

Global Forum for SDG Advisory Bodies/ Partnership Campaign workshop

Tuesday 16 May 2023

9:30 – 10:45 AM

Objectives of the online workshop

The objectives of this session were to:

- Familiarise members with the campaign and agree how the Global Forum can best contribute
- Contribute to the research by hearing from members about the role of government, national policies and level of trust in their contexts
- For members to share examples of good practice in creating an enabling environment for partnerships, and discussing the interest in developing some of these into ‘country snapshots’ for the report and for potentially sharing during a symposium at the 2023 SDG Summit

Introduction to the campaign & research

During the introduction to the campaign and research, the campaign team provided an overview of the campaign while the partners from UN DESA and Partnerships2030 emphasized the importance of the initiative from their perspectives. The lead researcher then explained the methodology and highlighted the key areas of focus for the research, which included policy frameworks promoting or enabling Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), funding for MSPs, facilitation and coordination of MSPs, capacity building for effective partnerships, and evaluation and monitoring of MSPs.

Extent of government engagement, trust and engagement in the SDGs

To assess the extent of government engagement, trust, and involvement in the SDGs, an online survey was used to gather responses to specific questions. The survey explored the level of stakeholder engagement by governments, the sense of responsibility and accountability towards climate change among different sectors, including business, NGOs, academia, and the general public.

The discussions on the results revealed that Finland, Mexico, and Ghana were perceived as having strong government engagement with stakeholders. In terms of sectors feeling responsibility and accountability towards climate change, NGOs showed the highest level of commitment, followed by academia, while business and the general public demonstrated lower levels of engagement.

Impressions from specific countries, such as Finland, highlighted the enthusiasm of academia compared to other sectors, making it challenging to involve non-academic entities. Jamaica emphasized the need to measure awareness and commitment across sectors and the lack of conscious linkages between ongoing work and the SDGs. In Ghana, participants stressed the importance of localizing actions and building understanding of the SDGs and climate change within their specific contexts.

Our contexts: ways in which government promotes collaboration

Participants were asked to share their national government's current experiences, areas for improvement, and suggestions for enhancing collaboration in breakout groups.

In the first breakout group, members from the Philippines, Nigeria, Jamaica, and Chile provided insights into their government's activities.

- The Philippines highlighted the constitutional mandate for collaboration, but expressed varying levels of engagement across sectors.
- Nigeria emphasized the need for collaboration in all government projects and the inclusion of academia for data gathering and research. They also mentioned the importance of legislative training and involving citizens through freedom of information act.
- Jamaica acknowledged the constitutional requirement for collaboration but noted limited engagement due to citizen interest. They emphasized the need for improved communication, local level ownership, and incentives for participation.
- Chile discussed the necessity of considering isolated geography and minority groups in government plans and emphasized long-term thinking for sustainable development.

The second breakout group consisted of members from Ghana, Ecuador, Finland, and Mexico.

- Ghana outlined their structured approach to collaboration through committees focusing on implementation and reporting. However, they identified a gap at the sub-national level and the need for policy conditions.
- Ecuador mentioned the establishment of the Vice Presidency's responsibility for the SDGs, but recent changes in government affected the activity levels.
- Finland highlighted their long-standing Commission for Sustainable Development as an effective platform for partnership, encompassing various actors from government, parliament, civil society, academia, and more. They also mentioned the importance of political will in sustainability efforts.
- Mexico mentioned their Executive Secretariat's role in bringing sectors together through working committees on different themes. They recognized the challenge of government changes and stressed the need for improved engagement with businesses and young people. They are excited that unions, in particular, have done a lot of work and are aligning their activities to the SDGs. They are linking and engaging with different sectors. It is also very valuable to have the perspective of different actors, not only the ministries national public institutions, but also businesses and academia in topics such as climate action.

Examples of national policies that support multi-sectoral collaboration

In a final plenary session, participants shared interesting examples of country practices in various focus areas of the research at the national policy level. Ghana highlighted the challenges they face in policy cohesion and the need to properly link the 10 goals proposed in their Voluntary National Review (VNR) to avoid progress in one goal resulting in setbacks in others. They emphasized the importance of viewing

the SDGs holistically rather than separately and mentioned the prioritization of education as an example. However, they acknowledged the challenge of transitioning from long-term goals to effective implementation.

Ecuador emphasized the importance of involving local actors, including representatives from all sectors, local governments, academia, and other stakeholders from civil society. While recognizing the significance of these processes, sustaining leadership in Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) has been challenging due to different levels of understanding of the SDGs among stakeholders. Some are already advanced in their work on the SDGs, while others are still trying to grasp the concept and its implications.

Chile highlighted the necessity of decentralized and multi-stakeholder institutional spaces for long-term stability. However, they cautioned against solely relying on government promotion for the establishment of such spaces. They suggested the need for basic financing mechanisms for decentralized spaces without falling into political or economic dependencies. They emphasized the urgency of concrete actions and decisions among different actors and levels of society to accelerate the SDG agenda. They shared an example of a confederation of NGOs created in Chile, which faced challenges due to internal differences, underscoring the importance of focused efforts and the necessary skills and tools for successful collaboration.

Jamaica mentioned that they were in the mid-term review phase, but highlighted the challenges they face as a small team with gaps in SDG implementation. They noted that technology has been instrumental in engaging stakeholders, particularly at the local level.

Finland, also working with a small team, emphasized their approach of working with youth and commissions to develop implementation strategies at various stages, making them less dependent on the government. They mentioned a Finnish word that conveys the idea of doing things together without monetary compensation, highlighting the collaborative nature of their efforts. They strive to make the SDGs relatable to everyday life by focusing on issues that matter to people, such as the sustainability and scalability of food production. They analyze input and translate it back to the SDGs to ensure alignment.

Mexico described their national-level efforts through the 2030 Agenda Executive Secretariat, which includes four committees covering environment, economy, well-being, and monitoring and evaluation. These committees bring together all sectors, including subnational governments, to share projects, programs, and priorities. They mentioned the inclusion of new sectors such as unions, social economy actors, cooperatives, and youth in their work. They also highlighted the recent Regional SDG Forum organized by ECLAC, which emphasized the importance of localizing the SDGs for acceleration while simultaneously strengthening monitoring mechanisms and data collection.

Example: use of social media in Nigeria

It is stated in the Constitution that government has to partner with civil society organisations and other stakeholders for their implementation of certain laws, especially with regard to sustainability.

This is not restricted to federal government. Nigeria has a decentralized system of government with six states government.

For those in the wider society who want to see this happening in practice, advocacy has a key role. For example, media engagement by multi-stakeholder partnerships brings in stakeholders committed to the adoption and integration of the SDGs.

Social media is especially important because Nigerian youth is really active in social media engagement. By engaging the government on all of their platforms, and ensuring that there's heavy traffic, partners can ensure that government departments and agencies are fully apprised on what they need to know about the SDGs, and then what needs to be done, especially in terms of implementation.

Another major opportunity is to help government officials who might not want to go through the pain of conducting research or gathering data about certain aspects of the economy that relates directly to the SDGs. The MSP in Nigeria includes academia, so doctors, professors from different walks of life, are placed in the field and carry out these independent evaluations and research.

For example, very recently up to date research on the health sector was conducted, which is essential as it is such a volatile sector and also has a major impact on many other issues such as food production and climate change. This revealed that the health sector, especially with regards to maternal health, is critical to many issues that we are facing in this part of Nigeria, especially regarding access to health care services, midwives, doctors, drugs and basic health facilities.

After the research, a policy brief in the form of an advocacy paper was used to engage the government also through social media and other forms of media. This ensured that it got the attention of the right audience and resulted in 98% implementation.

This is just one example, and other tools include engaging those with very little access even to social media, using townhall meetings for example. These are all used to engage government on issues key to the SDGs.

Overall, these examples provided insights into the challenges and innovative approaches taken by different countries in promoting multi-sectoral collaboration and advancing the SDG agenda at the national policy level.

Key messages from the workshop

The success of policies to enhance and support partnerships that further the implementation of the SDGs hinges on political will and the allocation of resources. Without the necessary political will and accompanying resources, they become ineffective. It is crucial for non-governmental stakeholders of all kinds to play a key role in bringing these policies to life. Their active participation and collaboration are essential for driving progress.

Technology emerges as a valuable tool in various aspects of government's efforts to work collaboratively on the SDGs. It can facilitate engagement, enable efficient data collection and monitoring, and support communication and collaboration among different stakeholders. Leveraging technology can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts aimed at achieving the SDGs.

Engaging stakeholders at the sub-national level, such as districts or states, poses a significant challenge to state-level partnering. It is important to ensure that the SDG agenda resonates with these local actors and that their perspectives and needs are taken into account. This requires tailored approaches and

strategies to foster their involvement and commitment to sustainable development, and for them to want to be involved in partnerships.

To make the SDGs meaningful to citizens, it is necessary for MSPs, as with any other ways of implementing the SDGs, to focus on issues that are relevant to their everyday lives, addressing matters that touch their hearts and minds. By making the SDGs relatable and tangible, citizens can better understand and connect with the broader sustainability agenda.

Capacity building is another crucial aspect of SDG implementation through collaboration. As highlighted by the Chilean representative, progress in sustainability can be achieved even without it being the primary objective. However, by prioritizing sustainability and equipping stakeholders with the necessary skills and tools to tackle the challenges, the potential for achievements would be significantly amplified. Therefore, investing in capacity building initiatives is essential for maximizing the impact of SDG efforts.

In summary, political will and resource allocation are vital for effective MSP support from government, while the active involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in partnerships is also necessary to translate these structures into meaningful action. Technology can greatly support collaborative working, while engagement at the sub-national level requires tailored approaches. Making the SDGs resonate with citizens by focusing on issues relevant to their lives is crucial in all aspects of the SDGs. Finally, capacity building plays a pivotal role in enhancing MSPs and their outcomes.