



**Global  
Challenges  
Foundation**

# **Social Entrepreneurship and UN**

## **Authors**

Nicole Bogott  
Tobias Straube

The submission proposes to expand a collaborative and social innovation platform, giving social entrepreneurs a stage to pitch their business ideas and find established stakeholders for an exchange of knowledge, resources and networks. This will allow social entrepreneurs to scale their ideas towards global impact while providing established stakeholders with impulses of social innovation. How does it work? Individuals across the globe voice challenges their communities find most pressing to be subsequently taken up by social entrepreneurs. The best entrepreneurial solutions are selected by a constituency of experts and representatives of global civil society in a mixed expert based and democratic election (cosmopolitan and liquid democracy mechanisms). The winners advance to a yearly global final in which they pitch in an international competition similar to the magnitude of the Olympic Games. The winning bottom up solutions enhance existing top down structures from the UN. Then the process starts all over again, continuously sparking social innovation for global challenges.





# 1. Abstract

The model is designed on the notion of merging the advantages of an institution as established as the United Nations with the advantages of innovative social entrepreneurs, while including world citizens in the decision-making processes of identifying and responding to transnational threats to their security.

The traditional institutions often act much like big ships. They have all of the equipment meaning valuable networks, knowledge and resources while moving rather slow yet steady. On the other hands there are social entrepreneurs globally acting much more like small speed boats. They are in need for what the UN has to offer while at the same time provide valuable solutions to complex and dynamic global challenges that the UN cannot respond to in the same effective manner as those social enterprises.

This is initiative that seeks to leverage the opportunities that come out of the sweet spot created by bringing together social entrepreneurs with the UN. This undertaking also includes global civil society in the process in order to create sustainable and user-centric answers to cross-boarder problems.

The initiative is providing this linkage through three stages of competition that the social entrepreneurs find themselves in. It starts with Studio Talks. These talks may take place in any city all around the world.

The first Studio Talk has already taken place in August 2017 in Kabul, Afghanistan; the birth place of this initiative. What the Studio Talks aim at is first and foremost that social entrepreneurs get a stage to pitch their business ideas. Furthermore, respective individuals are given the chance to voice what challenges are most pressing in the community. The best ideas are then featured on the initiative's webpage and make it into the Global Studio.

The Global Studio serves as an opportunity for the best pitches to pitch once more and get selected in a democratic vote. The vote is made by experts on the one hand as well as global civil society on the other. Deepening and widening the global democratic process is at the heart of this initiative. The most voted for ideas make it to the Final. The first Global Studio is taking place in Berlin, Germany in November 2017. At this point in time, as resources are limited, the present format is connecting startup ecosystems with the aim of creating actionable projects and/or businesses that are implemented to create impactful change in line with the SDGs afterwards.

The Final is a global format, which is supposed to attract much attention from all around the world, similar to the olympic games. It will create a buzz and media coverage globally. The most promising social entrepreneurs get the unique opportunity to present their solutions to solving global issues in sustainable while having the chance to be selected in order to receive valuable networks, resources and knowledge from the UN. At the same time the UN benefits as it gets infused with new and innovative ideas in order to solve cross-border issues.

The institutions for this endeavour are already in place. The UN will manage this initiative from the office of the Secretary General in order to act upon its promise to provide the resources, networks and knowledge needed for the social



entrepreneurs to advance and succeed. Decisions will be taken by global civil society and by an expert panel from various backgrounds. The notion of liquid and cosmopolitan democracy are encouraged by this initiative in order to bring the UN closer to the population all around the globe while making participation easy and accessible to anyone. People who are interested may directly join a social enterprise of their choice and also organise Studio Talks in any city they want to.

## 2. Description of the model

### I. ESTABLISHMENT OF A GLOBAL ACADEMY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Sources of funding for the academy

The academy w

Citizens all around the world are increasingly affected by global threats to their security. These threats are often caused by several multidimensional and intertwined issues such as climate change, demographic changes and other megatrends. What is significant is that most people do themselves not have any control over the threats, as the issues that are affecting everyone are complex and multilayered. Threats may either be man-made or natural.

The SDGs describe the multitude of issues that the citizens of the planet are facing in detail; Global inequality, religious extremism and climate change are just some of the multiple threats to our common global future.

#### Megatrends and their outcomes

Most of the above-mentioned challenges are unlikely to come to an end in the near future. Rather many of these issues will be amplified and accelerated. While consulting a variety of studies it came clear that overlapping and additional trends are expected to leave a severe global impact.

These dynamics include urbanisation, demographic and social change, shifts in global economic power, resource scarcity, climate change and technical breakthroughs (PwC 2016). They even touch upon subjects such as the future of smart or a behavioural revolution (EY 2017).

All of these developments are of an increasingly complex and fast changing nature, requiring solutions that cannot be developed and delivered by one person or organisation alone. This conclusion is the backbone of the UN concept of ‘multi-stakeholder partnerships’, which shall play an important role in implementing the Agenda 2030.

There are three traditional actors that on the one hand try to address root causes as well as responding to people’s needs. The overarching stakeholders are: states, the private sector and organisations.

Yet, an effective platforms to align the multitude of actors is missing – in particular platforms with outreach to (social) entrepreneurs. An alignment of traditional actors from different backgrounds and outreach to new actors is urgently needed. Currently, there are divergent interests yet complementary strengths:



### **States – National interest**

Over centuries, notion of the nation state has been a major organisational structure in most parts of the world. However, oftentimes state representatives and authorities are not able to reach out properly in order to address pressing national and transnational challenges that impact everyone. Depending on the context there are a variety of states that do not have the structures in place that may take care of the needs of the people residing in that state; whether they are nationals or not. States are supposed to respond to their citizen's needs or to the needs of the people residing in that country.

### **Companies – Customer's interests**

Companies respond to needs of paying customers. Although many small and large firms have recognised the need to also consider the sustainability and social responsibility of their actions, they are still limited in their agility to innovate and address market and social dynamics. This is underlined by Clayton Christensen, Professor at the Harvard Business School. His study 'The Innovator's Dilemma' (Christensen 2016) revealed that large firms tend to fail because of their limited ability to adjust not their products or services but business model to changing markets and demands. While this risk is not imminent across the private sector globally, this finding expresses the limitations of large companies that are interested in playing a constructive role with regard to the SDG, to keep up with global fast-paced dynamics.

### **Organisations – Beneficiaries (and donor's) interests**

Civil society organisations respond either to the needs of their constituents or target a specific cause. They may be either international, local, non-profit, faith-based or take other forms. However it is perceived that most established organisations are locked in the same 'innovator's dilemma' as large companies. Despite the large number of organisations and the impact they are having, civil society organisations are often criticised for being detached from the needs of their beneficiaries in the communities and to be working more for their own survival – eventually following the path of funding and hence donor interests. In addition, the authors have observed a mismatch between civil societies working at the national level in the capital cities and those in the countryside across the globe.

### **Challenges of traditional actors**

State authorities, organisations and large companies too often appear to be big ships with a limited ability to manoeuvre in the fast changing environment and are rather reacting to challenges today than pro-actively shaping the world of tomorrow. Though, in the face of social existentialism, there is resistance! Social entrepreneurs and agile civil society movements and actors produce innovative means to tackle global issues in sustainable ways. In the last century people also formed social movements to emancipate themselves from oppressive structures fighting for societal causes, environmental issues or further democratization within states all around the globe.

So, now the question is: Who is adequately equipped, meaning having the right approaches and legitimization to respond to a) transnational issues and b) to the needs of the people created out of those transnational issues?

### **Bottom Up Solutions: Social Entrepreneurs and Civil Society**

Committed citizens and entrepreneurs with a social goal, are increasingly



taking the initiative to action in the form of social entrepreneurship. As global institutions have largely not brought about the promises they had made; especially young people that are well connected to one another are taking matters into their own hands. Where state measures alone are not sufficient and effective, they can make a real contribution towards social goods such as education, health, the environment or sustainability through innovative business models. They often regard themselves as small and agile speedboats, characterised by flat hierarchies allowing them to act swiftly and hence produce quick and tangible results. Furthermore they often operate in environments they understand very well due to the fact that they are customer focused. In comparison to traditional NGOs they are fuelled by entrepreneurial spirits. They therefore have more leverage to take in ideas of the beneficiaries themselves when it comes to serve local needs. Just as companies have an exceptional way of listening to and responding to the needs of their clients and customers the hypothesis is that social enterprises are also the best in highlighting and responding to issues by knowing the beneficiaries of their social services and by taking on advice from other stakeholders as well.

### **Top Down Support**

Despite their shortcomings, traditional institutions like the UN are often the most legitimate when it comes with dealing with global issues. The UN has the global infrastructure, resources and political outreach, necessary to address global issues.

How to connect both dimensions?

Even social entrepreneurs need the legitimacy of the global community. Innovative ideas should be identified in democratic ways that is complemented by expert advise (because we are talking about innovation). This democratic way is important to give beneficiaries of social entrepreneurs a voice in the selection, inspire people to participate in thinking outside the box and practicing democratic principles

### ***Our Value Proposition:***

#### **A dual system enhancing the existing top down system with bottom up structures**

This is an initiative that does not recognise the dualisms of organisations such as the UN that are big ships and speedboats represented by social entrepreneurs as an obstacle but rather as complementary forces. This initiative aims at bringing social entrepreneurs and the UN together.

While the United Nations has an established and recognised infrastructure, policy making authority and all of the necessary resources, social entrepreneurs have the innovative ideas and liberty for quickly launching and testing solutions, inspiring others and enhancing a competition about the best ideas.

Therefore, this proposal aims at creating an effective interface between the vibrant and global social entrepreneurship scene, global citizens and the UN.

This will be done by becoming a worldwide TEDx-like platform to promote services and products of social entrepreneurs that have the potential to make the world a better place. On an annual basis, the most promising ideas are identified through this initiative as a global platform and subsequently receive access to the resources, networks and knowledge of the UN to scale their ideas and thereby sustainably solve global issues effectively.



The UN in return benefit from an continuous infusion of groundbreaking solutions, supporting the achievement of SDGs.

But there is more: Once presented at the Studio Talks, the best ideas move up the latter into a pool that global civil society may tap into. Hence this initiative encourage democratic decision making that is not linked to nationality. What makes this initiative different is the low threshold to participate and easy access to fully engage.

## **THE SOLUTION: STRENGTHENING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Definition**

Although, there is not just one definition of what social entrepreneurship is, it is commonly understood as business approaches used by individuals and companies in order to tackle societal problems. Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, one of the most prominent organizations in the field of social entrepreneurship, understands social entrepreneurs as “...the essential corrective force. They are system-changing entrepreneurs. And from deep within they, and therefore their work, are committed to the good of all” (Ashoka n.D.). Social entrepreneurship may be understood as the grey area somewhere between traditional profit-oriented companies and non-profit organisation entirely focused on social issues and on having an impact.

We understand social entrepreneurs as individuals or organisations, using an entrepreneurial approach towards achieving the SDGs on the local or global level by focusing on creating impact as much as profit equally.

The history of social entrepreneurship is equally contested. Although social entrepreneurship is a relatively new term, its characteristics can be found throughout history. The concept itself has often been reflected in the idolized expression of the ‘honorable merchant’, which has often been associated with business personalities acting ethically and doing something good for the society (Schwalbach 2008, 79). This image can be found as a reference for centuries across different cultures.

The arguably most famous social entrepreneur is Muhammad Yunus. He was the nobel-peace prize winner in 2006 for his social business, the Grameen Bank, which he already started in the 80s. The Harvard Business Schools, however, took the issue of social enterprises into consideration only from 1993 onwards, with “the founding of its Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI)” (Harvard Business School n.D.).

Today, social entrepreneurship is steadily gaining prominence. This development is fuelled by the above mentioned challenges as well as an increasing critical assessment of the capitalist world order. In the West the focus on social entrepreneurship has sharpened after the financial crisis of 2007. Trends show that the yearning for sustainability and justice in the economy are on the rise. Consumers are increasingly demanding more sustainable goods, as a study conducted by Bain & Company found out (Bain & Company 2014).

Other important developments do not come from entrepreneurs and consumers themselves but from established businesses. With globalisation and liberation of trade continuously gaining speed, businesses are increasingly looking beyond their markets at home. Still, the so-called ‘bottom of the pyramid’, meaning the



global low-income but large population, has been almost completely ignored by large and established companies. Yet it is this development that “presents both tremendous opportunities and unique challenges” (Ted London and Stuart L. Hart, P. 351). To tap into this potential, companies need to reinvent their business models and embrace social and societal factors to counter challenges they encounter when entering emerging markets. This is often done through partnerships with non-corporate partners, as they help to get a better understanding of the social and local context and bridge their knowledge gap, outreach or resources (Bhaumik, Gelb 2005: 351; Dahan, Doh, Oetzel and Yaziji: 2010).

Last but not least the damaging effects of the waste created by major economies, has contributed to the rise in prominence of the concept of circular economy, with its inherent sustainability approach for the public and private sector (McKinsey 2016).

### **Current Potential and Limitations of Social Entrepreneurship**

Besides the value that any entrepreneurial activity generates for any economy – in terms of innovation, competition and job generation – there are multiple advantages for addressing global challenges through social entrepreneurship:

As social enterprises do not rely on conforming with the priorities of governments alone, they can respond to social problems more efficiently while strengthening economies as a whole through their innovation potential. Their business nature also implies that they are not depending on limitation in funds from official institutions, which makes it easier for them to meet the needs of our society and to react to urgent demands in an agile manner.

Being rooted in communities usually, social entrepreneurs have the ability to deliver solutions in a way a public institution cannot. In distinction to traditional businesses, social entrepreneurs are enjoying greater credibility as change agents and hence have access to or initiate networks between social groups.

Social entrepreneur inspire others to get engaged. Especially in the global north, this dimension cannot be underestimated. Representatives of millennials (30%), generation X (38%), and baby boomers (48%) are seeking meaning in their work, not just a paycheque. This was the result of a global survey of 26,000 LinkedIn members, run with Imperative (Erickson, Hurst, et. al. 2016, 19).

Along with the evolution of social entrepreneurial activities (Thomson Reuters Foundation n.D.) is the rise of social entrepreneurship support institutions – which, however, are still a niche and do not provide full global access and presence. Ashoka, the social entrepreneurship network, the impact hub network or challenge competitions such as the Hult Prize are supporting social entrepreneurs through financial support or accelerator programmes.

Still, social entrepreneurship is in its infancies and the growth potential and challenges are difficult to assess. This is underlined by studies, that suggest that social entrepreneurs mainly receive measurable governmental support in the global north (Thomson Reuters Foundation n.D.) and often remain within national boundaries.





Although, there are interest groups that are lobbying for better legal frameworks and easier access to financial resources, these efforts are neither bold nor visionary. Linked to these efforts, nascent as they are, cut out the fact that there is already a developed infrastructure of organisations, such as the UN, with a mandate to work on the global challenges of today and tomorrow.

## **COMPONENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS**

### **The different stages**

We propose an initiative that is divided into three stages, basically functioning as funnel to identify the most promising ideas of social entrepreneurs while engaging the global public.

### **Studio Talks**

These are decentralized talks that may take place in any town anywhere in the world. The first Studio Talk took place in Kabul, Afghanistan in August 2017. At the studio talk the three principles of powerful impact: access to networks, resources and knowledge are discussed and ideas will either be generated or presented in the second part of the Studio Talk.

### **Global Studio**

The Global Studio is an event that emerges out of the Studio Talks. The first real life event is going to take place at the Berlin conference in November 2017. There Afghan entrepreneurs will get together with established actors that may provide necessary knowledge, resources and networks in order to kickstart impactful action in Afghanistan and Germany to solve societal issues through social entrepreneurship. In the future the vision is to have several best ideas being presented at a global studio in which proven and impactful actors from civil society as well as an expert panel decide on the ones that make it to the Final. The ideas and initiatives will be clustered according to the categories of the SDGs.

### **Final**

The impact Final takes place once a year. It takes place at the UN itself. This format is similar to the dragons' den, a programme that matches investors with startups on TV. The Final will be filmed and broadcasted online or maybe even on national TV stations. The format will encourage a global vote. The idea is to make the event as big as the olympics where people from different disciplines and countries participate in an event that takes place over a few days. The three elements knowledge, networks and resources needed by social enterprises and provided by the UN get particular prominence in the final event.

The social entrepreneurs will be allocated into a cluster system that corresponds to the SDGs and works based on the principles of the power triangle. According to the model real impact can only be achieved, if there is:

- A good idea with a plan on how it could be implemented; a strategy
- A network of people who are capable to implement the idea together; a team
- The necessary resources to financially support the people and the idea

## **THE MODEL:**

The above mentioned interface between the UN, global citizens and the social entrepreneurship scene is designed along four steps, involving three different entities.





### **1 Step: Discover**

Social entrepreneurs are active across the globe working on solutions to tackle local and global challenges while producing an income and being financially largely independent from other actors.

Eligible ideas must contribute towards four core aims:

- Work towards the achievement of the SDG
- Solve the needs of a defined group of beneficiaries and be user-centric developed
- Have the potential to be scaled and
- Provide a convincing case why networks, knowledge or resources are required from the UN

The first step aims at discovering these innovative, impactful and scalable approaches and ideas. This shall be done in a low threshold participatory fashion, following an approach, similar to TEDx, a conference in order to spread ideas. The Studio Talks are organised across the globe throughout the year, by anyone who obtains the free license and agrees to the vision and values. These studio talks shall be non-profit. However organisers are allowed to ask for fees from the audience to cover logistical costs.

The team will develop an 'event kit' to allow eventually any interested individual or organisation to organise a Studio Talk. This 'event kit' comprises all material incl. process guideline, communication strategy, logo etc.

At the beginning of the conference there is a slot for key individuals, from the specific communities that the talk will take place in, to voice their views on pressing needs that need to be tackled by the international community. Here the collaboration of the UN with social entrepreneurs is referred to. It is important to give a space in which some local needs can be highlighted to be tackled.

Then, this initiative serves as a platform event for social entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas and business cases for tackling a societal challenge, in the most innovative and engaging way they can. Each platform will include participants at various stages in their business development process.

At this first level, a jury and an audience vote (50/50) for the three most promising ideas and or businesses, taking into consideration the following criteria – often known as design principles, shared and promoted by organisations such as IDEO.

This initiative embraces a human centred approach. This method emphasizes the necessity to observe, identify and understand the needs of the beneficiary. Through the early creation and testing of prototypes, ideas are quickly evaluated and revised. The focus here is not on the detailed elaboration of ideas, but rather on extensive experimentation, testing and the gathering of new insights. This approach is applied especially by the startup-scene but also beyond.

While all ideas are promoted and all events are streamed through the website of the initiative, allowing committed citizen of the world to reach out and support innovators on an individual basis, only winning ideas of the different talks are entering the next selection stage, Global Studio.



In the Global Studio, citizens from across the world and civil society are invited to select 10 ideas through an open and simple voting mechanism. An additional 10 ideas are selected through an expert panel, consisting of representatives from the social entrepreneurship scene, private and public sector as well as civil society. With this twofold approach, the initiative ensures that beneficiaries have a voice in the selection process but also give social entrepreneurs with a limited public outreach the chance to enter the last stage.

This very last stage is called Final and is the platform where ideas are presented to UN representatives live to an international audience.

### **Step 2: Infuse**

The five selected social enterprises will be infused into the UN system. For the UN to benefit from the innovative approaches of social entrepreneurs and incorporate their products and services into their operations, it is indispensable to avoid the mistakes of innovation units of large companies, which are seeing innovation either as a standalone process and failing to integrate them into the operations across the organisation.

UN organizations across the world shall be encouraged to organize regional Studio Talks. Furthermore, at least one seat on the jury of the Final shall be reserved for a representative of a UN (sub-) organization. This not only provides the chance for the UN bodies involved to gain ownership for this initiative but also provide the frame for UN staff to enter into exchanges and discussions with social entrepreneurs, which will allow both sides to learn about methods and approaches to innovation from each other.

The following premises must be given for a successful format:

- this initiative needs to be slim. It needs to be easily understood structurally with a center where the essence of power is captured (Global Civil Society) and going into more complex issues as people join.
- this initiative should not be based on nations but on clusters. After all the UN revolving around nation-states already exists. This is a platform where real exchange and debate can take place to create the room for action and implementation worldwide. Any institution, individual or policy that comes from this initiative must have this aim.
- this initiative must exist outside the already existing mechanisms, but be closely interlinked to avoid the perception of being an ivory tower and therefore possibly lose the acceptance of UN institutions. This is important, as this initiative indirectly aims at provoking a more innovative thinking and agile working within the UN as a whole.

### **Step 3: Scale**

The selected social entrepreneurs in the Final will receive one year access to the knowledge, resources and networks to the UN system – depending on the specific needs. This, however, requires a debate within the UN about how to structure their knowledges, resources and networks to make it accessible to social entrepreneurs. This debate is not only important with regard to the establishment of the aforementioned clusters, but also to trigger a discussion within the UN about what it takes to build a more innovation friendly and user-centric organisational culture.



From a managerial perspective, the UN will assign a guardian from its own structures, who serves as a focal person for the respective social entrepreneur.

It is noteworthy to mention that innovative approaches need the space and liberty for trials and errors. Hence, social entrepreneurs should not be accountable for the achievement of specific outcomes in a fixed timeframe but rather for learnings and progress made (Ries 2011, 18-20). This means, that social entrepreneurs continue to receive UN support as long as they make progress towards scaling their approaches across regions or sectors and avoid repeating mistakes.

#### **Step 4: Learning and sharing**

Success and failure are key experiences of entrepreneurs. Failure should never be stigmatised but rather serve as a source of learning.

Learning from failure and success are invaluable experiences not only for the person experiences them, but also for others aiming at getting engaged in an entrepreneurial endeavour.

Therefore, shall the learnings of social entrepreneurs not only be promoted on the website, but also be subject to reviews at the beginning of Finals, before future ideas are pitched and discussed.

#### **THREE ENTITIES ARE INVOLVED:**

##### **Social Entrepreneurs**

###### *Function:*

The function of social entrepreneurs is to develop and pitch ideas which address societal challenges in sustainable ways. This initiative provides a platform for them. What is important is that their ideas gain global reach, to extend their impact and at the same time promote social entrepreneurship and inspire others. In that sense social entrepreneurs that succeed through this initiative are role models as well as change makers, combining sustainability and entrepreneurial approaches while connecting local with global.

###### *Responsibility:*

Social Entrepreneurs and their teams participate in the selection process by first pitching their idea at the Studio Talks and presenting their idea also on the the website. Social entrepreneurs, which make it through the pre-selection (called Global Studio) pitch their idea again at the Final. The winners of this last selection process receive access to the knowledge, resources and networks of the UN that they need to succeed. Any individual that is inspired may also directly contact the social entrepreneurs that have pitched their ideas through the website. The social entrepreneurs and their teams are expected to commit to scaling their business and hence widen their impact. They are also tasked to promote talks and their cause and share learnings with public.

###### *Decision Making Mandate:*

Social entrepreneurs themselves have no general decision mandate; however, successful and well-known social entrepreneurs are invited as representatives to sit on selection panels of the different stages of this initiative. They have the responsibility of voting for the most promising ideas brought forward by applicants. All social entrepreneurs are furthermore invited to promote the public decision making possibility within their networks.



## **Global Civil Society**

### *Function:*

Civil society, understood rather as individuals than established civil society organisations, is seen as an important factor to connect bottom up entrepreneurial solutions and top down support for scaling and widening their impact. In the Studio Talks across the world as well as the Global Studio, any person who lives on planet earth may participate in either joining a social enterprise or organise an event as part of this initiative.

### *Responsibility:*

Committed individuals or civil society organisations are encouraged take over a responsibility for organising Studio Talks in their city or elsewhere. If interested, they can furthermore reach out to social entrepreneurs through the website and support any initiative in any form possible. This initiative thrives because the threshold to participate is low. That is why the process of getting access, of voting and of participation is as low as possible.

### *Decision Making Mandate:*

The civil society gets the chance to directly participate in the voting process either at the level of the Studio Talks, the Global Studio or both. They are in charge of making a decision upon the social enterprise they deem worthy of support of the UN. What is important is also to alter people's awareness of their relationship towards UN structures. The UN is funded by states and the states get their funding from their citizens. Therefore, the link between individuals and the UN get's strengthened by creating voting structures that task the UN in supporting certain social entrepreneurial initiatives.

Key individuals may be community leaders that get a chance to voice pressing issues that need to be solved within their communities are either appointed through a global liquid and cosmopolitan voting method or through recruitment by the team. This liquidity will ensure that any appointment may be short lived if the envisioned results are not being delivered. These individuals have the chance to explain before the Studio Talks what issues they need help with. This also fits with the proposed user-centric approach. Once these concerns get addressed by social entrepreneurs in any of the Studio Talks they may have a good chance to progress towards the Global Studio and may even make it to the Final. The opportunity to respond to real needs of society will enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the platform.

## **United Nations**

### *Function:*

The UN Is expected to embrace this initiative and to manage it from the Office of the Secretary General. This is important in order to secure the necessary knowledge, resources and networks to support social entrepreneurs responding to needs within various communities globally. The UN has the function to foster social entrepreneurship and support innovative approaches for tackling global challenges. Further, the UN may embrace decision making procedures amongst global civil society individuals and organisations no matter what place they are from, by participating in this initiative. The UN uses its strengths to provide a platform for cosmopolitan and liquid democracy mechanisms of individuals in voicing their concerns as they are the ones affected by cross-border issues. The platform allows people to easily participate in cross-border action clusters that



social enterprises operate in. The aim of this is a greater involvement of more people in solving the world's biggest issues. This will make this initiative, and hence the UN, a practical exercise and experience for a more democratic and inclusive way to tackle challenges now and in the future.

*Responsibility:*

- The UN, being the organisation backing this initiative, benefits from this platform but is equally expected to contribute in multiple ways:
- Promote the creation of Studio Talks across the globe
- Support the website as main channel for reaching out to social entrepreneurs
- Connecting social entrepreneurs with the interested public or organisations
- Facilitating the global voting mechanism
- Streaming the Final
- Support representatives to sit on the panel of the Final
- Provide the winners of the Final access to networks, knowledge and resources

The networks, resources and knowledge that the UN may provide or help with are dependent on the context they are needed in. Resources might be funds but it could also be office space or human resources as well as technological resources and others. Networks are valuable in order to connect the social entrepreneurs to the right people and provide ways of distribution of the product or service proposed. Further, knowledge can mean expertise but also access to studies and other data that the social entrepreneur could not generate on his or her own.

In addition, the UN may consider how it wants to create interfaces with social entrepreneurs and local innovation ecosystems beyond this initiative. This would only provide the UN a continuous flow of innovative ideas and approaches but also teach UN staff agile development and management methods while entering important discussions with beneficiaries through credible actors.

*Decision Making Mandate*

The decision making power majorly rests with the bodies, most suitable for assessing the potential of solutions presented by social entrepreneurs: The beneficiaries, which is the broader public, and other social entrepreneurs, with an eye for recognising breakthrough or even disruptive approaches.

This delegation of decision making is important, as it increases the ownership of all parties involved, securing the sustainability of the model and legitimising the approach for the UN. Thus, direct decision making responsibility of the UN is limited to a vote on the panel of the Final.

**The model is practice**

After the horrific attack on the German Embassy on the 31st of May 2017 a dedicated group of individuals came together to discuss opportunities to start a new narrative on Afghanistan; inside and outside of the country.

The young and vibrant startups-scene in Kabul has the immense potential not only to foster innovation but also to shape the Afghan economy and society alike and hence be the face of this new and promising narrative on Afghanistan!



This is how this initiative was born! In August 2017 the first conference took place in Kabul. At the time it was aiming at providing a platform for entrepreneurs in Afghanistan to access and manage resources, knowledge and networks in the growing startup-scene. It was attended by more than 250 participants out of which more than 100 were returnees from Pakistan, Iran, Dubai and Sweden. In short: The conference was an overwhelming success and released the energy of all participants involved to take this initiative further!

This led the team to take this initiative further to replicate and enhance the event in Berlin, Germany, to connect both startup-ecosystems, promote social entrepreneurship in both countries, provide social entrepreneurs from Germany insights into the business environment of fragile states and give migrants and returning refugees the opportunity to connect with startups, which potentially offer perspectives.

Having seen different parts of the world and experienced entrepreneurship in different roles and contexts, has led the team to pursue a more global and inclusive approach with this initiative.

### 3. Motivation

#### CORE VALUES

This initiative embraces the Sustainable Development Goals as the defining framework in which the social entrepreneurs operate in. All ideas promoted and supported through this initiative must be guided by the good of all humankind and by respect for the equal value of all human beings.

This initiative is building around and based on different core values on multiple dimensions:

First and foremost, this initiative is beneficiary driven. Social entrepreneurs are focusing on impact at least equally as much as profit. This focus is emphasised through user centric design principles, which are applied from the beginning onwards as key criteria in the selection process of the social entrepreneurs. Beneficiaries even have the chance to participate in the selection process, fostering their key position in the product or service development process of social entrepreneurs. Further, beneficiaries get a chance to voice their needs.

This initiative believes that any organisation is as innovative as the decision-makers in charge. Therefore, this initiative pursues a crowd-based approach for identifying innovation. Everyone, who agrees with the values and concept of this initiative and obtains a free-licence, can organise a Studio Talk. Everyone interested in collaborating can reach out to social entrepreneurs through the website.

This initiative is not teaching participatory means and methods but provides a practical framework for committed citizen to make their voice heard in the selection process, which essentially gives them the power to shape the UN's service deliveries.



## **DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY**

Decisions are made on three different levels, narrowing down the options for decision-making.

First, Studio Talks identify ideas, which will be presented to the interested public and an expert jury. Both parties are asked to make their decision, using the user centric design principles as guiding criteria. The selected social entrepreneurs enter the Global Studio, essentially a global selection process to identify the suitable social entrepreneurs, who will be invited to the annual Final.

This public and expert mixed decision-making process, which is streamlined on all levels of this initiative, serves to give beneficiaries and committed citizen a voice. However, since it is possible that certain minority groups will not get the necessary public support despite having a good idea, an expert committee with representatives from the social entrepreneurship ecosystem, private sector and/or civil society.

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

The model, due to the focus on the design principles, favours social entrepreneurs with ideas that have already proven to be effective in a certain context.

The crowd-sourcing and competitive approach ensures the advancement of the most innovative and hence effective idea advances in the selection process.

The access to the resources, knowledge and network of the UN if furthermore more linked to development or learning progress from social entrepreneurs.

In order to effectively address the global challenges and risks, the governance model must include means to ensure implementation of decisions.

## **RESOURCES AND FINANCING**

The different stages of this initiative imply different cost structures.

The general management costs and maintenance of the website, which is currently managed by a team of four volunteers, will require additional staff and funding once this concept is being implemented.

The organisation of the Studio Talks, comparable to the TEDx idea platform, shall be non-profit. However organisers are allowed to ask for fees from the audience to cover logistical costs. The 'kit' and licence is for free. In the beginning, to scale this initiative from its current stage to the stage described here in the paper, this initiative will require creators across the globe to implement the first 50 Studio Talks.

The Global Studio and Final are implying marketing costs, logistical cost and honorariums.

The winners of the Final will receive access to the resource, knowledge and networks of the UN.

The return on investment for the UN will come in terms of impact, efficiency and solutions to achieve the SDG. In addition to that, the outreach and collaboration





with entrepreneurs and change-makers from around the globe is an invaluable asset, which the UN will gain through this initiative. Considering the vast amount of ideas identified through this initiative, will allow the UN cost savings in its different programmes. This will indirectly benefit a new and more innovative thinking within the UN

The proposed governance model must have sufficient human and material resources at its disposal, and these resources must be financed in an equitable manner.

### **GENERAL SECURITY**

The nuisance of this initiative is that it is not state's driven but cluster driven. This means that this initiative is oriented towards the achievement of the SDGs. Any and all progress is measured according to threats to humanity as a whole. A lot of these cross border threats are currently on the rise. Therefore, the model guarantees international security and even strengthens international security. Threats that are tackled are either man-made or environmental. As these threats are multifaceted affecting everyone this initiative will serve as a means for peace and stability in various regions all around the world.

### **FLEXIBILITY**

This initiative is organised in a three level approach (Studio Talks, Global Studio and the Final) in annual rounds, allowing adjustments at different entry points.

Social entrepreneurs address market needs and thus are inherently flexible with regard changing global environments.

A successful governance model must allow revisions and improvements of its structure and components.

Further the system really includes the flexibility to adjust to user centric needs such as IDEO:

- **Transparent:** Complex problems require simple, clear and honest solutions.
- **Inspiring:** Successful solutions will move people by satisfying their needs giving meaning to their lives, and raising their hopes and expectations.
- **Transformational:** Exceptional problems demand exceptional solutions that may be radical and even disruptive.
- **Participatory:** Effective solutions will be collaborative, inclusive and developed with the people who will use them.
- **Contextual:** No solution should be developed or delivered in isolation but should instead recognise the social, physical and information systems it is part of.
- **Sustainable:** Every solution needs to be robust, responsible and designed with regard to its long-term impact on the environment and society.



## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

The decision model of this initiative, backed by the website, allows all stakeholders to monitor and follow the progress and learnings of social entrepreneurs throughout their journey.

The user centric approach and learning accountability pursued by the support approach for social entrepreneurs ensures the best possible and transparent outcomes. Once social entrepreneurs cannot prove anymore that they have learned from their mistakes or when their approaches go beyond the framework of this initiative, then the support will come to an halt.

The latter also applies for Studio Talks.

This initiative will be observed by a supervisory body, which will intervene if necessary.

It is a fundamental requirement of a successful governance model that it performs the tasks it has been charged with, and that decision-makers can be held accountable for their actions. This includes mechanisms against abuse of power, which can invalidate decisions and actions that exceed the mandate of the governance model, and which can step in when it is clear that decision-makers and relevant institutions are not doing their job correctly. This requires transparency and extensive insight into power structures and decision-making processes.



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