

E-discussion: “*Managing the Transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: what will it take*”

Summary Report Thematic Window III: Partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda

Thematic Window III on ‘Partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda’ discussed examples for fostering partnerships that can lead to implementation and development results at the global, national and local levels; how multi-stakeholder partnerships can be effectively established and taken into account to facilitate the implementation of development priorities; and the elements needed to ensure accountability within partnerships for managing responsibilities, commitments and expectations for the implementation of the SDGs.

Overall, e-discussion participants reiterated the importance of fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships for achieving the post-2015 development agenda. They noted that harnessing the potential contributions of multiple actors, including governments, private enterprise, civil society, foundations, and others will be crucial for advancing the deliverability of resources and for increasing the effectiveness of the next development agenda. At the same time participants noted the need to have a better defined understanding of what partnerships mean where true partnerships are founded on a shared vision and are multi-stakeholder in nature. Key points from Thematic Window III of the e-discussion are summarized below:

What are good examples for fostering partnerships, including public-private that can lead to implementation and development results at the global, national and local levels?

- Building systematic partnerships with the private sector is a key prerequisite for the successful implementation of a transformative agenda to accelerate poverty reduction and sustainable development. The private sector has the ability to have a profound impact on areas as wide-ranging as food security, climate change, gender equality, human rights and good governance. The UN Global Compact, for example, is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. By doing so, business, as a primary driver of globalization, can help ensure that markets, commerce, technology and finance advance in ways that benefit economies and societies everywhere. With over 12,000 corporate participants and other stakeholders from over 145 countries, it is the largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative in the world. Partnerships focus on the many areas where private actors and public institutions can engage in win-win relationships, such as poverty reduction, health, education and community development.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can make important contributions to promoting sustainable development through their well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity, especially in the area of analysis, sharing of information and knowledge, promotion of dialogue and support of implementation of sustainable development. Partnerships with NGO’s have yielded significant development results. Smile Foundation in India, for example, in partnership with more than 150 corporate and institutional partners and more than 180 grassroots NGO’s and Community Based Organizations, works to empower underprivileged children, youth and women through relevant education, innovative healthcare and market-focused livelihood programmes. Its interventions benefit more than 300,000 people annually. In Pakistan, partnerships with local NGO’s to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights have been quite successful as local NGO’s have now integrated this objective into their programmatic priorities. In Nigeria, the DFID-funded State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) partners with citizen groups, parliamentarians and the media encouraging them to work together to promote more responsive, accountable and inclusive state governance. SAVI has been successful in promoting and accelerating key pieces of State legislation to support better

governance, especially Bills on fiscal responsibility, public procurement, and freedom of information.

- Partnerships with religious organizations and networks can play an important role in achieving development results. The International Union of Superiors General (IUSG) is a Catholic religious network which collaborates with social, civilian, political, and religious organizations that are committed to the pursuit of justice, peace, and promotion of the dignity of women. Through its 'Talitha Kum' network, which originates from a project implemented in collaboration with the International Office on Migration and funded by the US Government, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, IUSG works to eliminate human trafficking. World Vision –a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organization–partners with individuals, institutions (including UN agencies), governments, corporations, and faith communities in working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.
- Better data on all development finance flows – public and private, domestic and international – is essential to mobilize and track these resources effectively at global and national levels. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for better data play a significant role in supporting countries to effectively utilize and harness all development resources by facilitating better data. The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is a good example of this partnership. It has facilitated the availability of information on development cooperation in a standard that is compatible with the information needs of developing countries for managing their planning and strategic budgeting. IATI captures data from a wide range of organizations, including bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, philanthropic foundations, CSOs, development finance institutions, and private sector consultancies. It provides a good precedent in establishing a multi-stakeholder partnership in addressing the data gap of development finance flows.
- Online discussion platforms on sustainable development are an emerging form of partnership to influence policy. For example, the World We Want platform helped gather the priorities of citizens from every corner of the world to build a collective vision that is being used directly by the United Nations and World Leaders to plan the new post-2015 development agenda. Partnerships with ICT providers are important to achieving many aspects of the new development agenda. Massive Open Course (MOOC) systems could help raise awareness of the new development agenda.

How can multi-stakeholder partnerships be effectively established and taken into account to facilitate the implementation of development priorities?

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships require an environment that is conducive to the engagement of diverse development actors. Sustained inclusive dialogue and an appropriate legal and regulatory framework are two key elements of such an enabling environment. Sustained inclusive dialogue entails the sustained engagement of various actors (local governments, civil society and the private sector) in dialogue to establish, monitor, and be accountable for development policies and plans. Such dialogue is inclusive when it is multi-stakeholder, institutionalized and transparent, with feedback mechanisms on how inputs have been taken into account. Appropriate legal, regulatory and policy environments are key to supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with civil society. It implies law, policy and practice consistent with internationally agreed rights such as the freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association and freedom of expression.
- All actors in a multi-stakeholder partnership have an important role to play as they bring with them a unique set of skills and resources. Roles and responsibilities of the different partners need to be clearly defined when establishing a multi-stakeholder partnership, and stakeholders need to have a common understanding of the partnership goals.
- There should be minimum 'buy-in' to the partnership: a threshold contribution that stakeholders commit to make in order to be a member of that partnership.

- The private sector can be a strategic partner in the implementation of the development agenda and their capacities can be harnessed to innovate in order to deliver real solutions for sustainability. Governments must work with businesses to create coherent policy frameworks and incentives to ensure that profits are translated into sustained economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. While the private sector can be an effective partner in addressing development challenges, it must assume a larger role in supporting and respecting the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and supporting a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; undertaking initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
- CSOs have a prominent role to play in the implementation of development priorities and are key actors in multi-stakeholder partnerships. Greater investment –financial and otherwise– is needed in CSOs capacity to perform their critical and independent development roles.
- North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation can be powerful mechanisms to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships. These mechanisms can help find solutions to common development challenges through knowledge sharing, technology exchange, and collective action.
- In order for multi-stakeholder partnerships to play an effective and key role in the implementation of the new development agenda, structural coordination at the local, national, regional and global levels is needed.
- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has identified criteria (that are subject to ongoing review) for the development and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development. These could help guide the work of existing partnerships and foster new alliances. Under these criteria, partnerships should:
 - be ambitious, identify concrete objectives and address transformational change in the spirit of the post-2015 agenda;
 - pursue clear and measurable goals, while integrating all dimensions of sustainability as much as possible;
 - be organized on a bottom-up basis, and actively involve local populations or the bodies that represent them (e.g. parliaments or trade unions) right from the planning stage, so as to identify appropriate solutions, build local capacities, and offer lasting incentives on the ground (such as employment);
 - be run by a recognized project management team in possession of adequate powers and have sufficient institutional capacity;
 - work on a transparent basis, giving all stakeholders and target groups a seat, voice and a decision-making role in committees and other bodies, and ensuring a fair balance;
 - have a sustainable budget for the entire duration of the project;
 - ensure a regular, independent review of outcomes.

What elements will be needed to ensure accountability within partnerships for managing responsibilities, commitments and expectations for the implementation of the SDGs?

- Ensuring accountability within partnerships requires defining who will be held to account, who is entitled to hold them to account, and against what standards (and what happens when the standards are missed). Partnerships are mutually accountable inwards, to the partners themselves, but they are also accountable outwards, especially to those whose legitimate basic interests have been affected. Basic standards should be put in place related to environmental sustainability, human rights, non-discrimination, among others, with binding agreements and commitments. The commitment of states to genuine accountability is key to expecting accountability of partnerships.
- Partnerships should have institutionalized periodic reflection mechanisms that will help foster transparency and accountability within the group. There should be a way of measuring both inputs and outputs: the contributions that members make, as well as progress towards the shared objective.

- Formal institutions governing each partnership need to be set up for reporting, monitoring and measuring to enable accountability.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Countries must support systematic and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue to take into account the interests of diverse development actors (particularly those representing poor and marginalized populations) and create the foundation for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of development priorities.
- Governments must support an enabling environment for the participation of civil society and other actors in partnerships through appropriate legal, regulatory and policy environments. Concrete mechanisms should be put in place in this regard.
- Significant resources – financial and otherwise – must be directed to enhance the capacity of CSOs to perform their critical and independent development roles in order for countries to truly benefit from multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- Religious organizations and networks are important actors to advance the sustainable development agenda and they should be included in multi-stakeholder partnerships. However, difficult questions arise about their position on human rights standards, particularly around women's rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights. These need to be explored to find solutions.
- The substantive and technical expertise offered by academia and research institutions is critical to the development of sound policy, and so their inclusion in these multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential. Governments need to invest in these kinds of knowledge partnerships.
- The private sector can play a key role in delivering effective solutions to address current development challenges. Governments must work with the private sector to create coherent policy frameworks and incentives to ensure that profits are translated into sustained economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships for better data need to be supported and strengthened in order to help countries effectively utilize and harness all development resources. These partnerships can play a significant role in supporting all development actors to publish better data, including on development finance flows. Partnerships with ICT providers also need to be supported as ICT policies and programmes are important to many aspects of the new development agenda.
- Promoting North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation as mechanisms to establish effective multi-stakeholder partnerships is essential as these mechanisms can help find solutions to common development challenges through knowledge sharing, technology exchange, and collective action.
- Basic standards or principles related to environmental sustainability, human rights, and non-discrimination, among others, should be an integral part of multi-stakeholder partnerships with binding commitments by partners to conform to these principles.
- Ensuring accountability within partnerships requires a clear definition of who will be held to account, who is entitled to hold them to account, and against what standards (and what happens when the standards are not met). Formal institutions governing each partnership should be set up and institutionalized periodic reflection mechanisms should be established to help foster transparency and accountability within the partnership. There is also a need to find a way to measure the contributions that members make, as well as progress towards the shared objective.

Expecting accountability of partnerships requires the commitment of states to affirm responsibilities with respect to sustainable development.

Key Resources:

- **Charter for the Future: One World Our Responsibility.** Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). November 2014. See chapter 8: Forge a new global partnership and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development <https://www.zukunftscharta.de/ecm-politik/zukunftscharta/de/home/file/fileId/3038>
- **International Aid Transparency Initiative** <http://www.aidtransparency.net/about>
- **Religion and Development Post-2015: Report of a Consultation among Donor Organizations, United Nations Development Agencies and Faith-based Organizations.** UNFPA 2014. <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/DONOR-UN-FBO%20May%202014.pdf>
- **Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment** <http://www.taskteamcso.com/>