

Sharing the tools for development

If societies are to achieve sustainable development, we need to usher in a new era of collaboration, involving strong and meaningful partnerships between agencies, investors, communities and donors



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In September 2015, world leaders meeting in New York adopted *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This broad and ambitious agenda seeks to advance the wellbeing of all people while also safeguarding the planet. It conveys both means and ends, with its vital human development goals complemented by the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns, inclusive growth, decent work, essential infrastructure, and that fundamental precondition for sustainable development: peaceful and inclusive societies.

This new and universal agenda calls for action on sustainable development – and on the shared challenges our world faces – by every country in domestic policy. These challenges range from continuing extreme poverty for hundreds of millions of people to considerable unemployment (especially for youth), climate change, violent conflict, natural disasters and deadly disease outbreaks. The new agenda calls for a paradigm shift in the way in which development is done, and in the partnerships required to achieve sustainable development.

What has been learned from the MDG experience?

Over the past 15 years, the momentum generated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contributed to reducing the incidence of extreme poverty; improving access to primary education; reducing infant, child and maternal mortality rates; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis; and advances on other key MDG targets, like that for water.

MDG 8 promoted “a global partnership for development”. This galvanised significant increases in official development assistance (ODA), improved developing countries’ access to developed-country

markets, advanced major initiatives to reschedule or write down the external debt of developing countries, improved access to treatments for high-profile diseases and increased access to new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies.¹ As the MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015 underscores, despite important progress made towards the achievement of MDG 8, major gaps remain that will require strengthened partnerships for development to achieve the SDGs.

There were also issue-specific partnerships focusing on specific MDGs and their targets. For example, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases. This Global Fund partnership – an innovative health-financing mechanism – supports programmes that have saved more than 17 million lives since 2002.² The rapid increase in access to antiretroviral therapy in countries supported by the Global Fund – from four per cent coverage in 2005 to 21 per cent in 2010 and 40 per cent in 2014 – has been a tremendous contributing factor.³ Currently 2.2 million people are on life-saving antiretroviral therapy through UNDP programmes financed by the Global Fund.

Another example is Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which brings together governments, foundations, international organisations, civil society organisations and pharmaceutical companies to “improve access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world’s poorest countries”.⁴ Between 2000 and 2015, Gavi contributed to the immunisation of 500 million children, and strengthened health systems and immunisation services in more than 60 countries, thereby greatly contributing to progress on MDG 4, which aimed to reduce mortality rates significantly for children under the age of five.⁵

Gavi uses innovative financing mechanisms to provide long-term funding commitments to developing countries. For instance, it set up the International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) in 2006 to accelerate the availability and predictability of funds for Gavi’s

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◀ Helen Clark visits a school in Fier, Albania. Despite all SDGs being interdependent, education has a uniquely important role in equipping and empowering people to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development



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◀ Kazakhs herd sheep to their spring pasture in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. Transhumance helps to support biodiversity – an example of the nexus and balance between society, economy and the environment

immunisation programmes. IFFIm uses \$6.3 billion in long-term pledges from donor governments to sell ‘vaccine bonds’ in the capital markets, making large volumes of funds immediately available for Gavi programmes. Vaccine bonds have proven remarkably popular with institutional and individual investors who want a market-based return and a socially responsible investment opportunity.

Partnerships and Agenda 2030

In Agenda 2030, UN member states committed to mobilising the means required to implement the Agenda “through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.”⁶ This commitment is now embedded in SDG 17. Member states also pledged to

complement the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development with “multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to support the achievement” of the SDGs (target 17.16).

Agenda 2030 recognises that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, but also that national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment with coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and with strengthened and enhanced global economic governance. The new Global Partnership envisages demands for ongoing North–South cooperation, but also goes beyond it to embrace South–South and triangular cooperation as vital sources of innovation, expertise and solutions for tackling development challenges.

The new Agenda offers many opportunities for engagement by philanthropy and the

private sector. In 2013, philanthropic finance going to initiatives in developing countries was estimated at \$60 billion,⁷ while net ODA was \$135 billion.⁸ Thus philanthropic investment has scale, and is also known for its flexibility and willingness to take risks and innovate. Forging partnerships with the philanthropic community and broader civil society at the country level will be crucial for UNDP during the SDG era. For instance, UNDP is a founding partner of the SDG Philanthropy Platform – a collaboration between philanthropy and the wider international development community.⁹ It aims to enable partnerships on global development as we transition from the MDGs to the SDGs; to improve capacity, knowledge and data-sharing for philanthropic investment; and to promote accountability in the philanthropic sector.

The role of private investment in realising the Agenda will be very large, especially as it aligns with long-term sustainable development objectives. How businesses do business matters. For example, over and above the value of investment in developing countries, the use of inclusive and sustainable business models can have huge impact. Supporting the entry of micro, small and medium-sized business to value chains, providing skills training and decent work, and ensuring that business operations do not leave a toxic environmental legacy are all huge contributions to sustainable development.

Government policy and regulatory settings can also encourage investment into sustainable infrastructure – in, for example, energy, transport and waste disposal systems – and into research, development and innovation for sustainability. The removal of fossil fuel subsidies alone would be a significant boost for sustainability.

Drawing on all forms of finance (domestic and international, public and private, environmental and developmental) will be essential for SDG implementation. The different streams of finance can be blended

and leveraged. For example, public funding instruments like the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund can catalyse much larger funding flows from other sources. The partnerships between UNDP and these instruments will play an important role in supporting developing countries in moving towards low-emission and climate-resilient sustainable development.

Partnerships for advocacy, action and accountability

The outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development – the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* – emphasises that multi-stakeholder partnerships matter not only for mobilising financial resources, but also for sharing development knowledge, technology and expertise, and for complementing the efforts of governments.

1. Advocacy

The implementation of Agenda 2030 will be assisted by strong and continued engagement and support by broad partnerships of stakeholders. This will help to keep decision-makers focused on implementation, and to encourage the individual and collective behaviours that will move societies towards sustainable development.

Civil society and citizen participation and engagement featured prominently in the processes leading up to the finalisation of the SDGs. The UN's MY World global survey drew more than 8.5 million responses from individuals on priorities for the new Agenda. The successor to the UN Millennium Campaign, hosted by UNDP, will now play a strong role on national SDG advocacy and public engagement.¹⁰ The campaign will encourage broad stakeholder engagement with – and ownership of – the SDGs in every country, as well as citizen-driven processes to track progress.

2. Action

The SDGs promote coordinated action across the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental. Actions in one area should be supportive of, or at least

not detrimental to, desired outcomes in another. For example, investments in maintaining biodiversity or in climate change adaptation can advance other goals on poverty eradication, health, food security or job creation – if well designed.

I recently witnessed this in Laos where an agro-biodiversity programme supported by UNDP, the GEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is promoting mushroom cultivation as a source of higher and more sustainable incomes than the traditional foraging for mushrooms in the forest. Both people and the forest ecosystem are better off as a result.

In pursuing such win-win initiatives to progress the SDGs, the expertise and resourcing of international organisations will be important, along with the many contributions that can be made by governments, bilateral donors, the academic and research community, philanthropy, the private sector and civil society.

Integrated approaches and multi-stakeholder partnerships are needed for actions to move the SDGs forward. For instance, on forest conservation, the UN-REDD Programme – a partnership of UNDP, FAO and the UN Environment Programme – supports partner countries in designing policies to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, which embrace multi-stakeholder dialogues and partnerships, and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.¹¹ This partnership will contribute to the achievement not only of SDG 15 on sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems, but also of SDG 10 on reducing inequalities.

3. Accountability

The 2030 Agenda's emphasis on accountability requires governments and development actors alike to apply high standards to data collection and knowledge management, and to engage people and groups from all walks of life in implementing and monitoring the SDGs.

The new Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, of which

UNDP is part, is a good example of a multi-stakeholder partnership created for this purpose. It aims to build robust, high-quality datasets on sustainable development, and to drive a data revolution for implementing and monitoring the SDGs.¹²

It seeks to ensure that having reliable and accessible data for these purposes remains high on the agenda of governments, civil society and other stakeholders. By engaging diverse actors and data sources, countries can better track progress, while deepening the ownership people and governments have of the results.

Moving ahead

Achieving the SDGs will be challenging. Yet our world has more wealth, knowledge and technologies at its disposal than ever before. Partnerships will be vital in advancing Agenda 2030, as these resources now need to be fully harnessed in innovative and more joined-up ways.

UNDP is committed to working with governments, sister UN agencies and the wide spectrum of other development actors and stakeholders to revitalise partnerships for sustainable development. ●

- 1 www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/mdg_gap/
- 2 www.theglobalfund.org/en/impact/
- 3 [ibid](#)
- 4 www.gavi.org/about/mission/
- 5 www.gavi.org/about/mission/facts-and-figures/ accessed 24 November 2015
- 6 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Preamble
- 7 The report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4588FINAL%20REPORT%20ICESDF.pdf>
- 8 MDG Gap Task Force Report 2014, www.un.org/development/desa/publications/mdg-gap-task-force-report-2014.html
- 9 SDG Philanthropy Platform is a collaboration between philanthropy and the greater international development community led by Foundation Center, UNDP and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, and supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Ford Foundation and the MasterCard Foundation, the Brach Family Foundation and key philanthropy networks such as Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support, Asociación de Fundaciones Empresariales in Colombia and Association of Philanthropy Indonesia in Indonesia
- 10 <http://beta.unsdgcampaign.org/>
- 11 www.un-redd.org/AboutUN-REDDProgramme/tabid/102613/Default.aspx
- 12 www.undatarevolution.org/report/