



Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Value Chains

Gold Medal Symposium Summary

New York City – November 17, 2022

Background

The World Environment Center and AB InBev, winner of WEC's Gold Medal Award in 2022, convened a Gold Medal Symposium in New York City on the topic of *Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Value Chains* with over 100 leaders from business, government, and civil society. The goal was to inspire action in support of entrepreneurs in corporate value chains—a powerful way to unleash innovation at the local level for climate solutions and sustainable development.

Speakers

- **AB InBev: Ezgi Barcenas** – Chief Sustainability Officer
- **AB InBev: Nick Caton** – Chief B2B Officer
- **APCO Worldwide: Akinyi Ochieng** – Associate Director, Social Impact & Sustainability
- **Colgate-Palmolive: Ann Tracy** – Chief Sustainability Officer
- **IDB Lab: William Ernest Mondel** – Senior Specialist
- **Mastercard: Jane Prokop** – Executive Vice President
- **UNDP: Usha Rao-Monari** – Under Secretary General and Associate Administrator
- **U.S Department of State: Lauren Emerson** – Senior Lead, Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues

Moderators: Glenn Prickett, President & CEO, World Environment Center, Andre Fourier, Global VP Sustainability, AB InBev, and Ernesto Samayoa, Director of Operations, World Environment Center

Key Points

- (1) Entrepreneurship is a key enabler for achieving the UN SDGs.** Keynote speakers from *AB InBev* and *UNDP* emphasized that collaboration among corporations, governments, NGOs, and multilateral organizations is needed to achieve shared goals at scale. Public and private sector collaborators can leverage the energy and innovation of entrepreneurs to create hyperlocal solutions to sustainable development challenges. This fosters greater effectiveness and resilience when dealing with complex issues. *UNDP* focuses on entrepreneurship as a way of enhancing livelihoods, reducing the vulnerability of women, and accelerating green investment. The most effective approach is for organizations to tap into their existing networks and leverage resources that are already part of their business model, especially shared functions, such as finance, procurement, etc.
- (2) The private sector can leverage the power of partnerships** by working across sectors and making entrepreneurship a bigger component of ESG strategies. In *AB InBev's* experience, diverse partnerships create a broader community-level collaboration that brings in governments to help drive solutions in contextual and localized ways while also providing key human capital, i.e., experts, academics, locals, in a people-centric approach. This is key to centering the entrepreneur at heart of solutions to help drive meaningful change.



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- (3) **Effective climate action requires local entrepreneurship.** As emphasized at COP 27, there is a need to bring those who are most affected by the problem into the creation of the solution. Although mitigation of climate change remains key, we need an equal amount of effort, investment, and innovation in adaptation. Water and sustainable agriculture are important dimensions of adaptation as they sit in the center of sustainable development, human health, and food security. Entrepreneurship is an enabler for achieving adaptation and mitigation as it can be a key driver for unlocking shared prosperity across the value chain.
- (4) **Entrepreneurship at AB InBev** includes developing localized solutions by meaningfully engaging with stakeholders across the value chain. Farmers, recyclers, waste collectors, suppliers, and retailers need to find local solutions to local problems. *AB InBev* works with thousands of smallholder farmers and millions of retailers in three main ways: digital, financial, and social inclusion. Supporting entrepreneurs through inclusion drives innovation and supports livelihoods. [BEES](#), *AB InBev*'s B2B e-commerce platform, connects millions of retailers around the world and bridges the digital divide by providing access to technology, business development tools, and inputs needed to run a small enterprise. *AB InBev*'s teams in Uganda engage with smallholder farmers by providing access to radio broadcasts in their local language on best farming practices and crop information. Access to credit is a barrier for small retailers, so *AB InBev* has developed products to assist with working capital.
- (5) **Digital inclusion** is the process that enables individuals, communities, and vulnerable groups to have access to digital skills and technologies. Many SME retailers around the world are underserved businesses that still run on pen and paper and transact mostly in cash. *BEES* was built with the objective of improving the livelihoods of these retailers and making their businesses more profitable. A panel discussion with *AB InBev*, *Colgate-Palmolive* and *Mastercard* on this topic emphasized how critical it is to integrate digital inclusion efforts within commercial day-to-day offerings for sustainable impact. These companies support entrepreneurs in their value chains by investing in their education and management training, as well as in data and customer service. *Mastercard* supports SMEs by expanding access to digital and financial solutions, with partners such as *BEES*, to offer access to business solutions and data insights for running a successful business.
- (6) **Social inclusion**, the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, can also be enabled by entrepreneurship. *The U.S. Department of State* works with women entrepreneurs to expand access to well-paying quality jobs, increase access to child-care, and improve the resilience of women's economic livelihoods to the effects of climate change. In West Africa, for example, the State Department partners with the group [SOS Sahel](#) to encourage supply chain development and social inclusion in fragile states like Mali, Niger, Chad and more. In Latin America and the Caribbean, State partners with WEC through [La Red de Innovacion e Impacto](#) to support small entrepreneurs across 11 countries with a focus on women-owned businesses. [APCO Worldwide](#) helps entrepreneurs in the value chain with advocacy programs and effective communications. [IDB Lab](#) partners with *AB InBev* in open-source software to provide SME retailers access to digital credit, skills building content, and digital onboarding.