

CANAAN INTERNATIONAL -  
A SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTING NGO

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## **Abstract**

“Canaan International” will be not-for-profit Sustainability Consulting NGO providing sustainability solutions for businesses and communities, in the US and developing countries. The purpose of this paper is to assess its feasibility. While a full blown Feasibility Study encompasses a broad spectrum of topics to cover; this study will limit itself to assessing the existence of a market for such services, inventorying the types of services to offer, and providing an overview of a potential website. This study was done via documentary research and field corroboration work. In light of the increasingly worldwide scarcity of available resources, it is now very important that all business ventures as well as development projects are conceived to not only solve current issues but, furthermore, to create intrinsic conditions that would put future generations in a position to address issues of their times in the best sustainable way for them and for the following generations to come. This paper explores the premise of the creation of “Canaan International” as a Not – For – Profit NGO that provides sustainability solutions to businesses and also acts as a useful agent for conceiving projects, coordinating and linking resources mobilization efforts with actual locally expressed needs and aspirations. It will explore how “Canaan” seeks to increase public awareness of business and local communities’ sustainability concerns through public engagement and resource mobilization actions; as well as provide opportunities for businesses and local communities to promote and profit from particular projects ideas and implementation.

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## **Introduction**

“Canaan International Consulting” will be a not-for-profit Sustainability Consulting NGO geared toward providing Sustainable business solutions and Community Development Projects in the US and abroad in developing countries. The purpose of this paper is to assess its feasibility. The United Nation’s (UN) Brundtland Commission defined Sustainable development as a development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987).

This paper explores the premise of the creation of “Canaan International” as a not-for-profit Sustainability Consulting NGO that provides sustainable business solutions and acts as a useful agent for conceiving sustainable projects by coordinating and linking resources mobilization efforts with actual locally expressed needs and aspirations. It will explore how “Canaan” seeks to increase public awareness of business or local communities’ sustainability concerns through public engagement and resource mobilization actions; as well as provide opportunities for businesses and local communities to promote and profit from particular development projects ideas and implementation.

This paper thus also revisits Canaan International’s backgrounds and inspirational model. Indeed, Canaan is modeled after the organization formerly known as “Foundation of the People of South Pacific” and nowadays known as “Counterpart International”. While a full blown Feasibility Study encompasses a broad spectrum of topics to cover; this study will limit itself to assessing the existence of a market for such services, inventorying the types of services we offer, and providing an overview of our website.

## **Background**

The idea of a consulting NGO finds its origins in the repeated expressed frustrations with seemingly sempiternal issues continuously plaguing businesses and many local communities in most US inner cities and international communities and the ensuing personal call to action in 2009. I grew tired of continuous news reports about the negative environmental impacts of some business ventures or of hearing neighbors, members of local communities, and brethren from the African Diaspora complain about how bad things were “in the neighborhood”, in “inner cities US”, “back home,” and how it was always the fault of someone else; primarily of “the politicians”. Creating “Canaan International” is my response to members of local communities, of the neighborhood, and of the African diaspora who want to “do something about this/that...” by either investing their time and or money in the development of their current community as well as their countries of origin, or who want to return and reestablish there with business ideas and funding acquired abroad. Often they either don’t have trustworthy supporting structures that can help them achieve those goals or they are discouraged by others’ misadventures in that foray. “Canaan International” thus provides the trustworthy framework that will allow for these businesses, local communities, or African Diaspora members to get involved in all aspects of business/community project development: the conception, the implementation, and management of projects of their interest in their local community or their home country. It’s a sort of small scale, mutually beneficial, “Marshall Plan” (one block at a time) for some businesses, individual, or cities in the US, and some sub-Saharan countries in Africa.

Unlike most not – for – profit NGOs, often, only focused on the philanthropic end of the market based society; at Canaan we firmly believe that it will best serve society if everyone is taught productive skills and given opportunities to self – sufficiency, even if at some point in time they

might had needed help getting on their feet or maybe getting back on their feet. Canaan International thus seeks to catalyze the sustainable economic, social, and environmental development of the Sub-Saharan region of West Africa via a capitalist market solution at the image of the role played by the former “Foundation of the People of South Pacific” (Counterpart).

According to Hunter Lovins of Natural Capitalism Solutions:

Sustainability is careful and efficient stewardship of resources by businesses, communities and citizens. It is the practice of meeting our needs in ways that are respectful of future generations and restorative of natural, cultural and financial assets. Sustainable management is a whole systems approach to achieving superior performance in delivering desired outcomes to all stakeholders by business, government and civil society. (L. Hunter Lovins, 2014).

Sustainability has become a cornerstone principle for most businesses and for all development agencies’ programs in light of the increasingly worldwide scarcity of available resources. Sustainable projects have thus become the norms. It is therefore very important that all business ventures as well as development projects are conceived to not only solve current issues but, furthermore, to create intrinsic conditions that would put future generations in a position to address issues of their times in the best sustainable way for them and for the following generations to come. The best way any development project can be beneficial to businesses and to communities is by helping them find endogenous solutions to their problem and to provide them with the tools to find local suitable sustainable solutions to specific local issues. Sustainability, thus, allow for current

generations to satisfy their current resources needs to live a good life without jeopardizing future generations' prospect of equally better life.

## Literature Review

Of the existence of a market for Sustainability consulting – Estimating the sustainability industry's market size is an arduous proposition given the diversity of sustainability consultants who, for the purpose of this project, are grouped under two major title: the “sustainable business consultants” and “the sustainable institutional consultants”; the difference been that the first group caters essentially to businesses sustainability needs while the later deals with institutions other than business with distinct goals (social, environmental, philanthropic etc...) other than the bottom line. While it is relatively easy to estimate how much businesses spent on sustainability consultancy in relation to their yearly total sale figures; it remains very difficult to obtain an overall assessment of the sustainability market due to the lack of sufficient data.

The International Society of Sustainability Professionals' (ISSP) 2012 global sustainability consultants' survey found that it will be difficult to quantify with precision how much businesses spend on sustainability as a standalone budget item. According to their findings, sustainability spending is usually embedded into different business functions thus making it hard to assess its global cost to a particular business. To make matter more complicated, different consulting firms use various methodologies to quantify sustainability spending from one industry to another making it hard to compare and contrast: in 2010, Forrester Research estimated the global sustainability consulting market at \$2.7 billion with a grow estimate of \$ 9.6 billion by 2015, on one hand. On the other hand, Verdantix predicted that US businesses' sustainability spending will grow from \$5.8 billion in 2011 to \$10.5 billion in 2014. ISSP's survey also found that despite the recession, the sustainability industry grew by 60% in the last five years which is a testimony to the strong interest and concern about sustainability issues and also a reflection of the rapid growth of the

consulting profession overall. The survey found that 49% of respondent were very optimism about the prospect of strong business conditions to come (Linda Lovett, 2012).

Role and Impacts of NGOs – According to the International Institute for Sustainable Development:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a major role in pushing for sustainable development at the international level. Campaigning groups have been key drivers of inter-governmental negotiations, ranging from the regulation of hazardous wastes to a global ban on land mines and the elimination of slavery (IISD, 2014).

In many West African countries, NGO have been playing an increasingly irreplaceable role in local development. The deliquescence of the state in some countries has led some NGO to pick up the pieces in area formerly of exclusivity to governments such as healthcare, education, gender equality, conflicts resolution (justice), etc... The role of grassroots movements has proven quintessential in 90% of successful development (social, economic, cultural, etc...) that occurred in former “developing countries” in recent years.

In most Sub – Saharan African countries, 80% of the population is illiterate and most countries have a commercial balance deficit due food imports being the largest cause; therefore, the need to reinforce agricultural production thus rural populations and institutions’ capacities. That is why we, at Canaan International, made this ancient wisdom words our motto: “If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime”. Our aim of empowering rural community to become their own agents of sustainable development entails providing them with

the tools to acquire and use knowledge in transformative ways. As Downey and Woolverton (1999) so well illustrated, “the need for well-educated professional agribusiness manager has not lessened; if anything more are needed with the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with increasingly complex opportunities and challenges”(Pg. 1050).

Achieving Sustainable community development is a holistic goal that greatly depends on multiple factors. Therefore Canaan’s choice of a multifaceted approach centered on enhancing and making concrete human capital potential and creating synergic linkages leading to effective results. Including human capital; unleashing and increasing such capital is at the core of every activity undertaken by Canaan.

In the agricultural sector, Canaan will initiate or enhance extension education systems in countries where we intervene. We view Extension education as a cornerstone of establishing successful sustainable rural communities. The experience of developed country has shown the important role played by extension services among the vast array of market and nonmarket entities and agents providing valuable inputs and information that ultimately help success prospect of farmers and rural populations. In the case of Canaan Internationals’ actions, extension services will be used to provide many other services such as micro financing, business incubating, farm input distribution linkage, etc...

We seek to use agriculture and agribusinesses as launching pad to work toward sustainability overall. The history of contemporary developed countries is full of examples of the use of agriculture as developmental engine of future industries. The success of the agriculture sector

greatly relies on the continuous renewal of farmers' competence and the existence of a reliable farm inputs supply chain. A good extension system can help insure both conditions. Using knowledge transfers or information dissemination as primary vehicle; an extension education is our greatest asset as we will use it to fill the formal education/literacy gap as well as to transfer professional skills. We will also seek to establish linkages with input suppliers leading to win – win collaborations toward increasing farm outputs and insuring inputs (solvency issue)....

Extension education/system can, indeed, also be used as gateway to promote social justice, gender equality, and health/nutrition education, or many macro and micro policy goals for that matter. Along the theme of extension education, authors Snell and Infanger have made a clear stance of the authentic desire to have extension education programs with sufficient policies in place. The authors further explain:

Extension educational responsibility for macropolicy education is clear: provide farmers, agribusiness, and communities with an improved awareness and understanding of the impacts of macropolicies and policy making. The net result should be improved decision-making and more effective participation in the policy process. (Infanger, Snell Pg.1363).

The authors believe that a profound improvement is needed in order to bring extension education to the forefront of agribusiness. Without proper education in this area, the problems facing farmers, farming groups, and the rural communities will remain. The authors made these assertions while considering US state of farming affairs. Well; if that is true of extension education in the US, a

developed country, it goes without saying that the need for good extension education is manifold in developing countries such as Liberia or Cote d'Ivoire or Ghana.

Of the need for financial capital – Boehlje and Al. explained that:

Surveys and analyses initiated early in the twentieth century on agricultural credit conditions and markets showed that farmers were not being adequately supplied with capital for certain types of farm operations. The commercial banking machinery of the country was ill-adapted to making certain loans for the periods required by the farmer... and the cost of farm loans was disproportionately high in comparison with the loans acquired for operating purposes in other industries (Pg.558).

We hope to progressively address the lack of and/or inadequacy of financing adapted to current rural Africa's agriculture by mobilizing local saving via the promotion of established and honest microfinance institutions and by establishing linkage with social capital corporations such as "Root Capital" etc...

## **Methodology**

The idea of creating a not – for – profit Consulting NGO geared toward fostering sustainability in the US and abroad, in development in Africa came about, few years back, after multiple conference calls with frustrated West African expatriate friends all over the world. Tired of hearing complaints about how bad things were “back home” and how it was always the fault of “the politicians”. We thought “hey, what about us? What have we done to make things better”? Or for that matter, “what can we start doing to make things better”; instead of complaining all the time? Around fall 2009, we started the assessment of the feasibility of the idea of setting up a NGO through which volunteers could participate as civil society in the development of their respective neighborhood and/or country of origin. Later on, the idea of also providing businesses with sustainability solutions was included.

Our methodology consisted of first researching many existing non – profit organizations whose primary purpose at insertion was to foster the development of a specific world geographic region following major manmade or natural disasters. We thus settled on “counterpart International”, formally known as the Foundation of the People of South Pacific (FSP) because they had to face similar challenges as will Canaan International would be facing in West Africa at inception. Much like the FSP did at its beginnings, our initial goal is ‘to equip the people of – West Africa – with the tools and resources to address the needs of their community and ease the prost-civil wars/crisis devastation’. FSP improved the capacity of local organizations and developed a model of international aid that would become generally accepted as the best practices in development. This form of capacity-building continued to be the framework for the work Counterpart does around the world. That explains very well why we choose “Counterpart International” as NGO model for

Canaan. And like Counterpart, Canaan takes very seriously the old adage: “If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day. If you teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime”.

With the confirmation of a model NGO, Canaan started, informally, its activities mid – 2010. The goal then was to make the organization known and gain enough formal interest to eventually launch the organization. Indeed, we thought once we had interested enough friends into our activities deciding on the organizational chart/structure would be easy.

Our informal activities consisted of, on one hand, getting to know greater Milwaukee local development organizations and on the other hand, collecting and sending items back home (from school materials, used/unsold clothing to OTC medications) whenever anyone was traveling back home or whenever we had that opportunity. We operated that way for a year or so until year end 2010 when I decided to use the NGO as final paper project for my Masters’ in Agricultural Education (with a concentration in Sustainable Community Development). I therefore sought to formalize the activities of Canaan. It took me a while to get around to that task given the combined toll of a full time job’s obligations and school’s requirements. Late 2013, an executive chart of establishment was drafted thus addressing the need for an executive body (see “appendix” for the articles of incorporation).

In the next formal three years, the plan is to:

On the homeland level – to establish job and income generating projects at the image of the “Homeboy Industry” experience, in Los Angeles. The goal here is to, eventually; launch enough self-sustaining businesses with the help of local businesses trade schools, and communities’

stakeholders that can be used to leverage future investments into other job and income generating ventures to address youth delinquency and joblessness issues in greater Milwaukee. All Saint Catholic Church was identified as the “ground zero parish” and discussions will be starting soon to enlist Father Carl’s involvement.

On the international front – Liberia is chosen as the first country of intervention. Being originally from Liberia I have local effective connections there. The current Ebola outbreak in Liberia and in a couple of surrounding countries has heightened the need for immediate fast actions. We are working, in the US, on a campaign to collect PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for Liberian health workers that are currently dealing directly with the infectious disease. And in Liberia we plan on launching a public awareness campaign to disseminate as much information as possible about the infection; especially pieces of info about the proper and vetted medical protocols used by the CDC or WHO when dealing with outbreaks of this magnitude. Canaan will continue its activities of collecting, sorting, sending, and distributing donated items (clothing, OTC medications, light agricultural equipment) using space made available for charitable organizations on some corporation’s shipping lines/vessels (such Firestone) to Liberia. The goal is to progressively and consistently introduce our activities to local stakeholders through our donations and use that period to calibrate our future actions to real local needs and to also obtain tax exemption status in both the US and Liberia (first). Canaan primary area of action will be the agribusiness area with the expectation of progressively migrating into other sectors of rural development as needs arise and means grow.

Meanwhile, we will be creating linkage with local organizations in West Africa and setting up local Canaan offices where warranted. We will also seek to channel our objectives using existing

NGO's programs such as Heifer International's animal seeding donation or Root Capital's cash crop farmer's loan program etc. During that time Canaan will also be identifying area where we could be of a greater effectiveness and for which no service is been delivered at all or properly. Linkage with existing local organizations will allow us to offer supportive assistance where services need improvement thus relaying on and increasing the impact of existing institutions rather than re – inventing the wheels.

While carrying on those activities in countries of intervention, we will also establish our presence in our respective countries of residence via funds raising activities and volunteers signing – up. These first three year are critical in establishing a strong poll of volunteers and donors through fund raising events typical to our agenda. We will also bid to be implementation agent or sub – contractors for US government funded projects in our areas of competence, in our countries of intervention. Our corporate sustainability consulting will be another source of revenue to supplement our resources.

We will adopt an open books policy that will be the bedrock of our financial practice and our beckon of transparency by allowing registered donors to promptly access our account books with relative ease and speed from the moment the request is made (72 hours max). We will adopt the reporting system/method recommended by the IRS for similar type of organization to maintain our good standing and insure credibility. Our goal is to spend at least 85% of donations and revenues, on direct actions in the field and keep administrative (ocean freight and associated costs; website maintenance; events space rental etc...) as low as possible. Thus there will be no paid staff during those three years; just volunteers with some costs reimbursement stipends.

Canaan will rely on a certain number of documents which are summarized in the table below.

Item	Description
Canaan's Bylaws	This is the set of rules and laws that govern the functioning of the NGO. It is the official article of incorporation of the NGO.
Canaan's Funding Sources Matrix	This documents provides a description of the various financial sources Canaan intend on tapping into in the form of a matrix.
Fund Raising Projects	This document is a summary of the activities that Canaan can implement in its fund raising campaigns such as a Walk/Run A Thon; vending Kiosks; car wash etc...
Human Resources	This is the application form that Volunteers will complete in order to sign up to work with Canaan.

## **Our Services & Website**

This project is designed to fill the need for an organization involved both in the “preaching” and in the “doing”; both in the educating but furthermore in realizing or concretizing the human potential enhanced by education. We are committed to helping people realize their full potential in time and space. Some people already have good trade or job skills and our work with them will be to craft business plan that can make them workers-owners in new start-ups or link them to already existing thriving business or to businesses in search of a second life that we might help refocus their core business. With others, it will be more about job placement or finding financing via microfinance or business plan to banks to launch viable business unit(s) in sectors with proven successful track record.

Some field work was done to test the ideas of the premises of “Canaan” when we consulted for the, Milwaukee – Wisconsin based, Walnut Organization’s Corner Stores Project as a member of their “Healthy Food Working Group” (see appendix). We also, plan on working with the, Milwaukee based, “Growing Power” organization to develop a credit based curriculum that can be marketed to students of the University of Wisconsin System and other local universities for its practical urban farming training(s). We plan to, soon, submit a project proposal to the “Growing Power”. These collaborations with local community development organizations serve as stumping grounds for our full time dedication to Canaan’s vision. We are casting a wide net on the types of activities we envision been involved in few (three – five) years:

- Developing a strong urban sea food industry via aquaculture training and funding in collaboration with US based Local Economic Development Corporations (one such factory/farm now exist in Wisconsin and in Michigan).

- Promoting the development of urban/rural industrial corridors with “franc zones” privileges that will specialize in manufacturing goods that are currently been imported into the US but for which we now actually have competitive advantage.
- Promoting the development of businesses based on the use of sustainable sources of energy such as generating power from pig waste (Indiana), building and selling individual home size organic digesters as power source (US Army experimented it in Iraq), encouraging the building of solar panels farms as regional (Arizona and neighboring states) etc.....

Our website, [CanaanInternational.org](http://CanaanInternational.org) / [Canaan.org](http://Canaan.org) (still negotiating to buy back “Canaan.org”) will look a lot like Counterpart International’s website: <http://www.counterpart.org/>

## Conclusions

Overall our study confirmed:

- The existence of a maturing private/corporate sector's market for sustainability consultancy and
- The existence of a booming and thriving "public" (government/International development agencies and organizations) sector's market for sustainability. And highlighted the important role and impacts of NGOs on Sustainability issues throughout the world

We can therefore conclude that, all things been equal, this project is viable and feasible.

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