

Governance as an SDG Accelerator: Country experiences and tools

HIGHLIGHTS



Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a formidable challenge for countries at all levels of development. The 2030 Agenda requires governments to coordinate, consult and work across policy areas in an unprecedented way. The implementation of the SDGs necessitates the strategic use of budget, procurement and regulatory tools and the design and implementation of innovative, forward-looking policies and programmes. Strengthening governance mechanisms, not only is a goal in itself, but also more importantly, is an essential enabler for the achievement of all goals. The Governance as an SDG Accelerator report seeks to illustrate how public governance practices can be strengthened to contribute more effectively to the implementation of the SDGs by presenting experiences, good practices and lessons learnt from countries around the world. The empirical evidence presented in the report contributes to the evidence base of the proposed **Global Hub for the Governance of the SDGs** and its main pillars.

Governance as an SDG Accelerator: Key mechanisms and innovations

1. WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT CO-ORDINATION AND POLICY COHERENCE

The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda requires governments to work across policy silos and set ambitious and interrelated economic, social and environmental objectives that go beyond short-term political cycles. A whole-of-government approach to strategic visioning, priority setting, and implementation is needed. Robust co-ordination mechanisms and the development of civil service skills are also key in ensuring policy coherence and successfully addressing the multi-dimensional policy challenges that characterise the SDGs. Country case studies on the **Slovak Republic, Finland, Czech Republic, Paraguay, Egypt, Luxembourg and Indonesia** illustrate the benefits and challenges of placing the responsibility of implementation of the SDGs in different government areas, as well as the difficulties faced in coordination at the subnational level. The OECD is working to integrate whole-of-government approaches and build the civil service skills to achieve multi-dimensional policy priorities such as the SDGs as outlined in the OECD 2019 Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capacity (PSLC). Moreover, the OECD Council Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, complemented by an online Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit can guide country efforts to identify and address the trade-offs and synergies between different SDGs and targets.

2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND OPEN GOVERNMENT

Collaborating with citizens at every stage of the policy and public service design and delivery is critical for ensuring sustainable improvements that respond to nuanced public needs. By promoting the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation, open government strategies and practices can inform both the substance of SDG implementation- by directly contributing to the achievement of the goals- as well as to the process by which countries pursue the SDGs throughout the policy cycle, namely, during their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The cases of **Finland, Indonesia** and **Luxembourg** highlight examples of strategies that can help promote dialogue, foster commitment and strengthen partnership principles with stakeholders. The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government provides important lessons that can help countries respond to challenges in the implementation of open government commitments including those explicitly outlined in the SDGs.

3. EFFECTIVE USE OF BUDGETING TOOLS

The budget is a central policy document of government, setting annual and multi-annual objectives and how they will be prioritised and achieved. Adapting budget systems and processes can improve the extent to which resource allocation supports effective policy design and performance in support of national SDG agendas, at all levels of government. Governments are encouraged to develop a medium-term dimension in the budgeting process and to structure budget allocations in a way that respond to national objectives. Moreover, setting high-level goals and indicators is a first necessary step that needs to be followed by a national strategy plan, overall reporting and accountability system. The review of case studies indicates that no country has as yet fully integrated their SDGs into the budgeting exercise. Case studies on the **Slovak Republic, Paraguay** and **Egypt** do show, however, how results-based resource allocations can help strengthen accountability mechanisms. The cases of **France, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway** and the **European Union** on the other hand, provide insights on green budgeting techniques. The 2015 OECD Recommendation on Budgetary Governance guides governments on how to implement budgeting frameworks that allow strategic expenditure allocations that are aligned with fiscal targets, medium-term priorities and development objectives.

4. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND AUDIT INSTITUTIONS

Monitoring and evaluation and the strategic use of the information it generates throughout the policy and budget cycle can foster a range of objectives such as value for money, accountability, overall transparency and better decision-making and policy design. In the context of the SDGs, a sound monitoring and evaluation system is of particular importance. Considerations such as inclusiveness and sustainability- as opposed to more traditional considerations such as efficiency or effectiveness- require innovative approaches when assessing the merit and achievements of policy initiatives in support of the SDGs. The review of country experiences shows that while most countries have established a monitoring framework for SDG implementation, only a few have addressed the issue of how to evaluate SDG achievements. The case studies on **Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Finland, Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands** show various results from the monitoring and

evaluation exercise, as well as the role of Supreme Audit Institutions for oversight. The OECD Network of Economic Regulators, the OECD Framework for Regulatory Policy Evaluation, the OECD Survey on the institutionalisation and governance of policy evaluation and the OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook, all guide countries in the design of effective Monitoring and Evaluation systems including in relation to the SDGs.

5. FOSTERING A CULTURE OF INTEGRITY AND FIGHTING CORRUPTION

Corruption remains one of the most challenging issues facing governments. Particularly in today's context of growing inequality and an erosion of trust in government, there is a growing perception that policymaking is being captured by vested interests. Adding to the challenge, corruption can occur at every stage of policy making and across all sectors. Integrity is vital to govern in the public interest and for the prosperity and well-being of society as a whole. It promotes economic growth by cultivating a level playing field for business, helps reduce socio-economic inequalities, and supports environmentally sustainability goals. Strengthening integrity also helps make public policies more effective and is vital for restoring trust in government. The case studies for **Indonesia, Lithuania, Thailand** and the **United Kingdom** illustrate the relevance of tackling corruption to achieve sustainable development and the importance of promoting integrity through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The OECD Recommendation on Public Integrity and the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention support countries in their efforts to fight against corruption.

6. ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND CITIZEN'S LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

At its core, access to justice is central to ensuring the effectiveness of the rule of law, and promotes good public governance, policy design and regulatory performance. Strong, well-functioning justice systems reduce the scope for policy capture, corruption and mismanagement in the public sector. They increase trust in government and support governance systems that are conducive to achieve the SDGs. Although legal needs are not exclusive to a category of citizens, vulnerable and marginalised groups are most exposed to face legal problems and to be limited in their access to legal and justice services. In order to change this, stronger political will to invest and understand the social and economic outcomes of accessing justice is needed. One of the most important trends in OECD countries is the shift towards people-centred perspective as guiding principle. The case studies from **Australia, Canada** and the **United Kingdom** provide useful insights on how to assess legal needs and facilitate access to justice to vulnerable groups, like indigenous communities, women and socially economically disadvantaged people through a comprehensive approach. The Global Hub for the Governance of the SDGs will work with countries to help them reorient the model of delivering justice in order to enable people-centred justice pathways.

7. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Achieving gender equality is a complex, transversal and multidimensional task. It requires the involvement and buy-in from all actors as well as a broad array of stakeholders across society. In addition, given the diversity within the male and female groups and intersecting identity factors, (e.g. related to age, geography, culture, income, disability, ethnicity, etc.), an intersectional governance approach is critical to implementing gender equality while addressing economic, social, political and environmental aspects of gender gaps at the global, national and local levels. Four specific measures could help accelerate progress: i) developing a gender equality strategy and integrating it into the broader SDG agenda, ii) creating institutional frameworks for gender equality, iii) gender mainstreaming and iv) reporting, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality strategies. The case studies from **Iceland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania** and **Mexico** provide examples of gender mainstreaming practices to position gender equality at the core of national development goals. The OECD can support countries in closing the gender divide in public life through the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life. Moreover, the Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality provides countries with concrete guidelines to implement the Recommendation.

