



# **A Roundtable to Conceptualize and Initiate Global Ecosystem Hubs for Sustainable Energy**

Organized by SELCO Foundation and IRENA

26<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Morgan Stanley Global Headquarters<sup>1</sup>  
Manhattan, New York

## **Concept**

With the looming deadline of 2030, the SDGs represent international commitment to build a more sustainable, safer and prosperous planet for all humanity. The collective strength in diversity offers an opportunity to build on analogous contexts across and within countries to arrive at multiple blueprints that can serve as an archive of processes of how poverty can be alleviated through ground up, inclusive thinking and interventions via decentralized sustainable energy. Rather than focus on targets of poverty reduction, it is a time to challenge this approach and focus on creation of local capacity that can help reach those targets in a manner that create resilient and sustainable pathways for the poor that go beyond 2030.

The Global Ecosystem Hubs for Sustainable Energy is a proposed international platform to position UN's SDG 7 as a critical catalyst for a sustainable and equitable future. The idea of the Global Ecosystem Hubs is to create connections, facilitate productive transfers of local knowledge, local expertise and networks and to catalyze implementation of pro-poor sustainable energy solutions - all through South-South cooperation. It is proposed to become a learning exchange platform for sustainable energy and development agendas between locally led voices in communities and regions of distinct climatic, geographic, political, socio-economic features. It is intended to transform efficiency and effectiveness of sustainability and impact driven programs by becoming a channel for model and process replication and contextualization.

The Roundtable discussion, organized on 26th September 2019, brought together practitioners, thought leaders, philanthropists, funding agencies, among others to discuss the scope of such a concept. The objective of the roundtable was:

- Concept alignment
- Fostering partnerships: Synergies between planned and existing programs and agendas
- Global Hubs Founding partners - Role and commitments
- Regional Hubs Partners - overall and sectoral
- Scope and Timelines for next steps

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<sup>1</sup> Venue was generously made available by Audrey Choi, CEO Institute of Sustainable Investing at Morgan Stanley who expressed an alignment with the vision of SELCO Foundation.

## Agenda

AGENDA		THURSDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2019
14.30 - 15.00 hrs	Welcome and Brief Introductions	IRENA and SELCO Foundation
15.00 - 15.30 hrs	Opening Remarks and Context Setting	Rachel Kyte Kandeh Yumkella Francesco La Camera
15.30 - 16.15 hrs	<b>Ecosystem Driven Approach to Sustainable Energy:</b> Discussion on concept, agenda and role of the Global Ecosystem Hubs for Sustainable Energy	Presentation by SELCO Foundation
16.15 - 16.30 hrs	Coffee Break	
16.30 - 18.00 hrs	Open Discussion	Moderated by Harish Hande
18.00 hrs	Closing Remarks	Peter Goldmark

### Overview

The event opened with roundtable self-introductions of participants (refer Annex 1). This was followed by opening remarks from Kandeh Yumkella (Independent, Sustainable Energy) and Francesco La Camera (Director General, IRENA). Both underscored the urgency with which we all need to act within our respective powers. Key points highlighted included a focus on power to people or local ownership, integrated energy planning that is agnostic to any one technology or model, SDG7 is not a climate story rather a human one, empower countries with solutions such that they become competitive and are not compelled to migrate as illegal immigrants.

An overview of Global Hubs was presented by Huda Jaffer, Lead Designer, SELCO Foundation which focused on why there is a need for Global Hubs and how the ecosystems approach is a critical part of that approach. This was followed with a moderated roundtable discussion by Harish Hande, CEO SELCO Foundation to draw out alignment to the concept, how this feeds into broader conversations and the role of philanthropy in pushing the needle on sustainable energy for all. Finally, Peter C. Goldmark Jr., Climate and Social Change Advisor, Independent, summarized key elements of the discussion and encouraged each participant to commit to a “Call to Action” regarding Global Hubs as part of his closing remarks.

### Key Takeaways from Roundtable Discussion<sup>2</sup>

- **Ecosystems Approach**
  - There seems to be a **missing longer-term play** perhaps because while the ecosystems approach makes sense, **it’s a complex system to understand for**

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<sup>2</sup> The organizers invoked Chatham House Rules in order to stimulate more bold conversations and hence the notes are presented without attribution to any one person/organization.

**funderson who prefer simplicity** that seems more focused ex. specific technology or one model centric solutions. There is an overarching winner take all mentality ex. experience of providing \$100million to one start up vs putting that amount towards building the ecosystem.

- **Reductionist thinking** has lead to less emphasis on a systems change approach. It is imperative but there seems to be an apparent lack of a roadmap on how to get there. There is a need to find a quantitative way of understanding the challenge and also helping people to deconstruct what might appear as a complex solution. How can we build a common language internationally so that it resonates with more people?
  - **Pushback that complex problems will and should have complex solutions** so we cannot simplify some things. Very often the timeframes on what it takes to alleviate poverty do not match timeframes of solution drivers like impact investors whose exits are 2-3 year windows or short terms of program officers making it difficult to build trust of harness history of relationships and programs.
- **Energy Nexus**
    - Initial in-roads into the **integration of energy and non-energy sectors** in climate week with side sessions on the role of integrating energy into peace & security, IKEA Foundation side event on “Greening the Blue” – how can the UN family pay attention to its own consumption and integration of sustainable energy among its many centers & offices.
    - We need to **reframe the anti-coal messaging** to one that is focused on development.
    - Encouraging **conversations across the table at multiple levels and across sectors** ex. health, livelihood energy nexus. Some successes in this have happened when there is a government pull to initiate cross cutting among various departments- energy + non-energy, infusing energy into program designs at the onset vs simply as a checkbox during the life of the program.
  - **Need for Flexible Monies**
    - The notion of an increased appetite towards flexible funding and how the funder community can rally around this was prominent in the discussion. Some **strategies that have helped unlock flexible funding** over the years include investing in the process of trust building, importance placed internally on the value of learning from mistakes, flexibility that stems from the source of funds and therefore resulting elasticity around its utilization, repeating the story, spreading the message among funder community around how critical philanthropic monies have been used to build the ecosystem.
    - **“Failure monies” directed at international programs can be difficult for foundations particularly US Family Foundations** partly considerable due to diligence and transaction costs. Is there a funder collective that others can give to? Can we focus on building local capacities and ownership so that assets and programs stay within the country?
  - **Collaborations**
    - Funders need to play a better role at **connecting grantees to bridge opportunities** of working together like pieces of a puzzle to solve a common problem. Very often even grantees can work in silos.
    - The idea of a global hub of learning is not new even with the notion of 90% support towards ecosystem and 10% towards technology with the idea that the

ecosystem costs should reduce over time. **In the long run it's a cheapest option after 20 years however, funders want to see something in 2 years.** SELCO has proven itself to be an effective system integrator but in other countries finding such an integrator is tough. In order to initiate that process why not **leverage existing hubs stimulated in part by IRENA** ex. ECOWAS- ECREEE hubs, SADC. Further, the UN system can be leveraged to find public champions regionally.

- The **current climate is testament that systems have failed and there is an urgent need for different approach.** The global hubs cross learning features is not only required at a local level but certainly at a global level where there is a lot of silo thinking resulting in parallel initiatives and layered funding on the same program to try and resolve problems that arise from previous band-aid solutions.

### Call to Action

- Imperative that all our conversations and efforts need to be towards a **generational strategy** such that we do not attempt to navigate an ocean with an old map.
- Need to **tell the story-quantitative and qualitative- more effectively** in order to get more buy in for an energy nexus and ecosystems approach.
- Encourage a **funders consortium or collective** around effectively layering limited philanthropic funds towards long term solutions. This collective also has to be beyond sustainable energy and bring in complementing sectors to the table such that they infuse/integrate energy into their planning and implementation as well vs what might appear to be a push from energy stakeholders.
- Need to **create more SELCO integrators at regional or local levels** in order to catalyse "replication" efforts.
- **Elevate this need for flexible monies** and more examples of how when deployed, ecosystems monies make a huge impact in the long run. There is a growing appetite to support this sort of initiatives but every funder has a different definition for it. Helpful to be able to quantify what is the cost around building the ecosystem and how do we measure building it.
- Have to **put monies immediately into Implementation**, implementation, implementation else we run the risk of the problem exacerbating and plugging monies into [over]thinking vs doing.
- **MIT can offer a concrete role in any form of technical innovation** which is the core competency.
- **UNDESA can offer support to leverage its regional network of partners and co-convene workshops** to bring the right players in. This would also bring in other key regional bilateral donors.

## Annex 1: Participant List

SNo	Name	Organization
1	Ahmed Abdel-Latif	IRENA
2	Alex Healey	ACUMEN
3	Alex Perera	World Resources Institute
4	Athena Ronquillo-Ballesteros	Growald Family Fund
5	Audrey Choi	Morgan Stanley
6	Christine Eibs Singer	Independent
7	Don Gips	Skoll Foundation
8	Elizabeth Press	IRENA
9	Eric Wanless	Rocky Mountain Institute
10	Francesco La Camera	IRENA
11	Harish Hande	SELCO Foundation
12	Huda Jaffer	SELCO Foundation
13	Jeffery Prins	IKEA Foundation
14	Jim Walker	SE4ALL
15	Kandeh Yumkella	Independent
16	Karthikeya Singh	Wadhvani Foundation
17	Maggie Flanagan	The Lemelson Foundation
18	Manish Bapna	World Resources Institute
19	Marteen Derksen	DOEN Foundation
20	Matthew Tiedemann	Power for All
21	Megha Jain	DASRA
22	Michelle de Rijk	DOEN Foundation
23	Minoru Takada	UNDESA
24	Nadine Salame	UN
25	Nathan Argent	OAK Foundation
26	Nawal Al-Hosany	IRENA
27	Peter Goldmark	Independent
28	Rabia Ferroukhi	IRENA
29	Rachita Misra	SELCO Foundation
30	Richenda Van Leeuwen	Rocky Mountain Institute
31	Robert Stoner	MIT
32	Sandra Smithey	Mott Foundation
33	Sarah Alexander	SELCO Foundation
34	Shivani Garg Patel	SKOLL Foundation
35	Siddharth Balasubramanya	Climate Works
36	Stephanie Jones	Good Energies Foundation
37	Suman Sureshbabu	Rockefeller Foundation
38	Thomas D	A2EI
39	Vikas Mehta	SED Fund