

SDGs - Tools for business practice: A view from Moscow



Daria Isaeva, Russian Donors
Forum

The Forum of Partnership organized by UN Global Compact in Moscow in partnership with Russian Donors Forum in February explored among other things the role that community foundations play in achieving the SDGs. Daria Isaeva, Programme manager, Russian Donors Forum reflects below on a panel discussion which involved participants from the corporate and non-profit sectors along with James Magowan from ECFI. She highlights the recognition of the value of inter-sectoral cooperation and how the common language offered in the SDG framework helped make the connection.

Since the SDG agenda entered global philanthropy, it has stimulated a vivid discussion on how SDGs can be integrated in NGOs' strategies and activities and how the third sector can and should contribute to sustainable development.

Speakers representing both corporate and non-profit sectors in Russia also shared their perception of what opportunities and challenges SDGs open for their further cooperation. They emphasized that business has the potential to bring not only financial resources to a partnership, but also possesses a deep expertise in certain social mechanisms and has the ability to develop and implement innovations effectively. On the other hand, NGOs largely demonstrate a deeper understanding of the root causes of social problems and the needs of their target audience. Here, SDGs are perceived as a common language which should bridge the gap between business and NGOs and help them formulate their common goals.

Experts also reminded us that the SDGs should be considered as a tool which allows actors to see a bigger picture of how their efforts fit into the global puzzle of philanthropy and social investments.

At a panel discussion devoted to NGOs and business partnership for sustainable development, James Magowan, ECFI, highlighted that SDGs can help shape the



way European community foundations build roadmaps and organize their communication with donors. James also stressed that aligning NGOs' activities with SDGs plays an excellent motivating role for the community foundation teams, since employees and volunteers can see how their work contributes to achieving ambitious global goals.

Natalia Poppel from Severstal believes that SDGs serve as a perfect common ground for government, business and NGO to build their partnerships especially in the field of territorial development. Tatiana Burmistrova from Reach for Change charitable organization added that speaking SDGs language simplifies the search for like-minded actors who focus on solving the same problems within the SDG framework. Therefore, SDGs allow governments, business and nonprofit sector to identify similar intentions and goals, which were previously simply expressed in different words. SDGs are thus expected to advance intersectoral communication in the field of philanthropy.

IBM Head of Corporate Citizenship Irina Efremova-Gart focused on how companies partner with NGOs. She listed the criteria the company takes into account while considering joint projects with NGOs. These include:

- Sufficient expertise in the problem area in which the organization operates
- Good record and portfolios demonstrating that the NGO is able to effectively provide services to its beneficiaries
- Flexible approach to emerging problems and an open-minded attitude to digitalization.

For example, in the IBM Call For Code Initiative where developers from all over the world offer their solutions to acute socio-economic problems, NGOs are responsible for formulating tasks related to socio-economic problems, as well as for informing potential beneficiaries about the solutions proposed by the company.

The Forum of Partnership brought to the spotlight many concerns shared by both business and nonprofits. The present decade seems to be marked by closer intersectional partnerships and constant exchange of expertise aimed at achieving sustainable development goals and fulfilling their own strategies and missions.

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