in the deliberations of the High Level Political Forum overseeing sustainable development from now until 2030.

Since 2000 poverty has been halved worldwide. By next July the UN will adopt a Final Agreement on financing the ending of poverty everywhere. So far the UN has looked at means of financing from the perspective of what governments or the business sector can contribute. This report examines the role that people and communities can play in this process.

Focusing on methods of financing by people and communities at the grassroots level is a crucial aspect of the larger *paradigm shift* now occurring *socially, economically and environmentally* throughout the world. Hereby power and ownership of the planet and its resources at the expense of the many is making way as individuals

and their communities are sharing resources for free or for a fee and creating horizontal power structures dedicated to the well-being of all people and nature.

This report offers commentary and examples on various types of grassroots financing efforts derived from the sharing economy. It suggests how its inherent power and creativity can be further unleashed to create a dynamic economy at all levels to which all people contribute and from which all benefit.

# **Five Reasons to Support the Social and Solidarity Economy in the Post-2015 Agenda**

François Gave  
First Councilor for Development,  
Permanent Mission of France to the UN

France is supportive of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), which covers many different practices: self-management, solidarity lending, local exchange trading systems, fair trade organizations, worker cooperatives, give-away shops, and trade unions—economy for the common good. SSE has three common features: 1) It is not profit driven; 2) it is bottom-up and people-centered; and 3) it seeks to address the plague of poverty in an environmentally-friendly manner.

Why is SSE good for the Post 2015 agenda? The new development agenda is broad and ambitious. It aims at eradicating poverty, and it aims to do so in a sustainable manner. The question is, can we make it work? To make this happen, we need to do more. But we also need to do things differently. That is where the social and solidarity economy comes in. It could be a game-changer in terms of making things happen. Here are five reasons why:

## **Reason n° 1: Leave No-One Behind**

Our market economies have a good record in terms of creating growth and generating wealth, but the record is mixed in terms of dealing with poverty and especially extreme poverty. In the post-2015 agenda the solidarity economy can be very helpful to help empower the poor and enable them to have a say on matters that they are concerned with.

## **Reason n°2: Build Trust**

To build a new development agenda and to ensure it will be properly implemented we need *ownership and confidence*. Governments and multilateral institutions can't fix everything. The new post-2015 agenda is ambitious and quite demanding, calling for a strong sense of trust across a wide range of players. The social and solidarity economy comes in here, helping to build that sense of ownership and trust.

## **Reason n°3: Deal with Public Goods and Commons**

Public goods and commons are typical market failures. Markets may be created to deal with some of these problems—the carbon market, for example when it comes to global warming. But there are many problems that markets struggle to deal with that the social and solidarity economy can and does handle with great expertise for the public good.

#### **Reason n°4: Encourage Broad Access to Technology**

The market economy is good at creating new technologies, but less so at making sure everyone gets access to the technologies they need. The new agenda calls for *innovation*. Technological innovation will be one of the key issues at the Addis conference. But social innovation matters a lot. It enables people to get access to technology and makes sure they get the right kind of technology.

#### **Reason n°5: Deal with Adverse Selection**

Adverse selection, particularly in lending, disproportionately impacts the poorest people. We know the banking system is quite poor at dealing with that problem. It has in-built limitations. Community-based lending is one possible way out. It can make a real difference for those most in need.

Here are a few examples of areas where the SSE *could* make a difference and where it *already is* making a difference.

- Environment-friendly practices: The evidence is clear. The SSE helps raise environmental awareness. It helps cut the carbon footprint and better manage natural resources.
- Decent jobs: Cooperatives employ a lot of people, especially in the developing countries. They help poor people gain access to technology and finance. They give them a say. They enable them to get better information.
- Access to energy: The SSE has a good record in helping very poor people get access to energy in poor countries.
- Sustainable cities: Social and solidarity economic organizations do a good job at the local level. A strong community-based approach is key to more sustainable cities.
- Gender equality: Women tend to play a big role in SSE ; and the SSE helps protect their rights and empower them.
- Food security: Cooperatives play a key role for small farmers, helping them to get access to finance and technology and making them more sustainable.
- Universal Health Coverage: SSE plays a key role to help the poor, the elderly, the disabled get better access to medical care.
- Innovative financing: Community-based loans, micro-credit and risk sharing can make a difference for the sectors of society at the grassroots.

In conclusion, the Social and Solidarity Economy has a great potential. The new post-2015 agenda requires us to do things differently. SSE can be a game changer, providing a useful complement to the market economy. It ensures everyone is on board and creates a sense of a shared agenda and a *sense of ownership*—the number one condition to build a lasting consensus on sustainable development. However,

there is no silver bullet. There is still a long way to go. We need to think hard about how these innovative ways of doing development can deliver. But the post-2015 agenda is a great opportunity to take this new economy forward.

# **The Role of Government in Building Shared Societies: *A Means for Implementing the Social and Solidarity Economy***

***Marilyn Fowler, PhD***

*Professor of Consciousness and Sustainable Development  
John F. Kennedy University*

Shared Societies are the vehicle through which shared and solidarity economies can be implemented as a means for ending poverty in all its forms. This part of the discussion will examine the principles of Shared Societies and the role governments can play to enable and strengthen them within their own countries.

The term “Shared Society” was first used in 2007 by the *World Leadership Alliance-Club de Madrid* in their Shared Societies Project. This distinguished group of nearly one hundred former Heads of State and Government work globally with various governments, institutions and their leaders, advising them on the best approaches to building a Shared Society—a society characterized by four key principles:

- 1. Respect for the dignity of the individual and his or her community:*
- 2. Absence of discrimination*
- 3. Protection of individuals’ human rights*
- 4. The opportunity to participate in decision-making*

As part of the Shared Societies Project, these world leaders agreed on ten broad commitments that delineate ways in which governments can create enabling environments for a Shared Society within their own countries through appropriate governance structures, inclusive policies, and clear implementation strategies.

These commitments, listed below, create the mechanisms for an *infrastructure of trust and support* that allows social cohesion to develop. Several of these—in particular Commitments II, III, V, VII, VIII and X—are of central importance to long-term transformational change, meriting specific comments.

***Commitment I:*** Locate responsibility to ensure the promotion of social cohesion clearly within government structure.

***Commitment II:*** Create opportunities for minorities and marginalized groups and communities to be consulted about their needs and their perception of the responsiveness of state and community structures to meet those needs.

Providing universal access to the Internet is one of the most effective ways governments can enable dialogue with all segments of society— an

accomplishment that a number of countries, including Rwanda, one of the poorest countries in Africa, have already managed. With the Internet, governments have the capacity to set up online portals that allow people to formally and informally give their opinions about issues that affect them. As well, it gives governments the ability to poll constituents about how well government is meeting their needs. This is already being done in a number of countries with some surprising results. Often, we don't know what our constituents think or what they need until we ask them.

***Commitment III.*** Ensure that social cohesion is considered in devising governance structures, policy formulation and policy implementation and establish procedures and mechanisms to ensure this is achieved and to reconcile divergent positions between sectional interests.

Creating safe, stable communities in which all may live and prosper is a foundational principle of a socially cohesive, sharing society. One important strategy governments can enact to ensure prosperity for all is to prioritize investment in small-scale agro-ecological and organic food production to serve local consumption needs. Providing incentives for communities to focus on food production for local use rather than export markets is one of the surest ways to increase social resilience and stability in times of economic downturn.

***Commitment IV.*** Ensure that the legal framework protects the rights of the individual and prohibits discrimination based on ethnic, religious, gender, or cultural difference.

***Commitment V.*** Take steps to deal with economic disadvantages faced by sections of society who are discriminated against, and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources.

Investing in Internet access can provide dramatic returns at the governmental level, giving people at all levels of society equal access to opportunities and resources that can enhance communications, power innovation, increase knowledge-sharing, enable capacity-building and provide free education.

Through other means, equal access can be facilitated through government support of local cooperative enterprises such as community banks, community-owned micro-finance institutions, and local credit cooperatives that fund local development and build capacity at the community level. Using financing mechanisms such as development funds, long-term low-interest loans and favorable taxation policies governments can enable even the poorest sectors of their societies to build capacity and increase financial resilience.

***Commitment VI.*** Ensure that physical environments create opportunities for, rather than discourage, social interaction.



**Commitment VII.** Ensure an education system that offers equal opportunity for developing the knowledge, skills, capacities and networks necessary for children to become productive, engaged members of society, that demonstrates a commitment to a shared society and educates children to understand and respect others.

Three distinct types of education are urgently needed by all children today to enable them to become productive, engaged members of society. For governments to move their societies forward, these vital components should be implemented in all educational systems, beginning at the earliest levels:

- *Education in peaceful conflict resolution* and in the *Eight Action Areas of the Culture of Peace*. Teaching children as young as eight years old to understand and respect others is already being done in many schools around the world.
- *Technology-related education*. All children must learn at an early age how to master the technological systems that power twenty-first century society.
- *Sustainability-related education*. We must build into our education system at all levels an awareness of and accountability for peoples' impact on Earth Systems and highlight positive contributions people are making to sustainable development.

**Commitment VIII: Initiate the process to encourage the creation of a shared vision of society at local and national level.**

There is much research that testifies to the power of a clear vision to catalyze transformational change. An essential part of the great task of the Post-2015 Agenda is to create and articulate a clear vision of *the World We Want*—a global shared society committed to sustainable development, which balances economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Implementing this vision requires rethinking old values that no longer serve the new desired reality. To create a sustainable world, we must examine the values required to support that future, including the forms of capital that will enable us to implement that vision.

In the traditional paradigm, where a country's economic development is regarded as the primary goal, financial capital is likewise regarded as the primary form of valued capital. However, in the new paradigm, where balanced sustainable development is the goal, an *equal* valuing of *all* forms of capital becomes an essential requirement.

Some ways that governments can foster these new forms of capital include:

- Tax incentives for business cooperatives that share resources and profits.
- Incentives and support for socially responsible communities, such as Eco-villages, Transition Towns and Sarvodaya communities.

- Incentives for *local living economies* that grow, source, and buy locally, creating resilient communities even during economic downturns.
- Local currencies that foster sharing and community development. Time-based labor exchanges that reward volunteer efforts.
- Support for environmental efforts that preserve natural habitats.
- Support for methods to calculate the value of *intact ecosystems*—in terms of carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and species preservation.

**Commitment IX:** Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity and support local communities in exploring their identity, sharing their experiences with other identity groups and working together with those groups on common concerns.

**Commitment X:** Take steps to reduce tensions and hostility between communities and ensure members of all communities are protected from abuse, intimidation and violence.

This commitment applies not only to protecting communities in the human realm, but also to protecting those in the *non-human* world—promoting respect, understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

Much can be done in the sphere of government to promote the value of the Earth as a treasured legacy rather than as simply a ‘disposable resource.’ Legal structures must be strengthened at all levels and further developed at the global level to steward earth resources responsibly. Those who harm the earth must be held legally accountable.

A number of initiatives to strengthen legal protection of the Earth and its natural resources are currently being considered, including: creation of an Environmental Court; treatment of Ecocide as a Crime against Peace; Governance of the Earth System via the UN, with global input; and Reconciliation Courts that utilize the UBUNTU approach of the unity of all life.

In closing, I would like to share a principle from consciousness research. It is Einstein’s famous statement that *“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.”*

Scientists who study the workings of the Earth’s planetary systems have observed that matter continues to form larger and larger systems. One-celled organisms create the possibility for more complex forms of life, which grow and evolve into complex ecosystems, which share their resources interdependently in intricate webs of life.

For the human world, our escalating planetary crises perhaps also create the opportunity for collective growth and development into shared societies capable of interdependent collaboration and mutual cooperation. In the view of systems

ecologist Joanna Macy, humanity is now undertaking a great evolutionary leap—from individual capacity for limited action into collective capacity for planetary action. Whether we make the leap is up to all of us.

# Finance as a 'Common': The Role of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)

*Nicole Alix*

*Board Member, Mont Blanc Meetings Association*

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is based on the sharing of objectives and resources within people-centred companies. SSE has developed powerful collective action in finance through cooperative banks, cooperatives, mutual societies and associations.

The Mont Blanc Meetings (MBM) International Forum of Social and Solidarity Economy Entrepreneurs and the International Leading group on SSE work in close collaboration with the UN inter-agency Task-Force on SSE and forerunner states like France, Morocco, Ecuador, Luxembourg, Colombia, and Quebec. MBM intends to show how SSE is an essential condition to meet the constantly changing needs of major societal movements. SSE is the guarantee of economic plurality, built up by citizens to serve their collective future.

As our friends from Quebec say, SSE is 'an economic giant' but still 'a political dwarf', particularly on the financial level. Their role and their specifics should be more largely recognized. Here are some examples of why.

## **I. Cooperative banks, ethical finance**

SSE finance has a long tradition of using innovative means to finance the real economy and local development, based on the needs of people, and has been very resilient during the financial crises since 2008. As examples:

- Crédit Coopératif invented solidarity-based finance 30 years ago, creating in cooperation with the French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD), the first mutual investment fund. This was the first shared revenue fund where the saver gives his or her revenue to NGOs. This fund has now 13 million euros invested in 30 countries, with 60 partners.
- Solidarity-based finance in France now represents 6 billion euros on solidarity-based deposits or accounts in many banks, brought by 1 million savers, which generated more than 1 billion euros of funding for 100,000 social enterprises, social or environmental projects, and 6 million euros in grants to NGOs.
- Crédit Coopératif innovated with a Voluntary Contribution on Currency Transactions (VCCT), a sort of Voluntary Tobin Tax. This innovative form of financing has generated 100,000 euros per year for three years to fight climate change in the Indian Himalayas.

- *Kafo Jiginew* in Mali—now a successful mutual financial network with 131 local credit unions, 285,000 members and 20 million euros of credits—has been supported by cooperative banks of “the North” which decided not to create a subsidiary but rather to transfer know-how.
- Of mention as well is SOL, a local complementary currency, Uplift in India, Social Finance Foundation in Ireland, and last but not least, the International Association for Free Software (A12L), created by MBM members to develop open-source software for micro-credit institutions.

## **II. Financial system regulation and risk aversion**

Innovative finance promoted by social and solidarity economy cannot scale up easily because the financial regulation and types of financial tools used in finance today are more and more short-term oriented.

- Financial systems regulation is increasingly adopting models and standards to guard against the risk of default. In actual practice risk aversion means diminishing the role of people in institutions—using more quantitative than qualitative experts.

This raises doubts about the possibility of financing innovation with databases that use a “rear-view mirror” approach. We should start focusing on the road ahead.

- The methods of cooperative banks and ethical finance rely more on their members and clients’ experience. We believe human finance should be promoted, with short supply chains. To create trust, finance must explain where the money comes from that where it goes.
- To increase finance for development, we need not only new and innovative means of finance, but also a sustainable financial regulation—other ways of valuing than fixing prices where financial prices are not good indicators. We need long term investors like cooperative finance and mutual societies, in the north and in the South.

## **III. Action plan to promote finance as a ‘common’**

- We must do away with ready-made solutions and rehabilitate the numerous hybrid economic forms that have been, until now, considered derogatory by the State or the market.
- The atypical aspect of the social and solidarity economy finance should not be seen as a weakness, but rather as a prerequisite for setting up socio-economic innovations and renewing the democratic public space.

- Mont Blanc Meetings proposes building an action plan to promote finance as a 'common' with the UN Commons Cluster and the two Leading Groups, dedicated respectively to SSE and to Innovative Financing for Development, based on at least three points:
  1. Local currencies which reflect a specific link between people with a common purpose.
  2. Access to credit as a scarce resource: Questions to be explored include:
    - What kind of legal rights would the common require?
    - What place would banks, including cooperative banks and social finance, have in the common?
    - How would joint practices with citizens be financed ?
  3. Funding of strategic operations defined by the community – either for tangible assets (food, energy, land...) or for intangible assets (training, education, web...).

While there is much to consider, the possibilities should be explored.

# Financing and Implementing Sustainable Development: Contributions of the Co-operative Movement

Rodrigo Gouveia

Director of Policy, International Co-operative Alliance

Financing and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals is a crucial element of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his Synthesis Report, stated that “implementation is not just about quantity. It is also about doing things together, uniting around the problem. (...)”

The sustainable development goals provide a platform for aligning private action and public policies. Transformative partnerships are built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals: placing people and planet at the center. They include the participation of all relevant stakeholders.”

In the Rio+20 outcome document, Member States already “acknowledge the role of co- operatives (...) in contributing to social inclusion and poverty reduction, in particular in developing countries”.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the close of the UN International Year of Co-operatives (2012), recognized that “as a strong partner in development, the co-operative movement works with the United Nations every day to empower people, enhance human dignity and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.” ***We now need this recognition under the Post-2015 Development Agenda framework.***

Co-operatives are a well-suited model to implement sustainable development goals because they are people-centred and values-driven.<sup>1</sup> Their specific model of enterprise creates a *virtuous circle* in which *economic activity* creates *wealth*, which brings *development*, which benefits the lives of *people* and their *community*. This concept is illustrated in figure 1-1.

- **People/Community:** co-operative enterprises are owned and democratically managed by people. They are people-centred businesses. Co-operatives worldwide have **1 billion** members. These are the owners of the entrepreneurial activities, unlike other models that are owned by investors.
- **Economic activity:** because of their ownership structure, the economic activity of co- operatives replies to the needs and expectations of members. Their economic activity is not speculative but rather addresses the real economic and

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<sup>1</sup> Co-operative values: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity; Co-operative principles: voluntary and open membership; Democratic member control; Member economic participation; Autonomy and independence.

social needs of members in the real economy. In addition, employment and

Figure 1-1: The Virtuous Circle of Sustainable Development



income generated by co-operatives tends to be more stable and secure in the medium and long terms, even in times of crises.<sup>2</sup> Co-operatives employ and generate income for 250 million<sup>3</sup> people worldwide.

Furthermore, because they are locally owned and managed, co-operatives do not delocalize their activity, creating parallel and complementary services and employment in the regions where they are established.

- **Wealth:** the economic activity of co-operatives generates wealth that is, in turn, distributed back to members and their communities. Unlike investor-owned models, the revenues created by co-operatives are returned entirely to members, local communities or reinvested in their activities. The 300 largest co-operatives have combined annual revenues of USD 2.2 trillion<sup>4</sup>, the equivalent of the GDP of the 7th largest economy in the world.
- **Development:** by redistributing the wealth generated by their economic activity to members and local communities, co-operatives promote development. And because they are democratically controlled, this redistribution is applied in accordance to members' priorities and needs. With the adequate policy, legal and economic environment, these resources can be substantially increased for the benefit of development worldwide. This is an innovative way to leverage financing for development.

<sup>2</sup> For a perspective on the resilience of financial co-operatives see the ILO study "Resilience in a Downturn: The power of financial cooperatives."

<sup>3</sup> Co-operatives and Employment: A Global Report. <http://s.coop/1v7z3>

<sup>4</sup> World Cooperative Monitor 2014: <http://s.coop/1tk8y>



- **People/Community:** People and communities are, of course, the beneficiaries of the economic, social and environmental development by co-operatives.

Co-operatives are active in all sectors of the economy: agriculture, fisheries, industry and services, retail, energy, banking, insurance, housing, health, etc. They can provide crosscutting solutions for all areas of sustainable development. For example:

- By redistributing wealth generated by their economic activities and by being rooted in local communities, co-operatives can help **end poverty in all its forms everywhere**.
- Co-operatives are an ideal form of organization for farmers and fishermen to help them improve production in an environmental sustainable way, improve their access to markets and get better prices for their products, contributing to food security and prosperity of rural communities<sup>1</sup>.
- Co-operatives have been at the forefront of promoting *sustainable consumption and production patterns* and in the fight against Climate Change<sup>2</sup>.
- Co-operatives provide education to members, promote gender equality and women empowerment, provide decent jobs, and help people transition from informal to formal economies, among many others.

#### **What the UN can do:**

By recognizing co-operatives as a well-suited model to finance and implement sustainable development, the UN will create the policy conditions for national governments, co-operatives and other stakeholders to create the adequate legal, economic and social environment that will allow co-operatives to start and/or develop and to be an active participant in the implementation of national strategies to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals under the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

The International Co-operative Alliance calls on all UN Member States to include the recognition of the role of co-operatives in financing and implementing the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

*"Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility. "*  
*United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

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<sup>1</sup> For an outlook of the contributions of agriculture co-operatives please consult the FAO website.

<sup>2</sup> Euro Coop Climate Change Report: <http://s.coop/lvv24>

# **Creating Sufficient Means to Finance Sustainable Development**

***Rob Wheeler***

*UN Representative of the Global Ecovillage Network, Co-founder of the UN NGO Major Group Commons Cluster*

It is widely recognized that the international community needs to greatly increase the level of financing that is made available to achieve the SDGs and transition to a truly sustainable future; and we suggest that one of the best means for doing so is through the use of New and Innovative Means of Finance.

During these last few days and during the Financing for Development or FfD meetings we have heard of many means for increasing the level of financing. The UN Member States, with the assistance of the FfD office, should thus develop a matrix of supportive mechanisms, policy actions and means of finance that governments can choose from in order to significantly increase FfD.

Each community, country and regional government should then be urged to choose from among a range of quantifiable options, developed through the FfD process and listed in the matrix, to develop a sufficient financing strategy to be able to achieve all of the SDGs and its other sustainable development efforts.

The Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development has done tremendous work on identifying such new and innovative means of finance. Some twenty countries have already set up one or more innovative means of financing raising nearly \$6 billion USD in just the last 8 years since the Leading Group was established under the leadership of France and a number of other countries. This includes such things as a tax on airline CO2 emissions, air ticket levies that support and fund health initiatives, pre-financing mechanisms based on loan guarantees such as the GAVI Matching Fund for fighting Tuberculosis, blended financing, development of an international currency transaction tax, and public-private partnerships based on financial incentives from the public sector that reward successful innovations of the private sector - such as in the field of health care; etc.

One can find a great description of some of the best programs and innovative initiatives, that ought to be included in the matrix and in national and local strategy plans, in both the programme for their June 2014 Workshop and in the outcome report. You can go to: <http://www.leadinggroup.org/article1204.html> to find these.

In Doha the Leading Group called for a change in scale in implementing innovative financing mechanisms for development. We are suggesting that all countries ought to begin to use such innovative means of financing and that they ought to be greatly scaled up and rolled out around the world.

One of the best means for raising funds to provide social services, invest in infrastructure and to provide for basic human needs, particularly in urban areas, would be to take taxes off of buildings and to place them on the value of property or land instead - thus land value taxation. Wherever this has been even partially implemented throughout the world there have been positive outcomes of affordable housing and job creation.

This policy and practice was actually recommended as a part of UN Habitat's founding mandate and in the outcome document from Habitat II. It could provide an enormous amount of money for infrastructure development and the provision of basic services. This results from the rapidly increasing value of land, particularly in urban areas, as development processes occurs.

This is also a good policy for supporting small family farmers who typically have a lot of money invested in buildings and equipment rather than in land as compared to the large farms that have bought up huge acreages which would now be taxed.

Under such policies taxes on labor and productive capital should be reduced or eliminated entirely and instead the unearned income and surplus profits accruing to the commons of surface land and natural resources should be recycled back to the community to pay for goods and services needed by society as a whole. This public finance approach is fundamental to building an economy that is both free and fair; one that encourages individual initiative while also serving and supporting community needs. For more information see: [www.urbantoolsconsult.org](http://www.urbantoolsconsult.org)

The Commons Cluster drafted a paper before the Rio+20 Conference entitled Measures to Finance a Commons Approach to Sustainable Development. A commons approach basically means that there are both gifts of nature as well as other commonly developed resources that rightfully and inherently belong to and thus ought to be collectively managed and equitably shared by all of us.

In the paper we suggest that, "It is urgent that we shift from an economy that is destroying the very means of human survival to a commons-based approach that is capable of ensuring the well-being of all people and nature. For people and nature are the very basis upon which all economies rest."

We thus call on Governments to create an international (High Level or UN) Panel of Experts to develop a step-by-step plan for creating a worldwide commons-based economy along with recommendations for implementing a Commons Approach to Sustainable Development. This panel would consult with Governments, and relevant IGOs, CSOs, Major Groups and other stakeholders.

And we suggest that the Trusteeship Council be revitalized to establish a Global Resource Agency for cooperatively managing our shared or common global resources - as recommended as being needed by the Rio+20 UN Task Team on the

Global Commons. It is our hope that this will be considered to provide an important Means of Implementation for achieving the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

For example, a rental fee to finance multilateral programs and institutions could be placed on the development or use of many trans-border commons, including:

- carbon emissions
- foreign exchange transactions
- ocean fishing
- sea-bed mining
- electromagnetic spectrum use

Share the World's Resources has also put forward a good number of policy recommendations for creating a sharing economy that you can find on their website at: [www.sharing.org](http://www.sharing.org).

In the Executive Summary of their report on *Financing the Global Sharing Economy*, Share the World's Resources describes how governments could mobilize over \$2.8 trillion every year to bolster a sharing economy both within and between nations. This includes such things as establishing a global program and/or partnership initiative to phase out fossil fuel and other harmful or un-sustainable subsidies; taxing financial speculation through establishing a financial transaction tax; developing a supportive global mechanism to prevent tax avoidance; harnessing IMF resources to raise and re-distribute vast quantities of additional finance for poverty eradication and climate finance purposes - through such means as Expanding the IMF's Special Drawing Rights and progressively selling off the IMF's substantial gold reserves; canceling unjust debts; and protecting import tariffs for countries with special needs. See: <http://www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/financing-global-sharing-economy>

Support and agreements are needed to deal responsibly with and phase out all harmful and unsustainable subsidies, including those dealing with forests, fisheries, water, and agriculture, etc. The savings thus made from phasing out such subsidies could provide much needed financing for investing in sustainable development.

A global protocol, convention, or some type of a partnership initiative; implementation and review processes; and a secretariat thus needs to be established to assist all countries in fulfilling the commitment to phase out all harmful and unsustainable subsidies as soon as is possible.

It has been estimated that since the mid-1970s, we as a species have been eating into the Earth's natural capital rather than, as previously, consuming the annual self-regenerating interest. It is thus essential that the international community agree to recognize and respect the intangible value and natural or common heritage of our earth system as a whole and maintain it in a healthy manner as a part of the Post 2015 Development process.

Several thousand ecovillage communities, along with Millennium Villages, the Small Grants Program and the Equator Initiative are demonstrating how an integrated, multi-sectoral community based approach to sustainable rural and impoverished urban development can greatly scale up the ability to provide basic services and meet basic human needs.

For example these communities often provide new access to such things as renewable energy, clean water, sustainable agriculture, affordable and biological waste treatment, access to internet and communication technologies, healthcare and educational opportunities, etc.

The Global Ecovillage Network includes the suggestion that the international community support and fund the development of a global network of regionally based resource and service centers, coupled with training programs, where-in each of the regional centers could provide support, services, resources and training programs to multiple local villages and communities in the area.

Indeed such a global network of resource and service centers could provide a great means to support capacity development, infrastructure, and technology transfer in rural and impoverished urban communities around the world; and it should thus be adopted and included as a primary Means of Implementation for achieving the SDGs and other sustainable development agreements.

# **The Role of Internet Communications Technologies as a Means of Delivering Sustainable Development**

***Maurício Fávero***

*Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN*

Cooperatives are an old form of social organization that actually exhibits quite a contemporary characteristic as they are organized in networks, which is also the characteristic of the Internet. That networking aspect is what makes cooperatives, as well as the Internet, such a marvelous tool for development.

Universal access to the Internet is certainly at the core of a more sustainable future. But building a more sustainable world in all its dimensions (social, economic, and environmental) will simply not be feasible unless we substantially change our patterns of production and consumption. For us to succeed, we need a fundamental change of paradigm, from one of unlimited production for profit to a new paradigm based on sustainable patterns of production and consumption. As we make the transition from old paradigm to new paradigm, the United Nations should play a role in supporting increasing alignment of those old paradigms with more sustainable patterns.

At the same time, as the world's population continues to grow and urbanization intensifies, people are going to live increasingly closer to each other, and will have less living space. This creates challenges but also new opportunities for sharing, and brings another essential aspect of sustainable production and consumption to the spotlight, which is efficiency in the use of goods and services. This is where the sharing economy can make a significant difference.

Universal access to the Internet is one critical tool that should be made more fully at our disposal as we seek to implement the commitments of the post-2015 development agenda, the 17 goals and 169 targets of sustainable development. Internet access is key in mobilizing resources to finance sustainable development, particularly when related to Science, Technology, Innovation and Capacity Building. As we all know, information and communications technologies in general are an indispensable enabler for sustainable development. The transformative role they play in the promotion of economic growth and creation of opportunities for business is very obvious in developed countries, where access is cheaper and widespread, and even in some developing countries, where new developments have made mobile phones and other Internet platforms affordable, with tremendously beneficial economic impact.

However, the social and economic gains stemming from their phenomenal global expansion still elude the poorest populations of the world, who are precisely the ones who could benefit from it the most.

The current year offers three negotiating follow-up processes, which can enable us to be more proactive and move from rhetoric to action:

1. How we integrate ICTs into the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.
2. The preparatory process for the Third Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for development.
3. The review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10), which will address the digital divide and the governance reform of the Internet.

In the Rio+20 outcome document, member-States agreed that it is essential to work towards improved access to ICTs, especially broadband networks and services, and to bridge the digital divide. International cooperation for capacity building and technology transfer will be vital in this regard. Development cooperation partners must view cooperation in ICTs as an investment rather than a cost, as this investment will empower the populations of developing countries and enhance their own ability to mobilize resources for sustainable development, making them less dependent on development cooperation, which has not provided the needed predictability and stability.

Access to the Internet can be instrumental for social inclusion, empowerment of farmers and rural populations, access to finance, and in promoting the freedom of expression and improving health and education. In terms of the sharing economy, there are several ideas being discussed on the need to set up United Nations platforms, collective platforms for sharing - from the Secretary-General's proposal on an Online Platform to arrangements for a mechanism of dissemination and transfer of environmentally sound technologies, to a Technology Bank to the Least Developed Countries, among other initiatives.

As such, it is crucial that access to ICTs in general, and the internet in particular, is mainstreamed and up-scaled throughout the goals proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, including the SDG 17 itself on means of implementation. Present references to ICTs in just four out of the 17 SDGs do not do justice to the critical role played by these technologies.

In the preparatory process for the Third Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) this July, in Addis Ababa, there is an emerging understanding of the need to underscore the critical role played by ICTs as a means of delivering sustainable development. The discussion of an innovative chapter on "Science, Technology, Innovation and Capacity Building" seems to point to the increasing recognition of ICTs as an enabler of inclusive and sustained economic growth, social justice and

environmental sustainability. We hope to be able to adopt a stand-alone chapter on STI and capacity building in Addis, to more fully support the structural and systemic impact of ICTs on development, inasmuch as the FfD process currently does when it deals with trade, debt, global governance and other systemic issues.

In addition to the post-2015 development agenda and the FfD processes, the General Assembly will have an opportunity in December this year to raise the profile of ICTs and the internet as a catalyzing means of addressing the digital and technological divide within and between countries, as it will engage in the ten-year review of implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10). The commitments of Tunes Agenda that relate to enhanced cooperation with developing countries are precisely the ones where there has been less progress. As stated in the Tunes Agenda, which the General Assembly has committed to fully implement, we must focus our attention on measures to enhance the involvement of the UN in overcoming the lack of effective financial mechanisms to support the development of ICTs, especially its infrastructure.

Within the context of WSIS+10, the General Assembly will have to ensure that the Internet and cyberspace are used as tools at the service of sustainable development, including addressing the present shortcomings in the internet governance structures. The development of an open, inclusive, diverse and development-oriented information society, with the internet at its core, depends on the establishment of democratic decision-making processes which, through enhanced global coordination in the intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder levels, can ensure that the Web continues to be free, secure and equitable for all.

The current asymmetric structures that concentrate power in the hands of small number of states and corporations will not provide the necessary space for the interests of developing countries to be considered and will most likely exacerbate the current trend, causing the digital divide to grow not only in terms of differences in access, but also in relation to the quality of access. Internet governance can no longer be treated merely as a technical matter under the supervision of non-governmental organizations such as ICANN and IANA. Cyberspace and the technology to disseminate access to it must be kept public, affordable, accessible, and accountable to democratic global governance and the rule of law.

Brazil believes that we must abandon the false dichotomy of having to choose either multilateralism or multistakeholderism as governance frameworks for the Internet. We expect that the Tenth Internet Governance Forum, to take place in João Pessoa, in Brazil, in November of this year, can contribute new perspectives to the upcoming review of the WSIS+10.

Widespread access to an open, inclusive, democratic and development-oriented Internet is a pre-requisite for the flourishing of a successful sharing economy. Only then will we be able to fully realize the cross-cutting potential of the Internet as a game-changer in the way people live their lives and prosper.



## **Rwanda: Providing Universal Access to the Internet**

*Mrs. Jeanne d'Arc Byaje,  
Deputy-Permanent Representative of Rwanda*

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is crucially important for Rwanda and is enshrined in its Vision 2020 plan, adopted in 2000 in an effort to shift from an agricultural based economy to a knowledge based economy, with ICT at its core.

Rwanda is a landlocked state and thus does not have access to the sea nor as good a transport system as it might otherwise have. This lack of transportation infrastructure has made access to the Internet even more important for Rwanda. Business, government, banking are now conducted through the use of the Internet. Service delivery is a key priority in Rwanda as it does not have oil and other mineral resources on which to base its national economy. Thus, forty percent of the income in Rwanda comes from service delivery, making access to information provided through the Internet even more important.

Rwanda has broadcast fiber optics, but the investment in smart phones will probably still take a long time. Rwanda also already has universal health coverage - but it can be challenging to provide information and health services in some rural areas. However, now with mobile phones health workers can even reach people in such remote areas and the people can reach the health care workers.

In Rwanda access to Internet is as much a valued public service as is access to energy and water. Wi-Fi services are provided free in public places and on public transportation. Some areas that Rwanda is focusing on in relationship to its access to the Internet and that can accelerate development are:

- Skills development
- Private sector development
- Community development
- Fiber security protection
- Funding for services

Internet.org, an initiative founded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, is also partnering with Rwanda on a pilot project called SocialEDU, which will provide students in Rwanda with free access to a collaborative online education experience. SocialEDU addresses five critical barriers to access by bringing together: Free Content, Free Data, Affordable Smartphones, Localized social educational experience, and a government that supports innovation.

The students will receive free access from some of the world's leading universities including Harvard, MIT, U.C. Berkeley, TU Delft, Australian National University and ETH Zurich; and the platform will enable students to ask questions, engage with other students, interact with teachers, and participate in group discussions. For more information about this innovative initiative see:

<http://internet.org/press/introducing-socialedu>.

# Valuing Contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Sustainable Development

**Roberto Mukaro Borrero (Taino)**

*UN Programs Consultant, International Indian Treaty Council;  
Organizing Partner Focal Point for Indigenous Peoples Major Group*

Whilst acknowledging that Indigenous Peoples are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, it is also important to acknowledge that they are active participants and partners who are making important contributions to sustainable development.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous peoples are identified as custodians of many of the world's most biologically diverse areas and verifiably hold a wealth of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices on ecosystem management and technologies, traditional health systems and medicinal plants; agricultural production and food systems, local crops and seeds.

While these realities are increasingly recognized among mainstream sectors, indigenous peoples seldom share in the benefits of the commercialization of their knowledge. Indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, have a proven track record of responsible management of natural resources in forests, deserts, tundra, and small islands. Their contributions to sustainable development should not only be recognized and respected, but whenever possible, celebrated as models of good practices that have a huge potential to benefit all mankind.

## **Respecting commitments from Rio+20 and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples**

The UN General Assembly has adopted important guiding principles and commitments in support of indigenous peoples and sustainable development arising from the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and the 2014 High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP).<sup>4</sup> The Rio+20 outcome document “***The Future We Want***”, at paragraph 49, recognizes:

*“the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development” and “the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of global, regional, national and sub-national implementation of sustainable development strategies.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Indigenous People Major Group Policy Brief, pg. 4, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Indigenous People Major Group Policy Brief, pg. 2, 2015

The WCIP adopted an action oriented outcome document aimed at implementing the principles set forth in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, affirming that: *“indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development.” (Para. 33)*

The WCIP also committed to *“giving due consideration to all the rights of indigenous peoples in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.” (Para.37)*

Consistent with the rights of indigenous peoples and their valuable contributions towards achieving sustainable development for all, these outcomes represent commitments that must be strongly reflected in the SDGs and the final Post-2015 Development Agenda.

## Summary Statement

***Lisinka Ulatowska***  
*Coordinator, Commons Cluster*

Mr. Favero mentioned the Secretary General's Synthesis Report, Paragraph 125 whereby the SG proposes *"to establish an online, global platform building on and complementing existing initiatives, and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, in order to:*

*(a) map existing technology facilitation initiatives, needs and gaps,...*

*(b) enhance international cooperation and coordination in this field, addressing fragmentation and facilitating synergies, including within the UN system; and*

*(c) promote networking, information sharing, knowledge transfer, and technical assistance, to advance the scaling up of clean technology initiatives."*

This is a powerful tool indeed since it takes technology transfer out of the often vice-like grip of ownership and sets it free in the economy inspired by sharing.

Such an Online Global Platform could usefully be expanded, by adding the people to people transfer (free or for a fee) of other goods and services including know-how, best practices, information, education—anything that can empower the individual to develop his/her individual potential. The online platform could moreover contain two additional sections:

1. A learning center where people can master the tools of becoming accountable for their impact on the Earth System, such as their ecological footprints; and learn about all agreements already made by governments in the area of sustainable development.

2. A governance section that opens global consultation with the UN and its Member States to all people interested in a topic under consideration at the UN; all international agreements made in the area of sustainable development and the status of their implementation; and all global consultations and other activities, requiring input from the grass roots, being organized by the UN. Here decisions would still remain in the hands of Member States as is outlined in the UN Charter, while it would be informed by the needs and contributions of people worldwide.

***As this expanded Online Global Platform brings people, organizations, governments and the UN together in a multiplicity of mutually empowering relationships, its synergetic action will create an ever more powerful engine for economic growth centred on the well-being of all people and nature.***

Such an economic engine based on synergy and sharing would bring together people and Member States with the UN in the body of humanity much as the cells and organs connect to the brain in the body of a human being.

Such a natural form held together by equitable sharing is but one other in a long sequence consisting of myriad stable forms that have come together since the Big Bang. Within atoms, molecules, single cells, all plant and animal species and every ecosystem.

The *sharing* economy that leaves no one behind is both inspired and supported by natural forces that have been active since time immemorial. By tuning into nature, these forces can help us succeed in eradicating poverty and embarking on a sustainable course of development until 2030 and beyond.

Lisa Martinez and other members of the UN NGO Major Group *Commons Cluster* are now exploring how to develop the Expanded Online Global Platform.

*For more information*  
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