Renewable Energy and the SDGs:
Exploring Links with Extractives, Agriculture, and Land Use

24 September 2018, 1pm – 5pm
Philanthropy New York, 1500 Broadway, 7th Floor

Overview

Alongside the UN General Assembly in September 2018, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's Thematic Network on Good Governance of Extractive and Land Resources ("SDSN Thematic Network"), the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment (CCSI), the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), the World Bank, and GIZ will host a strategic meeting to discuss opportunities and challenges arising at the intersection of renewables and extractives, agriculture, and land use, as they relate to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes questions of how the extractive industries and agricultural projects are affected by, and can contribute to, the deployment of renewable energy in line with the SDGs, as well as how those deploying renewable energy technologies can be sensitive to their impacts, all along the value chain, on sustainable development and human rights. This conversation will draw on the experiences of companies, civil society and communities, donor and multilateral organizations, and others to assess how the private sector can promote accessible, low-carbon energy use while at the same time reducing poverty and respecting human rights.

A few key research projects will also be presented, including a report about how the use of renewable energy by the extractive sector can scale-up the deployment of and access to clean energy, and a report mapping renewable energy investments to the SDGs. An introduction to the concept of 'Climate Smart Mining' will be featured as well; it will explore how increased mineral demand for clean energy technology can also benefit the sustainable development of mineral rich developing countries (while minimizing the carbon and material footprint).

Background

The renewable energy industry is instrumental to the success of the SDGs. Renewable energy is core to the implementation of SDG 7, on access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy, and SDG 13, on urgent action to combat climate change. New developments in renewable energy—solar, wind, hydroelectric, and geothermal, among others—are necessary to replace fossil fuels in the global energy system, and can also bring modern, affordable energy to the near 1.1 billion around the world who lack access to electricity and 2.5 billion who lack access to modern sources of energy.[1] Access to clean energy is also an essential prerequisite to achieve many of the other SDGs.

However, renewable energy projects have at times undermined the achievement of the SDGs and adversely affected human rights.[2] Local communities confront some of the most prominent negative impacts, including economic and physical displacement, harm to livelihoods, and violations of indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent. The renewable energy sector must also ensure responsible sourcing of materials in supply chains; for example, critical minerals like cobalt and lithium, but also base metals like copper, for which demand is growing rapidly, have been widely associated with environmental degradation and labor abuses.

Given the urgency and scale at which renewables must be deployed to meet the world's climate goals, it is especially critical that we understand their potential impacts—both positive and negative—on each SDG, to

[1] International Energy Agency. 2017 World Energy Outlook. http://www.iea.org/access2017/
[2] [insert to link to BHRRC research?]

ensure that a renewable energy-focused strategy for meeting climate targets does not come at the expense of other development goals.

As we approach three years since the adoption of the SDGs, this meeting will provide a valuable opportunity to share updates on work being undertaken, identify synergies amongst existing projects and frameworks, explore potential follow-up activities to continue advancing this work beyond the meeting, and ultimately to build upon existing efforts to meet climate, energy, poverty, and human rights goals (SDG 13, 7, 1 and 16).

Meeting Agenda

1:00 PM – 1:10 PM: Introduction

1:15 PM – 2:00 PM: Kick-off presentations by event partners

Presenters:

- Renewable Power of the Mine (Nicolas Maennling)
- Climate Smart Mining (Kirsten Hund)
- Right Energy Partnership (Joan Carling)
- Mapping Renewables to the SDGs (Soledad Mills)
- Land Rights and Renewable Energy (Karol Boudreaux)
- Mineral supply chains (Tom Butler)

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM: Breakout thematic table discussions

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Table report-back and plenary discussion

4:15 PM – 5:00 PM: Networking reception

Thematic Discussion Questions

1. RE in Extractive and Agricultural Operations: How can extractive and agricultural projects, especially those in remote areas, be used to anchor and catalyze responsible renewable energy deployment both at the project site and at the community-level? What obstacles impede greater adoption of renewables by extractive and agricultural investors? How can governments, companies, financiers, and NGOs better collaborate to ensure that renewable energies are not only deployed to serve the extractive or agricultural project but also to equip the surrounding communities with access to clean and modern energy?

   Table leads: Nicolas Maennling and Tim Schloesser

2. RE Mineral Supply Chains: Technologies associated with renewable energy generation and storage are drastically increasing demand for a number of critical resources, like lithium and cobalt, but also base metals like copper. What responsibilities and tools do companies—those extracting and processing these materials, manufacturing technologies, and deploying renewable systems—and governments have in ensuring that the sourcing of clean energy technology is responsible and sustainable and consistent with the achievement of the SDGs? What regulations, initiatives, and institutions might help to ensure a responsible supply chains for renewables?

   Table leads: Tom Butler and John Drexhage

3. Engaging Local Communities: Indigenous communities have been among the first to resist renewable projects. How do project specificities (community-focused modular vs. large scale grid-focused; solar vs. wind vs. hydro) affect project impact? Do companies and governments have policies in place to protect communities' rights to land and territory, free prior and informed consent, information, participation (and influence) in decision-making, compensation for expropriation, and grievance mechanisms? How might companies, governments, financiers, and other stakeholders improve respect for land rights and protect affected indigenous, customary, and other communities from displacement? Do performance standards already exist? How do the potential impacts on land, other resources (e.g. water), and human rights, that are associated with a specific type of renewable project (community-focused modular vs. large scale grid-focused; solar vs. wind vs. hydro) affect decision making and project plans on whether and how a project will proceed on a specific site?

   Table leads: Joan Carling and Tehtena Mebratu-Tsegaye

4. Benefit Sharing for RE: At an operational level, how can governments, renewable energy companies, and companies deploying renewable technologies engage all stakeholders, including local governments and communities, to maximize the benefits of renewable projects for the achievement of the SDGs? What are some best practices with respect to fiscal and non-fiscal benefit sharing (and the related provision of legal and technical support to communities) that can help communities share in the benefits of renewable energies?

   Table leads: Soledad Mills and Christen Dobson

5. Land Rights and Renewable Energy: Renewable energy projects can have significant impacts on the land rights of local peoples. How can renewable projects, especially those working in areas where indigenous peoples or other vulnerable groups live, be best structured to reduce potential human rights and other harms associated with the use of and control of land and traditional territories? How might local people and communities leverage their customary and/or formal land rights to support the development of renewable energy projects? What options exist to create viable partnerships and benefit sharing opportunities between communities that use and control land and renewable energy companies?

   Table leads: Karol Bordeaux

6. Innovation and Technology: What role can innovation and technology play in improving the efficiency of the mining sector and ensuring that the appropriate technology and infrastructure is in place to safeguard the environment and the local communities in which they operate in developing countries? How can companies use technology to improve due diligence efforts by identifying community settlement locations resource needs (including for water, soil fertility, or forestry products)? How can innovation play a role in better managing the resources required to extract and process 'green' minerals, and promote sustainable land use planning? And how to avoid that companies wanting to 'green' their value chain focus on sourcing from 'safe' sources like Canada and Australia? Which policy instruments can governments in mineral rich developing countries use to encourage innovation and development of new technologies in the mining sector to ensure that all mining activities are efficient, safe and climate-friendly?

   Table leads: Daniele La Porta