



Partnering to achieve the SDGs: Lessons learned from monitoring civil society's engagement in development

Blog by the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment

At the next High-Level Political Forum – the apex of global follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in July, forty countries are expected to engage in [Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\)](#) of their own progress at national and sub-national levels. As per the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its guiding principles, follow-up and review should be: voluntary and country-led, taking into account different national realities and capacities; open, inclusive and participatory; and supportive of reporting by all relevant stakeholders. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (the Global Partnership) applies similar principles to its monitoring exercise.

The Global Partnership is a unique, multi-stakeholder platform to support the delivery of effective development co-operation for the realisation of development efforts, including the SDGs. Its [ten-part monitoring framework](#) tracks progress in the implementation of effective development co-operation commitments.

The Global Partnership monitoring process is voluntary and country-led and a number of its indicators require a multi-stakeholder monitoring approach, including Indicator Two, which tracks civil society's ability to “operate within an environment which maximises its engagement in and contribution to development.”

The Global Partnership conducted its last monitoring round in 2015/16. Meanwhile, the [Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment](#) (Task Team) conducted a [stock-take](#) of the country-level experiences with the multi-stakeholder monitoring approach of Indicator Two. Given the similarity of the guiding principles, lessons learned from the monitoring framework's Indicator Two could also be informative for SDG follow-up and review, particularly for countries engaging in VNRs in 2017. We've selected three main recommendations coming out of the stock-take, which could also be relevant to SDG follow-up and review.

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1 Work with focal points and encourage intra-stakeholder group coordination

For the monitoring of Indicator Two – which called for the engagement of national government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and development co-operation providers – the Global Partnership recommended stakeholder groups to each work through a focal point to help coordinate stakeholder participation and inputs to the monitoring.

The stock-take confirmed the value of working with focal points for inter and intra-stakeholder group coordination. However, it also found that the value could be further enhanced by broadening engagement across and within various stakeholder groups, including outside of capital cities. Moreover when working with this method, it is crucial that the roles and responsibilities of the focal points be clearly outlined.

2 Make sufficient time and resources available for multi-stakeholder processes

Probably unsurprising is that multi-stakeholder processes are challenging and resource heavy. It is therefore important to initiate the process early and to secure sufficient human and financial resources. Time is needed for sensitization, to get stakeholders on board, and to identify focal points. Meanwhile, effective multi-stakeholder dialogue requires building a common understanding of the subject matter and the objective at hand.

Important to keep in mind is that the ability to conduct more robust multi-stakeholder processes can be limited by capacity constraints such as insufficient financing, shortage of personnel and lack of experience and awareness. In its [2016 Monitoring Report](#), the Global Partnership

compared the countries reporting and receiving external support with those that did not receive external support. It found that amongst countries *with no external support*, only 59% reported on Indicator Two. This figure increased to 92% for countries that *did receive external support*. Further, the stock-take found that experience and know-how was an issue for state and non-state actors alike. Consideration should thus be given to country-level capacity development and financing to design and implement effective multi-stakeholder processes for follow-up and review of the SDGs.

3 Organize follow-up to discuss the findings

When it comes to monitoring – whether of the SDGs or the Global Partnership’s development co-operation indicators – the interest and value lies not only in the numbers, but in knowing where the ship is sailing in order to adjust course accordingly.

One of the broader aims of the Global Partnership’s monitoring exercise is behaviour change. This does not necessarily come out of the monitoring exercise itself, but rather out of follow-up based on the monitoring results.

Participants of the Indicator Two monitoring were interested in follow-up steps, including multi-stakeholder dialogue on the findings. Given that countries are to engage in annual reviews of the SDGs, consideration could be given to convening, institutionalizing and maintaining ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue on particular SDGs. Similarly, consideration could be given to reflection in single stakeholder groups on country reports, including the implications for their own practices as well as actions needed to make progress.

Overall, the Global Partnership monitoring is relevant for SDG follow-up and review in light of the multi-stakeholder process, but also in terms of its content. The Task Team's stock-take found, for example, that stakeholders deemed Indicator Two relevant for SDGs 16 and 17 on inclusive societies and accountable institutions, and partnerships for sustainable development respectively. Countries could build on the Global Partnership's monitoring framework to inform follow-up and review of these two SDGs (as well as others, like SDG 5). This would also be in line with 2030 Agenda's guiding principle that follow-up and review should build on existing platforms and processes.

To conclude, engaging in and organizing a multi-stakeholder monitoring exercise is anything but easy. However, participants of Indicator Two monitoring found it worthwhile from the perspective of collective interest in making progress. The same can be said for the SDGs. Inclusion – and more specifically the principle of leaving no one behind – is a cornerstone of Agenda 2030. It calls for multi-stakeholder engagement throughout SDG design, implementation and follow-up and review. After all, this is “an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people and this, we believe, will ensure its success.”

Interested in more information?

You can hear stakeholders speak about their experiences with the multi-stakeholder process of monitoring Indicator Two in the [summary video](#) of our [side event](#) at the Second High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership in late 2016.

You can also read the summary or full report of the Task Team's [Stock-take](#) of Indicator Two monitoring.

About the Task Team

The Task Team's work


The Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is a multi-stakeholder informal network.


Its work is concerned with advancing the role of civil society in development, in the context of international commitments on civil society and development as agreed at the 2011 Busan High Level Forum, the 2014 Mexico High Level Meeting and more recently the 2016 Nairobi High Level Meeting.

Task Team participants come from three stakeholder groups: governments that provide development cooperation; recipient governments; and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). It is led by three co-chairs, each representing a stakeholder group.

For more information about the Task Team

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Task Team

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