**MGoS Inputs into the**

**ECOSOC Partnerships Forum**

**31 March 2016**

**Background:** This document seeks to gather input and views from NGOs, major groups and other stakeholder groups to share with member states at the ECOSOC Partnership Forum to take place on 31 March 2016 at the UN ECOSOC Chamber. NGO observers will also be given the opportunity to make interventions from the floor at the interactive dialogue sessions taking place in the morning and afternoon.

We propose to gather this input into a paper to circulate to member states and to be used as a basis for NGO interventions at the Partnership Forum. All NGOs with an UN badge or have otherwise registered will be welcome to participate in the ECOSOC Partnership Forum taking place on March 31st at the UN ECOSOC Chamber. The proceedings will also be broadcast on UN Web TV [here](http://webtv.un.org/). The main web site for the Partnership Forum is [here](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2016/2016-ecosoc-partnership-forum-%E2%80%9C-commitments-results-leveraging-partnerships-2030-agenda%E2%80%9D).

**Instructions to provide input:** Questions have been provided below based upon the two dialogue papers prepared for the Partnership Forum, found [here](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/partnership-forum-issue-note1.pdf) and [here](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/partnership-forum-issue-note2.pdf) . Please provide short and concise inputs to any or all of the questions. In providing your inputs, please state your name, organization and Major Group/Stakeholder affiliation at the beginning of the paragraph. If possible, please utilize different color fonts to identify different inputs.

[Read: Dialogue Note 1](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/partnership-forum-issue-note1.pdf)

**1. What does it take to galvanize new cross-sectoral partnerships?**

**Rob Wheeler, Global Ecovillage Network, NGO MGp (The key points from my suggestions are in bold below): A core team of lead organizations/stakeholders, staff and most importantly funding. Support from the UN system as a whole. A willingness to reach out to and work with civil society organizations and networks that are already demonstrating how a cross-sectoral approach and partnerships can work and the benefits that they can provide - such as my own, the Global Ecovillage Network. Facilitate participation of indigenous NGOs who currently cannot provide feedback due to lack of hard currency and ECOSOC status.**

**Sunita Kotnala, Sathi All for Partnership, India - Political will and an understanding of cross sectoral partnerships by policy analysts, programmers and implementers within the government machinery. The willingness to accept advice from the civil society will depend on how well inclined a bureaucrat at the national, state and local administration level is towards new approaches- whether they perceive the CSO’s as partners or adversaries.**

**Jessie Henshaw, HDS natural systems design science - New York: Partnerships are like families, everyone having the same and separate agendas, the cohesion from an ability to work as a whole, making decisions for the whole, different parties making differing independent contributions. This same principle of “whole system design” applies to the world societies and cultures the SDG’s are designed to serve. In the nature of whole systems, it becomes whole system development that moves the real welfare of any part. So for the SDG’s, the goal of all partners should be to contribute to the development of the whole, leaving no constituency out, in each one’s different way.**

**Case A: For example, UN monitored and regulated partnerships are needed to assure the system as a whole remains faithful to the UN mandate, and that the distribution of support makes the most use of it. Just as in a family, those “top-down” partnerships need inspire and serve the “bottom-up” partnerships that will had more direct local understanding of the needs and abilities of societies as they seek to pull themselves together to grow and prosper as a whole.**

**Case B: The nature of whole family or culture growth and development is a matter of discovery and sharing, from new points of view, often arising from seemingly ‘alien’ sources. So everyone become a “knowledge worker” in that sense, alert to possible meanings of unfamiliar change and potential, much more of a “search process” than a “power play”. So using what is called “big data” to locate interesting or surprising patterns, social, technological, institutional, like emerging trends of either “things working” or “things failing”, and having vital conversations everywhere, is needed to feed the genius of the cultures and letting it flow to where it’s needed. It might very well be facilitated by a “knowledge extension service” in every region (i.e. mobile librarian perhaps, connecting local groups with knowledge resources) or other kinds of innovations, to make better use of the human creativity available from near and far.**

**JLH pp’s added 3/21/16: So, taking this “whole system” approach expands the “nexus” idea to the limit, seeing “development” not as a list of projects at all, but as a way of supporting the growth of human cultures by self-determination, inspired and aided by the UN vision and programs, but to achieve their own ends, the securing of their homes and fulfillment of their own way of life. It makes each culture’s own growth in seeking its own way of life, the “nexus” of every single one of the SDG goals and targets.**

**This new way of interpreting the SDG’s, as for inspiring and enabling the cultural growth, development and security of human societies, in effect conceptually turns “inside out” the statement of the UN SDG plan, which had been described as being for promoting targeted interventions in struggling societies, to push and prod them to achieve certain “targets”.**

**The real “nexus” of any successful economic or social development is always the success of the developing culture’s ambitions itself, making the role of all the goals, targets, outside governments and organizations secondary. Their principal job in fostering the SDG’s would be to condone, respect and give heartfelt support to each society’s own culture’s self-fulfillment.**

**2. What are possible incentives that would promote and encourage existing partnerships to utilize cross-sectoral approaches?**

**Wheeler/GEN/NGO: Developing a process to reach out to and partner with those that have already developed, are utilizing and demonstrating the success that can come from multi and cross sectoral approaches. For example, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) has developed and is making use of an Ecovillage Design Education Curriculum and Training Programs in more than 30 countries around the globe and that addresses most of the SDGs in a cross-sectoral manner, uses permaculture as a primary design tool, integrates solutions to community problems and challenges across sectors, uses community based planning and implementation processes in more than 100 countries around the globe, and includes many ecovillages that are among the most sustainable of communities on Earth. Currently the Global Ecovillage Network is developing a program to support ecovillage development initiatives in various regions throughout Africa and an EmerGENcies program to support ecovillage responses to natural and climactic disasters and to create resilient and regenerative communities. We welcome the international community, governments, including indigenous governments, and UN agencies to join us in the development and implementation of these two initiatives. But from past experience we have discovered that this may not be too easy to achieve unless the UN and its’ Member States develops a process to reach out to and partner with such initiatives.**

**Sunita Kotnala, Sathi All for Partnership, India- Given the accelerated speed of urbanisation and its impact on communities, cross sector programming in smart city planning could be demonstrated through pilot programmes with specific allocation of funding under FfD. It is easier to demonstrated cross sector planning because of the larger scale of service provision in urban areas ( unfortunately) and would be an easier fruit to pluck in terms of strategic positioning. Without this smart cities are likely to leave many people behind ( women, disabled, elderly, homeless and the disenfranchised and disadvantages) rather than “leave no one behind”. This can then be rolled into overall national strategies across regions.**

**3. What are the elements of an enabling environment for cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships?**

**Wheeler/GEN/NGO: Providing a good forum on an annual basis geared specifically towards those that are interested in, or that are, organizing a cross-sectoral partnership being able to present their initiative in such a manner as to be able to seek additional members; governmental, intergovernmental and UN agency support; and to describe how their proposal and initiative can provide significant added value to what is already being done. A willingness among governments to adequately fund such initiatives and particularly to encourage, welcome and support those being presented by civil society organizations and networks.**

**Sunita Kotnala, Sathi All for Partnership, India- legislative and institutional processes need to be geared towards cross sector planning. For example cross sector planning will not be possible if the legislation for mental health does not allow sharing of information with other players- consumers, families, health practitioners, law enforcement agencies- to address issues around violence and sexual health and sexual assault to the consumer.**

Implementation of the post-2015 agenda depends on national action, which entails that countries mainstream SDGs and national targets into their national development plans , strategies or develop new plans for this purpose and ensure follow-up through implementation. An effective institutional mechanism at the global, regional, national and sub- regional level is required to maximize effectiveness. In view of the reporting format would take both top-bottom and bottom-up approach. Such approach analysis provides an in-depth analysis of national institutions and integrated planning for sustainable development both globally and in the region, drawing out the key ingredients for national development planning for the SDGs and likely capacity needs for countries. Drawing from the top-down review of the emerging global architecture and the bottom-up review of national requirements and capacity needs, effective regional institutional framework for sustainable development.

**4. What institutional arrangements are needed for the United Nations to fully and efficiently support Member States in cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships?**

Wheeler/GEN/NGO: The United Nations and its various agencies needs to make a serious commitment to participate in and support the development of cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly those that are led by or that welcome and include the full participation of civil society in carrying out and implementing them. There are thousands if not millions of civil society organizations and initiatives that would love to have the additional support needed from governments and the United Nations to be able to more successfully contribute to sustainable development and to achieving the SDGs and various other international agreements. The UN agencies should be tasked with encouraging governments, including indigenous governments, and multi-stakeholder partnership initiatives to fully include civil society in both implementation and leadership processes; to ensure that the funds needed are provided so that civil society can adequately do so; and to support the development of such multi-stakeholder processes, along with the participation of civil society, in whatever ways they can.

Each UN agency should provide a list of Partnership Initiatives that they are supporting or participating in. They should each assign and delegate a contact person that Partnership Initiatives can then contact to see if the agency might be interested in their partnership. And each UN agency should make a determined effort to consider the various partnership initiatives that are being developed to see what added value the partnership could add towards scaling up sustainable development and achieving the SDGs around the globe.

**5. What are the lessons learned from multi-stakeholder partnerships that have successfully leveraged (or who are committed to leveraging) cross-sectoral approaches to achieve the SDGs?**

Wheeler/GEN/NGO: The Global Ecovillage Network addresses most of the SDGs at a community based level and has pioneered cross-sectoral approaches to sustainable development for more than 20 years. We have employed multi-stakeholder partnerships in various ways, particularly at a local and regional level, that have successfully leveraged such approaches in a cross-sectoral manner. There are hundreds of lessons that we have learned from such processes that we would gladly share with any that are truly serious about wanting to learn from us.

Community ownership is imperative for example - the community members must feel like and believe that the development projects belong to them, are what they want and need, etc. As is the willingness to participate in what can seem like endless meetings and having good tools for conflict resolution and effective communication processes. All of the key stakeholder groups need to be included in the process; everyone needs to be adequately listened to and believe that they are being heard. A holistic planning and design process needs to be developed, understood and implemented - typically at a community level using permaculture design processes and considerations. We need to learn from and mimic nature and develop practices and processes that are benign in nature and do not do harm to the local or natural environment - thus biologically oriented. Our aim should be to develop regenerative, restorative and resilient approaches to sustainable development and to live within planetary boundaries and the carrying capacity of the earth.

**6. How can we design cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships to effectively leverage integrated or nexus approaches to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

**Wheeler/GEN/NGO: We can begin by thinking like a tree. Thus starting with such questions as what does this tree need from its local environment? What are all of the interlinkages that effect and impact the tree? What does the tree need in terms of nutrients and the natural environment to sustain its ecosystem and life? How is humanity destroying or undercutting what it needs to survive and what can we do about this, etc? When we can think about a tree in this manner and what it’s needs are, then we can begin to think about a local community, or the larger community at whatever level, and what is needed to achieve any of the SDGs in a truly integrated, cross-sectoral and sustainable manner.**

**But such a process has to begin with developing an understand as to how things are inter-related and impact one another. Looking at the “Web of Life” is a good beginning exercise to help people discover what some of these interconnections are and how they can either sustain or undermine life. One important example is considering natural water cycles. Very few people realize the harm that we have done to not only the large scale but also small scale water cycles and the impact that this can have on both local communities and the natural environment.**

**Because we have disrupted, cut down or covered over so much of the natural environment and living ecosystems we have caused massive desertification, an increasing drop in water tables, rivers and streams that no longer flow to and reach the ocean during much of if not most of the year, and the loss of the life force and aqueous flow that is needed to sustain and nourish life. In healthy ecosystems water is held in the soils and plants and slowly seeps out throughout the year, the soils and plants act like a sponge and create an environment that is moist and resilient and that maintains the health and life of the ecosystem. The rich humus of the soil protects and shields the earth so that it does not run off when monsoon rains and hurricanes come. The water circulates constantly through small water cycles within a given bio-region nurturing and protecting life - rather than running off and creating dead zones in the oceans, silt in our rivers, and causing further sea level rise.**

**Once one understands this then we can begin to design water retention landscapes, free up and restore the life of our rivers and streams, and practice regenerative agricultural practices that will restore the natural environment, increase agricultural productivity, increase access to water throughout the year, create a more healthy environment for both people and nature, and provide an increasing level and supply of right livelihood opportunities. But again it all starts by thinking like a tree and imaging what it’s needs are and what we need to do to sustain, protect and restore it’s natural habitat and the life giving ecosystems it, like us, depend upon.**

**7. What type of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation mechanisms could be used for cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships?**

Wheeler/GEN/NGO: Again one will need to design a process that is integrated and holistic in nature. That does not look at each part in isolation but instead looks at the impacts and consequences in a holistic manner. For example, each partnership will need to look at and ask to what extent is it able to achieve such multi-sectoral results as I mentioned at the end in Q6 above.

Similarly one will need to project into the future. The results that we need are not what we can achieve now but what will result in 10 or 20 years out. There must be a plan put in place for maintaining whatever development improvements are made and ensuring that they can continue in a self-sustaining manner. One improvement made now should result as well in benefits that enable all of those involved to continue to make further improvements later as well. And investments made now should pay for themselves over time in such a manner that programs and initiatives can be scaled up and shared with an increasing number of people and communities until all can be covered and the SDGs can be fully met by 2030 - a daunting task, but achievable if we keep this goal in mind.

No partnership initiative can be a success unless we can plan for and include the means to be able to ensure that it will contribute to and ensure that all peoples’ needs and all of the SDGs will be met.

The media constitutes a critical actor in follow-up and review while influencing opinions, individual actions, and holding policy/decision-makers to account. They convey information and knowledge, which contribute to educating and sensitising the general public. But they can also serve as watchdogs by bringing attention to problems and holding those responsible accountable. The media have an important role in taking the voices of people and civil society to governments. The role of the media may be to raise the volume - shock and inspire, educate and inform. Make government at all levels more in touch with ordinary people; those who face the daily challenges.

The role of the media and communicators as information multipliers is paramount to public advocacy and awareness-raising for inclusive follow-up and review. Based on this recognizable and prominent role played by the media, it is important for them to be 100% committed and proactive on effective reporting of the SDGs in Nigeria since this will go a long way in increasing awareness and knowledge of stakeholders on the national processes on the SDGs and the steps in implementing the goals and monitoring progress with the realization in Nigeria.

By raising awareness about the development agenda, challenges and stimulating debate on solutions, the media is making a valuable contribution to the development of Nigeria and is therefore a crucial partner in ensuring a successful follow-up and review of the SDGs.

It is, however, important for the media to domesticate and link the SDGs in their program activities, both in electronic, social and print media, as virtually all programs or event coverage of the media, is directly linked to at least one or more SDGs. Taking for example, environment and educational programs on TV, The Media should work closely with the civil society to get more evidence-based information in aligning their strategies towards the post-2015 development agenda.

[Read Dialogue Note 2](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/partnership-forum-issue-note2.pdf)

**1. How can the UN system strengthen coherence and coordination of UN-led multi-stakeholder partnerships? What are the additional challenges involved in ensuring the transparency and accountability of cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder partnerships, and how can these be addressed?**

Jessie Henshaw: As described above in my “JLH pp’s added” Dialogue 1 Question 1, The most natural way to do that is to recognize the natural “nexus” of each developing culture as a whole. “The real “nexus” of any successful economic or social development is always the success of the developing culture’s ambitions itself, making the role of all the goals, targets, outside governments and organizations secondary. Their principal job in fostering the SDG’s would be to condone, respect and give heartfelt support to each society’s own culture’s self-fulfillment.

**2. How can multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the United Nations be more transparent and accountable?**

Learning to act in a way that is transparent to other actors, and to the cultures within which one is acting, is a rather tall order. So far all the expert measurement groups in the sciences and at the UN that I’ve tried to work with, actually seem to have rebelled against starting to be transparent regarding the actual scale of cultural and ecological impacts we are responsible for as a result of using money. It’s a highly solvable accounting problem, based on how we keep track of money and use it so widely to organize so much of society. So given that, a very simple principle of accounting for “average” cases can be also adjusted for “exceptions”.

“Average shares of benefits of a whole system for producing them   
has average shares of responsibility for the costs.”

No one wants to do it though, as it would mean “internalizing all externalities” of the economy in a very visible way.

In effect it would sweep out all “the elephants from under the carpet” we’ve been storing up, hiding all the side effects of altering the earth in ever bigger ways ever faster... as if saved for some future day. The scientific purpose would be to just have an honest accounting of what we are choosing to do with our financial decisions. I think we’d quickly find that with a holistic view of what clearly measurable costs to our future our spending is accumulating today… we would realize every dollar is making lasting changes to the earth. We’d be still glad to have them, but would become cautions and in a stepwise fashion begin to think much more carefully what we do with them.

There are other kinds of transparency too. It’s hard for different organizations to be transparent with each other, as they all think differently, for one thing. Most of the time the standard of “truth” people use is what I call the “economic standard”, presenting things in the most profitable way to the presenter. There is another kind, the “trust standard”. The trust standard is to be “not-misleading”, as an offer to correct or clarify if what was said turns out to be misinterpreted. It’s oddly the standard practice in designing computers, that any message sent is checked to see if it was received, to not be misleading. If organizations agreed to the “trust standard” they’d quickly learn they could challenge anyone who, as is common practice today, effectively “telling the biggest fib they can get away with”, using the “economic standard” of the truth.

**3. How can the UN improve its due diligence, monitoring and review of its partnerships that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?**

If the objective is not to serve the UN, per se, but to serve the growth and development of each culture being inspired and enabled to seek its own purposes, it would seem to greatly complicate the monitoring. It could be seen as very usefully dividing the job in two. There’s 1) the communicating to and getting feedback from the culture being served, then 2) the internal accounting of agencies for how well they themselves think they used their resources. That may indeed greatly simplify the task in the end.

**4. What kind of reporting would be appropriate for different types of partnerships?**

**5. How can the existing reporting requirements be aligned with UN partnership guidelines and principles?**

**6. What types of partnership models have been successful in establishing clear monitoring and review policies? What are some best practices that can be highlighted?**

**7. How could the role of Member States in reviewing and monitoring multi-stakeholder partnerships implementing the 2030 Agenda be enhanced to ensure the reputational integrity of the United Nations in such partnership initiatives?**

**8. What could be the division of labour on the review of partnerships of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum under the auspices ECOSOC and the General Assembly?**