



INSIGHTS SUMMARY

HOW CAN BUSINESS EMBED SUSTAINABILITY MORE DEEPLY FOR THE DECADE AHEAD?

BUSINESS FIGHTS POVERTY GLOBAL GOALS SUMMIT 2026

HYBRID WORKSHOP / 22ND SEPTEMBER 2026

Morten Enggaard Rasmussen, EVP People, Sustainability & Brand, **Novonesis**

Cassie Flynn, Director of Planet Hub, **UNDP**

Vicky Aridi, Programme Lead, **Learning For Well-Being Foundation** and Generation Unlimited Global Board Member, **UNICEF**

AS 2030 APPROACHES, BUSINESSES FACE A PRACTICAL QUESTION: HOW CAN THEY RETAIN THE SHARED DIRECTION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WHILE RESPONDING TO CHANGING REGULATION, POLITICAL PRESSURES, TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION AND LOCAL REALITIES? THIS WORKSHOP CONSIDERED WHAT A POST-2030 FRAMEWORK SHOULD OFFER. PARTICIPANTS CALLED FOR AN APPROACH THAT REMAINS AMBITIOUS BUT BECOMES MORE FOCUSED, INTERSECTIONAL AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUTCOMES IN PEOPLE'S LIVES. THEY ALSO ARGUED THAT SUSTAINABILITY MUST SIT WITHIN CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY, SHAPED BY HUMAN SKILLS, HOLISTIC WELL-BEING AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION. ONE CHALLENGE RAN THROUGH THE DISCUSSION: HOW TO MOVE PROVEN IDEAS BEYOND PILOTS AND COMPLIANCE TOWARDS ACCOUNTABLE ACTION AT SCALE.

INSIGHT 1: **KEEP A SHARED NORTH STAR, BUT MAKE THE NEXT FRAMEWORK MORE FOCUSED AND LOCALLY ACCOUNTABLE**

The SDGs have given companies, governments and communities a common language, measurable objectives and a basis for collaboration. Participants argued that this unifying role should continue beyond 2030. However, the next framework must address weaknesses exposed during implementation. Seventeen goals and more than 200 targets or indicators can be difficult for businesses, countries and communities to apply. Many participants called for a more focused, locally led and granular successor, while retaining the SDGs' shared direction and interconnectedness. Crucially, accountability must extend beyond institutional reporting to show whether action improves people's lives, particularly for those at the lower end of value chains..

"Business has earned the right to a seat at the table. And we need a clear framework guiding us well beyond the 2030 SDG horizon"

Morten Enggaard Rasmussen, EVP People, Sustainability & Brand, Novonosis

INSIGHT 2: EMBED SUSTAINABILITY IN BUSINESS STRATEGY AND MEASURE GENUINE OUTCOMES

Sustainability can create commercial value when it shapes strategy, investment and operating decisions, rather than sitting in a separate plan or traditional corporate social responsibility activity. The discussion linked this integration to more resilient supply chains, innovation, jobs and livelihoods. Regulation and investor reporting have brought environmental and social concerns into mainstream business practice, but they also carry a risk: compliance can become the end goal. Companies should distinguish activity and disclosure from genuine impact. This means identifying where the business can contribute most, connecting environmental and social outcomes, and measuring changes experienced by workers, farmers, young people and communities, rather than simply recording money spent or projects delivered.

INSIGHT 3: PUT HUMAN SKILLS, WELL-BEING AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AT THE CENTRE

Technological change does not diminish the importance of human capabilities. Participants highlighted listening, discernment and the ability to work across differences as foundations for problem-solving and systems change. Workforce development should cultivate these capabilities alongside technical skills, while recognising young people's experiences of unemployment, eco-anxiety, stress and burnout. Participation must also move beyond consultation. Businesses should treat young people as competent partners, invest appropriately in their time and explain how their contributions have influenced decisions. They should also identify whose voices are missing, both inside the company and in local communities. This approach links skills development with agency, holistic well-being and better-informed business decisions.

"Even the latest report that the World Economic Forum shared... [mentioned that] the greatest skills demanded are still human skills."

Vicky Aridi, Programme Lead, Learning For Well-Being Foundation and Generation Unlimited Global Board Member, UNICEF

INSIGHT 4: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AROUND CLEAR ROLES, DIFFICULT TRADE-OFFS AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

No company can deliver systemic sustainability outcomes through its own strategy and operations. Progress depends on businesses, governments, investors, civil society and communities understanding their distinct responsibilities and working through disagreement. Effective partnerships require more than broad commitments. They also require incentives and funding structures that reward organisations for solving shared problems, rather than protecting individual projects, brands or institutional interests. Governments need to provide credible policy signals and enabling regulation. Businesses must embed sustainability in investment and procurement choices, while financial actors must address risk models that block viable solutions. Local participants need the power and information to hold institutions to account. Collaboration can be difficult and unequal, so partners should make roles, incentives and decision-making authority explicit. This can turn a shared framework into coordinated action rather than fragmented initiatives.

"When we look at the data, and we look at the countries that have gone the furthest, the fastest, it's because collaboration has been at the centre of their goals."

Cassie Flynn, Director of Planet Hub, UNDP

INSIGHT 5: SCALE WHAT WORKS BY CHANGING THE CONDITIONS AROUND PROVEN SOLUTIONS

The discussion identified no shortage of promising pilots across food systems, the circular economy, forest protection, energy efficiency and technology. The harder task is to create the policy, finance and institutional conditions that allow them to scale across different contexts. A solution that works in one country may be unregulated or unavailable elsewhere, while legal uncertainty and prevailing financial models can deter investment. Scale is not simply geographic reach: solutions need to reach more people while going deeply enough within places to achieve meaningful local change. Partners should accelerate initiatives that work, stop those that do not and avoid repeatedly launching disconnected pilots. Locally appropriate enabling conditions can convert innovation into sustained impact.

CONCLUSION

Three shifts emerged from the workshop: from separate sustainability agendas to integrated business strategy; from high-level targets to locally accountable outcomes; and from isolated pilots to coordinated implementation at scale. A post-2030 framework should preserve the SDGs' shared direction while becoming more focused, intersectional and grounded in people's lived realities. The central barrier is not a lack of ambition or ideas, but the difficulty of aligning policy,

finance, institutional roles and local participation around delivery. Business can help shape the next framework, provided it matches its seat at the table with transparent accountability, meaningful participation and sustained cross-sector collaboration.

RESOURCES

- Explore Insights & Resources, Business Fights Poverty: Business Fights Poverty's library of insights, research, toolkits and practical resources focused on social impact and poverty reduction.
<https://businessfightspovetry.org/explore>
- ****Keeping Our Eyes on Our North Star: Building a Future of Resilience and Shared Prosperity Beyond 2030:**** An article by Business Fights Poverty CEO, Zahid Torres-Rahman, proposing resilience and shared prosperity on a healthy planet as a new North Star beyond the SDGs, centred on people's lives, livelihoods and learning, and the role business can play in advancing it.
<https://www.businessfightspovetry.org/business-beyond-2030-resilience-shared-prosperity/>
- **Five Bridges to 2045: How Business Can Build a Fairer, More Resilient Future**, Business Fights Poverty: A report setting out five critical "bridges" businesses can build to strengthen social impact and long-term resilience. It focuses on integrating social impact with core business functions, aligning social and environmental agendas, evolving governance and incentives, connecting decision-makers with those closest to the issues, and strengthening cross-sector collaboration.
<https://www.businessfightspovetry.org/api/report-download/five-bridges-to-2045>
- **Nestlé Training Centre, Côte d'Ivoire**: A vocational training centre established by Nestlé Côte d'Ivoire to address shortages in locally available entry-level technical and engineering skills. The centre combines classroom learning, practical factory experience, soft skills and entrepreneurship training. It has operated since 2017 and was formally accredited by the Ivorian government in 2024.
<https://www.nestle-cwa.com/en/media/pressreleases/centre-formation-emploi-yabilite-jeunes-cote-divoire>
- **Changing the Food Game: Market Transformation Strategies for Sustainable Agriculture**, Lucas Simons: A book exploring how unsustainable agricultural markets can be transformed through different phases of market change. It examines how collaboration, institutionalisation and changes to market rules can help move sustainable practices from isolated initiatives towards mainstream adoption.
<https://www.routledge.com/Changing-the-Food-Game-Market-Transformation-Strategies-for-Sustainable-Agriculture/Simons/p/book/9781783532308>
- **The Earthshot Prize**: A global environmental prize designed to identify, support and scale innovative solutions to major environmental challenges. It is relevant to the discussion as an example of the abundance of promising ideas and innovations, alongside the wider challenge of creating the partnerships, policy conditions and finance needed to take solutions to scale.
<https://earthshotprize.org/>