

The SDGs Are Good For Us

Report on Workshop 28-29 June, London



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Introduction

Connecting community foundations with the SDGs has been an important topic for ECFI since 2019. Since then, ECFI has provided resources online, shared knowledge and experience and delivered workshops under the title 'The SDGs are Good for You'. These serve to highlight the value added to community foundations and ultimately to the achievement of the Goals. The role of support organisations has always been seen as critical in order to reach the diverse constituency of community foundations at the right moment and in the most appropriate way, including in their own language.

The London workshop, 28-29 June 'The SDGs are Good for US', brought together practitioners from the support organisation field with experience of, or an interest in, encouraging community foundations to embrace the SDGs. All participants referred to the fact that it is unquestionable that the work of community foundations relates to the SDGs. It is however about presentation and the degree to which the SDG framework is used strategically.

The workshop reflected on the actions taken by community foundation support organisations, the experience of Northamptonshire Community Foundation, and the essentials of partnerships for the SDGs. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for community foundation support organisations to:

- share knowledge and practical experience on the relevance of the SDGs to their work and the work of community foundations
- consider the benefits that have been realised through embracing the SDGs (at community, community foundation and network levels)
- explore the role of support organisations in encouraging the community foundation field to embrace the SDGs

Participants

Beatrice de Durfort	Foundation of Lille	France
Anca Ilutiu	Foundation of Lille	France
Ulrike Reichart	Alliance of Community Foundations in Germany	Germany
Francesca Mereta	Assifero	Italy
Ansis Berzins	Community Foundation Movement in Latvia	Latvia
Stefan Cibian	Făgăraş Research Institute	Romania
Monica Jac	Romanian Federation of Community Foundations	Romania
Rachel McGrath	Northamptonshire Community Foundation	UK
Lina Kukulskyte	The Partnering Initiative	UK
Ben Robinson	UK Community Foundations	UK
Jo Williams	UK Community Foundations	UK
James Magowan	ECFI	Europe

Embedding the Global Goals into the work of a community foundation



Rachel McGrath, CEO, Northamptonshire Community Foundation, shared her experience of getting the SDGs on the organisation's agenda, leading to alignment of its strategy with the SDGs and to the point where 'The Goals are in community foundation's DNA'.

Beginning in 2019, Rachel started conversations within the team and the board about the relevance of the work of the community foundation to the SDGs. She was convinced that it should be 'all or not at all' and sought to apply a whole of organisation approach. A compelling case was made for embracing the framework and aligning with the Goals, highlighting potential benefits in relation to strategy, communications, attracting donors, partnership building, team motivation, and impact. Having got the board behind the idea, Northamptonshire Community Foundation reviewed and amended its values and vision to demonstrate their recognition of and commitment to the SDGs. With this vision Northamptonshire Community Foundation expresses the feeling as a local actor which is embedded into a wider international network, rich in good practice and collectively strong for empowering the voluntary and community sector ecosystem. After discussion at their Grants and Impact committee, Board of Trustees and through their senior staff team they agreed in 2019 to include the SDGs in their Business Plan 2019-2022 and commit to working towards some, or all, of these Goals through their work. The SDGs feature in the overall Vision and strategic plan as shown below.

'OUR VISION is about the growth of our Community Foundation to help our communities thrive and survive locally, with a focus on building philanthropy and generosity. We will strive to champion diversity, equality, inclusion whilst working towards supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals; we want to think global and act local.'

Northamptonshire Community Foundation Strategic Plan Goal 5 - Think GLOBAL, act LOCAL

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs/global goals) set a challenge to us all for what we need to work towards to create peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and in the future. We will gladly do our bit to build a healthy, happy, and sustainable Northamptonshire and a better and safer future for current and future generations on our doorstep.

We will carry out 'The World's to do list' on our local doorstep by embracing the UN SDGs to make our contribution to a better world locally as a Foundation team alongside our donors and funded voluntary community groups and charities.

We will champion the global goals in Northamptonshire and work alongside partners, collaborators, voluntary community groups and charities and donors and inspire others to take on the challenge of building a better and more sustainable world locally.

We will help raise the aspirations of all our donor's giving and the impact of the funded activities being carried out by aligning their wishes and the good work being delivered by funded community groups and charities to the UN SDGs.

We will use the UN SDGs to talk about the work of Northamptonshire Community Foundation and involve everyone on the journey to helping meet the global goals for 2030 from staff and trustees to donors, voluntary community groups and charities. We will do this through a series of community conversations so we can all work together to identify the good work happening and what more can be done.

We will look to identify opportunities for all donors and generosity givers to the foundation to build funds and community investments that help meet the global goals and to celebrate the achievements of those funds in helping build a better world.

The SDGs have been used by Northamptonshire Community Foundation in the following ways:











To prompt stakeholder and donor conversations



Using the UN SDGs to talk about the work of Northamptonshire Community Foundation including through local knowledge sharing; communications strategy and conversations with donors, funded groups, partners and other stakeholders. This led to the establishment of the Poverty Truth Commission which brings donors, partners and grantees together to discuss local solutions for our most urgent community concerns and needs.

Strategy development and local needs analysis

The Goals are used as a framework for help make a connection between Local Insights reports and needs analyses (Northamptonshire Hidden Needs reports, conducted in partnership with The University of Northampton, Institute for Social Innovation and Impact) and the foundation's strategy development.

Finding your way around this Local Insight profile			3
Introduction Page 3 for an introduction to this report			
	Population There are 753,280 people living in Northamptonshire <small>(See pages 4-6 for more information on population by age and gender, ethnicity, country of birth, language, migration, household composition and religion)</small>		Education & skills 22% of people have no qualifications in Northamptonshire compared with 22% across England <small>(See pages 40-45 for more information on qualifications, post attainment and early years educational progress)</small>
	Vulnerable groups 14% of children are living in poverty in Northamptonshire compared with 17% across England <small>(See pages 10-23 for more information on children in poverty, people out of work, people in hospital areas, disability, homelessness and other vulnerable groups)</small>		Economy 43% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Northamptonshire compared with 39% across England <small>(See pages 46-52 for more information on people's jobs, job opportunities, income and local businesses)</small>
	Housing 2% of households lack central heating in Northamptonshire compared with 2% across England <small>(See pages 24-25 for more information on dwelling types, heating fuels, affordability, overcrowding, age of dwelling and communal outdoor spaces)</small>		Access & transport 19% of households have no car in Northamptonshire compared with 26% across England <small>(See pages 53-55 for more information on transport, distances walked and digital services)</small>
	Crime & safety The overall crime rate is lower than the average across England <small>(See pages 56-58 for more information on recorded crime and crime rates)</small>		Communities & environment The % of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (77.3%) is lower than the average across England (79.3%) <small>(See pages 59-65 for more information on neighbourhood satisfaction, the types of neighbourhoods locally, local participation and the environment, air pollution)</small>
	Health & wellbeing 18% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Northamptonshire compared with 18% across England <small>(See pages 66-68 for more information on limiting long-term illness, life expectancy and mortality, general health and healthy lifestyles)</small>		Appendix A Page 67 for information on the geographies used in this report, publication dates for new indicators and acknowledgements.



Motivating staff and trustees



Making the connection between local and global and encouraging local action linked to global thinking has proved to be highly motivating for staff and trustees. All staff members adopt a Goal and become that Goal 'Ambassador', bringing a sense of ownership and responsibility. This has made the made embracing the SDGs fun and rewarding, adding colour and inspiration to their work.

Attracting new donors



The community foundation has attracted new donors and developed funds linked to the SDGs e.g. Bambino Mio Fund and Avon Fund for Women and Girls.

Connecting local to global



Putting the work of community organisations in a global perspective and in particular working in a multi-disciplinary way e.g. arts and culture and climate, at the intersections e.g. between climate and health, poverty and inequality etc.

Community engagement



Engaging with community groups, charities and donors through a series of online community conversations based on the SDGs

Partnership building



Aligned to Goal 17 the community foundation has strengthened partnerships e.g. with Delapre Abbey Northampton to put on a Community Celebration Event during Global Goals Week on the UN SDGs and work with local change makers and influencers to look at collaborative working across sectors.

Impact reporting



The [Impact Report](#) which quantifies outputs and offers case studies, is built around the eight Goals (1,2,3,4,5,8,11,16) that the work of the community foundation most relates to. It also includes a call to action around Goal 13, Climate Action.

Within a few years of embarking on the SDG journey it proved to be a game-changer for Northamptonshire Community Foundation - in its working culture, confidence, presence, and impact. 'The community foundation's work is taken more seriously by the community, partners, and donors, it has brought to life the global-local connection, opened doors in areas of work, and enhanced our impact', said Rachel.

Critical was staff and board buy-in and to ensure that embracing the SDGs was not perceived as adding additional work but rather that there would be a net gain for the community foundation and the local community. 'We all find ourselves at different starting points in the journey to align with the global goals - context and timing matter, a collective decision to commit is essential' concluded Rachel. In order to achieve that it was very helpful that the initiative to connect with the SDGs was supported by the work of the network in the UK (UKCF) and that community foundations elsewhere across Europe were also demonstrating how their work contributed towards the Goals and also were seeing the benefits to the organisation of connecting with the SDGs.

Building effective partnerships for the SDGs



Lina Kukulskyte, Programme Manager, The Partnering Initiative led a session on partnerships for the SDGs. TPI is an organisation that helps others become fit for partnering; performs partnership help checks; and help build the enabling environment for partnership working. The session drew on two key publications from its Toolbook series - [Maximising partnership value for the SDGs](#) and [The SDG Partnership Guidebook](#)

Partnership is defined here as an ongoing collaborative relationship realising synergy among or between organisations which:

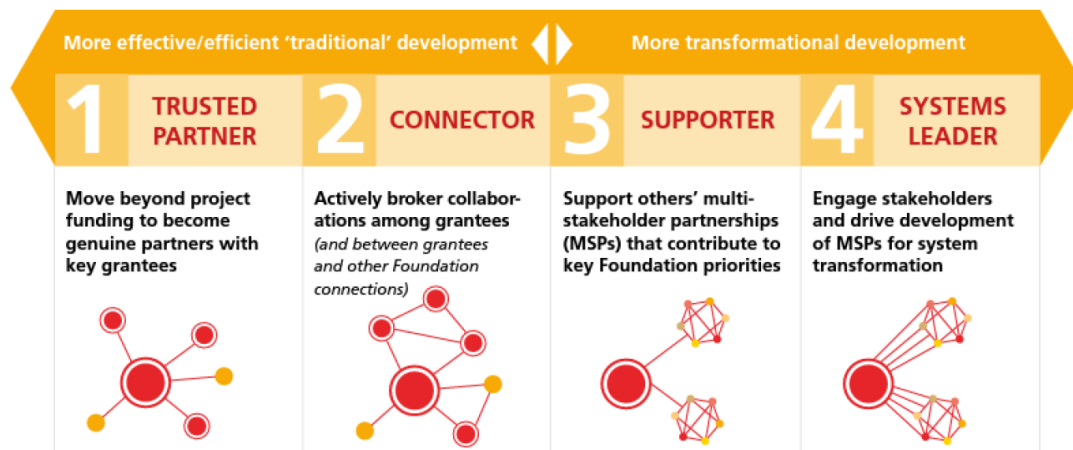
- aligns their interests around a common vision;
- combines their complementary resources and competencies and shares risk;
- maximises value creation towards partnership objectives;
- delivers benefit to all partners;

An effective partnership relationship relies on trust and transparency (partnerships move at the speed of trust); a recognised balance of power; mutual benefit; and co-accountability. Underpinning fundamentals for partnerships are:

- value creation
- right stakeholder engagement shared vision and aligned interests
- compatible values
- empowered partners
- senior level commitment and mindset

The group considered the range of partnership models and undertook an exercise to identify which applied to the work of community foundations.

PARTNERING MODELS



More info: <https://tpiglobal.org/knowledge-centre/research-and-policy/partnering-for-philanthropic-impact/>

This exercise demonstrated that there are community foundations working in all four models. It was noted that embracing the SDGs had enabled shifts along the spectrum towards more transformative development.

In addressing the question - **‘What can support organisations do to support SDG partnership aspirations of community foundations?’** the following actions were referred to by participants:

- show by example (in particular in communications and own operations)
- apply an SDG lens to the work of community foundations
- be a partnership broker
- contribute to, highlight and disseminate relevant research
- include SDGs in personal and organisational capability programmes e.g. Leadership, Donor Engagement, Strategy Development and Quality Accreditation
- be a lead e.g. as a national institutional partner
- engage at high level with national and international networks across sectors e.g. ASviS, STEP, Chambers of Commerce, WAPPP (for People and Planet), REVES, F20, UN etc
- highlight issues / bring topics and external expertise / resource to the table
- help create the environment for partnership and establish national level agreements e.g. renewable energy companies, city networks (notably those with 2030 strategies such as the Smart Cities Marketplace)
- connect with those responsible for SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)
- build capability to be partner ready e.g. through a leadership programme

Conclusions and next steps

It was noted that timing and leadership are critical. Some had experience of launching initiatives on the SDGs that had failed in the past but had been successful at a later date. It was considered therefore important for support organisations to ‘hold the space’ for the SDGs and to act as and when appropriate.

A primary challenge suggested is ‘how to relate something as complex and multi-dimensional as the work of a community foundation with a framework as simple as the SDGs’.

It was noted that in some countries there remains ‘cultural resistance’ but even where the SDGs are recognised and valued there is a need to help make the case for the framework being relevant for community foundations.

There is a need to commit resources at network and community foundation levels - mainly time but also some finance in order to build capability and drive an initiative to encourage community foundations to embrace the SDGs and realise potential benefits to community foundations in relation to strategy development, partnership building, communications, recognition, community engagement, donor relations, staff and board motivation, impact.

The ECFI Guide and workshops were a helpful starting point but these resources should be reviewed and more practice examples / inspirational stories / resources shared in the ECFI Knowledge Centre and as a continuous drip feed at European and national levels. It was suggested that attention should be paid to following the SDG planning calendar and convening around topics relevant to the [SDG planning calendar](#) - involving where possible other relevant actors.

Leadership is required from support organisations and thought should be given as to how to create demand from the network and in some cases overcome scepticism / resistance. There is a need to reach all those who influence and govern community foundations, including staff, board members, volunteers and stakeholders. The need for urgent action should be highlighted along with a credible ‘value proposition’.

The workshop served as a timely reminder to redouble efforts already being made and to encourage others to embark on an SDG journey. It was noted however that while there is need for energy and enthusiasm, given limited capacity within the community foundation field, there should be caution not to raise unrealistic expectations. For some however there is a real opportunity to use the SDG framework to build their own strategy and to offer something very tangible and of collective interest to members.

Finally, it was noted that there would be value in continuing to connect with relevant philanthropy and other networks around the world working on SDGs to share the experience from Europe, to learn from others, and to build global momentum around the work of community foundations and the SDGs.