AI Practitioner

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Using the UN's SDGs to Matchmake Between Philanthropic Funders and Projects Requiring Capital

The UN has created the alignment and framework needed through the SDGs. But the execution of the solutions falls to governments, businesses, not-for-profits and civil society, who work in silos. How can global ecosystem use collaboration and partnership to catalyse impact and create sustainable systemic change? Using the framework of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), one startup, Maanch, has created an answer to this time-critical question.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all and to transform our world. The global challenges that the SDGs have identified require significant behavioural changes to safeguard our future. We face deep-rooted climate, social and environmental crises driven by an increasingly volatile economic system that places incentives on maximizing short-term returns at the expense of long-term, sustainable growth which protects people and the planet: "The exponential growth of human activities is raising concern that further pressure on the Earth System could destabilise critical biophysical systems and trigger abrupt or irreversible environmental changes that would be deleterious or even catastrophic for human well-being."[1]

While the UN has created the alignment and framework needed through the SDGs, the execution of the solutions falls to governments, businesses, not-for-profits and civil society. And if these stakeholder networks continue to act in silos, the SDGs will not be achieved. As Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer state in *Leading from the Emerging Future*: "Today we realize that this silo-type approach—dealing with one symptom cluster at a time—isn't working. On the contrary, it seems to be part of the problem."[2]

One of the critical questions that the SDG framework has raised, and that many individuals and organisations now recognise the importance of, is how a global

1 https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art32/
2 https://www.presencing.org/assets/images/theory-u/Ego_to_Eco_Intro.pdf

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ecosystem can use collaboration and partnership to catalyse impact and create sustainable systemic change. Using the framework of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), Maanch[3] has created an answer to this time-critical question.

Using AI's 5Ds to unlock opportunity

Definition

Achieving the SDGs can unlock an economic opportunity of more than US$13 trillion. To begin to access this, there needs to be investment into core necessities. Philanthropic capital provides both the potential and challenges for this. As an entry point, the accessible market within philanthropy is £520 billion, but there is a lack of alignment, unreliable funding, an inefficient allocation of resources and lost potential due to lack of visibility. The fracturing of capital within the sector is an on-going problem and there is a critical need for collaborative tools to allow stakeholder groups to work in synergy. This will help address the discovery, monitoring and evaluation needs of individuals and organisations funding interventions, and provide the visibility, efficiency and accountability needed by those delivering them.

Discovery

The SDGs provide the first framework to identify the global challenges we face as well as an objective, globally agreed metric to track progress towards planetary sustainability. The impact that existing interventions create, short- and long-term, is not able to be accurately captured due to inconsistency of data, measurement and reporting at a global level. While specific impact from individual interventions is clearer, the ripple effect created (or as Scharmer and Kaufer identify it "the rest of the iceberg, the deep systemic structures below the waterline") is not. "Schrödinger's cat" in this case is measurable planetary impact.

A critical step in establishing the needs assessment in each locality was creating an interactive map of the Global Index Rank for each country.

Through aggregating global data during the discovery phase of Maanch's inception, as well as individual goal data, it became clear that different countries and regions require a significantly greater level of alignment in investment into interventions and project-focused solutions to achieve the SDGs. A critical step in establishing the needs assessment in each locality was creating an interactive map of the Global Index Rank[4] for each country, ranging from 1 to 156, with colours depicting the relative needs intensity from red (high intensity) to green (low intensity).

3 https://www.maanch.com/
4 https://www.maanch.com/the-sdgs. Source data: http://sdgindex.org

Imagine a world where high-impact projects are identified quickly and have easy access to long-term funding, meaning problems get solved quicker.

This data can be used by organisations to strategically direct the deployment of capital to areas which will have high-impact outcomes on a country's societal and economic needs, moving the needle on achievement of the goal.

Here is a hypothetical example, using the needs assessment data from the Global Index map. Imagine a baby formula company is looking to expand its geographical presence. The company could use the map to look for countries with a high prevalence of malnutrition in children aged between zero and five years. Because the need would be a key and strategic priority for the country, the business could receive government subsidies to ensure the price point was accessible to low-income families and enabled the highest impact possible at a society level. By aligning their investment and revenue needs as a business to the social and economic needs of the country identified using the SDG framework, the company would be able to unlock capital, provide jobs, deliver an accessible product and contribute to the country's sustainable development.

Dream

In envisioning what we could achieve by using this global framework to bring different communities and stakeholder networks together, we started imagining the potential impact outcomes:

- *Imagine* a world where high-impact projects are identified quickly and have easy access to long-term funding, meaning problems get solved quicker.

- *Imagine* a world where transparency and trust underpin every transaction, creating a fair future for everyone.

- *Imagine* a world where a high-impact giving experience is available on one intuitive global platform.

If the big data and global metrics available through the SDG index and framework were easily accessible to organisations and individuals, allowing them to make strategic decisions on giving and investment aligned to the highest needs intensity, we could accelerate global sustainable development through influencing the flow of funds by providing data and insights on impact projections. If this was enabled through collaborative technology, the capacity for scaling high-performing interventions through global participation would be exponential.

We recognised the importance of this technology needing to be open and inclusive, the data to be transparent and learnings to be easily shared.

The platform is designed as a universal measurement and matchmaking marketplace.

This would allow engagement at a civil society level where each individual understands the role they have to play in the realisation of these goals, and at an organisation and government level to inform decision-making through comprehensive, interlinked data-sets which give a single data point on how to move the needle. Each stakeholder group should have the capacity to track and monitor the impact of their contribution.

Design

The platform is designed as a universal measurement and matchmaking marketplace for the sector, as a solution to the inconsistency in data, reporting and impact tracking. It is the first global impact platform developed to facilitate funding to worthy projects using the lens of the UN's SDGs. Impact projection and metrics sit at the heart of the technology. Using the SDG indicators and targets and delineating the contribution required by government, policy change work and interventions requiring philanthropic capital as well as opportunities for civic engagement, we have created algorithms that matchmake funders and projects requiring capital using a needs-assessment scoring based on the SDG framework.

Investing in a robust technological architecture that enables us to map, match, mobilise and measure impact on the SDGs is the foundation of the business. It also provides an accessible and inclusive platform for uniting a global community of change-makers around this common vision, enabling Goal 17 at an individual level, organisational level, country level and global level.

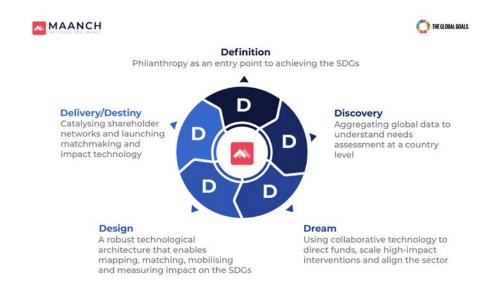*Maanch aims to be at the centre of the movement of funds to achieve the SDGs.*

Maanch aims to be at the centre of the movement of funds to achieve the SDGs. As more funds flow through the platform to high-impact interventions, we can aggregate the data and start to create real-time maps of what is working and where gaps continue to exist. This will enable us to catalyse strategic partnerships, create grassroots networks and interconnect global influencers to scale successful interventions.

Delivery

Imagine Airbnb for the philanthropy sector where "hosts" are charities, social enterprises and NGOs, and "guests" are individuals and organisational philanthropic funders. The "host" side of the platform has been live since February 2019 and we already have sixty organisations from twenty-two countries signed up and uploading high-impact interventions to the platform. The "guest" side of the platform is currently in development and will go live by the end of June 2019.

Catalysing shareholder networks is critical to the success of Maanch. Without sector alignment and collaboration between funders, evaluators and intermediaries identifying and uploading high-impact interventions, directing funds to proven scalable high-impact outcomes and consistently measuring impact to share learnings, the potential of the platform to sit at the centre of the movement of funds to achieve the SDGs will be missed.

Maanch: Using AI principles to connect philanthropists and those in need of funding

Conclusion

It is recognised globally that we need to change behaviours and require new thinking on sustainability to enable greater care for our common, global home. In times of disintegration and the fracturing of society through religion and politics, protecting our common home provides us with a path to realignment. The United Nations has provided access to data points on the biggest challenges we face at a planetary level through the SDGs, as well as outlining the steps we need to take along this path to reach realignment for people and the planet. Maanch provides the collaborative technology to ensure these steps are taken together using a platform which enables strategic philanthropy, alignment across stakeholder networks, and the direction of funds to high-impact solutions which can be adopted at scale to achieve the SDGs by 2030.