

Report

WORKSHOP

Youth Empowerment for Agenda 2030 Action through Social Entrepreneurship and Digital Social Currencies

16 January 2017, Vienna International Centre

Context

The use of innovative technologies as well as the use of information and communication technologies in the attainment of higher levels of social, economic and environmental development have gained increasing importance, and as such are key to the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2030. Such technologies have shown to harbor immense potential in generating the necessary momentum for broader action towards the achievement of the SDGs and in mobilizing the needed financial, technological and human resources. Even more, these technologies find resonance amongst the key drivers of inclusive and sustainable development, namely young social entrepreneurs.

Objective

The workshop served to introduce and strengthen the understanding of how **innovative technologies**, such as digital currencies based on block-chain technology, as well as information and communication technologies, can best contribute to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The workshop explored how these technologies can function as enablers for **social entrepreneurship**, particularly by youth-led enterprises, considering the unmatched potential that entrepreneurship promotion and youth empowerment have in driving development and achieving the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the workshop discuss the development of a 2030 Agenda “**marketplace for youth action**”, to mobilize the needed financial and technological resources, for effective and successful achievement of the Agenda 2030.

Co-Organizers

- International Association for the Advancement of Innovative Approaches to Global Challenges (IAAI)
- Regional Academy on the United Nations (RAUN)

Partners

- Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Vienna
- UN Habitat

The workshop

The workshop was opened by welcoming remarks from UNIDO, UN-Habitat, IAAI, and RAUN, followed by a keynote speech by **Werner Faymann**, former Chancellor of Austria, and current **Secretary-General Special Envoy on Youth Employment**.

The event then hosted three thematic panel sessions covering the following themes: Social Entrepreneurship, Youth and the SDGs; Digital Currencies/Block-chain as enablers of youth social entrepreneurship; and Elements for establishing the Agenda 2030 Marketplace. These panels featured a number of highly competent experts in their respective fields of expertise. Speakers on social entrepreneurship and the promotion of youth engagement towards Agenda 2030 action included representatives from **Impact Hub Vienna, the Austrian Development Agency, World Merit Austria, AIESEC, Social Banking Development at ERSTE Group, and Entrepreneurs for Social Change (E4SC)**; block-chain and social currencies were addressed by researchers from **St. John's University**, and by experts on Bitcoin from **BitPanda**, amongst others; and representatives from the **UN Global Sustainability Index Initiative, SustainUS, GoForeSight, IAAI**, and from a number of UN organizations addressed the gaps and challenges for the establishment of an appropriate and conducive ecosystem.

Following the thematic sessions, the workshop concluded with an interactive Action Session titled Social Entrepreneurship Design Lab, where participants had the opportunity to put the knowledge provided at the thematic sessions into practice, and deliberate and design social enterprises using block-chain technologies. In groups of 4-5, participants presented their ideas, which the global community can vote on via social media. The winner of this voting will then be recognized at the ECOSOC Youth Forum in New York on 30-31 January 2017.

All workshop sessions were recorded and streamed live (<https://www.facebook.com/UNIDO.HQ/videos/>) reaching an impressive number of people globally (Facebook **34,000 people** reached throughout the day; Twitter **54,000 people** reached with over 100 tweets).

Outcomes

The workshop was very successful in stimulating a dynamic and interactive discussion with the wider audience, and saw the engagement of students, experts on social entrepreneurship, block-chain technology and social digital currency, UN representatives, as well as representatives from the Permanent Missions (Brazil, Ecuador, Italy, Panama, Sri Lanka, and Switzerland, among others). Furthermore, through social media outreach, the workshop managed to attract a significant number among others) of online viewers. Therefore, this event promises to have triggered the necessary momentum for a global discourse on **empowering social entrepreneurship**, particularly through youth-led enterprises, and the use of innovative technologies such as block-chain and digital currencies towards the **achievement of the Agenda 2030**.

To manifest the commitment expressed at the workshop, and to ensure continued motivation towards the above-stated goal, **10 Action Points (AP)** have been indentified, summarizing the key conclusions and recommendations:

AP 1: A community was created; it unites like-minded people with a common vision and builds on expertise, commitment, and motivation. We intend to grow the community exponentially over the next months and to become a reference for the global debate on social entrepreneurship.

AP 2: The past event is part of a **series of events** that the organizers and partners are committing to continually organize; with the objectives being to share knowledge, continue to explore and foster new and innovative solutions, and to increase the size of this global community. Contextually, we also commit to **increase the resource allocation** for these events, both in terms of human capital and financial resources. A number of partners (e.g. Institute for cultural diplomacy Berlin) will be sought to organize events on a continuous basis.

AP 3: We have created an **open Facebook group** entitled **‘YouthEntrepreneurship2030’** that will serve as a repository of information and updates for the global community; the group remains open and should be promoted by all its members. Sharing is Caring! Therefore, documents, articles, studies, and any relevant information should be shared onto the group page.

AP 4: The global community of YouthEntrepreneurship2030 agrees on **promoting social entrepreneurs** as the group that, in our society, has the potential to contribute the most to the achievement of the SDGs. In fact, social entrepreneurs can and will have an impact on all the 17 SDGs; this is particularly true for youth-led social enterprises.

AP 5: Local interventions [by social entrepreneurs] should be given the chance to be **visible at a global level**; this will allow for replication, scalability and adaptation to other local realities, while raising the profile of social entrepreneurship globally.

AP 6: Social entrepreneurs deserve recognition [see AP5]; we commit to continuously promote social entrepreneurs and their impact at the local and global levels. This will allow for development and enforcement of **new/stronger policy frameworks** that favour social entrepreneurship development.

AP 7: Standards are a crucial element for defining the impact of social entrepreneurs and to assign a value (both quantitative and qualitative) to their interventions; we therefore commit to **develop a toolkit to evaluate the impact of social entrepreneurs** with the long term goal of setting up a marketplace (based on blockchain technology and digital social currencies) to showcase projects led by social entrepreneurs globally. This will require support from competent partners from public and private sector.

AP 8: The support network remains a critical element for the sustainability of social ventures; the global community will continue to build **enabling ecosystems for [young] social entrepreneurs**, strengthen peer-to-peer support mechanisms, and increase the technological and connectivity capacity of social entrepreneurs, particularly in remote and rural areas

AP 9: We agree that **block-chain technology and social digital currency** are the appropriate technologies to allow the exponential growth of social entrepreneurship, and to achieve the SDGs. More research, technology development, discussions and general agreement is still needed on how to implement block-chain technology and digital currencies to enable and incentivize social entrepreneurship for Agenda 2030 implementation.

AP 10: More resources can be mobilized to develop social entrepreneurship at local, regional and global level; we shall aim at **involving more players**, such as SDG Fund, social impact investors, foundations (e.g. the SDG Funders network), philanthropists, academics etc.