2026

Bridging the Divide: Experiences and emerging good practice to strengthen cross–society collaboration for the SDGs and beyond

Global Forum for

National SDG
Advisory Bodies

About the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

The Global Forum is a network that connects the knowledge and experience of multi-stakeholder advisory commissions, councils and similar bodies for sustainable development. These bodies contribute to the national institutional architectures for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. By bridging the knowledge and interests of various stakeholder groups, multi-stakeholder advisory bodies foster social acceptance and cohesion within society in times of transformation. The demand for their work in facilitating negotiation outcomes cannot be underestimated. This forum, for and by national multi-stakeholder advisory bodies, is as heterogeneous as the respective contexts its members are in, which vary accordingly in their institutional development, set-up, mandate and role. Constant exchange in and across working groups creates a rich marketplace of ideas, negotiation mechanisms and effective policy measures that can easily be transferred and tailored to local needs and demands elsewhere. As a demand-driven network, it constantly evolves its focus in collective processes. With its rich pool of collective knowledge, the forum effectively invites stakeholders and governments around the globe to adapt, implement and jointly accelerate the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

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Executive summary

This report examines emerging good practices in cross-societal collaboration for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, based on interviews with 46 organisations across 32 countries. The research reveals both significant challenges facing multi-stakeholder platforms and innovative adaptation strategies that demonstrate remarkable organisational resilience.

Key findings
Emerging good practices: The most effective SDG collaboration mechanisms have evolved beyond traditional advisory approaches toward strategic, implementation-focused partnerships. Success factors include: investment in professional coordination; demand-responsive programming that aligns with government needs and priorities; sophisticated organisational structures balancing

inclusivity with efficiency; and genuine government partnerships that create neutral spaces for constructive cross-party dialogue.

Challenging political landscapes: Organisations face eight escalating challenge areas, from operational constraints to complete democratic collapse. Common issues include chronic underfunding, technical capacity gaps, and political instability. More severe contexts involve civic space closure, criminalisation of civil society work, and in extreme cases, complete breakdown of democratic institutions requiring survival strategies rather than collaboration.

Adaptation strategies: Organisations demonstrate sophisticated responses to these challenges including capacity sharing and technological innovation for resource constraints; unified civil society voices and trust-building through private dialogue for government engagement; technical diplomacy and competency-based credibility for political transitions; and security protocols, anonymisation, and exile networks for restrictive environments.

Critical insights

Multi-stakeholder platforms succeed through strategic relationship-building over structural perfection, focusing on practical implementation support rather than comprehensive advisory coverage. Political resilience requires embedding mechanisms through legal anchoring or cross-party neutral spaces. Local-level action often proves more feasible than national initiatives, while evidence-

based approaches build credibility across ideological divides.

Implications for post-2030 frameworks

Interview insights suggest future global development frameworks should feature: modular architecture allowing country-specific priority selection; multi-decade timelines resilient to political cycles; crisis-proof coordination mechanisms; peer learning networks as a primary coordination mode; and creative resource-sharing to offset capacity inequities. Success depends less on global goodwill than building systems that endure political hostility, funding shortages, and social scepticism.

Case studies

Six detailed case studies (see Annex 1) demonstrate diverse approaches suitable for different contexts: regional government networks (ECLAC), inter-municipal cooperation (Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities), technology-enabled localisation (Philippines' Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation), independent advisory mechanisms (Germany's Council), thematic clusters for national implementation (Ghana), and voluntary adaptive alliances (Catalonia).

Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EEAC	European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Council
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IFAM	Instituto de Fomento y Asesoría Municipal (Municipal Development Institute, Costa Rica)
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
Mideplan	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (Costa Rica)
MSB	Multi-Stakeholder Bodies
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RNE	German Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung)
SDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TPI	The Partnering Initiative
UN	United Nations
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WJP	World Justice Project

Foreword
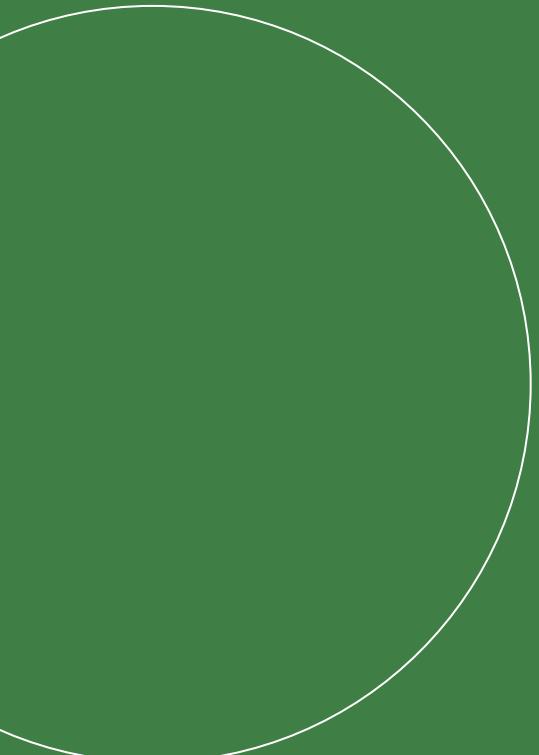
The Global Forum's initial study, ⬊ Pieces of a puzzle, Part I: towards national sustainable development advisory bodies, explored the type of organisations that are members of the Global Forum or could be candidates to do so. We revealed how multi-stakeholder platforms, advisory councils and SDG units fit into the wider SDG architectures in their respective countries.

In ⬊ Pieces of a puzzle, Part II: further steps on a journey, our attention moved to the context in which members of the Global Forum operate. We uncovered the challenges that they have to navigate in order to be a trusted 'critical friend' to government and to play a useful role in a whole-of-society approach to development.

Our research revealed a rich — and sometimes bewildering — landscape dedicated to the goal of multi-stakeholder engagement in the SDGs. This included ministerial councils and committees, secretariats, working groups, reference groups, national pacts, engagement forums, coordination bodies, networks and platforms, consultation processes and monitoring systems.

We also saw that Global Forum members are on a journey and are in very different stages of navigating their contexts, which also differ from each other in many ways.

Some of the most inspiring examples of organisations making a real difference by bringing diverse and unheard voices to development are in the most challenging environments. We found across the board a positive story to tell. This is a story that remains positive despite gathering clouds in so many places, as this new report also shows.

We then moved from researching the 'who' and the 'where' to the 'how'. That is the subject of this report.

Can we identify how different types of actors achieve their goals and the mechanisms they use? Are there some methods for engaging a wide variety of societal interests that are more effective than others? What can practitioners learn from each other about the best approach to take in very different contexts, particularly as the challenge for those committed to inclusion grow in so many countries? What case examples are there of good practice that can guide others?

Tom Harrison, on behalf of the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

Research teams

This research was conducted by African Monitor, ALIARSE, and The Partnering Initiative, and submitted to the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies.

The Partnering Initiative serves as the current Secretariat of the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies, while both ALIARSE and African Monitor function as Regional Facilitators of the Forum.

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The authors would like to especially thank the following individuals for their leadership in coordinating the regional research processes. Their efforts in engaging representatives of advisory bodies, governments, and civil society organisations across their regions, were instrumental in shaping the findings of this study.

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— Nangamso Kwinana, Africa Region Hub Coordinator
— Yared Tsegay, Development Economist, African Monitor
— Joseph Eliabson Maniragena, Senior Programmes Coordinator, African Monitor
— Puseletso Maile, Research & Advocacy Coordinator, African Monitor
— Ameerah Abrahams, Media & Programmes Support, African Monitor
— Danielle Jean-Pierre Figueroa, Director of Research & Alliances, ALIARSE
— Natalia Arroyo Guevara, Platform Manager and Researcher, ALIARSE

Moreover, the research has been conceptually developed and accompanied in its implementation by Miriam Rosa González (German Council for Sustainable Development, RNE).

Disclaimer: To protect participants and reflect rapidly changing contexts, some sections of the report do not attribute findings to specific individuals, organisations, or countries.

Chapter 1: Introduction, definitions and framing

1.1 Purpose and scope of the report

Aims

This report identifies and documents emerging good practice in cross-societal collaboration for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its aim is to support wider engagement through identifying and sharing the ways in which collaborative action can be optimised for increased effectiveness and used strategically to mitigate or adapt to challenging environments. At a time when the shrinking of civic space and opposition based on ideology in many countries is hindering the drive towards a more sustainable future, working together to share and expand good practice is increasingly important to forge a positive path to 2030 and beyond.

Who this report is for

This report is designed to support any organisations engaged in multi-sector collaboration to support the SDGs, including civil society organisations, government, development practitioners, and multi-stakeholder platform coordinators.

1.2 Methodology

Research approach and data collection

This research combined desk study with new qualitative and participatory data. Desk research examined a selection of active platforms supporting the SDGs. Primary data came from 35 semi-structured online interviews in 25 countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe, conducted by regional research teams. An online survey generated 23 responses, and additional insights were collected through an audience participation session at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum.

Interviews and participant selection

Interviews followed a semi-structured format, balancing comparability with space for context-specific insights. Participants were recruited mainly through the SDG Global Forum, with efforts to reflect different regions and stakeholder groups directly engaged in SDG platforms and accountability processes.

Analysis and limitations

Interview and survey data were analysed using a Grounded Theory Approach, allowing themes to emerge from the material itself. The main limitations were:

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— Most interviewees were selected via the SDG Global Forum, which may have introduced bias.

— The small number of survey responses limits the ability to make quantitative claims.

The findings therefore highlight broad patterns and illustrative examples but should not be read as statistically representative.

Regional reports

This document builds on two regional reports which can be viewed separately. These are:

— ↘ Report for the African Region, researched and written by **African Monitor**

— ↘ Report for the Latin American and Caribbean Region, researched and written by **ALIARSE**

Brief overview of actors surveyed for this research

Forty-six organisations were interviewed and/ or surveyed across 35 countries, including 16 Global Forum members. The sample encompasses diverse governance arrangements, comprising 17 independent civil society organisations, 16 semi-governmental mechanisms, 8 governmental institutions, and 5 academic/expert bodies. Geographically, the research captures mechanisms predominantly from Africa (15 countries), Latin America (9 countries), and Europe (6 countries), with additional representation from Asia (4 countries), North America (1 country), and 10 global or regional networks. The data reveals varied approaches to SDG governance, from autonomous civil society-led initiatives through hybrid semi-governmental arrangements to formal state institutions.

Type of actors

Actor Type	Description	Number of organisations
Civil Society Organisations	Independent CSOs that engage with government whilst maintaining autonomy	17
Semi-governmental	Organisations with formal government collaboration/ participation but maintaining some independence	16
Governmental	Government-led institutions and committees	8
Academic/Expert Bodies	Expert advisory bodies and academic institutions	5

Mechanism

Engagement Type	Key Activities	Number
Advocacy	Policy advocacy, awareness campaigns, lobbying	~25
Monitoring & Reporting	VNR contributions, progress monitoring, citizen reporting	~35
Implementation	Direct programme implementation, service delivery	~20
Coordination	Multi-stakeholder platforms, network coordination	~30
Capacity Building	Training, skills development, education programmes	~15

Regional distribution

Region	Countries	Number of organisations
Africa	Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda	15
Latin America	Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru	9
Europe	Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain	7
Asia	India, Nepal, Philippines	4
North America	USA	1
Global/ International	Various regional and global networks	10

Regional distribution

USA

MEXICO

COSTA RICA

ECUADOR

COLOMBIA

PERU

CHILE

BRAZIL

MAURITANIA

SPAIN

THE NETHERLANDS

GERMANY

HUNGARY

FINLAND

GEORGIA

KENYA

TANZANIA

MALAWI

UGANDA

SOUTH AFRICA

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CAMEROON

NIGERIA

BENIN

GHANA

NEPAL

INDIA

PHILIPPINES
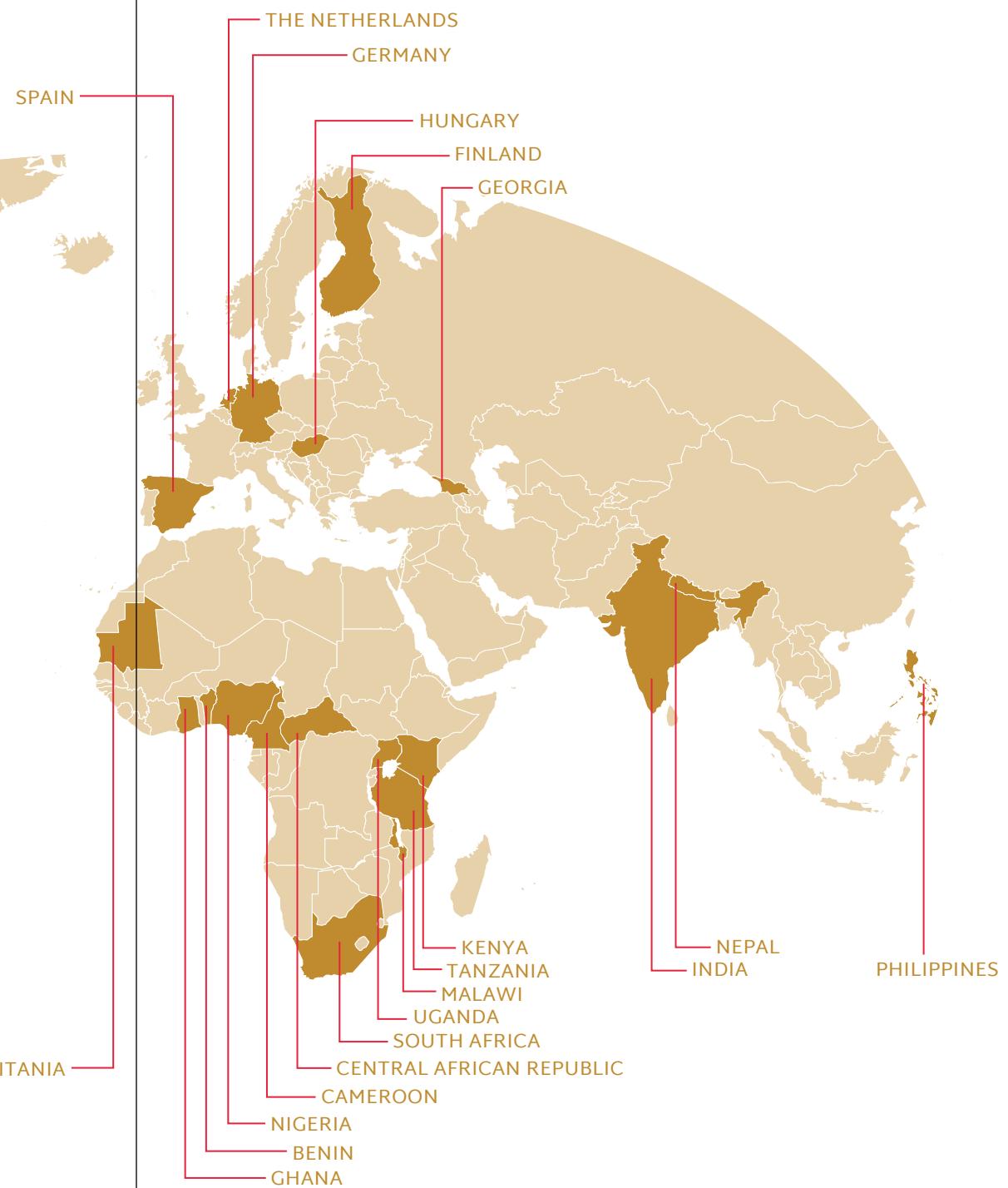
Level of intervention

Level	Examples	Number
National	National SDG platforms, country-level coordination mechanisms	27
Subnational	Municipal networks, state/provincial bodies	8
Regional	Regional networks, cross-border initiatives	6
Global/ International	International networks, global forums	5

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1.3 Understanding all-of-society collaboration

Definition
All-of-society collaboration mechanisms are formal or informal platforms that bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including government, civil society, the private sector, academia, local authorities, and international partners, to jointly advance the implementation, monitoring, and accountability of the SDGs.

Purpose
Their core purpose is to create shared ownership of the 2030 Agenda and to mobilise diverse resources, expertise, and perspectives. These mechanisms:
— Support coordinated implementation of the SDGs across sectors and levels of governance.
— Provide spaces for inclusive dialogue, priority-setting and problem-solving.
— Strengthen monitoring and accountability by incorporating independent and community-level perspectives.
— Build trust and legitimacy around SDG progress by ensuring transparency and broad participation.

Background
The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for all-of-society engagement, recognising that governments alone cannot deliver on the SDGs. Since its adoption in 2015, a wide range of mechanisms have emerged at national, regional and global levels. These vary in form, from government-led councils

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and commissions to civil society networks and hybrid multi-stakeholder platforms, but share a commitment to inclusivity, partnership and mutual accountability. Their development has often been shaped by contextual factors such as political openness, civic space, levels of decentralisation, and the strength of existing traditions of participatory governance.

1.4 Typology of all-of-society collaboration mechanisms

Based on analysis of 46 organisations across 32 countries, this research identifies five high-level platform types with distinct sub-categories, revealing how different governance arrangements, priorities, and contextual factors shape collaboration approaches.

High-level categorisation of mechanism types

Autonomous civil society networks

Structure:
Independent civil society organisations and networks maintaining full autonomy from government whilst engaging strategically with state actors.

Purpose:
Advocacy for policy change, holding governments accountable for SDG commitments, and amplifying civil society voices in policy processes.

Process:
External advocacy campaigns, independent monitoring and reporting, citizen engagement activities, and strategic engagement with government when opportunities arise.

Key Characteristics:
— Full institutional independence
— External pressure and accountability function
— Selective, strategic engagement with government
— Strong grassroots connections

Collaborative partnership platforms

Structure:
Multi-stakeholder platforms where civil society organisations collaborate with government agencies whilst maintaining organisational independence.

Purpose:
Foster whole-of-society approaches to SDG implementation through structured dialogue and joint action between sectors.

Process:
Multi-stakeholder conferences, joint planning processes, collaborative monitoring, and shared advocacy for SDG progress.

Key Characteristics:
— Formal collaboration agreements
— Shared decision-making on specific issues
— Maintained organisational autonomy
— Joint accountability mechanisms

Semi-governmental integration

Structure:
Organisations with formal roles in government SDG processes whilst retaining significant independence and a civil society identity.

Purpose:
Coordinate whole-of-government and whole-of-society SDG implementation through inclusive governance arrangements.

Process:
Government-led coordination with multi-stakeholder input, formal advisory functions, and structured consultation processes.

Key Characteristics:
— Formal government roles with independence clauses
— Dual accountability (to government and civil society constituencies)
— Insider-outsider strategy capability
— Structured influence on policy processes

Government–hosted multi–stakeholder bodies

Structure:
Government-established and hosted mechanisms with significant participation from non-state actors, including civil society, private sector, and academia.

Purpose:
Coordinate whole-of-government and whole-of-society SDG implementation through inclusive governance arrangements.

Process:
Government-led coordination with multi-stakeholder input, formal advisory functions, and structured consultation processes.

Key Characteristics:
- Government leadership and hosting
- Formal advisory or consultative roles for civil society
- Integration within government planning cycles
- Limited civil society autonomy within the structure

Fully governmental coordination

Structure:
Government-led institutions and committees responsible for SDG coordination, with civil society participation primarily through formal consultation processes.

Purpose:
Ensure coherent government action on SDGs with appropriate stakeholder input and oversight.

Process:
Government policy development, inter-ministerial coordination, formal stakeholder consultations, and state-led implementation monitoring.

Key Characteristics:
- Government ownership and control
- Civil society as external consultees rather than partners
- Focus on state capacity and coordination
- Limited power-sharing arrangements

Chapter 2: Assessing the context/ enabling environment in country

The enabling environment at national level forms the foundation upon which effective multi-stakeholder engagement for SDG implementation is built. Without supportive political structures, inclusive governance systems, and strong stakeholder organisations, even the most well-intentioned multi-stakeholder bodies struggle to achieve meaningful impact.

Assessing this environment helps identify systemic barriers and opportunities that determine whether collaborative approaches to sustainable development can be truly effective and inclusive. It reveals the degree to which governments genuinely embrace participatory governance, whether civil society and private sector actors have the capacity and space to contribute meaningfully, and if the political and institutional architecture supports the complex, cross-sectoral coordination that the SDGs demand.

These assessments are therefore essential for understanding the realistic potential for multi-stakeholder platforms to influence policy, mobilise collective action, and drive the transformative changes required for sustainable development.

Understanding the environment in which we operate, in its complexity, and gauging specific strengths and weaknesses, can support existing multi-stakeholder bodies engaging in SDG processes to determine the best approaches for engaging effectively with limited resources, and can support organisations and networks wishing to take on a role in supporting SDG implementation, planning and monitoring, to determine the most effective structure and approaches for their context.

2.1 Assessing the enabling environment in country

As part of previous research on national advisory councils for the SDGs, The Global Forum and The Partnering Initiative developed a set of criteria for assessing the enabling environment for advisory councils and other multi-stakeholder bodies engaged in supporting the SDG processes, in particular the VNR. These aim to evaluate the foundational conditions that determine whether multi-stakeholder engagement is likely to effectively contribute to SDG implementation.

The six criteria presented below assess government commitment to participatory governance, institutional capacity for cross-sector coordination, political support structures, rule of law, societal openness to collaborative approaches, and the organisational strength of key stakeholder groups. Key indicators are listed for each of the criteria reviewed.

1. Government commitment to stakeholder engagement: The government is willing and actively seeking to engage stakeholders in delivering the SDGs/ climate agendas
— Evidence of government engagement of multiple stakeholders and sectors in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)
— Multi-sector engagement in climate Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
— Multi-sector involvement in creation of national development plans (including the UN SDCF)

— Government self-reporting on SDG 16 (strong institutions)
— Formal public-private dialogue structures

2. Rule of law: Strong legal and institutional frameworks that support governance and accountability
— World Justice Project Rule of Law Index ratings (see below for details)
— Legal framework strength and consistency
— Institutional accountability mechanisms

3. Inclusive and progressive governance: Open society that supports participatory approaches
— Government transparency and openness
— Government receptiveness to new ideas and approaches
— Open government ranking performance
— Social Progress Index elements including corruption levels, inclusiveness measures, and personal rights protections

4. Institutional infrastructure for SDG delivery: Government has put in place flexible institutional structures to deliver the SDGs/climate commitments
— Whole-of-government approach with coordination units/processes across ministries
— Government mandate issued for Multi-Stakeholder Bodies (MSBs)
— Signatory status of Paris Agreement with NDCs
— National Development Strategy existence
— Light-touch advisory or governance body providing ongoing support to MSBs

5. High-level political support: Political support and interest demonstrated by highest governmental level and/or parliament

— Political system stability over time (Polity IV dataset)
— Highest level/presidential support demonstrated through proclamations, public/private dialogues, and government communications
— Supportive parliamentary role in establishing multi-stakeholder platforms for constructive advice and mediating societal positions

6. Stakeholder organisational strength: Effective organisation/strength of key stakeholders (academia, civil society, and private sector)

— Existence of business associations, CSO representative bodies, and academic networks
— Strength of civil society organisations
— Degree of formal versus informal business organisation
— Evidence of strong dialogue and trusted relationships across stakeholders
— Safe spaces for experimentation with new regulations
— Commitment to strengthening policy and regulatory environment for partnering and multi-stakeholder approaches

A practical tool for stakeholders at country level has been developed, based on the criteria above, with indicators and indications for desk research and interview questions. The full tool is shared in Annex 2.

NOTE:

WJP Rule of Law Index

The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index measures how rule of law is experienced in practical, everyday situations across countries worldwide. It evaluates eight factors:

1. Constraints on Government Powers – Whether government officials are accountable under the law
2. Absence of Corruption – Extent to which public power is free from corruption
3. Open Government – Government transparency and civic participation
4. Fundamental Rights – Protection of basic human rights
5. Order and Security – Public safety and security
6. Regulatory Enforcement – How effectively regulations are implemented
7. Civil Justice – Accessibility and effectiveness of civil courts
8. Criminal Justice – Effectiveness and impartiality of criminal justice systems

2.2 Assessing whole-of-society engagement in SDG planning, implementation and monitoring

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are critical mechanisms for countries to report their progress towards the SDGs. However, the effectiveness and

legitimacy of these reviews depend heavily on how inclusive and participatory the development process is.

Building on an event at HLPF 2025, the Global Forum has developed a ⬎ "*how to*" note introducing a structured framework for evaluating whether VNR processes genuinely embrace an inclusive "*whole-of-society*" approach, ensuring that diverse voices—including civil society, marginalised groups, and non-state actors—are meaningfully engaged rather than merely consulted as a formality.

While this assessment tool was originally designed to evaluate multi-stakeholder engagement in Voluntary National Review processes, the underlying factors it measures are fundamental to meaningful participation across all aspects of SDG work. The six dimensions assessed here are equally critical for effective SDG planning and implementation and can therefore serve as a valuable proxy for understanding a country's broader enabling environment for participatory SDG governance.

A government that demonstrates strong performance across these indicators in its VNR process is likely to have the institutional culture, capacity, and commitment necessary to facilitate meaningful stakeholder engagement in national SDG planning, policy development, and implementation monitoring. Conversely, weaknesses identified in the VNR context often reflect systemic barriers that constrain inclusive participation across the entire SDG ecosystem.

The assessment framework evaluates multi-stakeholder engagement across six key dimensions; each measured on a spectrum from low to high inclusivity:

Capacity to engage inclusively: assesses whether both government officials and stakeholders have the knowledge, resources, and skills needed for meaningful participation. High capacity is indicated when government leaders understand effective engagement practices and ensure all participants have adequate resources and internal capacity to contribute meaningfully.

Commitment to inclusion: measures the political will and dedication to creating truly inclusive processes. Strong commitment is demonstrated through engagement with diverse stakeholder types, clear government communication about whole-of-society approaches, and institutional measures that protect inclusivity across political cycles.

Awareness of SDGs: reflects how well the broader society understands the SDGs and the VNR's purpose. High awareness enables broader participation beyond specialist circles and helps marginalised groups connect with and contribute to the process.

Openness to criticism: evaluates government tolerance for constructive feedback and critical input. Inclusive processes create safe spaces where stakeholders can voice concerns about government performance without fear of repercussions.

Process to enable inclusion: focuses on structural design elements that facilitate or hinder participation. Effective processes feature multiple engagement opportunities, integrated consultation mechanisms, sufficient time for meaningful review, and embedded principles of inclusion throughout all stages.

How control is shared: examines the distribution of decision-making power in the VNR process. Highly inclusive approaches involve co-creation of engagement processes, collaborative agenda-setting, and opportunities for stakeholders to contribute content directly to the final report

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By using this tool to assess the VNR process, practitioners and policymakers can gain insights into the structural and cultural factors that either enable or limit meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement in their country's broader sustainable development efforts. This analysis can then inform targeted interventions to strengthen the enabling environment for participatory SDG governance at all levels, from initial strategy development through to ongoing implementation review and adaptive management.

Chapter 3: Emerging good practice
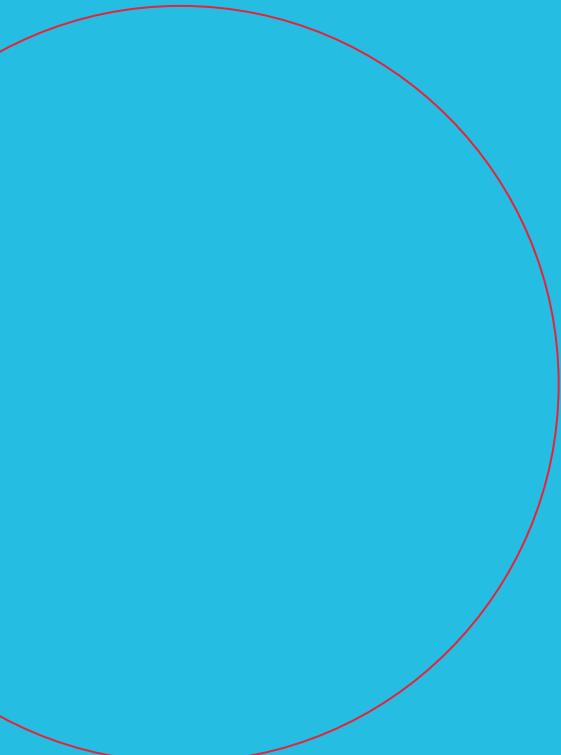
3.1 Examples of good practice

Strategic focus and resource allocation
Multi-sector mechanisms are increasingly moving away from traditional advisory approaches toward more targeted, implementation-focused strategies that maximise impact with limited resources.

Strategic timing and relationship building
Effective mechanisms invest in understanding government needs and building relationships that enable timely, relevant advice. This requires multi-sector platforms engaging in SDG implementation or monitoring to position themselves as partners rather than critics.

Demand-responsive programming
Successful platforms respond to country-driven demand rather than imposing external agendas. ECLAC's Community of Practice demonstrates this approach, responding to requests for specific topics like stakeholder engagement, data/statistics, and SDG localisation. This responsive approach helps maintain relevance and ensures resources address genuine implementation challenges.

Shifting from advisory publications to more specific policy implementation support
Advisory councils are recognising that the focus on resource-intensive publications is failing to drive meaningful change or even engagement. Several advisory councils have shifted to focusing resources on "*finding the right time or policy windows to speak to governments*" rather than producing publications that governments lack time to read.

Some European advisory councils are refocusing on supporting governments where their multi-stakeholder expertise is most valued, for example, with EU-mandated whole-of-society planning obligations like national energy and climate plans. Similarly, ECLAC notes the effectiveness of operating at technical rather than a purely political level, allowing for more substantive dialogue. For example, the focus on "*the localization of the SDGs, which has allowed us to continue working with countries through, in this case, subnational and local governments.*"

Organisational structure and effectiveness
The most effective multi-sector mechanisms have developed sophisticated internal structures that balance inclusivity with efficiency, creating sustainable platforms for long-term engagement.

Governance models that sustain engagement
Finland's Commission for Sustainable Development illustrates an effective governance approach with its "*network of networks*" model, where each stakeholder represents a broader constituency rather than just their individual organisation. With 108 members across all sectors, the commission maintains broad representation while ensuring each participant brings substantial networks and resources to the collaboration.

Balancing secretariat independence with member input
One Advisory Council's approach to secretariat autonomy shows how structural innovations can improve efficiency. By allowing the secretariat to publish information briefings without formal council approval, they've streamlined communication while reserving the full consensus process for major policy positions. This reduces bottlenecks while maintaining democratic legitimacy for significant recommendations.

Sectoral organisation for focused impact
Mexico's sectoral clustering approach demonstrates how thematic organisation can enhance both depth and reach. By organising engagement around sectors (labour unions, private sector, academia, youth) rather than individual SDGs, they enable participants to engage through familiar frameworks while contributing to broader sustainability goals. This approach recognises that different sectors "*speak different languages*" and need tailored engagement strategies.

Similarly, a few years ago the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development and the Finnish Government´s climate policy roundtable encouraged core business sector leads to develop their own climate roadmaps, with the result that these were not only relevant and actionable within a specific sector, but also generated significant engagement and ownership from sector members.

Institutionalising collaboration processes
Successful mechanisms develop formal frameworks that outlast political changes. For example, Colombia secured continuity for SDG implementation by embedding a multi-stakeholder platform in a formal CONPES policy (a high-level policy document issued by the National Council for Economic and Social Policy) and grounding it in the technical leadership of the National Planning Department, ensuring resilience beyond political cycles.

Tanzania's National SDG Coordination Framework, under the Office of the Prime Minister, and coordinated by the National Planning Commission, formally allocates representative seats to civil society under the Office of the Prime Minister.

These institutional arrangements provide stability and legitimacy that informal networks cannot achieve.

Government relations and collaboration models

The most successful multi-sector mechanisms have developed sophisticated approaches to government engagement that transcend traditional advisory relationships to become genuine implementation partnerships.

Creating neutral spaces for cross-party dialogue

Finland's commission demonstrates how neutral, closed-door meeting formats can enable constructive dialogue across political divides. By meeting 3–4 times per year without media presence, participants can "*shake off duties of bringing specific demands*" and "*have the freedom to think further into the future*" and engage in longer term discussions. This approach has enabled continuity across government changes, with right-wing governments implementing strategies developed under left-wing predecessors.

Horizontal coordination and anti-silo approaches

Catalonia's approach illustrates how advisory councils can help governments think systemically. Their national plan explicitly aims to "*promote a systemic view in government*". The council leverages its independence to engage across ministerial boundaries, helping to dynamically coordinate whole-of-government responses to cross-cutting

challenges. The open nature of the platform means members "*are there because they want to work together, knowing that the instrument is diverse, it's not perfect, and it evolves every day or every month.*"

Negotiation and pragmatic compromise

Rather than maintaining ideological purity, effective mechanisms engage in pragmatic negotiation with governments. This realistic approach recognises that influence often requires accepting partial adoption of recommendations rather than demanding wholesale implementation.

Multi-level government engagement

Costa Rica's IFAM network demonstrates how coordination between national and local levels can multiply impact. Strong coordination between the national planning ministry (Mideplan) and the municipal development institute (IFAM), where "*Mideplan sets the strategic direction, and IFAM brings it down to the local level*", enabled systematic support for over 50 % of municipalities to engage with SDGs, resulting in the world's first Local Voluntary Reviews in Costa Rica.

Adaptive engagement during political transitions

Successful mechanisms develop resilience strategies for political changes. Mexico's institutionalisation within the Ministry of Economy provided stability across government transitions, while their legal framework, with a legal requirement for all Mexican states to have 2030 Agenda offices, ensures continued multi-stakeholder engagement regardless of political preferences. This institutional embedding enables mechanisms to maintain relationships and continue

operations even during periods of reduced political support. As a result, "*Mexico is now the first country in the world with over 1,000 municipalities that have submitted VLRs to the United Nations.*"

3.2 Key implementation insights

For mechanisms seeking to adopt these good practices, several critical success factors emerge from this analysis:

Start with relationships.
The most effective mechanisms prioritise building genuine government relationships. Understanding government priorities, timing, and constraints enables mechanisms to position themselves as valuable partners rather than external critics.

Invest in professional coordination.
Nearly every successful example includes dedicated, skilled coordination, such as ECLAC's technical secretariat. Voluntary coordination rarely sustains complex multi-stakeholder processes.

Design for political resilience.
Mechanisms that survive government changes embed themselves institutionally (like Mexico's legal framework) or create neutral spaces that transcend party politics (like Finland's closed-door format). Building cross-party relationships and focusing on implementation rather than ideology helps maintain relevance across electoral cycles.

Ensure inclusion model supports effectiveness.
The tension between broad representation and operational efficiency requires careful design choices. Successful approaches include Finland's "*network of networks*" model, and Mexico's sectoral clustering. The key is ensuring every participant brings substantial capacity, not just symbolic representation.

Focus resources strategically.
Prioritising relationship-building, implementation support, and responsive programming over comprehensive coverage enables deeper impact with limited resources.

Enable genuine multi-stakeholder ownership.
Catalonia's alliance model demonstrates how moving beyond traditional advisory roles toward shared responsibility can sustain engagement and multiply impact. When stakeholders take ownership for implementation rather than just providing recommendations, mechanisms become platforms for collective action rather than purely consultative forums.

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Chapter 4: Key challenges and mitigation strategies

This section documents the key challenges that interviewees collectively identified, in rising order of severity:

Operational and capacity constraints

Gaps in representation and participation

Policy misalignment and low government buy-in

Trust issues and opposition based on ideology

Political turnover and fragility

Civic space closure and criminalisation

Fragmentation and duplication among development actors

Collapse of democratic institutions

More importantly, it sets out the remarkable adaptation strategies that organisations have developed to continue their vital work under increasingly difficult circumstances.

The eight sections below provide a comprehensive picture of the landscape facing SDG collaboration platforms – from operational constraints through to the most extreme situations

of democratic collapse. What comes through clearly is the resilience and innovation of these organisations, finding ways to maintain their mission even when traditional approaches become impossible.

The anonymous quotes and examples shared reveal both the severity of many of these challenges and the sophisticated strategies organisations have developed in response. From technical diplomacy and evidence-based engagement in contested political environments, to security protocols and exile networks in contexts of complete institutional breakdown, these represent hard-won insights that should be valuable for others facing similar circumstances.

Challenge 1: Operational and capacity constraints

Operational and capacity constraints represent fundamental barriers to effective SDG collaboration. Organisations consistently face chronic underfunding, technical skill gaps, low SDG literacy among key stakeholders, and sustainability challenges when external support ends. However, innovative adaptation strategies have emerged that demonstrate how platforms can maximise impact despite resource limitations through strategic partnerships, capacity sharing, and creative use of technology.

The challenge: multiple dimensions of constraint
Resource limitations manifest across multiple dimensions, creating or compounding challenges for SDG platforms. Funding constraints are pervasive, with organisations noting that *"resources are challenging, funding is always an issue."* Even larger organisations struggle to fund their activities: *"Despite being one of the larger offices with the most staff, when we go out and speak with others, we think, imagine these countries with only two people, how do they manage? We have about 10-12 people right now, and we can barely handle it."* Even where VNR consultation processes are inclusive, CSOs must fund their own participation, placing a heavy burden on smaller, local groups who lack the resources to travel to meetings.

Sustainability presents an ongoing challenge as external funding cycles end. For example, *"All of*

us are volunteers. For the past two or three years, we've been focused on how to keep the organisation financially sustainable." The dependency on external donors creates vulnerability: "An initiative like this, can only be sustained if there is funding that allows it to be sustained."

Technical capacity gaps compound funding issues. Many officials lack analytical skills needed for data-driven decision making: "Government officials are not always equipped in terms of professional backgrounds, in terms of experience, to be able to understand and to use the statistics to their advantage." This extends to SDG literacy, where "the understanding of the SDGs and the awareness of the SDGs was very low among the locally elected officials so there was a need for campaigning or educating them on what the SDGs are."

Administrative barriers further constrain smaller organisations, as "some big institutions are playing a gate person's role. They are blocking, especially emerging organisations ... to access funding."

★ **Strategic adaptations: maximising impact through collaboration**

Capacity sharing and mutual support
Organisations have developed sophisticated approaches to sharing technical expertise and resources. Capacity sharing with government proves particularly effective: "We had technical resources in terms of people in our team who were able to facilitate, who were also able to help municipalities write various chapters of their voluntary local reviews."

Consortium building allows smaller organisations to pool resources and compete with larger entities. Organisations recognise that "it's crucial to form consortia with NGOs that have more experience than us to advance many goals since we have many unmet objectives." This approach enables resource pooling for national-level campaigns where "civil society organisations [contribute] to a national pool of resources that can be leveraged to stage a national-level campaign."

Academic partnerships enhance credibility while building capacity: some organisations work "closely with the university, because what we want is to validate and make citizen-generated data to be seen as equal and valid as that data that has been verified through census household surveys."

Innovation in data and technology
Creative technological solutions help overcome resource constraints while improving accessibility. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) visualisation makes complex data understandable for officials with limited analytical experience: "so that they can understand, for example, where the level of poverty was higher in terms of the province and how they can focus on that."

Digital tools replace expensive field data collection: "we've used tools that don't require going into the field to collect data." Organisations experiment with AI-based solutions, noting: "Even this month, since we don't have funds for interpretation, we're going to test simultaneous translation using other platforms and AI to try to overcome this challenge."

Strategic secretariat functions
Professional secretariats prove essential for sustained coordination, addressing capacity gaps across multiple organisations. Successful platforms benefit from secretariats that can do all the work, from communications, to policy tracking, to policy proposal development, to consultations. These serve strategic rather than merely administrative functions, "*mobilising partners, managing relationships with government, guiding advocacy messaging, and ensuring inclusive consultation.*" The coordination function proves critical: "*If it doesn't work, the network doesn't work.*"

Streamlined processes can reduce administrative burden while maintaining quality. For example, organisations develop "*streamlined proposal processes where the technical secretariat prepares drafts rather than starting from scratch in workshops.*"

Localised and peer-to-peer learning
Focusing on local-level action maximises limited resources while building relevant capacity. Organisations find that "*national level action is going to take time. But we started using this data for local level actions, which has been more successful.*" One organisation "*created a system of 10 municipal promoters who act as liaisons*", growing "*from 20 to 51 municipalities (over 50%) participating in the network.*"

Peer learning leverages existing expertise within networks. Participants copy and adapt each other's best practices. There is competition, but this competition and rivalry pushes them forward. Regular exchange creates mutual support, for example between city municipalities sharing knowledge and

perspectives to drive sustainability planning and implementation: "*They tackle the same difficulties in their cities, they can commiserate together about their shortcomings.*"

💡 **Key lessons for resource-constrained collaboration**

Leverage existing structures: Successful platforms build on existing government mandates, academic partnerships, and civil society networks rather than creating entirely new systems.

Invest in coordination: Professional secretariats or dedicated coordinators prove essential for sustained engagement.

Design for sustainability: Building volunteer networks, cascade methodologies, and peer-to-peer learning reduces dependency on external funding while maintaining capacity.

Embrace technological innovation: Digital tools, GIS visualisation, and AI-powered solutions can overcome resource constraints while improving accessibility and impact.

Focus locally for global impact: Local-level action often proves more feasible and effective than national-level initiatives, allowing organisations to demonstrate value and build capacity incrementally. As one practitioner noted about maintaining engagement despite constraints: "*when we engage with players in other countries, we can continuously learn what our working mechanisms and innovations to improve what we are doing.*" This principle of continuous learning and adaptation, combined with strategic resource sharing, enables sustained collaboration even under significant operational constraints.

Challenge 2: Policy misalignment and low government buy-in

Policy misalignment and low government buy-in represent fundamental barriers to meaningful SDG collaboration. Organisations consistently face tokenistic consultations, government decisions that contradict SDG commitments, and sudden policy reversals that undermine years of collaborative work. However, innovative strategies have emerged that demonstrate how civil society can build genuine partnerships with government, create alternative pathways for progress, and maintain momentum even when official support wavers.

The challenge: from tokenism to active resistance

Government engagement with SDG processes often remains superficial, characterised by consultation exercises that fail to meaningfully incorporate civil society input. Organisations report that governments send "*the final version of the document or almost final draft of the document some days before and give very little time to make sense of this huge document, [which] is not really meaningful engagement.*" When feedback is provided, "*they didn't take some recommendations into account...it felt like it was simply a formality so that they could then say at HLPF that OK, we did this.*"

The disconnect between stated commitments and actual decision-making proves particularly frustrating. Organisations observe that "*we have wonderful goals and targets, but the day-to-day decisions are not in line with these strategic decisions.*" Government decision-making timeframes often preclude meaningful consultation, as "*the government is very quick in their decision making and there is no room, no time frame to discuss the ideas with the stakeholders.*"

In some contexts, the challenge extends beyond poor consultation to active policy reversal. The 2030 Agenda has "*lost strength ... I feel that, at the beginning, it had this logic of being a compass and a guideline, and everyone was really committed to it, taking it much more seriously.*" Political shifts have led to "*the emergence of various right-wing governments [that] has shifted national priorities away from multilateral agendas, which only adds to the growing distrust in and delegitimisation*

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of the UN and its agencies." Growing opposition to the SDG agenda is often rooted in a shift from global, technocratic solutions toward populist and sovereignty-focused politics that question the legitimacy of outside influence.

Short-term political thinking compounds these challenges. Governments want "*to make transformations in the very short term. When I explain to them that we have still five years for achieving the SDGs, they say 'Yes, we are already working on it, but for us, five years is very far from now.'*" This temporal mismatch creates fundamental tension between political cycles and sustainable development timeframes.

★ Strategic adaptations: building bridges and alternatives

Unified voice and coordinated engagement
Organisations have learned that fragmented approaches to government engagement are less effective than coordinated strategies. Speaking to government with a united voice proves powerful: "*When we speak with one voice, the people, the government listens.*" This requires sophisticated coordination mechanisms. For the VNR reporting process, this means coordinating across sectors to present condensed recommendations and feedback representing a wide range of voices across civil society and other sectors, where platforms "*synthesise the reports [other actors] produced with other resources into what we've done and annex their work to our report. This ensures we truly coordinate everything civil society produces.*"

Coordinated engagement extends beyond simply agreeing on messages to developing shared platforms that can represent diverse perspectives coherently while maintaining the legitimacy that comes from broad-based support.

Trust-building through private dialogue
Many successful organisations have shifted from public criticism to private engagement as a primary strategy for building government relationships. When dealing with sensitive issues, "*instead of going straight to the media or writing in the press, we target the relevant authorities and present them with evidence. So far, when we've approached them about issues that need correction, they've been resolved quickly.*"

This approach requires recognising that "*no government wants to be criticised publicly. You can raise concerns within the UN, but discuss issues within your own house first, then go outside together and create a more supportive environment.*" Organisations have found that creating space for private dialogue allows government officials to engage more openly: "*meetings are closed even though they are more than 100 people, there is no media there. So they can speak freely there, and they can make connections.*"

High-quality alternative reporting
When government consultation processes prove inadequate, organisations create alternative reporting mechanisms that complement rather than directly challenge official processes. Organisations produce "*spotlight report[s] that complement the government report*" rather than adversarial shadow reports. The key is ensuring these alternative reports are "*of*

good quality. So, sometimes find experts to ensure sampling is done well, to ensure information is objectively gathered."

Quality becomes essential for gaining government recognition: "*I focus on doing genuine work with databases, evidence, and best practices so that when we present our report, they say it's very good and recognise the good work we're doing.*" High-quality alternatives can eventually influence official processes by demonstrating methodological rigor and presenting evidence that governments cannot easily dismiss.

Strategic language alignment

Successful organisations carefully align their messaging with national policy frameworks and political priorities. They recognise the importance of "*being relevant or aligning your campaign to the regional and global policy agenda [that] is critical for any results that you want to achieve.*" This extends to using language that resonates with government priorities, employing terms like "*partnership*", "*multi-sector collaboration*", and "*whole-of-society*" approaches.

Organisations learn to frame SDG work within existing government priorities rather than as external impositions: "*We cannot just stage a campaign that has no relevance at the regional or the global level.*" This strategic alignment helps "*reduce resistance and increase policy traction*" by demonstrating how SDG activities "*contribute to shared objectives.*"

Institutionalisation and formal recognition

Creating formal institutional mechanisms within government structures can prove crucial for sustained engagement. Organisations advocate to "*start off by anchoring this into a very, very powerful either ministry or office within government, then that will give them big mileage in terms of resource allocation, mobilisation of stakeholders and so forth.*"

Successful institutionalisation goes beyond creating new structures to embedding SDG processes within existing government systems. Countries that show "*specific government efforts for the integration of the 2030 Agenda into their government framework*" create "*a more inviting context for collaboration. As a result, organisations seem to face fewer barriers and enjoy greater institutional support.*"

Independent platforms and alternative governance

When government buy-in remains insufficient, civil society may need to create independent governance structures that can operate with or without official support. Organisations establish "*independent civil society governance structure[s]*" that can "*ensure continuity beyond political changes.*" These platforms develop their own "*long-term vision[s] that transcend electoral cycles*" and operate through "*mechanisms independent of presidential decrees.*"

The power of independent platforms lies in their ability to maintain momentum regardless of government engagement levels while positioning themselves to engage constructively when political opportunities arise.

💡 Key lessons for building government partnerships

Prioritise relationship-building over confrontation: Private dialogue and evidence-based engagement

prove more effective than public criticism for building lasting government partnerships.

Align strategically with national priorities: Framing SDG work within existing government frameworks and using politically resonant language reduces resistance and increases uptake.

Invest in quality and credibility: High-quality reports, rigorous methodology, and expert validation help civil society contributions gain government recognition and influence.

Create coordinated platforms: Speaking with a unified voice while maintaining diverse perspectives requires sophisticated coordination mechanisms that can represent broad civil society constituencies.

Build institutional anchors: Formal recognition within government structures provides stability and resources, but requires sustained relationship-building and demonstrated value.

Develop alternative pathways: Independent platforms and governance structures ensure momentum can be maintained even when government engagement wavers, while positioning for future collaboration.

As one practitioner noted about the evolution of government attitudes: "*after 2019 is when they all realised, they even came to us and say, now we understand why you guys have been pushing this agenda.*" This transformation from scepticism to recognition often requires sustained engagement, demonstrated value, and strategic patience, but can fundamentally shift the relationship between civil society and government around SDG implementation.

Challenge 3: Political turnover and fragility

Political instability presents one of the most persistent challenges to sustainable development collaboration. Electoral cycles, government changes, and policy reversals can undermine years of relationship-building and institutional progress. However, organisations working on SDG implementation have developed sophisticated adaptation strategies to navigate these disruptions while maintaining momentum toward long-term goals.

The challenge: systemic disruption

Government changes frequently result in replacement of key focal points, loss of institutional memory, and the need to restart education processes with new officials who lack SDG knowledge. As one regional organisation noted: "*Sometimes we have to start from scratch again, because the new government officials, those now in charge of preparing the reviews, don't have much knowledge of the 2030 Agenda.*"

Electoral cycles and political transitions sometimes create dramatic changes in engagement, as governments prioritise decisions on short term benefits that will collect votes, rather than sustained SDG implementation. In extreme cases, reversals may be sudden and comprehensive; one Latin American

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country experienced complete elimination of its 2030 Agenda commitment through presidential decree, catching all stakeholders by surprise without consultation.

★ Strategic adaptations: building resilience

Technical diplomacy and competency-based trust
Organisations can establish credibility through technical excellence, focusing on "*the ability to conduct quality information*" to earn "*trust from the state and other partners*" that transcends political changes. This positions organisations as essential technical resources that new administrations need and can rely on regardless of political orientation.

Strategic timing and electoral sensitivity
Many organisations suspend advocacy during electoral periods. This maintains impartiality and prevents political interference. Organisations

exercise additional caution during elections, making deliberate decisions about when and how to raise issues to prevent political backlash.

Sustained relationship management
Successful organisations maintain detailed databases of contacts to track changing personnel and provide "*repeated foundational training sessions for new government officials*." They work through stable intermediaries like "UN *country teams and resident coordinators for continuity and focus on actors less affected by electoral cycles (like academia)*."

Multi-level and autonomous strategies
The most sophisticated responses involve creating structures designed to outlast political changes. In federal systems, organisations work through sub-national governments when national-level cooperation becomes difficult.

Civil society organisations establish independent civil society governance structures to ensure continuity beyond political changes. These are complemented by long-term visions that transcend electoral cycles. Organisations with autonomous mandates leverage their institutional autonomy and focus on technical rather than political approaches, continuing existing projects while operating within new constraints.

💡 Key lessons for resilient collaboration

Diversify engagement channels: Maintain relationships across government levels, as well as with academia, civil society, and international partners to ensure continuity during transitions.

Invest in systematic relationship management: Treat relationship-building as an ongoing organisational function through contact databases and continuous education for new officials.

Balance advocacy with technical service: Position platforms as essential technical resources rather than pure advocacy organisations to maintain access across political transitions.

Design for independence: Create governance structures and mechanisms that operate independently of government approval.

Embrace adaptive timing: Recognise when to pause activities during electoral periods to preserve long-term legitimacy and effectiveness.

As one practitioner reflected: *"When you need to work with a long-term strategy, which the 2030 Agenda is, the worst thing you can have is these changes in government, this lack of stability."* However, the adaptation strategies developed demonstrate that sustained collaboration is possible in volatile political environments, provided resilience is built into the fundamental design of collaborative platforms.

Challenge 4: Fragmentation and duplication among development actors

Fragmentation and duplication among development actors represent persistent challenges that undermine the collective impact potential of SDG implementation efforts. Competition for limited funding, uncoordinated approaches across sectors with different working methods, and the proliferation of similar initiatives create systemic inefficiencies. However, innovative coordination mechanisms have emerged that demonstrate how diverse actors can work together effectively through thematic clustering, clear role divisions, and strategic use of existing structures.

The challenge: competition undermining collaboration

Funding competition creates fundamental barriers to coordination among civil society organisations. The *"siloed nature of how civil society works has also meant that they are not able to bring themselves together to work on some issues, especially because of funding... civil society follows where money is."* This dynamic creates mistrust within civil society networks: *"And depending on who is funding you and where you are getting your money from, you barely want to talk to each other. And mistrust also among the civil society*

organisations is one of the things that is killing us."

The challenge extends beyond civil society to encompass coordination difficulties across different sectors. Multiple sectors operate with "*completely different operational methods, timelines, and ways of working, making coordination extremely difficult and leading to potential duplication of efforts.*" Even within sectors, coordination proves challenging: "*Sometimes it's actually easier for the public sector to work with other public sector actors, or for the private sector to work with itself, because they understand each other's dynamics better.*"

Competition can inhibit knowledge sharing and capacity building, as organisations "*hesitate in capacity sharing*" when they "*don't want to compete on the same tracks. They want to compete in something [where] they can show their uniqueness and not come second or third to somebody else.*" This competitive dynamic extends to reporting, where uncoordinated approaches result in fragmented national representation: "*there was a report that was coming from civil society, a report from business, a report from [government], and at no point were these reports coordinated so that they reflect the spirit and the vision of one country.*"

The proliferation of similar initiatives compounds these challenges and introduces further inefficiencies through duplication of effort, with organisations acknowledging "*there are so many networks*" and noting the difficulty of coordinating "*a lot of NGOs, a lot of institutions, a lot of research programmes*" working in related areas.

★ **Strategic adaptations: coordination through structure and process**

Thematic clustering and specialised coordination
Successful coordination often emerges through thematic organisation that allows organisations to maintain their specialised focus while contributing to broader objectives. Organisations create "*thematic clusters aligned with specific SDGs or priority areas*" that "*strengthened targeted advocacy, enabled production of thematic shadow reports, and facilitated capacity building within civil society.*"

Thematic approaches work because they acknowledge different organisational priorities while creating mechanisms for coordination: "*Different organisations host different activities under the [umbrella] platform, and we compile these under the common organised program as a national civil society platform.*" This structure allows for specialisation while preventing duplication of effort.

Regional approaches demonstrate similar benefits, with countries organising "*member organisations into thematic clusters aligned with specific SDGs*" that become the "*foundation for broader coordination efforts.*" These clusters create natural groupings for capacity sharing and joint action while respecting organisational autonomy.

Clear role division and coordination agreements
Successful multi-actor initiatives invest significant effort in establishing clear institutional roles and coordination agreements. Organisations create "*clear division of roles*" where different institutions handle distinct aspects of the work: national coordination,

local government engagement, and technical support. This approach requires explicit agreement to "*respect each institution's lines of action, in order not to duplicate efforts or resources.*"

The process of establishing these agreements proves as important as the outcomes. Organisations dedicate "*extensive time to understanding each sector's working methods and building common ground*" through "*intensive workshop-based dialogue.*" This investment in understanding different operating styles enables "*effective coordination despite different operating styles.*"

Horizontal governance models prove more effective than top-down approaches because they "*respected different sectoral approaches while enabling collaboration.*" Building "*shared rules and decision-making processes*" requires significant upfront investment but creates sustainable coordination mechanisms.

Building on existing structures
Rather than creating entirely new coordination mechanisms, successful initiatives strategically build on existing structures and relationships. Organisations explicitly focus on "*not duplicating existing efforts as a core principle*" and instead create networks that "*allowed those different efforts to be centralised into a single network.*"

This approach extends to leveraging existing programs and partnerships. Organisations align with "*existing [international development] initiative[s] involving work with intermediate cities*" rather than creating standalone initiatives. Building on established foundations proves more sustainable and avoids the resource drain of starting from scratch.

Government initiatives demonstrate similar principles by requiring coordination through existing institutional structures. National councils bring together "*high-level representatives from various federal ministries and agencies*" to ensure "*integrated*" rather than "*checklist*" approaches to SDG implementation.

Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing
Creating mechanisms for ongoing knowledge exchange helps prevent duplication while building collective capacity. Regional platforms establish "*community of practice specifically to enable peer-to-peer learning and avoid each country 'reinventing the wheel.'*" These platforms facilitate "*direct connections between countries working on similar issues*" and create "*Teams group[s] for ongoing communication beyond formal sessions.*" One organisation maintains resources from "*65+ sessions to prevent duplication of effort.*"

Peer learning proves particularly valuable because it leverages existing expertise within networks rather than requiring external resources. Countries "*regularly requested contacts from others for specific expertise, engaged in peer review of reports, and benefited from shared experiences across the region.*" This approach builds relationships while addressing practical coordination challenges.

Capacity building can amplify the benefits of peer learning, some platforms develop "*training manuals*" and "*presentations*" that help "*civil society organisations... do [their work] in a more organised way toward specifically oriented*" goals.

Collective action and shared resources
Despite competitive pressures, some organisations recognise the power of collective action for achieving

scale. Civil society platforms understand the need to *"leverage our collective power. I think that is really important. Civil society must find strength in our collectiveness to be able to undertake any national-level campaign."*

Successful collective action requires moving beyond coordination to actual resource sharing and joint implementation. Organisations pool resources for *"national-level campaign[s]"* where *"civil society organisations [contribute] to a national pool of resources that can be leveraged to stage a national-level campaign."* This approach maximises impact while distributing costs across multiple organisations.

Collective action also creates opportunities for smaller organisations to participate in larger initiatives. Organisations *"searching for organisations and other agencies, which are already on the ground, doing the same thing"* and then collaborate rather than compete, recognising that coordination increases everyone's effectiveness.

Meaningful private sector engagement
Organisations address private sector mistrust by moving beyond transactional relationships to meaningful partnership. The challenge of *"You only call me when you want money, right? You call us into these spaces not to listen to us or involve us meaningfully, but just to ask for money"* requires *"expanding the ways others can contribute"* and creating *"genuine dialogue spaces and horizontal governance approach[es]."*

This involves demonstrating *"willingness to listen and incorporate private sector perspectives"* and building *"trust through consistent engagement and follow-through"* rather than opportunistic outreach.

Key lessons for reducing fragmentation
Invest in understanding different working methods: Successful coordination requires significant upfront investment in understanding how different sectors and organisations operate, rather than assuming common approaches.

Create thematic structures: Thematic clustering allows organisations to maintain their expertise while contributing to coordinated efforts, proving more sustainable than broad, unstructured engagement.

Establish clear role divisions early: Explicit agreements about institutional responsibilities prevent duplication and reduce territorial conflicts between organisations.

Build on existing structures: Leveraging established programs, relationships, and institutions proves more effective and sustainable than creating entirely new coordination mechanisms.

Facilitate peer learning and knowledge exchange: Regular opportunities for organisations to share experiences and resources reduce duplication while building collective capacity.

Move beyond coordination to collective action: True impact requires moving from information sharing to joint resource mobilisation and implementation.

As one practitioner noted about the value of diverse collaboration: *"The value of this mechanism lies precisely in bringing together those different ways of doing things."* This recognition that diversity of approaches can be a strength rather than a barrier, when properly coordinated, represents a fundamental shift from viewing other organisations as competitors to seeing them as complementary partners in achieving shared SDG objectives.

Challenge 5: Gaps in representation and participation

Gaps in representation and participation represent fundamental challenges to inclusive SDG implementation. Exclusion of rural and historically marginalised populations, inadequate participatory mechanisms, and data systems that fail to capture diverse voices undermine the "*leave no one behind*" principle. However, innovative approaches have emerged that demonstrate how organisations can create meaningful participation opportunities through community-centred dialogues, citizen-generated data systems, and targeted inclusion strategies that prioritise marginalised voices.

The challenge: systematic exclusion and inadequate mechanisms

Exclusion of marginalised communities occurs at multiple levels, from data collection to decision-making processes. Traditional monitoring approaches focus "*primarily on official/government statistics without incorporating subnational information or citizen perspectives adequately.*" This creates blind spots where "*even if you're saying that for one broad community things have improved in the last 10 years or so, within that large community there are*

also so *many communities which will not have the same level of progress.*" Structural barriers compound exclusion challenges. Infrastructure limitations mean "*some places are not connected to the power grid, so you find that it becomes expensive for us to reach, especially when you cannot have virtual conversations or consultations.*"

Data aggregation practices obscure disparities within communities: "*If you aggregate all of those groups as one group, there are disparities.*" For example, education levels and access may vary significantly between diverse population groups which, when aggregated, would show an overall increase in education levels. "*So all of this cannot be aggregated into one category.*" However, when citizen-generated data is produced to counter this, it can face credibility challenges: "*the challenge is when we bring forward that data, it is looked upon as inferior data because who has verified it?*"

Broader political shifts threaten inclusive participation. In some regions, there are "*social and political changes, the rise of far-right parties. We have also a society which is shifting to the right and to the far right*" where "*young people aged 18 to 25 don't believe in climate change. They don't consider that climate change is an issue. They consider that we don't need to respect women's rights.*" As a result, political pressure can threaten inclusion of already marginalised groups, even by platforms that would wish to provide them with a voice: "*There is a community, for example, maybe LGBT group that would benefit from this hearing, but I would fear to invite them because even if I invited one or two, the whole activity would be branded as an activity of LGBT.*"

★ **Strategic adaptations: centring marginalised voices**

Community-centred dialogue mechanisms
Organisations have developed sophisticated approaches to meaningful community engagement that prioritise historically excluded voices. Several community dialogue mechanisms specifically target *"persons with disabilities, youth, marginalised groups, indigenous groups, the aged"* and create structured spaces where these communities can *"have dialogue about the issues they're going through, their concerns, how to address them, how then can citizens take, or use their power to influence decision-making."*

These dialogues prove effective because they *"link them to policy makers and decision-makers, it also gives the policy makers an opportunity to hear from the communities what they are going through."* The direct connection between community voices and decision-makers creates accountability mechanisms while ensuring that marginalised perspectives directly inform policy processes.

Successful dialogue mechanisms also build community capacity for ongoing engagement rather than one-off consultations. They help communities understand *"how to address their concerns"* and *"use their power to influence decision-making"*, creating sustainable participation rather than extractive consultation processes.

Citizen-generated data and scorecards
Organisations have developed systematic approaches to citizen data collection that complement official statistics while centring marginalised community experiences. Citizen scorecard mechanisms create inclusive tools that allow

citizens to *"make their mark and make their voices heard through a process of looking and reflecting on the package of services that stems from the implementation... of the SDGs wherever they are."*

These approaches explicitly focus on communities typically excluded from official data collection. A survey described by one organisation identified *"one very marginalised community and survey[ed] 100 households of that one community in one location so that we have some decent sample size of data saying that this whole community has no education, no health access or whatever the challenges may be."*

The methodology emphasises community ownership throughout the process: *"we have participation from communities from the designing of the survey to the dissemination of the study findings."* This approach builds community capacity while generating evidence that challenges official narratives about progress and inclusion.

Targeted inclusion strategies
Successful platforms develop explicit strategies to ensure diverse representation rather than assuming inclusion will happen naturally. For example, creating *"systematic rotation of non-governmental members every two years to ensure diverse voices"* or working *"beyond committee membership to work directly with broader networks"* to reach constituencies that might not otherwise participate.

Some organisations specifically mandate inclusion of different perspectives: *"We always try to ensure that there are dissenting voices in every space, even dissent among the young people themselves... It was really powerful to see that, despite their differences, everyone*

came together and reached certain agreements." This approach recognises that meaningful inclusion requires active facilitation of different viewpoints rather than superficial representation.

Territorial representation receives explicit attention through, for instance, the creation of *"Regional and Local Councils to ensure territorial representation"* and efforts to ensure *"territorial equilibrium"* in participation processes. This geographic approach complements demographic inclusion strategies.

Democratic participation structures

Several organisations established clear frameworks for inclusive participation that go beyond ad hoc consultation. These include *"democratic structures with clear terms of reference for participation"* and *"participatory methodologies that centred marginalised voices."* Clear structures help prevent participation from being captured by more privileged or vocal community members.

Some organisations create governance review processes that explicitly include marginalised communities: collaborative reports *"look at different sectors like economy, health, education and then also marginalised communities including informal workers, farmers and see how government has worked or not worked for them."* These reviews create ongoing accountability mechanisms while building community analysis capacity.

Multi-channel and accessible communication

Organisations develop communication strategies that acknowledge different technological and linguistic capacities. Regional platforms provide *"interpretation*

services *(when funding available) to overcome language barriers"* and adapt approaches to *"different capacity levels and regional needs."*

Accessibility extends beyond language to include different participation formats and technological requirements. Organisations recognise that virtual participation excludes some communities and develop hybrid approaches that combine online and in-person engagement to maximise inclusion.

Intergenerational and intersectional approaches

Innovative inclusion strategies explicitly address intersecting identities and intergenerational perspectives. One organisation created *"intergenerational dialogue[s]"* that bring together *"the National Council for Children and Adolescents, the National Council for Youth, the National Council for Elders"* while ensuring representation across different identity categories.

These approaches ask fundamental questions about representation: *"we never talk about immigrants. How can we include people that have arrived… in the last two years, one year? How do they perceive climate emergency and how do they relate to it? People with Down syndrome - they are also part of our society."* This questioning approach helps identify overlooked communities and develop targeted inclusion strategies.

Key lessons for inclusive participation

Move beyond consultation to community ownership: Successful participation involves communities in designing processes, not just responding to predetermined questions or frameworks.

Develop systematic rather than ad hoc inclusion: Meaningful representation requires explicit strategies, clear structures, and ongoing attention rather than assuming inclusion will happen naturally.

Centre marginalised voices rather than mainstream perspectives: Effective approaches prioritise historically excluded communities and create specific mechanisms to amplify their voices and experiences.

Build community capacity for ongoing engagement: Sustainable participation requires building community skills for analysis, advocacy, and ongoing engagement rather than extractive consultation.

Create multiple channels and accessible formats: Inclusive participation requires diverse communication methods, technological approaches, and participation formats to accommodate different community needs and capacities.

Connect community voices directly to decision-makers: Effective mechanisms create direct pathways between community input and policy processes, ensuring that participation influences actual decisions.

As one community member reflected on their participation experience: "*I grew up knowing that my community is poor, but I never realised... how vast these challenges are.*" The transformation from knowing about problems to understanding their scope, and developing evidence-based responses, illustrates the power of meaningful participation that goes beyond consultation to community empowerment and action.

Challenge 6: Trust issues and opposition based on ideology

Trust issues and opposition based on ideology represent increasingly complex challenges to SDG collaboration. Rights-based language faces contestation, climate and sustainability issues are being sidelined, and rising misinformation creates widespread data distrust. The 2030 Agenda has become increasingly vilified in various social and cultural contexts, in many geographies, while growing anti-UN discourse undermines multilateral frameworks. However, organisations have developed sophisticated strategies to navigate these ideological challenges through evidence-based approaches, strategic framing and language adaptation, and trust-building mechanisms that focus on shared outcomes rather than contested frameworks.

The challenge: contested narratives and eroding trust

Political polarisation has made previously consensual development language contested territory. There is increasingly a strong, typically conservative or right-wing, backlash against not only specific elements of the sustainable

development agenda, including climate change, environmentalism, rights-based approaches to gender, diversity, and inclusion, but also the wider framing around the development agenda, including the SDGs themselves.

Examples include widespread denial of climate change and growing opposition to the SDG agenda, increased stigmatisation of the term 'sustainability', as well as the *"demonisation of gender issues where conservative sectors are now pushing to replace 'gender policy' with 'family policy'."* This extends to broader rights-based frameworks, with organisations noting the *"erosion of trust in UN declarations and conventions"* and *"ideological resistance to human rights frameworks."*

Information environments, and specifically the primacy of social media, compound these challenges as *"voters go mostly to social media for information... In social media, there are huge groups of information. This is also a problem. How can we reach people in circumstances when the basic amount of information is too much? The noise is too big to create valuable information."* Organisations note that it is *"absolutely problematic that there's too much information and too much false information on social media platforms."*

Trust issues extend to operational relationships between sectors. Some platforms' organisations face suspicion when *"civil society organisations see you engaging with the private sector and government, they tend to feel that you have sold out and that you are no longer working for civil society."* And conversely, government relationships are complicated by historical dynamics where civil society

has *"a history of being perceived as anti-government."*

Even where the opposition is not strictly political or ideological, the 2030 Agenda itself has lost credibility in some contexts, being viewed as *"merely 'fashionable' rather than substantive, losing credibility and being viewed as utopian rather than practical."*

★ ## Strategic adaptations: rebuilding trust through evidence and outcomes

Evidence-based engagement and technical credibility

Organisations have learned that rigorous methodology and data validation can in many cases build credibility across ideological divides. Successful platforms ensure they can provide evidence for their arguments and recommendations and maintain a strictly fact-based approach. *"Rather than sensationalise or be emotional, we are fact-based. Where we need to concede, we concede."* This approach extends to *"presenting their findings through rigorous methodologies and data validation"* which *"signals to public authorities that the CSOs are not engaging in partisan activism but offering meaningful input aligned with development goals."*

Technical credibility requires surrounding *"ourselves with all guarantees so the documents we produce aren't attacked. So, so far, all the documents we've produced, we've tried to gather statistical data where we collaborate with experts, so the report content is objective."* This evidence-based approach builds trust because it demonstrates commitment to accuracy over advocacy.

Strategic language adaptation

Organisations have developed sophisticated approaches to reframing contested concepts while maintaining substantive focus. Rather than abandoning sustainability work, some advisory councils adapt by *"changing their language but still doing the same policy"* in some cases taking *"out most of the words that mean sustainability or environment, and there's different words for things."*

Successful reframing emphasises practical outcomes over ideological frameworks: *"call it whatever you want, [organisation] is involved in this because we're simply setting key points to guide us towards sustainable development. Is there anyone opposed to closing gender gaps? Improving education? Having sustainable cities? Ensuring water quality? Building partnerships?"* This approach recognises that *"some people can tell me 'we are against the 2030 Agenda,' but obviously they want to reduce poverty, obviously they want to reduce inequalities, obviously they want to be more resilient to climate change."*

The key insight is to *"don't put the focus on the instrument - put it on the contents, on the goals"* while ensuring approaches are *"very adapted to the local situation."*

Political impartiality and collaborative positioning

Several organisations build trust by maintaining strict political neutrality and positioning themselves as collaborative rather than adversarial partners. Successful platforms adopt *"apolitical stance and technical rigor"* that earns *"trust of both civil society and state actors."* This involves being *"not aligned with any political party. Perhaps that also makes*

us credible, you see. So, when we speak, we're not bothered... I think it's about doing everything to avoid having a political side."

Collaborative positioning requires moving beyond confrontational approaches to find *"a balance between confrontation and collaboration"* which *"is very much the challenge. Not everyone understands that there are skills involved in being able to sit at a table in a multi-stakeholder environment, from negotiation skills to cultivating people in the room, to providing evidence for what you do, to advocating correctly, to using the right language."*

Community-centred trust-building

Organisations build legitimacy through sustained community engagement that demonstrates genuine commitment to local needs. Community hearing mechanisms help organisations gain *"trust from communities"* with the result that, despite potential ideological resistance, *"not at one point have we been denied opportunity to have a community hearing."* Success comes from *"being synchronised with the community because we clearly define our role as an organisation, the role of government, and also communicate clearly that the community or the people we serve are not only participating, but it is their investment."*

This approach builds trust by demonstrating that participation creates genuine value for communities, as opposed to more extractive consultation. Organisations show that community engagement *"bridge[s] an invisible gap that is fundamental in providing consistent and regular data to inform policy and implementation of SDGs."*

Multi-channel communication strategies
Recognising the limitations of social media and formal channels, some organisations develop diverse communication approaches that meet people where they are. This includes using "*radio, newspapers, town hall meetings… newsletters, finding ways of reaching people in local languages as well, billboards, adverting train stations, adverting motor parks*" to ensure broad accessibility beyond digital platforms.

Media capacity building proves particularly valuable through "*training media journalists on issues of SDGs, working together with media to advance some of the SDG conversations*" to build more informed public discourse that counters misinformation.

Key lessons for navigating ideological challenges

Lead with evidence, not ideology: Rigorous methodology and data validation build credibility across political divides more effectively than ideological arguments.

Focus on outcomes, not frameworks: Emphasising specific practical benefits like improved education, water quality, and reduced inequality generates broader support than increasingly contested sustainability frameworks.

Adapt language while maintaining substance: Strategic reframing allows organisations to continue essential work while avoiding politically charged terminology.

Maintain strict political neutrality: Organisations gain credibility by demonstrating independence from partisan politics and positioning themselves as technical rather than political actors.

Build trust through sustained engagement: Long-term relationship building with communities, government, and private sector creates resilience against ideological attacks.

Develop diverse communication channels: Moving beyond social media and formal channels to reach different audiences through accessible, locally relevant communication.

Defend civil society by highlighting positive impact: Civil society strengthens its legitimacy by vigorously defending its work in positive terms—highlighting achievements, progress, and solutions rather than losses or threats.

As one regional practitioner noted about navigating contested political environments: "*even though the advice is good, [governments] will only do what brings them voters.*" This reality requires organisations to demonstrate that SDG implementation can align with political incentives while maintaining focus on evidence-based approaches that transcend ideological divisions. Success comes from showing that sustainable development serves everyone's interests, regardless of political affiliation.

Challenge 7: Civic space closure and criminalisation

Civic space closure and criminalisation represent some of the most severe challenges facing SDG collaboration platforms. Legal repression of NGOs, threats to freedom of expression and association, and the labelling of civil society organisations as *"foreign agents"* create environments where traditional collaborative approaches become impossible or dangerous. Organisations face surveillance, funding restrictions, and in extreme cases, disappearances of activists. However, innovative adaptation strategies have emerged that demonstrate remarkable resilience, including shifts to local-level focus, cross-sector networking for protection, strategic language adaptation, and the development of alternative mechanisms that preserve civil society voice while minimising risks.

The challenge: systematic repression and fear

In certain countries, civic space restrictions have escalated from bureaucratic hurdles to systematic criminalisation of civil society work. New laws target NGO activities directly, creating situations where *"if you want to do advocacy for a public policy, and it's perceived that you're trying to influence something, then you could potentially be sanctioned under the law."* Organisations face *"increasing difficulty accessing funding due to legal restrictions"* as governments

"can just remove your licence to receive foreign funds just on the basis of" using prohibited language like *"advocacy"* or "campaign" in legal proposals.

The *"foreign agent"* designation has become a widespread tool for delegitimising civil society work. Certain governments have *"labelled all CSOs who receive funding from outside... as foreign agents as being so having interests supporting some foreign interests rather than supporting national interests."* This creates legal and social stigma that undermines organisational legitimacy and creates safety risks for staff and partners.

Physical security threats compound legal restrictions. In a few countries, environmental defenders face particular risks, with reports of *"disappearance of many environmental defenders"* creating a *"climate of fear for civil society activists working on environmental issues."* One organisation reported surveillance where *"paramilitary members, posing as young people, came to their event just to listen in on what they were saying"*, forcing activists to operate with constant awareness of potential monitoring.

The restrictions create cascading effects on organisational operations. Civil society members in these environments can become *"too afraid to speak publicly"* and organisations report instances where *"civil society representatives didn't even want to read their statements out of fear. Fear of being identified."* This fear extends to partnerships, with some donors recommending complete disengagement with the government in these contexts: *"simply not to talk to them, not to invite them to anything, not to share anything with them."*

Self-censorship becomes pervasive as organisations adapt to restrictive environments. Staff report being *"forced to be more engaged in self-censorship"* and note that people and organisations *"are willing to give their time, give their resources, but they will not give their name because that can circle back to them and then impact them."*

★ Strategic adaptations: preserving voice while ensuring safety

Organisational structure innovation
In some examples, organisations have developed creative structural approaches to maintain operations under restrictions. Operating as *"umbrella organisation[s], a collaborative network of civil society, rather than a registered organisation"* provides protection from some restrictions that target formal entities with foreign funding. Network structures distribute risk while maintaining coordinated action. Individual organisations contribute resources and expertise while avoiding the vulnerability that comes with single-organisation initiatives.

Strategic language and framing adaptation
Organisations have become sophisticated in adapting their language and framing to operate within restrictive legal environments. This involves *"more strategic language and human rights framing in project proposals"* and avoiding terminology that triggers legal restrictions. Organisations learn to frame their work in terms of development, growth and welfare rather than advocacy or campaign terminology relating to sustainability.

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The approach extends to positioning organisations as *"technical partners supporting national development goals"* rather than advocacy organisations. This framing helps organisations maintain access while preserving their substantive work, recognising that *"the commitment is still pretty much the same. Their ideologies are pretty much the same, so they figure out different ways to contribute."*

Regional and cross-border support networks
Some organisations have developed sophisticated regional support systems that provide protection and alternative channels for participation. For example, some regional networks enable organisations to *"take on reading statements for local civil society members who were too afraid to speak"* by leveraging their *"status as non-nationals to provide protection for local voices."*

These networks maintain *"alternative channels for civil society participation in international forums"* when local organisations face restrictions.

Regional organisations document restrictions and provide "*international advocacy and documentation of restrictions*" that creates external pressure and visibility for local challenges.

Local-level operational shifts
Other organisations adapt by shifting focus from national to local levels where restrictions may be less severe or enforcement less consistent. This involves "*working with local rather than national authorities when possible*" and recognising that local governments may have different relationships with civil society than national authorities.

Local-level work also reduces visibility to national security apparatus while maintaining a substantive impact on communities. Organisations can continue development work through direct service provision and local capacity building while avoiding advocacy language that triggers restrictions.

Coalition building for protection
Cross-sector networking provides protection through legitimacy and shared risk. Organisations "*intentionally build partnerships with academia, faith-based groups, and professional associations*" because "*these actors often enjoy higher public trust and can serve as intermediaries when direct engagement with government is not feasible or too politically sensitive.*"

Coalition approaches can help "*diffuse political risk, enhance their legitimacy, and present a more unified, depoliticised voice on SDG issues.*" The diversity of coalition members makes it more difficult for governments to characterise initiatives as partisan or foreign-influenced.

Legal awareness and alternative engagement with governments
Some organisations in these contexts have invested heavily in legal literacy to navigate complex and changing regulatory environments. This includes efforts to "*continuously inform ourselves legally and otherwise the impact and the decisions of government. Because at any time, if you are not informed legally, any error can lead to disaster.*"

Legal compliance extends to building relationships with government institutions through training and dialogue "*especially this training being facilitated by officers from government institutions that would otherwise be hunting us*" and this helps officials "*appreciate what we are doing and also we understand exactly what some of these legislations mean to government and their intention.*" This approach builds mutual understanding while ensuring organisational compliance.

Non-adversarial positioning
Several organisations mentioned they adopt a "*non-adversarial tone, presenting shadow reports as complementary to government efforts, thereby maintaining their seat at the table while preserving their independence.*" This strategic positioning allows continued engagement while reducing perceived threat to government authority.

The approach involves "*avoiding public criticism and opt[ing] for direct, closed-door engagement with authorities*" when possible, recognising that public confrontation may trigger restrictions while private engagement can maintain influence and access.

Key lessons for operating under restrictions

Diversify organisational structures: In restrictive environments, informal networks and umbrella organisations can provide flexibility and protection that formal structures cannot.

Invest in legal literacy: Understanding the evolving legal landscape and maintaining compliance prevents unnecessary exposure while preserving operational capacity.

Build cross-sector coalitions: Partnerships with trusted institutions like academia and faith organisations provide legitimacy and protection through shared risk.

Focus on global pressure points: Areas where international frameworks create pressure for government compliance offer safer spaces for continued engagement.

Maintain regional connections: Cross-border networks provide essential support, alternative platforms, and protection for local organisations.

Adapt language while preserving substance: Strategic framing allows continued work on essential issues while avoiding terminology that triggers restrictions.

The reality of civic space closure requires organisations to balance safety with mission, often making difficult compromises to preserve some capacity for action. In restrictive environments, survival and continued service to communities often require strategic adaptation rather than direct confrontation.

Challenge 8: Collapse of democratic institutions

The collapse of democratic institutions represents the most extreme challenge facing SDG collaboration platforms. When state legitimacy erodes completely, civil society engagement structures cease to function, and basic freedoms disappear, traditional collaboration becomes impossible. Organisations face complete absence of civic space, exile of partners, and the need to operate entirely outside of formal systems. In these contexts, the focus shifts from collaboration to survival, resistance, and maintaining alternative channels for civil society voice. Adaptation strategies emphasise security, anonymisation, and the creation of independent structures that can operate without state sanction.

The challenge: total system breakdown

Democratic collapse manifests as complete breakdown of institutional legitimacy and citizen trust. In one extreme case, both executive and legislative branches face approval ratings "*below 4%. That means they lack legitimacy. In a democracy, legitimacy comes not just from elections but from the ability to build consensus and earn public trust. These are core state institutions that the public has rejected.*" This creates situations where "*we're not*

in a democracy where you can say, 'Let's strengthen participation and push the state to act in line with the agenda.' The conditions simply aren't there."

In some of these contexts, civil society engagement structures face systematic destruction. Organisations report "*complete collapse of civil society and a complete demolition of any civil society engagement and structures*" where the "*majority of [organisations'] partners are in exile and there is no real possibility for them to come back.*" In affected regions, there is simply no civic space, with some countries that "*[don't] have any civic space basically or any kind of freedoms.*"

Situations of military conflict and occupation compound institutional collapse by making sustainable development work irrelevant to immediate survival needs. Organisations acknowledge that "*there is a lot less interest in sustainable development goals and completely different priorities. It's not easy to engage civil society... on these topics, because of course they had different priorities, and it's quite understandable.*"

The breakdown creates pervasive fear that extends beyond formal restrictions to social and psychological pressure. Some civil society representatives become so fearful that they "*[don't] even want to show their faces*" at international events, requiring others to speak "*on their behalf at the international presentations because they didn't even want to show their faces.*"

Communication infrastructure itself becomes compromised, with governments "*intentionally*" interrupting internet access and organisations needing to use "*virtual private networks as a must in their institutions such that they somehow shade themselves away from unnecessary, or intentional government blocking and tapping.*"

★ **Survival strategies: maintaining voice under extreme constraints**

Independent coalition building
In these contexts, some organisations have created entirely independent structures that operate outside state recognition or control. These "*independent coalition[s] of experts*" are deliberately "*never registered... for security purposes so that it's harder to prosecute us*" while still managing to "*produce shadow reports, we engage in the* UN *events, we find outside funding.*"

The unregistered nature of these coalitions provides protection while maintaining coordination capacity. Organisations recognise that formal registration creates vulnerability and instead develop informal but sophisticated coordination mechanisms that can function without legal recognition.

Anonymisation and security protocols
Comprehensive security measures become essential for protecting participants. Organisations have developed "*really strict security protocols*" including anonymisation where "*we sometimes had to hide names*" and careful control of documentation: "*we don't take pictures of people from particular countries and such things.*"

Security extends to international events where colleagues "*weren't sure how openly they can engage*" and "*people just didn't feel safe. So everything that has been done, it was done anonymously.*" These protocols recognise that any visible participation can create serious personal risks for individuals and their families.

Proxy representation and voice
As noted in the previous challenge, when local civil society cannot participate directly, regional organisations can provide alternative channels for representation. In one example this includes *"speaking on behalf of other countries at international events to protect identities"* and taking on *"reading statements for local civil society members who were too afraid to speak."*

This proxy approach allows continued participation in international forums while protecting the identities and safety of those who would face persecution for direct engagement. Organisations leverage their *"status as non-nationals to provide protection for local voices."*

Shadow reporting through exile networks
In one example, civil society maintains alternative reporting mechanisms that challenge official government narratives. Shadow reports produced by civil society in exile are presented at international forums, with organisations managing to *"send the message to the international community about what is really happening"* and securing statements from international bodies that contradict official government presentations. These shadow reports rely on networks that maintain connections between exiled activists and those remaining in affected countries, preserving information flows despite systematic restrictions.

Leveraging international pressure
One organisation shared that they focus their efforts on international platforms where governments cannot fully control narratives. This includes strategic use of international forums where shadow reports can be presented and where *"we basically had some allies on our side among Member States"* who can amplify alternative voices.

The approach recognises that international pressure may be the only remaining mechanism for accountability when domestic institutions have collapsed entirely.

Preservation of prior capacity
Organisations that had established platforms and awareness before institutional collapse can prove more resilient. One organisation shares that *"capital of knowledge of SDGs"* and existing platforms help maintain some coordination even when *"people were in exile. They were still connected to people in place and they were actively engaging in the report preparations."*

This suggests the importance of building strong civil society platforms during stable periods as insurance against future collapse. Organisations with established networks and awareness may be able to more easily adapt to extreme restrictions than those starting from zero capacity.

Technology for secure communication
Virtual private networks and secure communication tools can become essential infrastructure in challenging contexts. One organisation notes that *"some institutions have resorted to virtual private networks or VPN"* as necessary protection against government monitoring and interference with communications.

Technology can provide some protection but requires careful implementation and ongoing adaptation as governments develop more sophisticated surveillance and interference capabilities.

Lessons for extreme circumstances

Build independent structures before they're needed: Informal, unregistered coalitions prove more resilient than formal organisations when governments systematically target civil society.

Develop comprehensive security protocols: Anonymisation, careful documentation practices, and protection of participant identities become essential operational requirements.

Maintain international connections: External relationships provide the only remaining channels for voice and accountability when domestic space disappears entirely.

Preserve capacity across borders: Exile networks can maintain some coordination and voice if they build on previously established platforms and knowledge.

Accept limitations while maintaining principles: Organisations must focus on survival and basic voice rather than comprehensive collaboration when institutions collapse.

Leverage technology strategically: Secure communication tools provide some protection but require ongoing adaptation and careful implementation.

The collapse of democratic institutions represents a fundamental shift from collaboration to resistance and survival. As one organisation noted about their decision to withdraw from government collaboration: "*we decided that we don't collaborate with the current government because we do not see possibility in sustainable development while they are killing people every day.*" This stark reality requires organisations to abandon traditional engagement approaches in favour of preservation of civil society voice through whatever channels remain available.

The experience of organisations operating under complete institutional collapse demonstrates that while SDG collaboration may become impossible, the preservation of civil society capacity and voice remains essential for future recovery when democratic institutions can eventually be rebuilt.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and future directions

5.1 Summary of key findings

This report explores emerging good practices in cross-societal collaboration for the SDGs based on interviews with 46 organisations across 35 countries. The study identifies both significant challenges and innovative adaptation strategies developed by multi-stakeholder platforms working on SDG implementation.

Emerging good practices
The most effective SDG collaboration mechanisms have evolved beyond traditional advisory approaches toward strategic, implementation-focused partnerships. Successful platforms demonstrate three key characteristics: **strategic focus and resource allocation** that responds to government needs and timing rather than producing unused publications; **sophisticated organisational structures** that balance inclusivity with efficiency through models like Finland's "*network of networks*" approach; and **genuine government partnerships** that create neutral spaces for cross-party dialogue and move beyond consultation to shared implementation responsibility.

Critical success factors include investing in professional coordination, building cross-party relationships that survive electoral cycles, and focusing resources on targeted government support rather than comprehensive coverage. The shift toward collaborative positioning rather than adversarial relationships has proven particularly effective for sustaining engagement across political transitions.

Conclusion and future directions

Key challenges and adaptation strategies

Organisations face eight major challenge areas, ranging from operational constraints to complete democratic collapse.

1

Operational and capacity constraints affect all platforms, but successful organisations respond through capacity sharing, technological innovation, and strategic secretariat functions.

2

Policy misalignment and low government buy-in is addressed through unified civil society voices, trust-building via private dialogue, and high-quality alternative reporting that complements rather than challenges official processes.

3

Political turnover and fragility requires building technical credibility that transcends political changes, maintaining systematic relationship management, and creating governance structures designed for independence from electoral cycles.

4

Fragmentation among development actors is mitigated through thematic clustering, clear role divisions, and building on existing structures rather than creating new coordination mechanisms.

5

Gaps in representation and participation are addressed through community-centred dialogue mechanisms, citizen-generated data systems, and targeted inclusion strategies that prioritise historically marginalised voices.

6

Opposition based on ideology and trust issues require evidence-based engagement, strategic language adaptation that focuses on outcomes rather than contested frameworks, and political impartiality.

7

In more severe contexts, **civic space closure and criminalisation** demands organisational structure innovation including informal networks, strategic language adaptation, regional support networks, and coalition building for protection.

8

In the most extreme cases of **collapse of democratic institutions**, organisations develop survival strategies including independent coalition building, anonymisation protocols, proxy representation through exile networks, and leveraging international pressure points.

5.2 Beyond 2030

Emerging insights for the post-2030 Agenda
Interviews from across regions highlight that, while the SDGs provide a powerful framework, their vulnerabilities also offer important guidance for designing the next phase of global development collaboration.

Note the following points are based purely on the interview data, and do not necessarily reflect the recommendations of any of the research teams or their organisations.

1. Building political and institutional resilience
— **Avoid political dependence:** SDG progress has been highly exposed to electoral cycles and shifting political priorities. Countries like Mexico demonstrate that embedding commitments in law and budget structures offers protection, while others show how quickly gains can unravel with political change.

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— **Continuity and evolution of platforms:** Networks in Finland and Catalonia emphasise their intention to keep working beyond 2030, even adapting existing platforms rather than discarding them.
— **National vision integration:** Some countries (such as Tanzania) are already embedding SDGs into longer-term national visions.
Insight: Post-2030 frameworks must institutionalise mechanisms that survive political turnover, through legal anchoring, constitutional provisions, or durable multi-stakeholder platforms.

2. Local ownership and contextual adaptation
— **Local drivers matter most:** Progress has been strongest when communities take ownership, such as Costa Rica's municipal networks, Colombia's platforms, and Mexico's local reviews.
— **Adaptation over uniformity:** Interviewees stressed the need to stop applying "*conceptual tools that don't come from our reality.*"
— **Balancing universality and context:** While flexibility is vital, some coordination is necessary for transboundary issues like climate change and inequality.
Insight: The next framework should act as a flexible architecture, adaptable to national and local contexts, rather than imposing uniform global targets.

3. Financing and resource mobilisation
— **Funding gaps are universal:** Nearly all cases reported financing as the critical barrier. Promising collaborations collapsed without resources.

- **Dependency is unsustainable:** Some countries highlighted the volatility of donor-dependent models.
- **Innovation required:** Colombia shows how creative resource-sharing can sustain initiatives.

Insight: Post-2030 approaches need predictable, sustainable financing models, innovative domestic financing, or dedicated mechanisms at the global level.

4. Collaboration and implementation models

- **Horizontal not hierarchical:** Peer-to-peer networks (such as ECLAC's community of practice, and Costa Rica's networks) work better than top-down directives.
- **Coordination vs. implementation:** Platforms taking on implementation roles can alienate members.
- **Citizen-generated data:** Countries like South Africa are institutionalising citizen-led data, demanding mechanisms that recognise it alongside official statistics.

Insight: Future frameworks should prioritise horizontal learning and collaboration, clear role definitions, and inclusive data systems.

5. Managing expectations and legitimacy

- **Measured ambition:** Overly aspirational goals risk credibility when unmet. Practitioners stress the value of achievable, progressive targets.
- **Tracking impact:** Nigeria and Ghana underline that systematic monitoring of stakeholder contributions is vital to keep actors engaged.
- **Leave no one behind remains central:** Voices from Nepal emphasise that this principle must carry into any new framework.

Insight: Frameworks should combine realistic, phased targets with robust accountability and impact-tracking systems to maintain legitimacy.

6. Confronting political and social headwinds

- **Anti-multilateral sentiment is rising:** Populist backlash against global governance cannot be ignored; future frameworks must address sovereignty concerns.
- **Political adaptation strategies:** Some countries suspend advocacy during elections, while others highlight how political fears can exclude vulnerable groups.

Insight: Post-2030 agendas must be designed to withstand populist pressures, by being visibly bottom-up, politically adaptive, and inclusive.

Implications for the post-2030 framework

Drawing from these insights, a successor to the SDGs might feature:

- Modular architecture where countries select priority areas.
- Multi-decade timelines resilient to political cycles.
- Crisis-proof mechanisms to sustain coordination during shocks.
- Legal and constitutional integration of sustainability commitments.
- Peer learning networks as the main mode of coordination.
- Resource-sharing compacts to reduce inequities in capacity.

Overall reflection:
The SDGs' greatest strength, their comprehensiveness and universality, has also proved a weakness, making them politically vulnerable and operationally complex. A post-2030 framework should be more modest, flexible, and locally owned, but also institutionally anchored and financially resilient. Sustainable progress depends less on global goodwill and more on building systems that can endure political hostility, funding shortages, and social scepticism.

Annex 1:
Case studies

Introduction and overview

These six case studies illustrate diverse approaches to whole-of-society engagement for SDG implementation, each offering distinct models of good practice suited to different contexts and objectives.

1. The **ECLAC Community of Practice** demonstrates how regional organisations can facilitate peer learning among governments through demand-driven programming and adaptive political management, particularly valuable for regions with shared challenges but diverse political systems.

2. The **Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities** showcases inter-municipal cooperation through competitive collaboration and dedicated coordination, offering insights for countries seeking to strengthen local government networks around sustainability.

3. The **Philippines' Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation** illustrates how civil society organisations can navigate shrinking civic space while maintaining multi-stakeholder engagement through technology-enabled evidence-based approaches, especially relevant for contexts with decentralised governance and limited technical capacity.

4. The **German Council for Sustainable Development** presents an independent advisory model balancing government connection with institutional autonomy, valuable for countries with stable democratic institutions seeking coherent policy coordination across ministries.

5. **Ghana's Civil Society Platform** demonstrates formal multi-stakeholder coordination with government integration, particularly applicable to democratic contexts with active civil society sectors seeking systematic policy influence.

6. Finally, **Catalonia's Advisory Council** exemplifies voluntary alliance approaches that adapt to political volatility through narrative development and flexible programming, relevant for sub-national actors and contexts experiencing political instability or declining support for multilateral frameworks.

1. Adaptive regional government network: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Overview

ECLAC's Community of Practice for the 2030 Agenda, established in 2019, supports 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries in SDG implementation and Voluntary National Review preparation. After five years, 32 countries have presented 70 VNRs to the HLPF in New York between 2016 and 2025, including 22 countries that submitted their VNR more than once, with the mechanism demonstrating remarkable resilience across diverse political contexts.

Core good practices

Demand-driven programming
Rather than imposing agendas, ECLAC systematically surveys countries about priority topics each cycle. This ensures sessions address genuine needs and maintains engagement even as government priorities shift. Common themes emerge organically: alignment of the SDGs with national and regional frameworks, meaningful stakeholder engagement, data and statistical challenges, SDG localization, and financing mechanisms, among others.

Strategic multi-stakeholder flexibility
While primarily serving national government technical teams in charge of elaborating the VNRs, the platform strategically opens to other stakeholders, including subnational and local governments, civil society, the private sector, youth, indigenous communities and parliamentarians based on thematic relevance. This targeted inclusion enriches discussions without diluting the core government-to-government focus.

Political adaptation without compromise
When national governments withdraw from the 2030 Agenda, the mechanism employs pragmatic strategies: engaging through UN country teams, working with regional, subnational and local governments in federal systems, and maintaining technical-level relationships beyond political considerations. This preserves continuity while respecting political positions.

Regular engagement rhythm
Regular virtual sessions create ongoing relationships rather than episodic interactions. Countries can participate selectively based on relevance while maintaining connection to the broader community. This frequency builds trust and enables deeper bilateral cooperation beyond formal sessions.

Comprehensive knowledge management
A dedicated website hosts resources from 64 sessions spanning nearly six years, including presentations, tools, and recorded discussions. A Microsoft Teams platform connects 200+ members for ongoing bilateral exchanges. This systematic documentation creates lasting value and institutional memory.

Institutional memory function
The mechanism serves as critical continuity during political transitions. When new governments arrive lacking knowledge about previous SDG commitments, ECLAC staff provide essential briefings and connect them with regional experiences, preventing complete restarts.

Success indicators
- **Official recognition**: Countries consistently acknowledge the Community of Practice's value in the VNRs themselves as well as their presentations at the HLPF in New York
- **Peer learning**: Direct country-to-country collaboration, including peer review partnerships
- **Knowledge base**: Nearly six years of documented regional SDG implementation and follow-up experience

— **Sustained participation**: High satisfaction in evaluations with requests for continuation

Resource requirements

Core needs: Professional interpretation (primary cost), virtual platform infrastructure, dedicated staff time, website maintenance, annual workshop logistics.

Cost-effective model: Virtual-first approach reduces costs while maintaining broad participation. Countries contribute content through experience-sharing, reducing secretariat burden while ensuring authenticity. Use of artificial intelligence to reduce interpretation costs by using translations applications (for example Webex closed captions) to remove language barriers and guarantee broad and inclusive participation.

Replication considerations

Essential elements:
— Regional convening authority with cross-border legitimacy
— Technical SDG implementation expertise
— Stable core funding and platform infrastructure
— Systematic approach to participant needs assessment

Adaptation requirements: Language and interpretation needs, existing regional cooperation mechanisms, political dynamics, technological infrastructure capacity.

Key success factors

1. **Responsive design**: Systematic attention to participant needs ensures ongoing relevance
2. **Institutional credibility**: Neutral convening authority enables trust-building across political differences
3. **Technical focus**: Emphasis on implementation challenges rather than political debates maintains cooperation
4. **Peer-led content**: Country-driven sharing builds ownership and authenticity
5. **Adaptive management**: Flexible responses to political changes preserve continuity
6. **Relationship investment**: Focus on building ongoing connections, not just content delivery

Transferable insights

The ECLAC model demonstrates that effective regional mechanisms require balancing structure with flexibility, maintaining technical focus while adapting to political realities, and investing in relationships as infrastructure. Success depends less on perfect institutional design than on responsive management, political pragmatism, and sustained commitment to peer learning over expert-driven approaches.

2. Inter-municipal cooperation for local implementation: Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities

Overview

Finland's six largest cities have operated a collaborative SDG platform since 2019, focusing on strategic management and localisation of the 2030 Agenda. The Association centres on peer-to-peer learning, competitive collaboration, and shared resource development, culminating in the world's first synthesised multi-city Voluntary Local Review policy brief in 2024.

Core good practices

Dedicated coordination resource
A full-time coordinator serves as the platform's backbone, providing 24/7 strategic support, facilitating connections, and maintaining momentum. This dedicated resource enables cities to focus on implementation while ensuring continuous coordination, information sharing, and relationship management across the network.

Competitive collaboration model
Cities simultaneously compete and collaborate, copying each other's best practices while adapting them to local contexts. This "*productive rivalry*" drives innovation and progress rather than creating barriers, with cities celebrating collective achievements while maintaining healthy competition in different SDG areas.

Differentiated engagement strategy
The coordinator employs tailored approaches for each city's unique context, strengths, and challenges. Rather than one-size-fits-all solutions, engagement is customised through individual consultations, targeted support, and recognition of each city's distinctive contributions to the collective effort.

Equal treatment principle
Despite significant differences in city size, wealth, and capacity, the coordinator maintains equal treatment across all participants. Smaller cities often provide crucial insights for broader municipal replication, while larger cities drive innovation. This balance prevents dominant voices from overshadowing valuable diverse perspectives.

Multi-level integration strategy
The platform operates simultaneously at local, national, Nordic, and global levels. Cities benefit from international connections (UN Habitat partnerships, Nordic VSR participation) while maintaining strong ties to national government through the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of the Environment, creating a comprehensive "*sustainability ecosystem.*"

Political leadership development
Systematic effort to engage mayors and political leaders alongside technical staff, using tailored messaging and demonstrating concrete value. The platform achieved significant political buy-in, evidenced by mayors presenting VLRs and leading panel discussions on SDG management after four years of relationship-building.

Service design approach to participation
The coordinator employs human psychology principles and service design methodology to maximise engagement despite time constraints. This includes drafting initial materials for comment rather than starting from blank pages, conducting individual interviews, and creating comfortable spaces for different personality types to contribute.

Success indicators

- **Collective action**: World's first synthesised multi-city VLR policy brief
- **Political engagement**: Mayors presenting and discussing VLRs publicly
- **Sustained participation**: Network maintaining cohesion despite 50% turnover of project team members
- **International recognition**: Platform cited as unique model at global forums
- **Continuous exchange**: Most active members meeting several times weekly

Resource requirements

Essential elements: Full-time dedicated coordinator, regular meeting platforms (virtual and in-person), website for resource sharing, funding for international engagement and events.

Cost-effective model: Virtual meetings reduce costs while maintaining frequent contact. Cities contribute through experience sharing and joint resource development. Coordinator serves multiple functions (facilitation, research, international relations) maximising efficiency.

Challenge management

Competitive tensions: Balance competition's motivational aspects while preventing cities from withholding weaknesses or avoiding risks. Address through individual relationship building and celebrating diverse strengths.

Resource constraints: Adapt engagement methods when cities face time/staff limitations. Employ drafting-for-comment approaches and individual consultations to maintain co-creation feeling despite limited participation time.

Political transitions: Navigate municipal elections and changing priorities by demonstrating SDG integration into core city strategies rather than positioning as peripheral add-on work.

Replication considerations

Prerequisites: Cities must have existing relationships and willingness to share experiences. Requires sufficient scale (minimum 4–6 participants) to enable meaningful peer learning while maintaining manageable group dynamics.

Critical success factors: Dedicated coordination capacity, equal treatment principle regardless of city size/wealth, integration of competition and collaboration, tailored engagement approaches.

Adaptation requirements: Adjust to local government structures, political cycles, economic contexts, and existing inter-municipal cooperation traditions.

Key transferable lessons

1. **Coordination investment**: Full-time dedicated coordination is essential – peer networks cannot sustain themselves without professional facilitation

2. **Productive competition**: Rivalry can drive progress when channelled through shared learning rather than zero-sum competition
3. **Diversity as strength**: Including different-sized participants enriches learning and broadens replication potential
4. **Political integration**: Technical cooperation must be matched with systematic political engagement using appropriate messaging
5. **Service design mindset**: Apply human psychology and design thinking to maximise participation despite resource constraints
6. **Multi-level strategy**: Local cooperation gains strength through simultaneous engagement at regional, national, and global levels

The Finnish model demonstrates that effective municipal cooperation requires professional coordination, strategic balance of competition and collaboration, and systematic attention to both technical and political dimensions of SDG implementation.

3. Technology-enabled SDG localisation in shrinking civic space: Philippines' Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation

Overview

The Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation (JVOFI) demonstrates how civil society organisations can navigate shrinking civic space while maintaining effective multi-stakeholder SDG engagement. Operating for nearly 45 years from northern Philippines, the Foundation has evolved from traditional development work to sophisticated SDG localisation through its whole-of-society approach integrating government, academia, business, and community organisations.

JVOFI's engagement spans multiple levels: participating in the national SDG Chamber established by government, membership in the UN Global Compact, and direct partnership with local government units mandated to integrate SDGs into their programs and budgets. The Foundation's approach centres on evidence-based planning through technology platforms that make official statistics accessible to decision-makers, funded by Germany's Agenda 2030 Transformation Fund.

Core good practices

1. Technology-enabled evidence-based decision making

Development of GIS-based visualisation tools that present SDG indicators geographically and longitudinally, enabling mayors and local officials to

understand poverty patterns, agricultural status, and development trends in accessible formats.

2. Comprehensive stakeholder integration
Memoranda of agreement establish clear roles, responsibilities, and sustainability mechanisms for all partners, specifying not only implementation responsibilities but also post-project continuation strategies.

3. Academic partnership model
Universities provide GIS training and technical support while gaining practical application opportunities, ensuring knowledge transfer to both foundation staff and government partners while building sustainable technical capacity.

4. Multi-level network participation
Simultaneous engagement in local implementation, national policy dialogue through SDG Chamber, and global advocacy through UN Global Compact membership, amplifying local innovations to national and international levels.

5. Sustainability-focused project design
Building government ownership and budget allocation from project inception rather than creating dependency relationships, ensuring local governments understand and commit to continuing initiatives through their own resources.

6. Evidence-based advocacy approach
Focus on official statistics and data visualisation rather than abstract SDG promotion, helping decision-makers see practical applications to their immediate challenges and jurisdictions.

Success indicators
— **Institutional integration**: Government adoption of evidence-based planning tools and SDG framework integration into local development programs
— **Capacity building outcomes**: Enhanced government ability to interpret and use official statistics for development planning and budget allocation
— **Policy influence**: Local government integration of foundation-supported initiatives into comprehensive development programs and annual implementation plans
— **Network expansion**: Successful replication from province-level to city-level implementation with interest from other jurisdictions

Resource requirements
Essential elements: Technical expertise in data visualisation and GIS, long-term relationship building capacity across electoral cycles, access to official statistics and analytical capabilities, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms.

Sustainability planning: Understanding of government budgeting processes, ability to demonstrate project value for resource allocation decisions, flexible funding arrangements adapting to donor limitations.

Challenge management

Political instability: Frequent leadership changes requiring flexible adaptation and relationship renewal, addressed through memoranda of agreement transcending electoral cycles and building relationships with career civil servants.

Low SDG awareness: Ongoing education campaigns needed for local officials, managed through simplified communication approaches and practical application demonstrations rather than abstract concepts.

Technical capacity constraints: Government limitations in statistical analysis requiring capacity building, addressed through academic partnerships and user-friendly visualisation tools reducing technical barriers.

Civic space restrictions: Complex regulatory requirements and political pressures demanding professionalisation of operations, managed through rigorous compliance procedures and transparent accountability systems.

Fragmentation challenges: Archipelagic geography and diverse organisational cultures requiring sophisticated coordination, addressed through flexible implementation models adapted to local conditions.

Replication considerations

Prerequisites: Decentralised governance system enabling local government autonomy, technical capacity for data visualisation development, academic institutions willing to provide technical support.

Adaptation requirements: Adjust to local statistical systems and data availability, government structures and electoral cycles, academic partnership opportunities, technology infrastructure capabilities.

Critical success factors: Technology platforms balancing sophistication with accessibility, government ownership from project inception, multi-level engagement strategy, academic partnership for technical expertise.

Key transferable lessons

1. **Evidence-based advocacy effectiveness**: Decision-makers respond better to specific data about their jurisdictions than general sustainable development concepts or abstract frameworks

2. **Technology accessibility balance**: Successful platforms translate complex information into intuitive formats that non-technical users can understand and apply practically

3. **Government ownership from inception**: Sustainability requires building government commitment and budget allocation as fundamental project components rather than hoped-for outcomes

4. **Multi-level engagement amplification**: Organisations benefit from simultaneous participation in local implementation, national policy dialogue, and international advocacy networks

5. **Academic partnerships mutual benefit**: Universities provide technical expertise while gaining practical application opportunities, creating sustainable knowledge transfer relationships

6. **Long-term relationship investment**: Sustained impact in dynamic political environments requires institutional relationships

transcending individual leadership changes while adapting to new contexts

The Philippines model demonstrates that effective SDG localisation requires technology platforms that make complex data accessible, systematic building of government ownership, and strategic academic partnerships which provide technical expertise while ensuring the sustainability of knowledge transfer.

4. Independent multi-stakeholder advisory mechanism: German Council for Sustainable Development

Overview

Germany's Council for Sustainable Development operates as an independent multi-stakeholder advisory body that has provided continuous guidance to the German government since 2001. The Council brings together representatives from diverse backgrounds including political, economic, ecological, and scientific sectors to advise on sustainable development goals implementation at national level and promote implementation at European and international levels.

Positioned with direct access to the Chancellery while maintaining independence, the Council serves as both a policy advisor and institutional continuity mechanism across government changes. The body addresses conflicting positions within government ministries, promotes coherence in sustainable development policy, and engages in public discourse through media and stakeholder outreach. Beyond advisory functions, the Council implements practical projects and develops tools that support broader SDG implementation across government and business sectors.

Core good practices

1. Institutional independence with government connection:
The Council maintains independence while being connected to the Chancellery as its political reference point, enabling it to challenge government positions while maintaining official relationships and influence within government structures.

2. Cross-ministerial coherence promotion:
Systematic efforts to address conflicting positions between different government ministries, particularly between agricultural policy and climate policy, through analysis and recommendations for integrated approaches to sustainable development.

3. Electoral engagement strategy:
Before national and European elections, the Council establishes benchmarks and demands for different political parties, conducting direct discussions with candidates to secure commitments on sustainable development priorities.

4. Business sector integration:
Development and implementation of the German Sustainability Code supporting companies in their sustainability reporting and the implementation

of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Additional government funding is secured for expansion and European translation.

5. Multi-level project implementation:
Direct implementation of practical projects including city reporting standards (used by 38 German cities), mayors' dialogue platform (engaging 40 mayors nationwide), and international initiatives like the Global Forum established with Finland and UN DESA.

6. Transformation teams facilitation:
Support for government's transformation teams mechanism that requires different ministries to develop coordinated positions across six to seven thematic areas before cabinet decision-making, promoting whole-of-government approaches.

Success indicators
— **Business adoption**: A Sustainability Code being used by companies for sustainability reporting and funding secured for its expansion
— **Local government engagement**: 38 cities using municipal reporting standards compatible with Voluntary Local Reviews
— **Political influence**: Government adoption of transformation teams approach for inter-ministerial coordination
— **International recognition**: Global Forum establishment and ongoing coordination with international partners
— **Institutional continuity**: Sustained operation across multiple government changes providing democratic stability

Resource requirements
Essential elements: Government funding ensuring institutional independence, diverse expertise across political, economic, ecological, and scientific backgrounds, direct access to highest political levels, dedicated staff for project implementation and coordination.

Sustainability challenges: Need to demonstrate continued relevance every three to four years to secure ongoing government funding, competition with other stakeholders and civil society organisations for government attention, balancing independence with government relationship maintenance.

Challenge management
Relevance maintenance: Continuous adaptation to remain valuable to changing governments and political contexts, requiring strategic positioning and demonstration of unique contributions compared to other advisory bodies and stakeholders.

Impact measurement difficulties: Challenge in demonstrating direct attribution between Council recommendations and government policy changes, with success often measured through qualitative influence on political debate rather than quantifiable outcomes.

Political transition navigation: Managing relationships across government changes while maintaining institutional continuity and credibility with different political parties and ministerial configurations.

Competitive stakeholder environment: Operating effectively within complex ecosystem of

environmental organisations, civil society groups, and other advisory bodies, sometimes creating synergies and sometimes facing overlapping recommendations.

Replication considerations

Prerequisites: Political will for independent advisory body, long-standing tradition of multi-stakeholder governance, stable democratic institutions enabling continuity across electoral cycles, sufficient government funding for independence.

Adaptation requirements: Adjust to national political systems and ministerial structures, existing stakeholder landscapes and advisory mechanisms, cultural traditions of government-civil society engagement, available funding mechanisms for independent bodies.

Critical success factors: Clear government mandate with independence protection, diverse multi-stakeholder composition, direct high-level political access, practical project implementation capacity beyond pure advisory functions.

Key transferable lessons

1. **Independence with connection**: Effective advisory bodies require independence to challenge government thinking while maintaining sufficient connection to ensure influence and relevance to decision-making processes
2. **Practical implementation complements advice**: Combining policy recommendations with concrete project implementation demonstrates value and creates tangible tools that support broader policy objectives across different sectors
3. **Electoral engagement sustains influence**: Systematic engagement with political parties before elections creates commitments that transcend individual government changes and builds long-term political support
4. **Cross-sector tool development**: Creating practical instruments like reporting standards serves both advisory and implementation functions while building broader stakeholder engagement beyond government relationships
5. **Continuity provides democratic value**: Independent advisory bodies can provide institutional memory and policy continuity that supports democratic governance stability during political transitions
6. **Relevance requires continuous adaptation**: Long-term institutional survival demands ongoing demonstration of unique value and strategic positioning relative to changing political priorities and competitive stakeholder environments

The German model demonstrates that effective independent advisory councils require careful balance between government connection and independence, combining high-level policy advice with practical tool development and multi-stakeholder engagement across electoral cycles.

5. Thematic cluster for national implementation: Ghana Civil Society Organisations Platform on the SDGs

Overview

Ghana has established a comprehensive whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation through its Civil Society Organisations Platform on the SDGs, demonstrating how multi-stakeholder coordination can effectively bridge government policy and grassroots action. The platform consists of different civil society organisations working across all 17 SDGs, with a dedicated 18th platform specifically focused on young people and youth-led organisations.

Operating within Ghana's democratic political environment, the platform serves as both a coordination mechanism and advocacy vehicle, bringing together local organisations, international NGOs, academic institutions, private sector actors, and government representatives. The mechanism extends beyond domestic coordination to influence international reporting processes, with Ghana successfully incorporating civil society voices into its Voluntary National Review submissions to the UN.

Core good practices

1. Multi-level engagement approach

The platform operates through quarterly meetings at both national and goal-specific levels, ensuring regular coordination while maintaining focused thematic work. Media engagement and national dialogue platforms amplify advocacy efforts beyond formal meeting structures.

2. Government integration strategy

Platform representatives sit on the government's inter-ministerial implementation committee, ensuring civil society voices directly influence policy development and resource allocation decisions rather than operating through ad hoc consultation.

3. Issue-based coalition building

Cross-sectoral collaboration addresses complex development challenges through unified advocacy, as demonstrated by the successful national campaign on menstrual hygiene that resulted in 300 million Ghana cedis budgetary allocation.

4. VNR participation model

Civil society organisations prepare complementary reports that the government incorporates into official submissions, with civil society leaders presenting their own sections during official government presentations in New York.

5. Youth platform integration

The dedicated 18th platform ensures meaningful youth participation through organisations like Youth Advocates Ghana, which has served as co-convener and contributed to national SDG processes.

Success indicators

— **Policy outcomes**: Concrete budgetary allocations achieved through coordinated advocacy campaigns
— **Government recognition**: Official incorporation of civil society contributions in international forums

- **Institutional resilience**: Platform maintained operations through the COVID-19 pandemic and political transitions
- **International influence**: Civil society work highlighted in UN presentations and international reports

Resource requirements

Essential elements: Technical knowledge of SDG frameworks and government systems, human resources for stakeholder engagement, organisational credibility built through programme delivery, collective resource mobilisation capacity.

Sustainability challenges: Competition for funding creates organisational silos, youth organisations face particular difficulties accessing resources due to perceived high-risk status, donor preferences often favour larger, adult-led organisations.

Challenge management

Coordination difficulties: Despite formal structures, competition for funding and recognition creates silos where organisations work independently. Address through transparent governance and shared benefits distribution.

Trust deficits: Historical tensions and perceived cronyism limit genuine collaboration. Manage through continuous relationship-building and clear platform mandate definition.

Government commitment inconsistencies: Resource constraints and competing priorities limit genuine partnership despite official support. Navigate through strategic positioning and demonstrating organisational value.

Role clarity issues: Platform must avoid becoming an implementing organisation that competes with its members and should focus strictly on coordination and convening functions.

Replication considerations

Prerequisites: Democratic political environment supportive of civil society engagement, existing civil society capacity and networks, government willingness to engage in formal structures.

Adaptation requirements: Adjust to local political systems, civil society landscape characteristics, government decision-making processes, and funding environment realities.

Critical success factors: Clear mandate definition distinguishing coordination from implementation, transparent governance structures, issue-based collaboration approaches, formal government integration mechanisms.

Key transferable lessons

1. **Platform mandate clarity**: Coordination platforms should not assume implementation roles that compete with member organisations - focus strictly on convening and capacity building
2. **Government integration advantage**: Formal representation in government structures proves more effective than ad hoc consultation for sustained policy influence
3. **Unity amplifies influence**: Single-organisation advocacy faces limitations that collective action can overcome, but requires addressing underlying trust and competition issues

4. **Issue-based collaboration**: Cross-sectoral coalition building around specific challenges demonstrates concrete value and builds platform credibility
5. **Institutional sustainability**: Balancing individual organisational needs with collective platform objectives requires transparent governance providing member recognition and benefits
6. **Alignment with global agendas**: Connecting local campaigns to international development priorities creates multiple leverage points for advocacy success

The Ghana model demonstrates that effective multi-stakeholder platforms require clear role definition, formal government engagement mechanisms, and systematic attention to both coordination functions and member organisation sustainability needs.

6. Voluntary alliance for adaptive SDG engagement: Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia

Overview

The Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) represents an innovative model that evolved from traditional government advisory functions to comprehensive SDG implementation facilitation. Established in 1998, CADS transformed in 2016 when it recognised that governments fundamentally misunderstood the 2030 Agenda as a foreign affairs matter, rather than a cross-cutting domestic priority.

Under Director Arnau Queralt-Bassa's leadership, CADS coordinated Catalonia's national SDG implementation plan and established the Catalonia 2030 Alliance, a voluntary platform bringing together over 90 institutions including government, local authorities, businesses, and NGOs. The mechanism operates within a challenging political context, including frequent government changes, rising far-right movements, and declining public support for multilateral agendas.

Core good practices

1. Systemic government engagement approach
CADS leverages its independence to engage all government departments simultaneously, promoting cross-cutting SDG thinking and addressing the siloed nature of public administration through coordinated inter-ministerial outreach.

2. Voluntary participation model
Organisations participate because they genuinely want to collaborate rather than fulfilling formal requirements, creating stronger commitment and more authentic dialogue than mandatory structures.

3. Strategic institutional design
Rather than creating competing formal bodies, CADS developed informal mechanisms to influence existing sectoral councils through Alliance members who bring SDG perspectives to specialised forums.

4. Cross-sectoral working groups
Thematic collaborations including culture and sustainability, health and inequalities, and

intergenerational dialogue encourage organisations to recognise linkages between development challenges.

5. Narrative development focus
Emphasis on building compelling stories about transformation rather than treating SDGs as administrative checklists, helping sustain engagement across diverse organisational cultures.

6. Adaptive programming approach Continuous adjustment of activities based on member feedback and changing political contexts, maintaining relevance despite volatile environment.

Success indicators
— **Platform longevity**: Sustained member participation across multiple political transitions
— **Network strengthening**: New partnerships emerging from alliance meetings creating spillover effects
— **Government integration**: Continued engagement in SDG planning processes indicating perceived value
— **Adaptive capacity**: Successful navigation of COVID-19 and political instability while developing new collaborative approaches
— **Member commitment**: Organisations expressing desire to continue collaboration beyond 2030

Resource requirements
Essential elements: Professional facilitation capacity for managing diverse institutions, flexible funding

arrangements supporting adaptive programming, independence from government control enabling authentic engagement.

Long-term investment: Years of relationship building required without immediate results, sophisticated coordination skills for conflict resolution and stakeholder management.

Challenge management
Representation complexity: Ensuring meaningful participation across regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups, and cultural communities requires sophisticated design and significant resources.

Organisational pressures: Short-term operational demands conflict with long-term SDG objectives, requiring continuous relationship management and value demonstration to organisational leadership.

Political volatility: Frequent government changes necessitate repeated explanation to new leadership, while rising far-right parties create additional pressure on SDG-focused initiatives.

Credibility challenges: Gap between ambitious rhetoric and limited tangible progress undermines collaborative approaches, requiring emphasis on substantive outcomes rather than administrative compliance.

Replication considerations
Prerequisites: Existing institutional relationships, willingness to share experiences, sufficient scale

for meaningful peer learning while maintaining manageable group dynamics.

Adaptation requirements: Adjust to local government structures, political cycles, economic contexts, and existing multi-stakeholder cooperation traditions.

Critical success factors: Independence enabling authentic dialogue, voluntary participation creating genuine commitment, narrative development over administrative compliance, long-term investment perspectives.

Key transferable lessons

1. **Independence enables authenticity**: Attached but independent status allows challenging both government and civil society thinking while maintaining productive relationships
2. **Voluntary participation creates commitment**: Organisations remain engaged because they see value in collaboration rather than fulfilling formal requirements
3. **Narrative trumps administration**: Investment in communication and meaning-making activities sustains engagement more effectively than compliance-focused approaches
4. **Avoid institutional duplication**: Strategic influence of existing structures reduces bureaucratic burden while expanding reach compared to creating competing bodies
5. **Long-term investment non-negotiable**: Meaningful multi-stakeholder collaboration requires years of trust-building despite political pressures for immediate results
6. **Local-global balance essential**: Organisations need immediate relevance while understanding global connections, requiring sophisticated facilitation between different scales

The Catalonia model demonstrates that effective voluntary alliances require professional coordination, strategic institutional design, and systematic attention to both relationship building and adaptive programming in volatile political environments.

Annex 2: Criteria for the assessment of enabling environment for multi-stakeholder bodies for country-level SDG implementation and monitoring

Enabling environment assessment criteria

Environment Assessment Criterion	Indicators	Desk research	Interview questions
The government is willing and actively seeking to engage stakeholders in delivering the SDGs/climate agendas	Evidence of engagement by the government of multi-stakeholders in: VNR SDG/climate processes National development plan/strategy Self-reporting on SDG 16, strong institutions	Engagement of multi-sectors in climate NDCs Engagement of multi-sectors in creation of national development plans Engagement of multi-sectors in VNRs Self-reporting on SDG 16, strong institutions Formal public-private dialogues etc. (World Bank documentation around Public-Private Dialogue structures)	What action have you seen the government take to engage stakeholders in development priorities? Have these actions (if there are any) been installed for the purpose of a single process (VNR) or have they an ongoing character? How has the process been planned and implemented (Stakeholders in silos, multiple levels, cascading up, etc.)?
Rule of law		WJP ROL	
Inclusive, progressive, open society	Government is transparent and open The government is progressive and open to new ideas and approaches	Open government ranking Elements from ↘ Social Progress Index (e.g. corruption, inclusivity, personal rights)	Do you believe the overall political environment will support an all-of-society approach to implementing the SDGs?
Government has put in place flexible institutional structures to deliver the SDGs/climate commitments	Government pursues a whole-of-government approach and has installed coordination units/processes across Ministries Government issued mandate for MSB Signatory of Paris Agreement with NDCs National Development Strategy Light-touch advisory or governance body provides ongoing support to MSB	VNRs NDCs National Development Strategy Public commitments to SDG implementation at the highest level of government (national press, conferences, public dialogues)	Does the current political environment support the role of an MSB? What is the need and demand for such a body? Have the right stakeholders been engaged to participate with the MSB? What has been the key problems and challenges in establishing and maintaining such a body? Which Ministry is in the lead? Is there effective cross-government collaboration? Has the government implemented any changes to deliver the SDGs more successfully? How do you take into account the interlinked nature of SDGs when implementing them?

Political support and interest demonstrated by highest governmental level and/or parliament (caucus)	Political system (over time) Highest level/presidential support demonstrated (e.g. through proclamations, presidential public/private dialogues etc.) other government communication AND/OR Supportive role of the parliament (caucus) to establish a MS-platform for constructive advice and mediate positions existing in society	Polity IV dataset	Is there an interagency body to complete VNR established? What is the political context or environment in which the multi-stakeholder body operates? How has the relationship of the MSB with the government changed over time? Are there any political or legal factors/ processes that have contributed to the legitimacy of the MSB in relation to the government? How has the relationship of the MSB with the government been impacted by the political context, changes in political leadership or policy changes? How has the MSB managed to maintain its advisory role in relation to the government over time? Is there a supportive role of the parliament (caucus) to establish a MSB for constructive advice and mediate positions existing in society?
Effective organisation/strength of key stakeholders (academia, civil society, and private sector)	Existence of business associations; CSO and academia representative bodies etc. Strength of civil society Degree of formal vs informal business Evidence of strong dialogue and trusted relationship across stakeholders, (e.g. safe spaces to experiment with new regulation) Commitment to strengthen policy and regulatory environment for partnering and multi-stakeholder approach	↘ Civil society index rating World Bank Doing Business Report VNR	What other platforms, organisations, forums, councils etc. exist to promote a collective voice? How do you interact/cooperate with them? Compete or collaborate? Is there a history of stakeholder dialogues or commissions to identify compromises across stakeholders?

# Individual MSB Assessment criteria

Criterion	Indicators	Desk research	Interview questions
External MSB Connections & Support			
MSB has the mandate and is officially recognised as an advisory/intermediary body	Government recognises the MSB as an official advisory body Government regularly engages with the MSB Participates in VNR process or other national or sub-national processes for sustainable development	MSB website; government communications Engagement in VNR process and other sub-national processes	Is the MSB officially recognised and mandated by government? At what level of government is the MSP positioned and over what sectors does it have influence? How does the government engage with the MSB?
Strong, charismatic leadership able to effectively engage and influence all sectors of society	Previous experience of similar roles requiring the same skills Previous experience in multi-sectors i.e. government, civil society and business Individual has good reputation and respected voice with people from multiple sectors Platform leader (or coordinator/manager) can think, lead and act across organisational boundaries	Evidence of previous experience from CV, LinkedIn profiles etc. Key informant interviews with other stakeholders	How would you describe the leadership of the organisation? How does the MSB facilitate lesson-sharing and promote innovation among members? How do you solve problems collectively and reach agreement on priorities to be addressed and ways of addressing them? Have there been instances where members' needs and objectives were not in alignment? How are conflicts among members resolved? What have you/your organisation learnt from these interactions and problem-solving exercises? Has it changed the way that you think or act, or has it had any impact on the work of your own organisation?

The MSB is well-connected and has strong engagement, trust, reputation and influence across societal sectors	Wide range of organisations (including representative bodies) that are officially connected/members of the MSB The MSB is trusted and has a strong reputation among its constituents Regional support/connections with other MSBs Vertical links (to international institutions) and horizontal links (to other platforms) Multiple, diverse, strong relationships at all levels Platform is built on existing structures, with minimal new infrastructure Sense of 'ownership' of platform by its stakeholders/members and hosts understanding of when, where, how, why and with whom to connect	List of organisational members Inclusion of MSB in other meetings/conferences/dialogs Number of times MSB is mentioned in national press Number of times MSB is mentioned on its member organisations' websites	How well connected and influential do you think the organisation is? Is it an effective PPD to communicate both ways (public to government and vs/vs) on progress and needs of SDGs?

Internal MSB Governance & Operations

The MSB is representative and inclusive and has sound governance	MSB has in place policies and processes to help ensure inclusion Operating structure supports effective management of MSB and inclusion of other stakeholders Platform is built on existing structures, with minimal new infrastructure	Website and other documentation Operating procedures and set-up of advisory board	What does the MSB do to ensure it is representative and inclusive? Can you please tell me about the membership of this multi-stakeholder body? What is the relationship between members of the multi-stakeholder body? Is there multi-sector representation? What kinds of organisations or institutions participate in this body? Is it composed only of government representatives, independent NGOs or a mixed membership? How many members does your multi-stakeholder body have and how are they selected? Do you feel it is equally representative of all key stakeholder groups? Has the MSB been set-up to be an effective inclusive platform?

MSB includes Public engagement at subnational level (ability to create space for the government to follow-up pilot action)	Multiple, diverse, strong relationships at all levels Understanding of when, where, how, why and with whom to connect Establish pilot projects or studies to pave the way for large-scale activities by government agents (create space for action)[1]	MSB website and other documentation	Does it extend beyond the central level to receive input from subnational level? Is it an effective Public-Private Dialogue to communicate both ways (public to government) on progress and needs of SDGs? Do you establish dialogue projects or create knowledge to be provided as a foundation for government agents to follow up with innovative action?
The MSB has the skills and experience to be able to 1) facilitate consensus building and develop policy advice, 2) mediate across different interests, and 3) support the development of collective action.	MSB has demonstrated its ability to deliver on those three areas MSB has staff with the right experience and skills	Track record of the organisation (from website)	How would you rate the experience and skills the MSB has in the three areas? What mechanisms institutionalise or promote the MSB's interaction/engagement with government? How do government and MSB actors interact in meetings, and how would you describe the MSB's level of participation and influence in these meetings?

[1] ↘ https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/en/projects/

The MSB has systems and processes to engage effectively and M&E in place to measure its effectiveness	Documented process for engagement Strategy and work plans aligned to SDGs Learning linked to M&E Logic model/Theory of Change used to maintain strategic focus	Website reports	How do you measure the effectiveness of your work? Have you developed a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategy for the MSB? What is the expectation of members in relation to M&E for the MSB? For example, are members expected to collect and submit data on progress related to joint activities led by the MSB? Who takes the lead on reporting for the MSB? Does this require all members' sign off? As a collective body, have you engaged in any reflective exercises around how your work can be improved?
The MSB is a bona fide organisation able to accept and report on finances	The MSB is a legally registered organisation (or programme of a registered organisation) The MSB is in sound financial condition Has (or is seeking) multiple, diverse funding sources Platform champions help to secure funding Funders provide other support as well as money Reporting requirements are realistic and fit-for-purpose (i.e. initially more geared towards a small start-up enterprise than a large development project)	MSB reports (website/list of donors or partners) + Complement with interview with MSB´s staff	How is your MSB funded? If you receive any funding from the government, what does this mean for the scope of work, the way that you work or your level of independence? What are the constraints in terms of funding and resources, and how does this affect the capacity to collaborate?