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Great Insights



***Civil society and
business: pulling in
the same direction?***

**Africapitalism and
partnerships for the
SDGs**

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companies:
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Herman Brouwer,
Minu Hemmati and Jim
Woodhill

ECDPM's Great Insights magazine offers a quick and accessible summary of cutting-edge analysis on international cooperation and Europe-Africa relations. It includes an independent overview of analysis and commentary from a wide variety of experts and high-level officials and provides updates on policy debates in Africa and Europe.

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Editorial



Civil society organisations are regularly seen to name and shame companies for what they consider to be socially and environmentally unsustainable business practices within the companies' own operations or in their supply chain. While there is a clear role for civil society to play in this regard, it also increasingly teams up with business to establish more sustainable value chains. Indeed, multi-stakeholder partnerships are central in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. However, civil society and business have different interests and ways of working. Successfully collaborating is far from a simple exercise.

Therefore, this issue of Great Insights zooms in on civil society – business collaboration. We are delighted to present you articles from a diverse set of authors from civil society, business, development practitioners, academics and other experts. They come from Europe, Africa and beyond. Most importantly, they bring different perspectives on civil society – business collaboration for more socially and environmentally sustainable value chains. What does it take for civil society and business to pull in the same direction? And how can governments engage more effectively to facilitate such collaboration? The articles shed light on these questions.

Rather than theories, many of the articles draw lessons from practical examples of civil society – business collaborations. The examples relate to different levels (local, national, regional, global), in different sectors (e.g. agriculture and extractives) and for different purposes. A diverse collection that provides a wealth of insights.

The articles shed light on issues such as dealing with power imbalances, trust building and conflict. There is a fine balance to be achieved among these factors and successful collaboration is still possible as shown by Lies Craeynest of Oxfam, and one can find common ground as it is clear from the article of Julian Lageard of Intel. Some articles address the role of the European Union. For instance, Lorena Sorrentino of CSR Europe shares her experiences participating in the EU multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its practical recommendations for the European Commission to do more to support responsible business practices. Piscitelli and Gerbrandy, on the other hand, explain why EU competition law matters for sustainability-oriented collaboration between competitors and civil society. Others have an African focus. We interviewed two dairy company owners in Mauritania and Kenya, whose stories showed interesting contrasts. We also invited Nicholas Jengre from the civil society organisation Solidaridad to speak on lessons from their collaboration with business on land rights and livelihoods in Sierra Leone. Professor Amaeshi, professor Idemudia and social entrepreneur Nnoli-Edozien explain the fascinating concept of Africapitalism and how collaboration between business, civil society and government comes in.

It is clear that civil society – business collaboration is neither a quick fix nor a silver bullet. There is no 'ultimate recipe' for such partnerships either. But they can hold great potential to contribute to transformational change.

It is emphasised in various articles, including forcefully by Lisa Stott, that a stronger evidence base for partnership effectiveness is necessary. The results of partnership activities are widely assessed, but the usefulness of partnership as an approach far less. When doing so, we can and should learn from successes and failures, argue Herman Brouwer, Minu Hemmati and Jim Woodhill. Open and continuous dialogue and learning among partners should be at the heart of it.

This issue of Great Insights can be seen as an effort in this regard, to contribute to enhancing the evidence base and dialogue on civil society – business partnership approaches. We very much hope you will enjoy reading it and find it useful. As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome and will assist us in future work.

Guest editors

Jeske van Seters, Head of the Programme Private Sector Engagement
and **Poorva Karkare**, Policy Officer Economic and Agricultural Transformation



Engaging with companies: pragmatic idealism

Times are changing rapidly. To stay relevant, organisations need to keep up and adjust the way they operate. Sometimes this means stepping outside of institutional comfort zones and taking a leap into the unknown. A case in point is the way NGOs like Oxfam deal with the private sector. This topic has stimulated much soul-searching and continued internal and external debates. These processes of reflection and exchange are invaluable, because the questions we are dealing with are vital. We cannot afford to approach them lightly. Oxfam works with companies in complex ways, testing and trying ways of engagement to have a greater positive impact.

By Lies Craeynest

We know that the private sector can play a key role in improving the lives of people living in poverty around the world. Not only can their innovations bring radical solutions to intractable problems, but corporations' sheer size means that their investment choices will determine whether economies are inclusive, environmentally sustainable and beneficial to people living in poverty. Too often we see businesses pursuing short-term interests, prioritising shareholders' financial returns

over their own workers and the communities they impact, and lobbying against laws that would address the egregious abuses committed by some companies.

The gap between what is possible and what has been achieved so far is huge. We need a totally different approach to build the sustainable, human economy that the world so urgently needs. 'Contributions' by business are expected to

underpin the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but based on performance to date, we have cause for concern. On the flipside, a range of opportunities to engage businesses in new efforts to address poverty are being created as progressives in the private sector realise that social and environmental breakdown is bad for business too. Combined with renewed expectations on business, and after years of successful campaigns exposing corporate abuse, we see new initiatives emerging in the business world.

For over ten years now, Oxfam has worked with companies in complex ways, testing and trying ways of engagement with corporations to move them to greater positive impact. We are known for our hard-hitting campaigns, for example, the Behind the Brands campaign on food and beverage companies and the more recent Behind the Price campaign on supermarkets. The enormous power of pressure from the increasingly aware public, thanks partly to these campaigns, has led to the adoption of new policies by major companies, such as Coca Cola on landgrabs, General Mills on carbon emissions and Mars on empowering women in their supply chains. These companies are now among the pioneers seeking to put in practice the policies they have committed to. Oxfam remains in dialogue and sometimes partnership with them as they do this.

On other occasions, we collaborate with the frontrunners who want to fix a problem, but cannot move unilaterally because the problem is deeply systemic and sector wide. Implementing solutions alone may mean becoming an uncompetitive business. However, collaborative efforts can bring tangible results. For example, Oxfam has worked with the 'B-Team'. This is a group of companies that have realised that corporations' current tax behaviour is causing major problems in the fabric of society. They are building a set of tax responsibility principles for companies to adopt. Initiatives like this create space for governments to bring in better legislation.

We also aim to channel the creativity, resources and influence of the private sector to build better solutions. In collaboration with VISA, for example, Oxfam in the Philippines worked to set up a simple and efficient platform involving local financial institutions and communities to organise speedy money transfers during disasters and emergencies. With Unilever we are testing another way of working: a pooled fund that supports Unilever supply chain partners to increase their social impact. Oxfam is helping the company and its partners build and select quality control programmes that empower women in the supply chain and improve conditions for workers.

We believe that a mature approach of engaging with the private sector is one that considers that companies are not a homogenous group, and are not static entities either. We aim to develop a strategic approach that changes over time, using various stakeholders around companies, including investors, shareholders, workers and the communities impacted by the company. We want to steer these companies into a different, more socially and environmentally sustainable direction. That means hitting them hard when needed, but also collaborating where real solutions can be found.

For over ten years now, Oxfam has worked with companies in complex ways, testing and trying ways of engagement with corporations to move them to greater positive impact.

Businesses are clearly evolving, and positive forces for change may be emerging. We see it in the US businesses that spoke out against the US governments travel bans; and in diamond companies such as Tiffany & Co that supported the release of a journalist arrested by the Angolan government. We see it in companies dedicating the windfall gains following the US government tax cut to climate action, and in the growth of companies that are increasingly concerned about the impact of inequality on society and the planet.

As Oxfam, we haven't quite found the ultimate recipe to make a company move on our concerns, and we regularly re-examine our multifaceted approach. Yet, we have no doubt that we do need to develop a diverse set of tailored and agile strategies towards the corporate sector if we want to make progress towards the SDGs.

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Moving beyond conflict: the critical role of collaborative partnerships in tackling abuses in minerals supply chains

Assembling governments, industry and civil society together in a partnership is an effective way to identify and address conflict, social abuses such as child and forced labour, and environmental abuses like mercury pollution in mines. However, such collaboration does not come without challenges. Intel's Julian Lageard zooms in on the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals.

By Julien Lageard

Pursuing responsible minerals

More than a decade ago it was revealed that money from ICT companies sourcing tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold (3TG) from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and surrounding countries was being diverted to fuel armed conflict – instead of improving the socio-economic well-being of local, often artisanal mining communities. Something needed to be done. Industry established what is now the Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI) and the United States introduced the Dodd Frank Act, which requires publicly-listed companies to provide the Securities and Exchange.

Commission annual reports show that their 3TG supply chains are ‘conflict free’ according to the legal definition under Dodd Frank. While Dodd Frank continues to send a strong signal to the marketplace, there has been a negative impact. Companies, concerned with the additional administrative and financial burden this entails, have decided to source their minerals from other jurisdictions. ‘Conflict-free’ became ‘Congo-free’.

In 2016, the EU adopted a regulation that places legal requirements on 3TG importers. They must undertake due diligence in their 3TG supply chains from all conflict-affected and high risk areas (CAHRAs), not just DRC and surrounding countries, according to the OECD five-step framework. These obligations start on 1 January 2021.

A European partnership

A not-for-profit public-private partnership, the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals (EPRM), was formed to act as an accompanying measure to the EU regulation. It will help make the rules work on the ground in CAHRAs by improving the social and economic conditions for mine workers and local communities, at the same time increasing the number

of mines adopting responsible business practices.

The partnership brings together governments, supply chain actors (in upstream, mid-stream and downstream industry) and civil society. The founding strategic partners include the Netherlands, the UK, Philips, Intel, Solidaridad, Diakonia and the International Peace and Information Service (IPIS). More members have joined since. Observers are the European Commission, the EU External Action Service, OECD and the UN Environment Programme. The EPRM also works with knowledge partners such as academia and the Global Campus of Human Rights.

Getting the partnership up and running

In bringing such diverse interests together a clear and transparent governance structure is imperative. For the EPRM, the best part of two years was spent making the collaboration operational. A secretariat was selected, the Dutch Enterprise Agency RVO, because of its prior experience managing public-private partnerships. Some might consider two years a long time. But getting the structure right is a prerequisite for establishing an effective multi-stakeholder partnership.

A memorandum of understanding was drafted and signed by members, and a governance board was established comprising three members from each of the three pillars (government, industry and civil society). The governance board consists of the Dutch, UK and German governments, Philips, RMI, Valcambi, Solidaridad, IPIS and Diakonia. The EPRM Chair rotates between the government, industry and civil society pillars. Solidaridad is the Chair for 2019. Apart from monthly board meetings, an annual All Member Event is held to update members on the status of operations and to solicit input on strategic directions and next steps.

Another challenge has been to involve non-ICT sectors that consume 3TG. Companies, both upstream and downstream, which import 3TG into the EU fall under the scope of the EU legislation. However, the majority of downstream industry is out of its legal reach. Expanding membership beyond Europe has also been a slow process.

It also took a long time to introduce an appropriate membership fee structure. The EPRM is funded by governments and industry. Governments can pay what they like. For industry there is a tiered structure. The most expensive membership category is for companies that want to become a strategic partner. Then there is regular membership. A reduced fee applies to trade associations and to collaborative partnerships if their core business is responsible minerals or if 75% of their members are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs themselves pay a reduced fee as well. Regular trade associations pay the corporate membership fee, but are encouraged to enlist one or more of their member companies to the join the EPRM. If they do, the trade association gets a fee reduction, depending on how many member companies they bring in. Civil society groups pay no fee.

Why sign up?

Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG17) identifies partnerships as a key means to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The EU’s responsible minerals legislation has a global geographical scope. With the EPRM as an accompanying measure, it will set the worldwide regulatory direction operating under the OECD due diligence framework. All global actors who are in pursuit of responsible minerals supply chains are welcome to join, provided certain criteria are fulfilled.

Now the EPRM is fully operational and has started delivering on its objectives. Upstream projects are being funded in a broad array of countries, from

Columbia to Rwanda and Indonesia. These address various issues including empowering women in artisanal mining communities to access credit, technical training on responsible mining, identifying and mitigating sustainability challenges in mining, and providing downstream companies information about the origin of minerals in their products.

Moving forward, job number one for the EPRM is to further support industry, in particular, importers and SMEs which have to comply with the legal obligations. It will support upstream and downstream member companies to communicate their due diligence practices. Facilitating information exchange via the EPRM network and knowledge platform is another priority, as is the application of learning to non-3TG minerals supply chains like cobalt. The goal is to advance understanding of the OECD framework mineral scope, geographical scope (all CAHRAs with data updated in real time), industry schemes (RMI, London Bullion Market Association LBMA, Responsible Jewellery Council RJC, etc.) and company communication on supply chain due diligence practices.

Interests of different stakeholders

Assembling such a broad and diverse range of stakeholders with different interests is not easy. We all want to do something about abuses and know that something has to be done in minerals supply chains, but we often come at it from different angles. What unites the various parties is a common realisation that no single interest and entity can solve the problems alone. The only way is to work together in collaborative partnerships.

Governments want to join the EPRM to be part of the solution and help improve the situation in and around mines. They also want to participate

in joint actions in relation to the EU regulation. The EPRM will likely be used as a tool to support the work of the national competent authorities that have to implement the rules. Multi-stakeholder cooperation leads to the best mix of experience, knowledge and budgets for projects. Governments value the EPRM's capacity to help European companies reduce the risks in their minerals and metals supply chains. The EPRM can also serve as an instrument for donor coordination.

The EPRM enables companies to make progress in the field of responsible minerals, acting as an important accompanying measure to the EU regulation. Through it, companies can take joint action to tackle responsible

Getting the governance structure right and building trust among non-traditional allies is a time-consuming process, but it is worth the effort.

mineral sourcing. The EPRM supports companies, especially SMEs, in conducting due diligence by providing a platform for sharing knowledge, best practices and lessons learned. Finally, the EPRM helps to foster stronger linkages between downstream and upstream partners throughout the entire supply chains.

Civil society actors are interested in joining the EPRM because development is needed alongside regulatory measures, and complex issues call for joint, concrete action. They also find it imperative that local, artisanal and

small-scale mining perspectives are covered. Moreover, civil society sees the opportunity to shape the EPRM and ensure credible implementation of the EU rules, productive synergies and complementarity of the EPRM with other initiatives, avoiding duplication. NGOs can use the EPRM to connect to downstream supply chain actors, for increased engagement and mutual understanding. Supply chain actors can be mobilised for meaningful change and to achieve more speed and scale. The EPRM is a means of finding and developing opportunities for partners in activities in the field. It offers a platform for learning and exchange; partnerships in shared goals with critical fellow travellers. Through the EPRM, civil society can stay abreast of developments on EU legislation implementation, ensure credible implementation of the EU legislation and make sure that the voices of local communities are heard.

With such an array of different interests, this kind of multi-stakeholder collaboration is a lengthy process and most definitely not a quick fix. Getting the governance structure right and building trust among non-traditional allies is a time-consuming process, but it is worth the effort. The partners understand the gravity of supply chain abuses. They are driven by a common will to do something about it, at the same time realising that no one interest can identify and address these abuses acting alone.

About the author

Julian Lageard is Intel's Director of Corporate Government Affairs for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Intel is one of the founding strategic partners of the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals (EPRM).





Seven principles for effective and healthy multi-stakeholder partnerships

Most policymakers, businesspeople and civil society representatives at sustainability conferences today are heard calling for more stakeholder engagement. Academics increasingly agree that solutions for sustainable development require cross-sector communication and partnerships. In fact, multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) seem to be a favourite strategy for dealing with the challenges of sustainable development.

By [Herman Brouwer](#), [Minu Hemmati](#) and [Jim Woodhill](#)

Despite this enthusiasm we shouldn't be naïve. Getting people to work together towards common goals is never easy. Partnership is especially daunting when diverse and competing interests, perspectives and values are at stake, and different organisational and cultural contexts involved. It is not as simple as just sticking people in a room and hoping for the best.

A trend towards collaboration, at a time of widening divides?

The trend towards more partnering is undeniable. Companies are teaming up with governments, farmers and consumers to set standards in agricultural value chains; governments

are joining with NGOs and businesses to tackle child labour; and civic organisations are forging broad coalitions to ban landmines. We are also seeing an increase in partnership platforms, whose main goal is to catalyse new partnerships.

Partnerships are central in the Sustainable Development Goals and in the strategies of many countries, companies and civil organisations. Paradoxically, traditional collaborative infrastructures, such as the United Nations system, the European Union and trade agreements, are under threat. Their legitimacy and effectiveness are being loudly challenged. We live in the most connected world ever experienced, but people are retreating into their own nation, tribe or bubble.

Yet, retreat is no solution. More effective MSPs at all scales is more important now than ever before if we are to stand a chance of achieving the transformation required. A core group of frontrunner companies, NGOs, governments and knowledge institutes have embedded a partnership approach into the core of how they work. Nonetheless, behind these frontrunners is a wide field of actors that still needs to be convinced that the future of our common home depends on us joining forces.

The key to effectiveness for partnerships

Though the frontrunners are convinced of the merits of MSPs, they are still often frustrated by the challenges and struggles that partnering brings. A lot of MSPs blossom early, but never bear their full fruit. The question, therefore, is not whether the idea of partnership is good or bad, but what types of partnerships are most promising. How can MSPs be designed and facilitated to deliver the change we are looking for? What conditions do they require to work?

We use the term MSPs as an overarching concept highlighting the idea that different groups can share a common problem or aspiration, while having different interests or 'stakes'. MSPs are a form of governance. They can serve as a mechanism for groups to make decisions and take action for the common good at the local, national or international scale. To be effective, however, such processes need to consider issues of power and conflict, systemic change and the social and cognitive paths involved in interaction and learning.

Seven principles for effective multi-stakeholder partnerships

Designing and facilitating MSPs is a science, a craft and an art. Given the number of partnerships that fail prematurely or never deliver results, it is safe to assume that much can go wrong, and usually will go wrong. Our experience in brokering, designing and facilitating MSPs, and our interactions with academics and practitioners, have taught us that there are no simple success formulas. However, we have identified seven principles that healthy and effective partnerships generally follow.

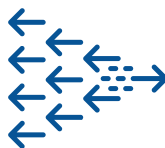


Principle 1: Embrace systemic change

MSPs are often designed in a way that suggests that change is plannable. However, human and natural systems are complex.

That means change is dynamic and often unpredictable. Uncertainty is an inescapable reality. It has to be accommodated when engaging in MSPs. Intervening in complex systems requires us to be agile to respond to emerging opportunities. We must commit ourselves to continuous monitoring, and expect and learn from failure.

More diversity in an MSP is an asset – even if it produces more friction and conflict, because a diversity of perspectives generates more opportunities to understand the system and fosters creativity in the pursuit of solutions.



Principle 2: Transform institutions.

When we talk about social, economic and political change, we are also talking about changing the underlying institutions or traditions. By 'institutions' we mean the

'rules of the game', the formal and informal norms and values that shape how people think and behave. Deeply held values, established traditions and formal frameworks can be real barriers to change, but they can also be supportive and help MSPs achieve their aims. MSPs need to help stakeholders look critically at the institutions – both their own and those of others – that affect their work.



Principle 3: Work with power.

Power can be a negative force, but we also need it to bring about positive change.

Power differences and power abuses that stand in the way of desired change need to

be addressed. MSPs need to include or reach out to powerful stakeholders to shift power structures in the right directions. Similarly, empowering particular stakeholder groups – helping them get into a position where they can use power constructively – can be key in developing just and equitable solutions.



Principle 4: Deal with conflict.

Conflict arises when parties or individuals have genuinely different interests and struggle unproductively over them, rather than consulting or negotiating solutions.

Conflict is an inevitable part of any MSP. It may even be necessary for change to occur. Understanding, bringing to the surface and dealing with conflict is essential in effective MSPs.



Principle 5: Communicate effectively.

Underlying any effective MSP is the capacity and willingness to communicate in an open, respectful, honest, empathetic and critical way. This involves abilities to both listen to

others and to clearly articulate your own perspectives and ideas. Process designers can ensure that space is created for exploring the worldviews that underlie stakeholders' positions. We also need to recognise the emotions of the people involved in dialogue. Effective communication gears decision-making mechanisms for high-quality decisions that are practically enforceable.



Principle 6: Promote collaborative leadership.

Leadership patterns and capacities have a profound influence on the direction that MSPs take. MSPs need a strong collaborative leadership pattern,

as they are about enabling people to work together, sharing responsibility and becoming empowered to tackle difficult issues. Leadership roles need to be vested in a range of actors. We use the term ‘collaborative leadership’ to refer both to sharing leadership responsibilities and to the particular styles of leadership likely to be most effective. Practising collaborative leadership is particularly important in MSPs, because approaches that work in a hierarchical setting where leaders have formal authority are likely to fail here.



Principle 7: Foster participatory learning.

MSPs have to provide a space where learning can flourish – otherwise they are pointless. MSPs need mechanisms that enable different stakeholders to learn together from their collective experience.

Events and activities are required throughout the life-cycle of an MSP to bring stakeholders together to talk, share, analyse, make decisions and reflect on what they are doing together. The quality of these learning events can be the difference between a successful or a failed MSP. Participatory learning and monitoring methods can foster creative, open, emotionally engaging and analytically sound interactions.

Putting the principles into practice

Good and effective MSP processes don’t just happen – they need to be designed and facilitated. Applying these seven principles can help prevent MSPs from becoming endless talk shops, toothless animals, ruthless battle zones or exercises in reinventing the wheel.

If MSPs are to make their expected contribution to the SDGs, it is time to raise the bar for collaboration. Leaders can contribute to their effectiveness in several ways:

- Work on partnership readiness: Many organisations talk about MSPs, but their operational structure and culture hold staff back from meaningfully engaging in MSPs.
- Be strategic about what you design MSPs to do: An issue-fit, a partner-fit MSP and a roadmap are needed for how you will develop the partnership together.
- Be creative in finding new financing models: It is time for MSP support to move past traditional one-donor dominated modalities.
- Set quality standards for MSPs: Clear quality standards can help assess existing MSPs and develop higher-quality ones in the future.
- Create safe spaces for disadvantaged groups in MSPs:

Procedures and decision-making mechanisms need to be adapted so that MSPs don’t replicate existing unequal power relationships.

- Build capacities for partnering: Don’t assume that running or engaging in a partnership is the same as running an organisation. Invest in analytical, creative, social and emotional competencies.

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Non-profits and business team up for land governance in Sierra Leone

Since 2016, the civil society organisation Solidaridad and the company Natural Habitats Sierra Leone (NHSL) have joined forces for land rights, livelihoods and sustainable business practices. The collaboration was enabled through the DFID-funded LEGEND programme. ECDPM's Jeske van Seters and Poorva Karkare interviewed Nicholas Jengre, Solidaridad country manager for Sierra Leone, to learn about this collaboration and tease out early lessons from the partnership experience.

ECDPM: LEGEND stands for “Land: Enhancing Governance for Economic Development”. What does the programme aim to achieve, and what are the key elements of this approach?

Nicholas Jengre: Analyses show that land deals in Sierra Leone typically lack transparency, adequate documentation and consultation. They also do not include free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the communities directly affected. As a result, companies entering into these land deals may face significant disputes with the local community. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible

Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) were developed by the Committee on World Food Security to address land tenure issues by serving as a reference and providing guidance on land governance to ensure equitable access to land.

The VGGT informed Sierra Leone's new land policy. The DFID-funded LEGEND programme seeks to contribute to implementation of the new policy. In particular, it has been engaged in connection with a large palm oil investment by the company Natural Habitats Sierra Leone (NHSL) in the

Makpele chiefdom in the country's south. The programme aims to contribute to protection of land rights, livelihoods and food security of vulnerable people, while promoting sustainable business.

The project involves a range of interventions. It includes facilitation of stakeholder consultations, training on land governance and land rights in local dialect and support to farmers to organise themselves and apply good agronomic practices for production of certain staple foods.

How does a multi-stakeholder nature help in resolving issues around land ownership?

Nicholas: NHSL inherited a master lease covering the entire chiefdom of Makpele (almost 40,000 hectares of land) from an earlier company. But there were serious disputes in the local community, which was not adequately consulted at the signing of the land deal. NHSL has a strong ambition to produce organic and RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) certified crude palm oil. For the company to meet these standards and to comply with the national land policy (NLP) it is important to engage in consultations with the community. Moreover, the NLP stipulates that an investor must not acquire more than 5,000 hectares of land at a time for large projects.

Consequently, the company decided to surrender the entire lease and - through engagement and consultation with the local communities - started a process to get FPIC from landowners and ensure more transparency on new leasing arrangements. However, it needed a partner to do this effectively and provide a neutral convener who made sure that all voices were heard before the new lease was finalised. Thus, they formed a consortium with Solidaridad and national NGOs such as NAMATI, WOHRAD, Green Scenery and UNFAO Sierra Leone.

Solidaridad also engaged in rigorous consultations with the community and the private company. Through these consultations, land was mapped in a participatory way. Agreements were made not only between the company and the community on which land was to be leased and which was to be kept for farmers, but also between farmers within the same community to set boundaries and help avoid disputes in the future. The new lease now covers some 2,300 hectares, well within the NLP-stipulated threshold. Moreover, each lease (68 lease agreements in all) includes four signatories (instead of the

two previously), making the process more transparent and inclusive. Furthermore, as a result of this participatory process, communities came up with their own “recommended land acquisition steps” for investors based on their experiences with NHSL. It is important to institutionalise such multi-stakeholder approaches. In this spirit, and in line with the NLP, the process resulted in the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform at the chiefdom level and eight multi-stakeholder community land committees. These communities are now organised to decide on land use planning or outside requests from investors.

To reach a consensus and have mutually acceptable land acquisition there needs to be trust between the stakeholders. How have you built trust, and what opportunities and challenges have you encountered?

Nicholas: Initially, it was a challenge to gain the trust of the local communities. They viewed Solidaridad as working for the big company and serving its interests, since we did not have our own office at the start and operated from the company's compound. We had to work hard to gain their trust. It helped when we took community representatives to the wider chiefdom, provincial and even national level to meet other stakeholders, because they now realised that we were working on a larger, nationally embedded agenda to ensure responsible land-based investments. We slowly gained their trust, also by proximity and providing them valued support.

Tensions between the community and the company were running high, mainly because of the way the previous lease had been signed. The local communities did not trust NHSL, and quite a few landowners were unwilling to lease their land. By surrendering the old lease, NHSL demonstrated its commitment to engage with the communities in a meaningful dialogue. It proved important to involve a wide range of local stakeholders.

We had numerous consultations at the community level with actors like chiefs, councils of elders, security services, teachers and others. These helped diffuse tensions between the community and the company, and gave us a chance to explain the NLP and best practices for land governance and generally build capacity among the communities, most of whom are illiterate. This helped promote dialogue within groups across communities that had been at loggerheads due to disagreements over the land lease, as some agreed to lease land while others did not. It was only after these consultations at the community level that stakeholders were brought together at the chiefdom level, with representation from each of these groups, along with representatives of women's groups, farmers' associations and youth organisations.

The participatory land mappings mentioned earlier included not only those who had agreed to lease their land but also those who had not agreed. This was an important aspect of the trust-building exercise: all relevant stakeholders were included, regardless of their views and positioning.

At the same time, tensions did arise between Solidaridad and the company. The company felt that it was not being given due credit, while Solidaridad received all the praise for building capacity within the local communities. This turned out to be mainly a communication issue and was resolved. It does illustrate the delicate task of operating as a neutral convener and becoming and remaining the trusted partner of different parties, including a large investor and local communities.

The project tested an operational tool to help investors apply the VGGT- that is, the Analytical Framework for Due Diligence in Responsible Land-Based Agricultural Investment, developed by the New



Photo: Solidaridad

Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. It was the first time the framework was applied by a large-scale investor in Sierra Leone. What lessons did you learn?

Nicholas: The tool helped us identify red flags in investments and avoid them. It provided useful information to guide due diligence efforts. However, such a document can be seen as static when compared to the complex reality of changing dynamics. Due diligence is a continuous effort which requires reflection and adjustment.

When is community engagement fully satisfactory? You find that out in practice. Hence, overall, a big lesson is that while an analytical framework is helpful, it has to be applied with care and taking into account on-the-ground realities. Moreover, we realized that dealing with the conflict around the land lease wasn't enough. Sierra Leone is the third most hungry country in the world. When seeking to talk with communities about land rights, they raised immediate food security concerns. Thus, we integrated this important aspect into the LEGEND programme. We supported farmers to organise themselves into farmer groups and provided training in good agronomic practices for production of certain staple foods, including development of food crop demonstration plots. In the future,

some of those farmers may act as oil palm out-growers for the company.

You pay particular attention to gender issues. What has this entailed and how did it play out?

Nicholas: More than 70% of the women in the country are engaged in agriculture. However, they have limited access to and control of land. So one of the project objectives was to ensure that women get that access. We worked towards this through various, interlinked means.

For instance, we embarked on gender-sensitive land tenure training. Apart from this, we engaged with community chiefs, referring to the NLP, which urges that women not be discriminated against and must have ownership of land. At the same time, with the gender family model we gathered men and women to train them to mobilise local resources to improve their livelihoods, such as by growing cassava, rice and peanuts. We also promoted community savings groups in a structured way.

All these simultaneous interventions resulted in a general improvement in the livelihoods of farmers through more food security and better savings. These developments led to better treatment of women in the family. Today, some 35%

of the new lease signatories are women, which enhances their say over a part of household-income. This is historic for a country like Sierra Leone, where women's rights are not very strong and the starting point is low.

You told us that LEGEND seeks to contribute to implementation of the new land policy. From LEGEND's experiences so far, what is your view on the role government plays. Do you have any recommendations for policymakers in Sierra Leone and beyond?

Nicholas: The national land policy includes essential measures in line with the VGGT. Going beyond the policy though, several things come to mind. For instance, the government needs to play an active role in ensuring that its policies are implemented. It is not just about designing policy, but also about putting it to practice. Government needs to demonstrate leadership and hold companies to account. This is increasingly happening in Sierra Leone. As a case in point, the government is developing an approval process for agricultural investments to ensure that investors and investments meet certain criteria.

The government needs to go beyond a mere rule-setter role. The land policy changes people's rights, and government should support communities to know and make use of those rights. Furthermore, when useful, it can act as a convener between companies and communities, making sure that all voices, including the vulnerable, are heard. This can be done by putting redressal mechanisms in place. While Solidaridad is a firm proponent and facilitator of multi-stakeholder approaches, the role of governments remains crucial.



Multi-stakeholder platform delivers 'a minor miracle'

A very diverse group of stakeholders, known as the EU multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), managed to agree on four key areas for support to enterprises. 'A minor miracle', declared the First Vice-President of the European Commission. According to the platform, the next EU leadership should focus on sustainable consumption and production, people's skills, human rights and promoting transparent and trustworthy approaches.

By Lorena Sorrentino

The fact that platform members, despite coming from very different backgrounds and representing very diverse constituencies, managed to find common ground and strongly push together in the same direction can be considered a singular success. The recommendations constitute a new narrative on working with the private sector towards the SDGs, adding focus and momentum to the SDG process and a sustainable Europe by 2030. Among other things, the platform's proposals seek to make corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability part of the purpose and core strategy of organisations.

The platform identified four key areas where the EU should do more to support responsible business practices within and beyond Europe, thus contributing to SDG achievement:

- Support and incentivise sustainable consumption and production
- Invest in people's skills and the future of work
- Adopt supportive approaches for 'business and human rights'
- Encourage monitoring, transparency and trust building

Sustainable consumption and production

Companies are vital to reduce the EU's environmental footprint. Circular production needs to be further promoted and incentivised, paying particular attention to global supply chains. Moreover, sustainability needs to be integral in the future vision of the European Industry Strategy 2030. That can be supported through the work of another major platform, the 'Industry 2030' High-Level Industrial Roundtable, established by the European Commission in 2018.

Ideally, the Commission would support a practical initiative to engage European businesses and industries in integrating sustainability into their vision, strategy and projects. The idea is to help business and industry accelerate the shift towards more sustainable business practices and devise solutions to societal sustainability challenges. For example, it could include rolling out sustainability industry strategies by all European industries, including a sector vision, action plan and targets, along with projects and progress reports.

People's skills and the future of work

Europe needs to focus on and support initiatives towards more people-centred work environments, enabling lifelong learning, employability, job transitions, well-being at work, inclusive labour markets and balancing care with employment. For this, the EU should invest in research and innovation, people and human talents, while putting in place a governance structure that encourages engagement between enterprises, education and training establishments, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels. All such measures can contribute to sustainable livelihoods for people and the economic sustainability of enterprises.

Business and human rights

The EU should develop a coherent and effective approach on business and human rights, in close collaboration with enterprises and stakeholders. This would serve multiple objectives:

- Strengthening policy coherence and complementarity across different CSR initiatives
- Facilitating the creation of new sector and cross-sector collaborative platforms for responsible sourcing and sustainable supply chains
- Providing for investments in capacity building on business and human rights with partner countries
- Creating enabling conditions for global and local players to, for instance, incubate and implement practical and local solutions to help global implementation of the SDGs

Monitoring, transparency and trust building

All stakeholders, including enterprises, should be encouraged and supported to monitor progress on sustainability and

engage with relevant stakeholders in outreach on the impact of activities and policies towards sustainable development. A concrete area where the EU could support enterprises, investors and stakeholders is in the monitoring of different reporting requirements for companies, at the EU, national and regional level. This would include, at the appropriate time, the transposition and implementation of the EU's non-financial reporting rules (these rules require large companies to publish regular reports on the social and environmental impacts of their activities).

Europe needs to focus on and support initiatives towards more people-centred work environments, enabling lifelong learning, employability, job transitions, well-being at work, inclusive labour markets and balancing care with employment.

With the roll-out of the Commission's Action Plan on Sustainable Finance, it will be important to look at the challenges and opportunities of disclosure relating to sustainable investments and sustainability risks, including impacts on access to finance in the real economy. Here the platform suggests making the European Lab on Corporate Reporting a principal hub for companies, investors and stakeholders with two primary aims: (1) to learn from each other on quality and efficient reporting processes and (2) to discuss specific reporting challenges, such as those emanating from environmental, social and governance (ESG); sustainability; and CSR reporting obligations. Links to existing EU financial and non-financial information reporting obligations for companies could also be explored.

The multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs strongly encourages the new leadership of the European Commission to engage actively and effectively on these four areas. Moreover, platform members hope not only to see their mandate renewed, but also to secure enlarged participation and engagement of other interested stakeholders, as well as other key institutions, such as the European Parliament and the Council.



Members of the EU multi-stakeholder platform on the Sustainable Development Goals

Backstory

The European Commission established the high-level multi-stakeholder platform in 2017 to support and advise on the delivery and implementation of the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda. The platform brings together 30 major stakeholders representing a range of interests and sectors. Members span academia, NGOs, businesses, civil society, and EU organs such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions. The platform is tasked to advise the Commission on delivering the SDGs at the EU level and to work towards exchanges of best practices at the local, regional, national and EU level.

Platform members worked on a set of common proposals and recommendations, which they published in October 2018. These centre on the need for an overarching visionary and transformative sustainable Europe by 2030. The platform's inputs single out areas where changes are needed, including governance and the EU's existing toolbox.

In particular, the platform has identified key elements related to the sustainability of enterprises, where the EU could do more to support responsible business practices contributing to the SDGs. These are part of the report presented in October,

and also emerge from discussions among members in the sub-group dedicated to CSR.

The proposals and recommendations refer in particular to (1) areas where policy coherence between several EU initiatives is important and (2) areas where support to business is crucial to promote their actions towards the SDGs, to enable them to learn from each other, and to support multi-stakeholder action and capacity building towards sustainability goals.

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Sustainable Business for Africa (SB4A):

A platform for improving the investment climate through dialogue between governments, businesses and civil society

Having a skilled workforce gives a major boost to a country's investment climate. Through its External Investment Plan (EIP), the European Union is supporting initiatives to develop and improve of vocational education. In Côte d'Ivoire, dialogue between local businesses, chambers of commerce and vocational training experts has honed vocational training to employers' needs.

The EU is committed to leveraging more funds for development and creating sustainable and decent jobs, particularly in Africa and countries in the EU neighbourhood. That is why it created the External Investment Plan (EIP), launched in 2017. The EIP promotes private investment that can spur long-term economic growth and create jobs.

The EIP works in three ways:

- First, a fund provides financial guarantees and grants to lower the risk of investing in partner countries.
- Second, expertise and technical assistance is available to help get projects off the ground.
- Third, it supports improvements in the investment climate in partner countries, so they can attract more investment and make doing business easier, while addressing the structural needs of the economy.



To underpin these efforts, the Sustainable Business for Africa (SB4A) platform was created at the sixth EU-Africa Business Forum, held in Abidjan in November 2017. SB4A establishes a process to enhance systematic public-private dialogue aimed at addressing the challenges that businesses and investors face. Facilitated by EU delegations and in collaboration with governments, SB4A promotes and prioritises business environment reforms, to help economies develop sustainably and create decent jobs, especially for young people and women.

SB4A explores ways to adapt vocational training schemes so they equip people with the skills employers need. It also foresees addressing informality and how to improve conditions for unregistered businesses, especially in fragile environments.

An SB4A example: Making vocational training relevant to real jobs in Côte d'Ivoire



The EU-funded PROFORME project, implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), improves vocational training and youth employability in Côte d'Ivoire. In that country, 43% of young people are unemployed, and less than 10% of secondary students have vocational training. PROFORME brings local authorities and the private sector together to hone vocational training to employers' needs. The project adapts training courses to the requirements expressed by employers. It also creates regular opportunities for dialogue between local businesses and vocational training centres. Workshops regularly gather local businesses, chambers of commerce and vocational training experts from the public sector.

To date, PROFORME vocational training has covered more than 50 job areas, and some 7,500 persons have benefited from training. The project is further working to improve the regulatory environment for vocational training.



The sustainability dilemma in competition law

The business world is inherently dynamic, as demonstrated by the growing number of collective agreements involving companies and other stakeholders – such as civil society organisations – aimed at fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, these agreements can put companies on a head-on collision course with European competition law. Giancarlo Piscitelli and Anna Gerbrandy spell out possible avenues to accommodate such agreements in competition law, thus integrating sustainability initiatives.

By Giancarlo Piscitelli and Anna Gerbrandy

Why is competition law relevant at all?

European competition law seeks to prevent or halt anti-competitive conduct. Such conduct often takes the shape of agreements between firms with potentially negative repercussions on end consumers. Such agreements could lead, for instance, to higher prices or to less variety in products. Competition law pertains exclusively to the private sector.

However, as progressive liberalisation is putting many traditionally public services, such as energy, healthcare and transport, into private hands, the reach of competition law is expanding. Alongside liberalisation of public services, recent years have witnessed a shift in paradigm: the traditionally for-profit sector is becoming increasingly aware of its ecological

footprint and social impact, discovering the appeal of charitable causes and sustainability-oriented initiatives – concerns usually conceived as alien to the private sector.

Firms may even find it efficient to join forces with competitors, and with civil society organisations, to achieve more sustainable production lines. This could lead to industry-wide initiatives towards human, animal and environmental sustainability goals, for example, agreements on child labour, living wages and livestock welfare. Such agreements are likely to result in higher prices (among other things), since organic and ethically-harvested products come at a cost. Competition law, in principle, outright forbids agreements between competitors that produce economic harm to end consumers by increasing prices.

Sustainability agreements, however, are not, at least on the face, aimed at increasing firms' revenues. Rather, they pursue morally upstanding goals, and often enjoy widespread popular and even governmental support; they pursue, in competition law jargon, non-economic goals.

Competition law matters because this new breed of privately-led agreements pursuing non-economic goals has met stubborn resistance by this field of European law. Indeed, competition law has as yet been incapable of determining exactly how non-economic interests, such as social and environmental sustainability, measure up against the familiar economic interests, such as price effects, in its assessments of private agreements.

Sustainability: Friction between law and values

There exists an undeniable friction between European competition law and non-economic interests. Sustainability-oriented private agreements are a sub-category that often experiences this friction. At the root of the incompatibility between competition law and non-economic interests lies the purely economic standard by which competition law assesses private agreements. Starting in the early 1990s, the European Commission, as chief enforcer of European competition law, progressively embraced quantifiable economic standards for assessing the competitive conduct of firms, and whether that conduct could be justified. This so-called 'economisation' of competition law was designed primarily to quantify the impact of anti-competitive agreements on consumer welfare (such as changes in prices, quality, diversity and innovation),

by adopting only quantifiable economic tools (such as models of supply and demand, market shares and pricing effects, and consumer and producer surplus). This made the analysis of competition law more predictable for undertakings and practitioners, and somewhat more 'rational'. In that respect, competition law practice has remained virtually unchanged to date, and competition authorities at the central level of the European Commission and within each member state are still adamant that economic effects on consumer welfare remain the yardstick of competition law assessments.

But in a system that is so determinedly focused on efficiencies and economic effects on consumers, what room can there be for non-economic societal concerns, such as a clean environment and access to healthcare? With this question, the debate essentially becomes one of whether interests that are not strictly speaking 'economic' can too become part of the equation.

On a superficial level, this manifests in case law as a legal conflict. But more fundamentally, it is a conflict at the level of the values that one considers central to competition law. A look at Dutch experience in integrating sustainability with competition law may cast light on possible avenues for a more socially and environmentally friendly European competition law.

The Dutch legal laboratory

The Netherlands has been thrown into the European spotlight by a number of leading test cases experimenting with the interaction between competition law and sustainability.



Dutch campaign highlighting the difference in weight between an organic chicken (left) and one bred for cut-price meat (Plofkip)

One of these concerned the ‘Kip van Morgen’ (‘Chicken of Tomorrow’), involving an industry-wide, government-brokered agreement to improve living standards for chickens. It was brought to the Dutch competition authority (ACM) for review of its compliance with competition law. In its assessment, the competition authority quantified in monetary terms both the impact of the agreement in terms of harm to consumer welfare (it would lead to a price increase of €1.46/kg) and its benefit to the environment and animal welfare (consumers’ willingness to pay for these benefits was calculated as €0.82/kg). Because the benefits were €0.64/kg shy of neutralising the consumer cost, the ACM concluded that the agreement contravened competition rules, and was thereby forbidden.

Leaving aside objections as to whether the willingness-to-pay surveys were an adequate method to quantify environmental benefits, what is striking here is that the Dutch ‘reconciled’ environmental goals with competition law by simply monetising them (i.e., analysing the price effects). In other words, the Dutch reframed the arguably non-economic goal of chickens’ welfare as a mere monetary issue, bringing it under the aegis of consumer welfare (‘how much are consumers willing to pay for an environmentally friendly chicken?’).

This is certainly one way to go about integrating sustainability with competition law, though a conservative one. It essentially denies the existence of friction in the first place, in terms of both law and values, because sustainability is taken to be adequately assessed using an ‘economicised’ approach to competition law.

The question then arises of whether there are other possible avenues to accommodate more boldly sustainable initiatives within competition law – avenues that acknowledge the non-quantifiable, qualitative nature of certain non-economic interests.

The faiths of sustainability in competition law

The current debate, in both academic and legal practice circles, ranges from calls for simple clarifications on the stance of competition law with regard to such non-economic interests, to proposals for radical law reforms overthrowing the system. Below we conceptualise three possible avenues for creating consonance between competition law and sustainability. Rather than being mutually exclusive, these may very well work conjointly. They help us visualise possible solutions and are presented in order of increasing, shall we say, ‘intrusiveness’ in their law-reforming effects:

1. An integrated approach, whereby sustainability is reduced to monetary standards. Like the ‘Chicken of Tomorrow’ example, this solution rests on economic analysis; it all comes down to hard numbers. But it has the disadvantage of being a short-term and tentative response to the sustainability deficit in competition law.
2. Clarification of the law through soft law instruments. In this method, the enforcement authorities, chief of which is the European Commission, issue non-binding instruments clarifying their views on the role of sustainability in the enforcement of competition law.
3. Re-interpretation of the pervasiveness of economic analysis in competition law. This need not entail a legislative reform, but could take the shape of a precedent before a national competition authority, or the European Courts, in which economic analysis is attenuated and non-economic interests are given their due. This long-term and radical solution would allow authorities to factor in non-economic interests, such as social and environmental sustainability, without having to reduce these to monetary standards.

On the spectrum of available courses of action, it is contested whether and how competition law should in fact accommodate the attempts of the private sector to move towards sustainable business practices. No consensus between scholars and practitioners is yet on the horizon, for one main reason: choosing one of the above options instead of another betrays a clear vision on the means to implement sustainability as a goal on the one hand, and the *raison d’être* of competition law on the other – and both these issues are far from set in stone.

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Africapitalism and partnerships for the SDGs: what we can learn from the Unilever-GBF partnership in Nigeria

Africapitalism is about how the private sector can contribute to sustainable development in Africa, underpinned by the values of long-termism and inclusion. It recognises that the business case for sustainability depends on the stake a company has in the economy it operates in. Unilever put these principles into practice. It adopted a partnership approach with the Growing Businesses Foundation. Both collaborators utilised their internal resources and external relationships to catalyse a grass-roots revolutionary network of mini-distributors. In doing so, Unilever made inroads in sales to the remotest rural areas, while rural communities gained not only access to new products, but also income generating opportunities and improved livelihoods.

By Kenneth Amaeshi, Uwafiokun Idemudia and Ndidi Nnoli-Edozien

Capitalism defined as ‘a mode of economic coordination... fundamentally anchored on the principles of freedom (liberty), individuality (self-interest), diligence (thrift and self-discipline), rights (private property), and equity (fairness)’ (Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015: 213), is not new in Africa. As just one example, the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria have long practised a mode of capitalism that promotes enterprise, competition and industry for the common good. Indeed, in this system, ownership is understood in a way that integrally and concurrently considers the interests of past, present and future generations (Nnoli-Edozien, N 2007:16).

This is very important because one of the problems of capitalism in Africa is its misalignment with societal needs. Arguably, in Africa, ‘capitalism’ has been overly driven by agendas set by ‘outsiders’, who primarily see Africa as a market for exploitation and are obsessed with the profits such ventures can produce, without an adequately long-term view. This is reflected in the excesses of some multinationals operating in Africa.

Unfortunately, a focus on profit as the measure of corporate success tends to accentuate tensions between individual and collective interests. This is antithetical to the value

of collectivism prevalent in most African societies, which many Africentric worldviews intuitively capture and modern extrapolations like Africapitalism take seriously.

Africapitalism, in a nutshell, is about how the private sector can contribute to sustainable development in Africa. According to Amaeshi and Idemudia (2015), Africapitalism is an idea and a discourse underpinned by values that reflect a spirit of long-termism and inclusion:

- *Sense of progress and prosperity.* The combination of financial profitability and social wealth
- *Sense of parity and inclusion.* Recognition that the benefits of progress and prosperity need to be equitably shared
- *Sense of peace and harmony.* The view that the simultaneous pursuit of profit and social wealth is primarily a quest for balance, harmony and peace, 'a process of achieving human development... in an *inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent, and secure* manner' (Gladwin et al., 1995: 878, emphasis original)
- *Sense of place and belonging.* An understanding of Africa primarily as a place (and not necessarily as a market) with meaning and value to people's identities

Africapitalism is a form of entrepreneurship that seeks to meet Africa where the continent is in her development path.

As an idea, Africapitalism articulates a possible face of capitalism in Africa, which could be extended to other parts of the world. It is a discourse to galvanise a movement that will ultimately change the practice of capitalism in Africa. Positioned as such, Africapitalism becomes an aspiration for Africa's renaissance – a force for change. It challenges the status quo, that is, capitalism in Africa, which has not transformed Africa. The problem is not necessarily the spirit of capitalism, as the harbinger of human freedom and economic emancipation, but the inherited form of capitalism practised in Africa, which is often at variance with the socio-economic development of the continent.

This misalignment creates lopsided outcomes, not least, economic banditry, corruption, inequality and poverty, which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to address. In this regard, Africapitalism is a call for the private sector in Africa, especially multinational enterprises, to contribute to realisation of the SDGs by taking into consideration the unique circumstances of the continent.

Most multinationals can easily re-deploy their productive assets across the globe. However, for indigenous firms there is little room to manoeuvre, as they have nowhere else to go – and this also applies to multinationals bound to a specific location (e.g., those in extractive industries). Therefore, the case for sustainability as core to business best practice also

depends on the stake that a business has in the economy it operates in. The SDGs becoming imperative signifies a potential competitive advantage for those investors truly vested in an economy – indigenous and foreign alike.

For the SDGs to be achieved, constructive and concerted inputs are needed from government, business and civil society. Businesses become part of the solution of sustainable development when they enrol other actors in their institutional change initiatives (e.g., through standard setting and social projects). This might involve partnerships with non-business actors like NGOs. Collaboration can reduce free-riding and help overcome cultural barriers between development actors. We provide a practical example of how a multinational enterprise. In this case, Unilever – a leading fast-moving consumer goods producer in Africa – partnered with a local NGO to profitably increase its market share and touch lives.

Africapitalism at work in a multinational-NGO partnership

Beyond its commitment to the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, the firm's local management realised that to increase its market share in Nigeria it had to expand its reach to villages with smaller populations in more remote parts of the country. These areas had millions of potential consumers but low purchasing power, no retail distribution networks, no advertising coverage, poor roads and limited transport/distribution options. Taking on such a challenge would not readily make sense to a business that sees the market narrowly as a space for the privileged few who can afford to participate in it.

Unilever adopted a partnership approach, working with the Growing Business Foundation (GBF, an NGO established in 1999). Through the Nigeria *Mbuli* and *Gbemiga* projects (both terms translating to 'empowerment' in local languages), co-created by both organisations, they utilised their internal resources and external relationships to catalyse a grassroots revolutionary network of mini-distributors. In so doing, Unilever succeeded in merchandising its low unit pack (LUP) products in the remotest of rural areas via a multi-layered supply chain to serve the 'bottom of the pyramid'.

GBF, in particular, leveraged its expertise from working with 4,000 micro-businesses in the Niger Delta and 9,500 micro-retailers across Nigeria's 37 states. The partnership started small, with 100 rural businesses in 2014. By 2018, it had engaged 3,000 women in a commercial activity designed in tandem to achieve rural development and poverty eradication through jobs, wealth creation and building sustainable local economies, one community at a time. Moreover, the door-to-door sales model adopted by GBF brought the Unilever brand and health education programmes to 26,000 households.

This success story revolves around a commercial initiative driving innovative, cost-effective sales and distribution. It delivered win-win outcomes for both business and communities by drawing on the complementary core competences of the partners. For example, for business, new rural markets were reached, generating new sales revenues, with 10,000 new points of purchase. Consumer loyalty to the Unilever brand was strengthened, and Unilever strengthened its rural and urban retail and open market presence. For communities, the partnership created access to new products, income generating opportunities and improved livelihood.

Africapitalism and the SDGs

We are thus left with the question: how does this all connect with Africapitalism and the SDGs?

First, based on a sense of parity and inclusion, we have argued that there is a need for a particular form of collaboration between business, government and civil society that is based on the weaving together of global ideas with local solutions towards the SDGs in Africa. Here, the goal is not simply to transfer practices or initiatives that worked in one context into another. Rather, the goal is to adopt and adapt such initiatives with consideration for the local context and knowledge. Hence, the role of Africapitalism here could be to encourage multinational enterprises to consider alternative approaches to business in Africa, including collaboration, to create an enabling environment for local ideas and to support local efforts geared towards addressing the SDGs, while improving business efficacy and efficiency.

Second, the need for overall progress and prosperity from an African perspective calls on businesses to better align their strategies to pursue the SDGs. The disjuncture between business and the sustainability agenda (or 'corporate social responsibility') means that while multinationals seek to contribute to poverty reduction in local communities, they may simultaneously lobby for governmental policy at the national level that indirectly contributes to poverty in local communities. This disjointed agenda undermines the generation of social wealth. For example, while oil companies in Nigeria may contribute to poverty reduction in the Niger Delta via social investments, they also actively lobby for weak environmental laws that make it possible for oil spillage to drive more communities further into poverty.

Third, the socio-cultural realities of Africa, based on a sense of place and belonging, require multinationals to pursue corporate social innovations, if their contributions to the SDGs in Africa are to be both meaningful and sustainable. One of the implications of a sense of place is the need for 'social contracts' such that problems, including environmental degradation, waste management, poverty, youth restiveness and unemployment, receive the attention of multinational enterprises. As such, the goal to help address social problems is based on the nature of the social relationships that emerge due to a multinational's presence in a particular locale, with the

objective of creating sustainable scalable solutions that serve both private interests and the common good.

Finally, multinational enterprises need to use their internal resources and external relationships to advocate for the SDGs and educate their stakeholders. This requires strengthening weak institutions where they exist and playing leadership roles in situations where their core competences can make a difference. It will also involve continuous organisational renewal and adaption to the dynamics of the SDGs in the contexts they operate in.

In sum, the values of Africapitalism can be a good guide for strategic business decisions and inform collaboration with civil society organisations and other stakeholders in Africa and beyond.

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Partners for good: what two African dairy companies can teach us about partnership with NGOs

CSO-business partnerships are vital to achieve sustainable development. But policymakers and development practitioners still struggle to pinpoint what it takes to make these collaborations work. While there is no magic formula for success, the context of a partnership can tell us a great deal about its chances of achieving its aims. ECDPM's Poorva Karkare interviewed Nancy Jones Abeiderrahmane of Tiviski (Mauritania) and Nathaniel Makoni of African Breeders Service Total Cattle Management Ltd (Kenya), two private dairy companies that have partnered with international NGOs to further their business. Their stories provide interesting contrasts and valuable lessons for the future.

By Poorva Karkare

Huge potential in African dairy

There is huge potential in upgrading the dairy value chain in Africa, not least, by bulking the output of small producers. This is complicated, however, by industry-specific factors, like the difficulty of

organising smallholders to supply milk, the need for consistent quality of the raw milk and the greater effort required to deliver production-boosting services to dispersed populations of producers. There are also broader constraints, such as the lack of infrastructure, finance, access to markets,

and policy environments that are not always conducive to small businesses.

Private businesses interested in sourcing milk from smallholders have sought to collaborate with non-profits, such as NGOs, to overcome the obstacles. In some cases,

funding from development partners has helped make such ventures successful. The resulting collaborations provide valuable insights into CSO-business partnerships overall. Here we compare ventures involving two companies: African Breeders Services Total Cattle Management (ABS TCM) in Kenya and Tiviski, a dairy company in Mauritania.

Similar products, different contexts

The two companies operate in very different contexts. In Kenya, smallholders have a sedentary lifestyle with livestock based in one place. In Mauritania, herders depend on sparse pastures in arid zones. This obliges them to travel long distances in search of feed and grazing. Kenyan smallholders, moreover, have had previous – albeit disappointing – experiences with the cooperative model, and are somewhat exposed to the business model of milk production. The herders in Mauritania are based in remote locations and have little earlier exposure to commercial business, besides being culturally reluctant to sell milk.

However, similarities can also be found. In both cases, the private company proved pivotal in making the ventures work. They adopted different business models, but each made an informal pact with small producers to bulk the raw milk before trucking it to a central processing unit.

ABS TCM used a hub model the company had been developing for several years. It established locations where milk could be collected, chilled and then sent on to processors. At the hubs, the farmers supplying to ABS TCM could also obtain inputs and services on credit to help boost their production.

Nouakchott-based Tiviski set up delivery centres close to producers, near the grazing lands, hundreds of kilometres from its processing plant. It also provided inputs like feed, again through a credit system for participating herders. Milk is then transported to the processing plant

to make products like pasteurised milk, cheese and butter.

In both cases, bulking made it possible to collect milk in the quantities required for processing, paired with strict quality control. These market development projects were profitable for ABS TCM and Tiviski, while also increasing the incomes of the producers involved, as their production now reached the formal market. Higher incomes had knock-on effects, stimulating the rural economy and helping establish a supply chain.

Different models of partnership

Both companies partnered with international NGOs, though these partnerships arose somewhat differently. ABS TCM already had several years of experience with its hub model and was convinced of the model's benefits. To replicate it elsewhere, the company entered into a partnership consortium with Heifer International. Other partners in the consortium included Technoserve, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), and CGIAR. The consortium applied for development funding to scale up the business model together.

Tiviski collaborated with Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (Belgium), an international NGO, to support a producers' association the company had set up, called Association des Producteurs Laitiers de Tiviski. While the association provided services to enhance milk quality – particularly feed, veterinary care and training (e.g., milking hygiene films), it proved too costly for the company, despite contributions from the herders involved. Thus, it sought financial and technical assistance from the NGO.

The NGOs' roles were also different. In Kenya, the development partners complemented the company's activities. Among other things, they mobilised smallholders to bring their milk to the hub and assisted in enterprise development, best dairy practices and performance

documentation. These were no easy tasks, given farmers' initial distrust and hesitation to provide milk to a larger entity, due to their previous disappointing experiences with a cooperative model. The private company provided participating farmers services like artificial insemination, veterinary and udder care, as well as inputs like feed, on credit, debited against the milk supplied. This resulted in a significant boost in production.

The Kenyan consortium partners brought out each other's strengths. The development partners absorbed some of the risk, helping to mobilise farmers and providing financial backing to scale up operations. The business model (setting up hubs for collecting and cooling milk in bulk and providing cattle services) remained firmly in the hands of the private company with no subsidy from the partners. By 2018, when the project ended, the model had become self-sustaining.

Partnership with an international NGO provided a way to overcome market and policy constraints through technical and financial support

In Mauritania, however, the partnership was short-lived, as it ran up against conflicts between the principles and needs of the NGO and the private company. Whereas Tiviski viewed the milk-backed credit system as key to ensure the sustainability of the support and quality in the system, the NGO – strongly opposed to the private component – demanded that services also be provided to herders who did not supply to the company. Eventually this resulted in separation of the

association from the company. It became an independent herders' organisation and the feed supply component was discontinued, as the NGO prioritised the veterinary care element. Demand from herders prompted Tiviski to resume supply of affordable feed on credit. The NGO reportedly eventually discontinued its support due to cooperation issues and personnel challenges.

What lessons does this teach?

Smallholder farmers and herders are fragmented and operate on a small scale, resulting in both high transaction costs and poor access to credit. Similarly, inputs and services are costly to provide to dispersed populations of small producers, even if all those involved contribute. In each of our cases, partnership with an international NGO provided a way to overcome market and policy constraints through technical and financial support

and relationship-building assistance. Donor funding proved important to reduce the cost burden for the companies. This underlines the key role that development partners can play, at least in certain cases, in facilitating successful partnerships. In our cases, development financing – from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Kenya and from the European Union in Mauritania – was released for the projects through the NGOs, which in turn worked with the private businesses.

Before such funds are provided, project proposals need to be rigorously scrutinised to determine if a partnership is warranted in the first place. Where partnership is considered worthwhile, project evaluation criteria can be carefully designed to include collaboration components. This is a departure from the typical project performance indicators, which relate mainly to outputs, like numbers of families

supported or outcomes like increases in incomes.

Partnerships involving businesses and CSOs can take different forms. When the objective of collaboration is to contribute to sustainable value chain development, it seems particularly important for the domestic private sector partner to have a central part. While CSOs can help in this endeavour, they seem best placed in a supporting role. The primary position needs to remain with the industry partner that creates the added value and stimulates the local economy, through employment generation and scaling up.

Modes of collaboration that acknowledge the different roles and strengths of the private business and CSO can obtain better results than project-driven exercises led by an NGO and treating the private company as an accessory. These latter may never become independent from assistance. The former, however, are increasingly recognised as vital instruments for sustainable development, though much remains to be learned about their effectiveness and efficiency.

For development partners, it is perhaps most important to go beyond the evaluation of the results of a particular project, to assess partnership experiences and the way the collaboration affects the results. A qualitative assessment of the partnership dimension can go a long way in drawing lessons to inform future partnership approaches.

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Milk weighing, photo: Tiviski



Partnerships for sustainable development: the monitoring and evaluation challenge

Partnerships are widely promoted as vehicles for achieving Sustainable Development Goal targets. We therefore need to do much more to assess how the process of partnering contributes to partnership effectiveness and their potential for transformation.

By **Leda Stott**

The core rationale for working in partnership is that by combining the resources, skills and competencies of different sectors of society, development challenges can be addressed in a more focused, robust and innovative manner than individual approaches. The value created by these multi-actor relationships is increasingly viewed by business and other sectors as a way of transforming societal systems and structures.

A vast number of private, public and civil society organisations are investing time, energy and money in building partnerships to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To justify this investment, better evaluation is essential for demonstrating what societal, organisational and individual benefits can be gained from working in this way.

Assessing the process of partnering

Most partnership evaluations measure effectiveness by examining the short-term tangible outputs of joint activities. Such appraisals may bypass medium-term outcomes and long-term impact, and they do little to help us understand how partner relationships influence results. They also fail to explain why partnering may be preferable to working in a project mode managed by a single organisation or in a traditional contract-based relationship.

Evidence linking partnership effectiveness to good process management suggests that greater consideration of how partners work together in order to meet their goals is needed. As Joanne Burke notes in the book 'Shaping Sustainable Change', 'The way that partners manage their interaction and invest in their relationship – how they collaborate – is inextricably linked to the overall effectiveness of the partnership and what it achieves.'

What to assess and when?

While the results of partnership activities can be evaluated using standard project monitoring and evaluation frameworks, templates for investigating how partners work together, and the usefulness of partnership as an approach, are less readily available. A nuanced appreciation of context and how it influences particular collaborative approaches is crucial when the subject of assessment is the process of partnership itself. A report by the Partnership Broker's Association observes that partnership activities for the SDGs are impacted by a complex mix of external and internal contextual issues. Understanding how partners navigate these is critical for successful achievement of partnership goals, according to the report.

Some methodologies that incorporate such considerations into partnership review and assessment include:

- A framework developed by Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff for assessing evolving partner relationships. This approach aims to improve partnership practice and explore a partnership's contribution to performance and outcomes.
- The Partnership Learning Loop (PLL) tool which seeks to strengthen collaboration between partners. It explores different partnership layers and provides insights into how a partnership functions, how it adds value and how it evolves over time.
- An approach suggested by Building Partnerships for Development that examines partnership performance and effectiveness by analysing drivers. Study of factors that promote or inhibit partnering is proposed at three interconnected levels: the external context in which a partnership is working; the organisational environment of each partner; and among individuals representing partner organisations.

These approaches reinforce the importance of integrating monitoring and evaluation of the partnering process into

the fabric of a partnership from the start. Before entering a collaborative arrangement, potential partners may find it useful to assess the individual risks and benefits of working in this way. During partnership implementation, regular 'health checks' can provide opportunities for partners to review how they are working together. Process challenges can then be identified and addressed in a timely fashion, and adjustments made where necessary.

As the SDGs have a particular focus on transformation, consideration of how partnerships might contribute to systemic change is clearly merited.

More formal evaluations are advised for assessing progress in relation to partnership goals, partner inputs and contextual constraints. Mid-term evaluations can provide pointers for realignment of objectives and activities, while final evaluations can extract lessons from the overall partnering experience.

Who should assess and how?

Open and continuous dialogue among partners is at the heart of the assessment methodologies proposed here for analysing the partnering process. Building Partnerships for Development further notes that 'partnership assessment is best initiated and conducted as a "conversation" owned first and foremost by the partners themselves'. Such interaction centres on listening carefully to others, which necessarily requires time, and creation of a non-threatening space for meaningful exchange between partners.

A 'safe space' for analysing how partners are working together may be facilitated by a partnership broker or a critical friend. Those who take on these roles can support partners in reviewing and revising their work together in order to maximise their collaborative potential. A partnership broker may represent a partner organisation or operate from outside the partnership. An insider's detailed knowledge of the partnership and its relationships is useful for 'health checks'. However, an external assessment may be more appropriate for a wider evaluation exercise, particularly when contents are shared publicly and a more 'objective' view of the partnership may be required. A combination of both internal and external review is also a possibility. Whatever option is chosen, it is essential that all partners are fully informed about the nature of the assessment process, when it will be undertaken and how learning from it will be used and shared.

Reflection and learning

To deepen learning from partnering, partnership brokers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice, critically questioning and analysing the way they work. Positioning the principle of reflection as central to review and assessment can stimulate partners to engage in constructive dialogue and generate knowledge for improving partnering practice and performance.

Learning may be further promoted by conducting partnership peer reviews. This methodology has been used successfully to explore European Social Fund partnership arrangements. Another option is the use of case studies such as those undertaken by the Partnership Brokers Association. Further possibilities include flipped learning methodologies, which have been used to study the Alianza Shire in Ethiopia, and story-telling sessions that examine what works well and what does not. Learning from such reviews can also provide a basis for exploring a partnership's potential to contribute to transformational change.

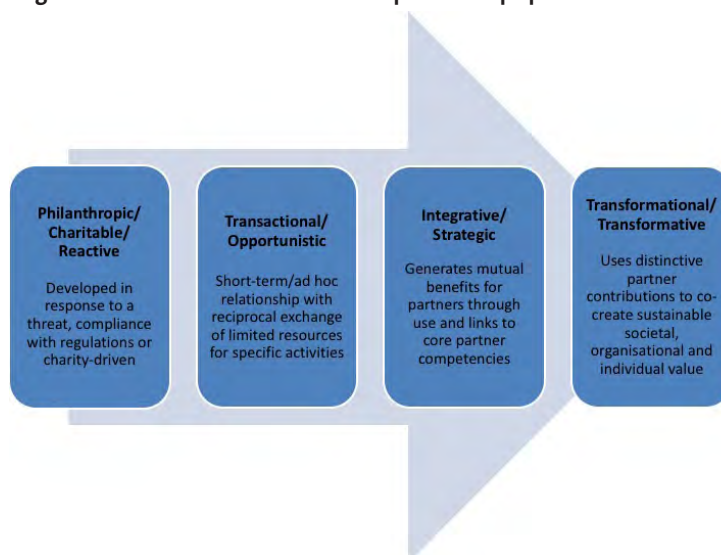
Exploring the transformational potential of partnerships

As the SDGs have a particular focus on transformation, consideration of how partnerships might contribute to systemic change is clearly merited. Transformational change resulting from collaboration may include the development and endorsement of positive rules and norms at the policy level, shifts in individual and organisational behaviours, and the empowerment of vulnerable and marginalised stakeholders. Research on partnerships in South Africa and Zambia, for example, found that partnering provided an important space for a wide range of stakeholders to come together and share their different needs and concerns.

Those involved in developing partnerships with the European Social Fund believe that working in collaboration with other actors enhances the voice of disadvantaged groups in the political arena. They further note that internalisation of learning from partnering encourages improvements in organisational mandates and processes, and assists deeper shared understanding of the value and importance of other sectors and their roles in society.

To explore how partnerships between non-profit organisations and businesses can co-create 'significant economic, social, and environmental value for society, organisations, and individuals', Austin and Seitanidi propose a collaborative value creation (CVC) spectrum. The CVC spectrum suggests that partners can enhance their potential for generating meaningful shared value as they evolve through four stages of collaboration. These stages are similar to a set of partnership 'types' proposed by the UN Global Compact LEAD Taskforce on UN Business Partnerships and the Network for Business Sustainability (Fig.1).

Figure 1: Towards transformation – a partnership spectrum



Source: Adapted from Austin & Seitanidi (2012), UN Global Compact LEAD Taskforce (2011) and Network for Business Sustainability (2013).

Beyond offering a linear or evolutionary model for partnerships, more detailed scrutiny of the different categories provides a useful discussion tool for partners to examine where they feel their relationship 'sits' on the spectrum. Partners may also consider whether a move towards the transformation end of the continuum is taking place and whether results might be more easily achieved through alternatives, such as single sector or contractual approaches. In view of the time and effort involved in partnership building this question is not a frivolous one.

A recent report by The World in 2050 initiative on the transformations needed to achieve the SDGs calls for 'enhanced partnerships' that support 'sustainable transformation'. To develop more ambitious forms of collaboration, a stronger evidence base for partnership effectiveness is clearly necessary – one that assesses both process and results. However, because partnerships are challenging to build and maintain, and often place enormous demands on partners, adding too many complex layers to review procedures, or insisting on prescriptive and one-size-fits-all approaches may be unhelpful. Instead, flexible assessment methodologies that support partners to work better together and deepen learning from collaboration are more likely to provide the creative space needed for developing transformational partnerships.

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Leda Stott is a specialist in multi-actor collaboration and sustainable development. She is an Associate of the Partnership Brokers Association, a member of the Innovation and Technology for Development Centre at the Technical University of Madrid (itdUPM) and currently supports the activities of the Thematic Network on Partnership for the European Social Fund Transnational Platform.



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San Bilal, ECDPM paper, February 2019

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Making markets work for indigenous vegetables in the Lake Naivasha Basin, Kenya

Hanne Knaepen, ECDPM paper, September 2018

Like in other parts of Kenya, the population around Lake Naivasha produces and consumes various indigenous vegetables, such as black nightshade or amaranth. Despite their sustainability benefits, the local food system is reticent to expand the cultivation, marketability and consumption of indigenous vegetables. A key problem is that most Kenyan farmers rely on one crop: maize.



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Jeske van Seters, ECDPM briefing note 100, March 2018

Garments and textiles value chains offer opportunities for inclusive growth in many developing countries in Asia and increasingly also in Africa. They are faced, however, with many social and environmental sustainability challenges. This briefing note provides insights on national multi-stakeholder sector initiatives that have been developed in both Germany and the Netherlands to improve social and environmental conditions along the entire supply chain, and looks at the role of the EU in such a context.



Leveraging private investment for sustainable development

Great Insights Vol 7 Issue 2, Spring 2018

When discussing development cooperation policy and action in 2018, it is all about leveraging: leveraging the private sector, leveraging private finance, leveraging investments by companies and corporations. More broadly it is about leveraging resources, skills and knowledge the private sector can bring to the table to support and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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