

## From Developing to Scaling-Up Innovative Social Businesses at the Base of the Pyramid

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**Brief Bio**  
*Session Leader(s)*

**Grégoire Castella:** After completing his PhD in Life Sciences in 2008, Greg got out of the lab and joined the International Committee of the Red Cross. He served as a delegate and manager in Ivory Coast, Afghanistan and Colombia. After returning to Switzerland, Greg joined Antenna Technologies, an innovation-for-development foundation, which has successfully brought to the market innovative products to meet the basic needs of people living at the BOP. Greg and his team recently launched OOLUX SA, a startup marketing a solar kit designed for off grid populations.

**Jérôme Voillat:** After studying international business in Reins, Jérôme worked in various positions in large private companies. He was then involved several years in the non-profit sector as project manager (Cameroon and Laos). Following these field experiences, he was appointed in Paris as project coordinator for an EU cooperation program in the horn of Africa. He joined Antenna Technologies Water Department early 2015. With his team, he implements projects on autonomous technology and business models for vulnerable communities lacking access to safe water.

**Abstract**  
*Short description, including alignment with conference themes and objectives*

Identifying and understanding the challenges of scaling up social businesses is key for technology-for-development entrepreneurs. From spotting a promising technology, developing its potential, to scaling it up and building a commercially viable company, many obstacles await the social entrepreneur. At every stage, the startup has to tackle external and internal barriers, ranging from expanding reach, changing a customer's mindset, to accessing financing or building in-house expertise.

This session will entail presentations of companies at every step of the business development. The discussion will focus on successful business models that brought to the market innovative solutions to reach the customers (last-mile distribution) and to make the technology affordable. Concrete field examples from various industries (incl. solar energy, safe water, and medical technologies) will emphasize solutions that work. The session objective is to draw general lessons that will benefit stakeholders active in various social businesses and to identify the key factors young entrepreneurs should keep in mind when designing their own business model.

This session will allow experienced and aspiring social entrepreneurs in technology-for-development businesses to interact and figure out what hurdles still need to be overcome to scale up the ventures to create even greater social impact.

**[SE19-CCI]**

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### **Description**

*Proposed discussion focus*

Speakers will be invited from various technology-for-development fields and from companies at different stages of business development. Building on their respective experiences implementing social businesses, the speakers will be asked to focus on their key factors for success and also on the major obstacles they have had to overcome to scale up their enterprise. Representatives of recently created startups will detail their development perspectives and the critical factors they consider necessary to scale, while speakers from more mature companies will focus on the solutions they built to expand their reach, such as adaptive social marketing to reach new markets or building and retaining human capital for their business.

Specific barriers encountered by larger inclusive businesses will also be discussed. Finally, the discussion will address the challenge of increasing social impact while scaling. The debate should be lively, drawing on the experience from the panel, audience, and from representatives of Antenna Technologies Foundation. Its expertise in the fields of solar energy, safe water, and agriculture, as well as the experiences of its successful spinoffs will also enrich the debate. The lessons learned, tips and ideas highlighted during the session will be shared with all the Tech4Dev counterparts during the Plenary.

### **Objectives**

*Justification and expected impact during and after the conference*

Young and creative social entrepreneurs often lack expertise in how to build and scale up their businesses. In the field of Tech4Dev in particular, it is often difficult to gather the different sets of necessary skills (technological expertise, management skills and social impact sensitivity) in a limited-size startup. It is thus important for young entrepreneurs to profit from more experienced social managers. The UNESCO Tech4Dev International Conference is the perfect forum to achieve this.

The debates will give experienced participants the opportunity to share and discuss lessons learned, as well as to examine new ideas from less experienced entrepreneurs. Early stage critical factors such as local communities' involvement in the innovation process, adapted social marketing or clear partnership strategies will be identified and the key factors to scale successfully will be pointed out. The outcomes should help young technology-for-development entrepreneurs' scale up their business.

### **Target Audience**

The session aims to put together experienced social entrepreneurs, technology-for-development startup managers and young talents wishing to launch their own company. Real cases discussed will range from solar industry, to safe water and agriculture. Participants should be motivated to develop and to learn about market-driven innovative solutions for essential needs in the Global South.