



INSIGHTS SUMMARY

UNLIKELY PARTNERSHIPS: THE IMPERATIVE FOR NEW COLLABORATION

GLOBAL GOALS / HYBRID WORKSHOP / 20 SEPT 2023

We would like to thank the following opening speakers:

Ajaita Shah, Co-Founder, **Frontier Markets**; **Eric Hudson**, Co-founder, **Preserve**;
Pratibha Vuppuluri, Co-Founder & Managing Partner, **Unreasonable Collective**

Moderator: Frances Cabrera, Vice President, **Barclays**

In a rapidly changing world, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires organisations to rethink traditional modes of operation and collaboration. Embracing new, often unconventional partnerships holds the key to driving sustainable change at the scale and pace required.

A recent comprehensive report on the matter delved into intricate strategies and practical examples, unravelling key tenets – participation, advancement, resilience and empowerment. These facets elucidate both the challenges and solutions in the arena, offering a roadmap for businesses and investors.

INSIGHT 1: CULTIVATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION

The complex challenges presented by the SDGs cannot be addressed by singular efforts or conventional approaches. Organisations must seek to create deeper and broader collaborative frameworks. This means moving beyond mere networking or ad-hoc partnerships towards genuine, multi-stakeholder collaborations. Such alliances have the potential to integrate different skills, resources and perspectives, leading to holistic solutions. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, it's clear that scaling up such collaborations is more than just beneficial – it's essential for tangible progress.

INSIGHT 2: BROADEN HORIZONS BEYOND TRADITIONAL ALLIES

Relying on established or familiar partnerships might offer immediate comfort but can limit an organisation's reach and impact. Others may be better positioned to solve for an element of a problem, bringing alternative perspectives and experience from other sectors. Diversifying collaboration efforts requires looking beyond traditional stakeholders. Venturing into this unknown territory might bring challenges, and even failures, but it's crucial for creating lasting systemic change. It is through these diverse partnerships that organisations can pool resources, share risks and innovate in ways

To really build that system change actually takes a coalition of the willing – which is government, it's community, it's corporate, [and it's] social businesses.

Ajaita Shah, Co-Founder, Frontier Markets

When you have a partnership that involves multiple entities, I think you have to be even more diligent about making sure you're keeping those proper project management activities going.

Eric Hudson, Co-founder, *Preserve*

they couldn't have done alone. Ultimately, embracing such diversity in collaboration can lead to more robust and resilient solutions.

INSIGHT 3: APPLY LESSONS FROM PANDEMIC-ERA PARTNERSHIPS

- **Shared Vision and Cheerleading:** At the core of every successful partnership lies aligned values and objectives. It's vital to establish a mutual understanding early on, identifying shared goals and ensuring all partners stand to benefit. This included the importance of having a core person focused on making the partnership work – someone impartial but highly responsive to the politics on the partnership leaning in to make it work.
- **Navigating Short-Term vs. Long-Term:** Partnerships formed in crisis differ from those with a long-term perspective. Crisis collaborations may require third-party mediation or expedited trust-building mechanisms. It's essential to differentiate and strategise accordingly.

It's about people. It's about finding values-aligned partners that allow you to really think of this from a long-term perspective, rather than a short-termism.

Ajaita Shah, Co-Founder, *Frontier Markets*

- **Foundation of Trust:** For collaborations meant to last, trust is paramount. This trust is cultivated over time and relies heavily on transparency, open communication, and mutual vulnerability. Without trust, even the most promising partnerships can flounder.
- **Agility in Partnership:** Having structures in place to adjust or terminate collaborations when they aren't yielding the desired results is crucial. This ensures that resources aren't wasted and objectives remain in focus.
- **New Skills for New Collaborations:** As partnerships evolve, so too must the skills required to manage and benefit from them. Organisations must recognise and nurture these capabilities to succeed in future collaborations.

There always seems to be a person within the partnership – that is, the mediator, the champion, the quarterback – somebody who is making sure that the collaboration stays on track and stays effective.

Frances Cabrera, Vice President, *Barclays*

IN SUMMARY

The urgency to act on global challenges demands a shift in how organisations collaborate. By adopting a forward-thinking approach to partnerships, organisations can position themselves to deliver on the SDGs. This not only requires seeking out non-traditional allies but also systematically integrating the valuable lessons from recent experiences. As the landscape continues to shift, the mantra is clear: adapt, collaborate and innovate.

RESOURCE

- **REPORT:** collaboration.unreasonablegroup.com