

INTRODUCTION



This is the third of three briefs that highlight findings from a global survey of locally based NGOs on their awareness of the SDGs and the voluntary national reviews and their assessment of implementation efforts to date. The survey was conducted in spring-summer 2017 by the NGO Committee on Social Development and was circulated in 5 languages to NGOs in the 44 countries up for voluntary review. Complete responses were received from 132 organizations from 28 countries across the world. Responding organizations represent both urban and rural programs, secular and religious, single focus and multipurpose groups.

Partnerships are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Our survey examined them from several perspectives.

AWARENESS OF NEW GOVERNMENT/NGO PARTNERSHIPS REGARDING THE SDGS

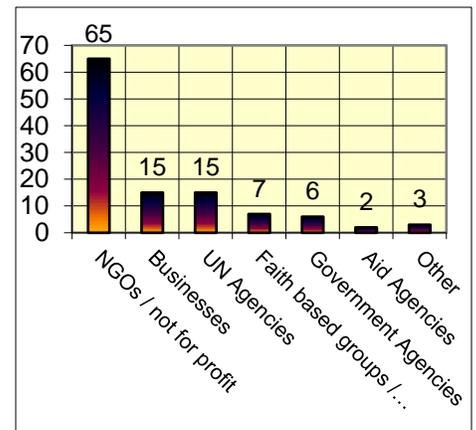
First, it reviewed whether participants were aware of *new* government and/or NGO partnerships related to the Goals. 66.7 per cent, a majority of whom are working directly at the grass roots level, said they were unaware of such new partnerships.



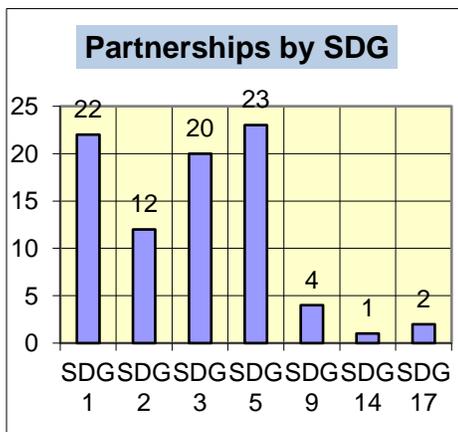
Of the 31.1 per cent who were aware of new partnerships, 20 respondents said they learned of collaborative efforts through connections at the NGO level. Nine discovered partnerships through working with governments at the local and regional level. Another 9 became aware through UN and international funding agencies or organizations. One learned of them through corporate social responsibility-led initiatives. 2.3 per cent did not respond. There were more respondents aware in India, where 19 mentioned they knew of partnership programs.

EXPERIENCE OF PARTNERING ON THE SDGS

In a second survey component related to partnerships, respondents were asked whether they were partnering with any other organizations to collaborate on Sustainable Development Goals and, if so, which ones. 79 (59.8%) indicated that they were, whereas 50 (37.9%) gave a negative response. A large majority (65) of those surveyed had partnered on the SDGs with other NGOs or not-for-profit organizations. Another 15 worked with businesses towards the Goals and an equal number with UN agencies. Seven collaborated with faith-based groups, 6 with government agencies, 2 with aid agencies, and 3 with others.



Of those respondents engaged in partnerships, 22 focused on SDG 1, 12 on SDG 2, 20 on SDG 3, 23 on SDG 5, 4 on SDG 9, 1 on SDDG 14, and 2 on SDDG 17. These were the Sustainable Development Goals considered during voluntary



reviews held in 2017. In 66 cases specific goals were mentioned, with some citing as many as 8 of the 17 SDGs. All 17 goals were mentioned directly or indirectly by one or more respondent. Most frequently mentioned were goals 1 – 5 as well as “environment” – referring mostly to SDG 15.

Partnering Organizations

The single most frequently mentioned SDG was # 5 on gender equality, followed by SDG 1 (poverty eradication), and SDG 3 (Health and wellbeing). It seemed that partnerships were most evident in addressing goals related to the former MDGs.

Respondents who have not collaborated with other organizations came from a variety of countries, most of which are extremely impoverished.

BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIPS

A third component of the survey related to partnerships questioned how programs have changed because of them. Responses fall into five general categories:

1. Broadening the scope of programs offered and the number of people reached was mentioned by 17 respondents. Sometimes the benefits of partnership were also seen in terms of broadening the perspective. One such example was a program in Peru which reached out to more than 15,000 people and involved collaboration with the Ministry of Women.
2. Next, heightened awareness led to concrete outcomes. The value of partnership was also seen as leading to greater awareness in local communities. This in turn led had let to tangible benefits
3. Ten respondents highlighted financial and economic advantages of partnership, mentioning access to funding, reduction in expenses because of donations in kind and help with acquiring infrastructure. Access to new marketing channels for products was also identified as a benefit from partnering with businesses.
4. 13 respondents referred to the benefits of partnership in terms of having access to resource people with expertise and benefitting from training inputs which led to expanded capacity building and training.
5. Sometimes partnership opened up new channels for broader, collective action and advocacy. 8 respondents from India highlighted this, referring to the greater influence that their collective work gained, giving them a stronger voice which could actually influence Government.

“It has enlarged our horizons, enabled us to reach out to more people and effects changes in their lives for good.”

“We have succeeded in making women and their families change their conditions of poverty and improving their diet, studies, interpersonal relationships etc.”

In one case it was noted that there was a “better price for the farm produce through the link with business people by avoiding various levels of middle men”.

“Providing skills training to youth has reduced the chances of their being trafficked”.

“The joint action of NGOs has built a collective consciousness in the government department that the Goals need to be addressed holistically”.

LINKS BETWEEN COUNTRY CONDITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Promote awareness of the SDGs at all levels, highlighting best practices and benefits of partnerships**
2. **Provide information about potential partnerships and resources to engage in them**
3. **Increase opportunities for partnerships in lesser developed locations**
4. **Ensure that civil society and persons from the grass roots are included in government decisions and that development benefits, and is inclusive of all.**
5. **Ensure that activities of private entities are designed to address real community needs**

In responses noting that conditions in their countries are worsening or there is *no* progress, a lack of networking and exclusion of civil society in government decisions was cited. NGOs are often ignored and only the NGOs with good connections will have a say. Other times, it could be dangerous for some NGOs to function because of the way that the government viewed them.

Lack of NGO participation and agency was again cited as an issue in responses from those who noted *little* progress in their countries. Some respondents replied that while there might be an effort of partnership, benefits and goals of development are not meant for the ordinary person. Others stated that private entities were able to freely spend money in ways that they chose without regard to actual community needs. Corruption was also stated as a reason that there is no partnership and that the SDGs seem unachievable.