

# Knowledge Exchange Expedition 2017-2018

## Presentation

### Introduction

This Knowledge Exchange Expedition, spread over a period of 9 months (mid-October 2017 to mid-July 2018), aims to foster exchanges between the perspectives of emerging countries (India in particular) and the mindset of developed countries regarding sustainability, mainly in economics and management (academia and business).

The Knowledge Exchange Expedition is a collaborative project driven by oikos and swissnex India thanks to the financial support of Mercator foundation.

### The need of a Knowledge Exchange

oikos, being a worldwide student driven organization for sustainability in economics and management, has such a diverse community made of students and alumni worldwide with various cultural backgrounds, that it can help build the bridge to better understand complex global, regional and local sustainability related issues and challenges by looking at them from different angles. Ensuring that the oikos community gets access to diverse sources of information to be inspired by what is happening elsewhere and exposure to different ways of thinking, is a way to achieve it.

For students, who are the entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs of tomorrow, it is crucial to prepare them to face tomorrow's challenges, to know how to work in multicultural teams, to become responsible leaders having in mind the global, regional and local impact of their decisions. Tomorrow, responsible leaders need to have a clear overview of the situation, taking into account all the perspectives. It is part of oikos' goals to help them shape this habit. For alumni, who already are the entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs of today, it is necessary to give them more materials from different sources and to introduce them to other ecosystems and approaches in their field in order to enable them to take into account various perspectives in their daily decision making.

In parallel, the expedition will satisfy oikos' needs in bringing its community closer together by integrating better the organization's chapters, alumni and faculty members from emerging countries into oikos activities on an international and local level.

A consultation has been led within the oikos community to know its expectations in regard to the Knowledge Exchange Expedition to make sure it answers its needs. The results of the oikos consultation can be found [here](#).

To facilitate the process of exchanges, swissnex India is a key associate in this Knowledge Exchange Expedition. Its main purpose is to connect the dots in science, education, art and innovation between India and Switzerland. Its mission is to support the outreach and active engagement of its partners in the global exchange of knowledge, ideas and talent. swissnex India is part of the swissnex Network, an initiative of Switzerland's State Secretariat for Education Research and Innovation (SERI). The activities of the swissnex Network are based on a collaborative approach, relying on public and private partnerships and funding.

Over the past few years, swissnex India and oikos members and alumni have been collaborating on different projects taking place in India starting with the Young Scholar Academy in 2011 in IIM Bangalore to oikos Asia Meet in VIT Vellore in 2016, including hiring a Swiss intern from oikos Lausanne in 2015. Thanks to those already existing exchanges between swissnex India and oikos in sustainability in higher education and innovation, it seemed logical to pursue and deepen the relationship on those topics and to also open it to new ones like sustaining alumni networks. Both, oikos and swissnex India, can benefit from each other's Indian networks including faculty and alumni members, and share best practices.

Concurrently, Mercator foundation happened to offer the possibility to fund some knowledge exchange projects that brought this project to fruition.

## Execution of the Expedition

To drive this project an Outreach Manager has been appointed to work 50% with oikos and 50% with swissnex India. The expedition is led from Bangalore, India for the first 8 months and from oikos headquarters in St Gallen, Switzerland in its last month, to ensure long-lasting impact of integrating the learning into oikos processes at a global level.

The Knowledge Exchange Expedition starts on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 and runs until July 13<sup>th</sup> 2018.

- oikos

This expedition has been conceived to build a bridge between India and the rest of the oikos community.

To do so, one goal is to deepen oikos' knowledge on India's sustainability challenges and challenge oikos' views on sustainability topics. It will be done by sharing articles, interviews, events, news, talks and/or workshops at oikos international events (oikos FutureLab and the Spring Meeting) on Indian sustainability issues and the way they are tackled. Meanwhile, a process for the community to have easy access to those types of information should be created in order to have a lasting impact on the oikos community.

Another way to build the bridge is to advance the integration of emerging market perspectives into the international oikos activities. A way to do it is the creation of internal processes to make sure international activities include different perspectives, like the Indian one. In the long run, the best would be to extend this to local projects led by chapters.

The last goal is to strengthen the oikos alumni and faculty network in India. Indeed, it is crucial to have a strong Indian oikos network well connected with the rest of the oikos community to foster exchanges and learning. Visiting Indian chapters to meet local members and faculty members, organizing alumni get-togethers, supporting the alumni ambassadors in India, working in collaboration

with the international executive board members in charge of India, of the alumni network and of the Asian expansion are different approaches to strengthen the oikos network in India and connect it to the international community. More concretely, strengthening the oikos alumni network in India can be boosted by supporting oikos chapters in India to strengthen their own alumni network and engage Indian alumni in oikos activities, e.g. by facilitating chapter strategy meetings, taking part in oikos projects, encouraging the organization of events that include alumni and by organizing dedicated alumni meetings. Ultimately, a database of oikos alumni in India should be updated in order to create long lasting synergies among professionals in the field of sustainability in India and at the international level.

In terms of reporting, the outreach manager is in constant contact with the international oikos team in St. Gallen throughout the collaboration, especially through online participation in monthly meetings of the team and transfer of knowledge in the last month in Switzerland (information, processes, contacts) to international oikos team.

- **swissnex India**

For the swissnex India part, the Academic Relations and Projects team mainly conducts the expedition.

One of the goals of this team is to engage in structuring the Swiss university alumni network in India by gathering the Swiss who now live in India and Indians who studied in Switzerland on common online platforms. Strengthening the Swiss university alumni network would also be done by directly organizing Alumni meetings in Bangalore and Mumbai and supporting the organization of the New Delhi alumni event in 2018. The main goal of this Swiss university alumni network is to foster exchanges and opportunities between India and Switzerland through people attached to both countries.

Another goal is to identify opportunities for collaborations on Swiss-Indian academic projects which could be supported by Swiss foundations. Switzerland being the third country in Europe with the most foundations compared to its population, finding support from players from this sector should be explored in detail. Indeed, some new partnerships could ensue from this search.

In parallel, throughout the expedition, a broader support would be required based on the on-going projects within swissnex India in general.

Eventually the work done for each organization should benefit the other one way or another. This is how the exchange of knowledge takes on its full meaning.

## **Conclusion**

The main aim of this Knowledge Exchange Expedition is to foster transfer of knowledge between India and the international community, with a specific focus on sustainability related topics. Both hard skills and soft skills are scrutinized in the expedition to facilitate personal and professional exchanges beyond cultural and regional differences.

For swissnex India, whose objective is to foster exchanges between India and Switzerland, the expedition is a way to get inputs from an international organization that has a similar innovation mindset. Working on similar projects such as the alumni network and having access to a broader

Indo-Swiss network, thanks to oikos' connections in Switzerland and in India in the academic field (students and faculty members) could lead to new opportunities for swissnex India.

For oikos, the expedition is not only a way to strengthen its Indian network providing a greater impact on a long term run, but also more deeply to challenge the organization and to ensure it transforms its diverse community into a powerful learning, exchanging and inclusive network taking into account various perspectives and approaches. That is what tomorrow's responsible leaders need in order to make the best decisions in this complex world. Particularly in this interlinking topic that is sustainability.

The results of the consultation made within the oikos community on this expedition generated similar ideas: including more and better perspectives from the emerging countries into oikos's activities appears to be a strong wish. Let's make this wish reality!

Learn – Share – Create



swissnex India team as of November 1st, 2017.

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More information on swissnex India projects:  
<http://www.swissnexindia.org/>

More information on oikos projects:  
[www.oikos-international.org](http://www.oikos-international.org)

More information on Mercator Foundation projects:  
<https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/en/>