

HLPF Learning Event



Supporting an integrated implementation of the SDGs:
Tools for addressing SDG connections and enhancing policy and institutional coherence

Wednesday 11 July 2018 | 3-6pm | Conference Room 5 | UN Headquarters, New York

Summary



Introduction

The [PCSD Partnership \(#SDGAction12066\)](#) in collaboration with the OECD hosted a learning event on **“Supporting an integrated implementation of the SDGs: Tools for addressing SDG connections and enhancing policy and institutional coherence”** on 11 July 2018 as part of the *2018 HLPF SDGs Learning, Training & Practice*. The purpose of the event was to share country experiences; learn about relevant tools being developed and piloted for enhancing policy coherence; and identify gaps in tools, methodologies and processes as well as specific needs for more in-depth work.



The event was chaired by **Ebba Dohlman, Head of the OECD Policy Coherence Unit**, and convened speakers from 12 different institutions including international and regional organisations, think-tanks, civil society organisations and research institutions as well as from the national delegations of Mongolia, Germany, Finland, Mexico and Brazil. In her opening remarks Ebba Dohlman highlighted the importance of matching supply and demand to make the wide range of available tools for policy coherence more relevant for different country contexts. She referred to the *OECD Action Plan on SDGs* agreed by OECD Ministers in 2016, which provides - as one of the key actions - the mandate to update OECD instruments and tools on policy coherence, working in collaboration with other institutions and stakeholders.

Tools for enhancing policy coherence in SDG implementation

The event was structured in three sessions with presentations of different tools, followed by a panel discussion on the challenges different countries face in enhancing policy coherence and their need for tools and capacity building. Experts and PCSD Partners presented available tools, methods and initiatives for three main purposes: (a) assessing horizontal and vertical coherence; (b) integrating the SDGs into national implementation strategies; and (c) assessing and tracking progress in policy coherence for SDG implementation.

a) Assessing horizontal and vertical coherence

Moderator: Riccardo Mesiano, UN ESCAP, underlined the growing need for concrete tools that support country efforts for addressing synergies among SDGs. Governments and other actors require support to build capacities to better exploit complementarities, both across sectoral actions and between different governmental levels to accelerate progress in achieving the SDGs.



Karina Barquet, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) introduced the **framework for SDG interactions**. She stressed that progress on the SDGs can incur both positive and negative impacts. Using a qualitative 7-point scale, the Framework can guide policy making by scoring the nature of different interactions among targets, thus addressing a fundamental question: “if progress is made on target X, how does this influence progress on target Y?”. The purpose of this scale is to provide a common language and a process

to more systematically assess interactions through a cross-impact matrix, usually developed through a participatory and multi-stakeholder dialogue. The assessment can be carried out at the national and local levels and focused on national development plans, SDG implementation or sectoral objectives. The results of the matrix provide a point of departure for identifying

“Why is it important to understand interactions? Because you may not want to invest in a target which is having a negative impact on a set of targets that are positively connected”

patterns; understanding the aggregated influence of the targets on other targets; and showing areas where stakeholders have shared or conflicting interests. It can also inform ways to organise implementation, using public resources, and fostering dialogue and a learning process.

Anita Breuer, German Development Institute (DIE) presented two initiatives: (i) NDC-SDG Connections and (ii) National SDG governance mechanisms – a 3D typology. The tool ***NDC-SDG Connections*** aims to help policy makers become aware of potential synergies and trade-offs between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. She highlighted, for example, that one of the common actions proposed in climate finance is to increase the share of renewable energy which is also one of the targets under SDG7. However, relying exclusively on renewable energy might make it difficult to achieve affordable energy access for all. The tool has different functionalities that allow for exploring thematic overlaps between these two agendas at different levels, and analysing how climate actions under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) corresponds to each of the 17 SDGs. The tool allows for analysing and comparing individual countries or groups of countries, and highlights co-benefits of implementing these two agendas in an integrated manner. ***National SDG governance mechanisms: A 3D typology*** is a research initiative which aims at analysing and coding the institutional arrangement set up or planned for the purposes of achieving integrated SDG implementation, as described in the VNRs. The analysis is based on a three-dimensional typology: i) horizontal coordination, ii) vertical integration, and iii) societal inclusiveness. The initiative will explore the relation between SDG-governance mechanisms and countries' political and administrative systems to identify root causes of reform blockades as well as enablers for institutional reforms.



“Policy coordination to achieve an integrated implementation will require a deep institutional reform, and it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the institutional arrangements that countries have set up for SDG implementation”



Apollonia Miola, Project leader, European Commission (EC) Joint Research Centre, introduced a research project launched to build a ***Science-Policy Interface Framework for SDGs***, which aims at providing scientific support for evidence-based implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in the EU. The project has three elements, the: 1) development of an analytical tool to support policy coherence for sustainable development, which draws on gap analysis, assessment of co-benefits and trade-offs to support priority setting in policy-making; 2) identification of EU's key policy nodes, by putting together the results of interlinkages analysis with a mapping of all EU policies (legislative acts) along the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. This will then feed into

the modelling for ex-ante impact assessments of policies in the EU; and 3) establishment of a community of practice on SDGs to share knowledge among different policy communities.

Lynn Wagner, Group Director, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), presented two tools that can support policy coherence: **1) *The SDG Knowledge Hub*** focuses on providing clear and concise information and daily updates for policy-makers on decision making regarding the 2030 Agenda and SDGs – in particular the who? what? and where? The Knowledge Hub highlights key linkages between SDG areas and helps inform national decision-making. **2) *The Sustainable Asset Valuation (SAVi)*** is a flexible tool that helps decision-makers to evaluate the extent to which environmental, social and economic externalities affect the financial performance of infrastructure assets and projects. It helps to make explicit all the different competing values that the SDGs embody.



The discussion highlighted issues such as the extent to which (i) the tools are accessible to all countries (governments and stakeholders) and user-friendly, particularly for least-developed countries struggling to translate the global 2030 Agenda into national policies; (ii) the tools are useful to analyse and guide policy action with regard to transboundary effects; (iii) governance arrangements are appropriate and able to achieve integrated SDGs; (iv) institutional arrangements are adapted to enhance policy coherence effectively; (v) the interlinkages analysis is sufficiently effective, had a real impact on policy design, is supported by stakeholders, and how well these policies have been accomplished; and (vi) the SDG have been mainstreamed within the EU development cooperation interventions.

b) Integrating the SDGs into national implementation strategies

Moderator: Ernesto Soria Morales, OECD, underlined lessons from past experiences with Agenda 21 and national sustainable development strategies that emerged from the Rio process. They have shown that integration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into policy-making and planning is one of the most difficult balances to achieve. He underscored the need for tools that help policy-makers take a more holistic, integrated and long-term perspective of the sustainable development challenges.

Katinka Weinberger, Chief, Environment and Development Policy Section, UNESCAP, introduced the **SDG Help Desk** which is a one-stop, partnership-based online gateway to knowledge products that aims to support national SDG implementation. This tool has four specific features (services lines, search engine, knowledge repository and partnerships), and was developed based on an assessment of capacity development needs in countries in Asia and the Pacific. According to the assessment, countries require more support in terms of follow-up and review especially in the context of policy coherence and stakeholder engagement. The platform helps to categorise information and facilitates collaboration in the region and beyond. ESCAP's **E-Learning Course on "Integration of the SDGs into National Planning"**, supports policy-makers and practitioners in the region in developing national strategies and plans for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The course consists of four modules which provide insights into the importance of balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development and guidance on how to achieve this balance in practice.



Steven Arquitt, Millennium Institute, presented the **Integrated Simulation Tool (iSDG)**, which is specifically designed to look at all the 17 SDGs. The model aims to support planners and policy-makers to embrace the complexity of the SDG system. It contains explicit causal linkages which represent the interconnection between SDGs and targets and simulates the behaviour inherent in the causal structure of the SDGs. It provides the user with the possibility to perform experiments to examine different policy mixes and see how policies impact on all SDGs. The model contains about 75 indicators and gives the possibility to examine impacts on individual indicators as well. The iSDG model has been implemented in six different sub-Saharan African countries and in one regional project which includes 10 countries from the Sahel. The implementation of the model, which involves training, starts by looking at the national plan of the country and by projecting where that plan will take that country in terms of SDG attainment. It entails an iterative process on how to improve that behaviour.

Duncan Cass-Beggs, Head of the OECD Strategic Foresight Unit, underlined the importance of strengthening strategic foresight capacities and future focus to SDG for integrated approaches to implementation. He emphasised that we are living in an exceptional time in terms of the pace of change and uncertainty around the world, which is particularly driven by acceleration of technological development and the interaction with megatrends such as demographics, climate change, politics and geopolitics. In this context, we do not know what the world will look like in 2030, and there is a need to develop capacities to plan 2030 national strategies in the face of uncertainty and considering alternative future scenarios. He introduced the **Strategic Foresight for SDGs**, as a set of tools and approaches to support the design of adaptive and future-ready SDG national strategies through policy dialogue and work-shops where some of the key emerging trends and uncertainties are identified and the implication of plausible scenarios are discussed among policy-makers. Strategic foresight supports integration by bringing together diverse stakeholders to consider systemic changes which can impact across different polices.



“We have seen a huge amount of uncertainty and in this context we can’t simply design plans and strategies to fit with the world in 2018; we need to see how our strategies will work in a context of alternative futures and scenarios in 2030.”



“If we are going to achieve the sustainable development agenda, then we need to involve the private sector.”

Julianne Baroody, Manager, Sustainable Development, Verra, transitioned the discussion from the policy level to the level where sustainable development activities happen: often, as projects promoted by civil society or the private sector. A key question is how to capture and promote the innovations of such activities and the contributions that they make to the SDGs in a context of policy uncertainty and as different national agendas for implementing SDGs are still being developed. There is a need to make it easier for civil society and the private sector to undertake sustainable development projects and to show them how they can benefit from their contributions to the SDGs. In this context, Verra is developing a certification standard to be released in early 2019 called the **Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard (SD VISTA)**. Under SD VISTA, projects could be transparently assessed by a reviewer against an open and flexible standard, enabling them to communicate social, environmental and economic impacts in a comparable way. Such project certification might attract the interest of investors or corporate sponsors interested in supporting the SDGs. Having certified projects demonstrate successful activities on the ground can be the proof of concept that leads governments to develop national policies or other incentives that advance the national sustainable development agenda.

Issues highlighted in the discussion included: (i) the need to use and develop measures beyond GDP to capture the impacts of actions, and the benefits and costs of various SDGs; (ii) how standards can facilitate the negotiations or conversations with financial institutions and banks for projects labelled with SDGs to get lower spreads or facilitate projects with entrepreneurs; (iii) the importance of independent certification of standards; (iv) the challenges in using evidence for planning interventions and accessibility of modelling tools for least developed countries; (v) the type of data and data sources used in modelling tools in a context where countries are struggling to find data (including environmental and disaggregated data) to measure targets at the national level; and (vi) the use of strategic foresight in fragile contexts.

c) Assessing and tracking progress in policy coherence for SDG implementation

Moderator: Rilli Lappalainen, Kehys, underlined that tracking progress on policy coherence and effectively communicating the importance of it are two major challenges for all countries.



“If you look at the policy cycle, there are different levels of mechanisms to ensure coherence between policies”

Ludgarde Coppens, UN Environment, discussed the development of a **Methodology for measuring SDG target 17.14** and underlined that policy coherence is seen by countries as one of the key means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda. Policy coherence has its own target. The indicator that will help to monitor progress on this target is “the number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development”. The key challenge is that no internationally established methodology or standard exist. At the same time, it is important that any new methodology can be used to harmonise country data for international comparability. The indicator has to be feasible for all countries - from the least developed countries to most developed - and estimates need to be transparent. Ms Coppens highlighted that an International Expert Group has been established composed of multiple stakeholders to develop a draft methodology, which will

then be tested in pilot countries with a view to refining it. She underlined that the Expert Group is taking a broad perspective and looking at common elements of the policy-making cycle in many countries (agenda setting, policy formulation and planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation) to identify institutional mechanisms for policy coherence at different levels.

Ernesto Soria Morales, Senior Policy Analyst, OECD Policy Coherence Unit, underlined that OECD has been working for the past 20 years to promote policy coherence for supporting development agendas. The OECD has aligned its approach and analytical framework for policy coherence to the nature and principles of the 2030 Agenda. He introduced the **PCSD Framework**, as a flexible and adaptable tool that aims to support any government interested in strengthening its analytical capacities, institutional mechanisms, processes and practices to pursue policy coherence in the implementation of the SDGs. The PCSD framework provides guidance and a screening tool (checklist) for: i) analysing critical interactions between economic, social and environmental policy areas as well as potential policy effects that need to be addressed for effective implementation of the SDGs; ii) adapting existing institutional mechanisms, based on eight building blocks for PCSD identified by the OECD drawing on country experiences; and iii) developing indicators for tracking progress towards PCSD and strengthening monitoring and reporting systems. The PCSD Framework consists of three generic modules (institutions, analysis and monitoring) and three thematic modules (food security, illicit financial flows and green growth).



“At the OECD we have adapted our analytical frameworks for promoting policy coherence to the nature and principles of the 2030 Agenda. We have moved from a donor-centric approach towards a more universal approach based on multi-stakeholder partnerships”



Javier Pérez, CIECODE, presented **Parlamento 2030** which is designed to assist governments, parliaments, and civil society organisations in overcoming the challenges of addressing the integrated nature of the SDGs. The tool: i) builds a database with all documents published by the parliament; ii) labels and classifies political initiatives with related SDGs and targets, and iii) provides all relevant information in a user-friendly interface which allows the user to see the parliamentary activity through an

“SDG lens”. The tool can be used to undertake a deep policy coherence analysis of the SDG-related political activity, by mapping interlinkages of laws with SDGs and targets, and detecting unforeseen connections and uncoordinated political debates. The tool is implemented in Spain and has been adopted by the Spanish government as one of the official tools to support the follow-up of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The tool can be adapted for use by other countries or levels of government.

“We are implementing SDGs through pre-SDG institutions, and we are monitoring the 2030 Agenda through pre-SDG approaches and tools. This means that the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs is an extra challenge for all of us”

Jakob Trollbäck, Creative Director of The New Division, highlighted that a successful achievement of the complex 2030 Agenda requires strengthened collaboration and a consensus on what to do. He underlined the importance of translating the complex text in the 2030 Agenda document adopted by 193 UN member countries into smart and inspiring language to incentivise action and build common understanding on the challenges we are all facing – information is not communication! With the support of the Swedish government, he is developing a tool for **Communicating the 169 targets**, as part of a communication system for all the SDGs and targets. The tool builds on the visual design language in the icons for SDGs to outline points of action for each of the 169 targets. He also informed about a joint initiative with the Stockholm Environment Institute to develop a system for visualising how individual targets impact on other targets, which is a way to single out key targets as enablers for accelerating progress, such as target 16.5 (combat corruption) which is about the largest threat against democracy, and target 16.6 (develop strong institutions) which can accelerate progress in many other targets. Understating the power of the targets is key for implementation.



“The solution to many of the problems that we are trying to solve is not in a target, it is in a combination of targets”

Ensuring a coherent implementation of the SDGs – What needs do countries have? What type of support can help?

Moderator: **Ludgarde Coppens**, UN Environment, highlighted some of the needs that countries have and what type of support they are looking for.

Doljinsuren Jambal, Director of Development Policy and Planning Division, National Development Agency (NDA), **Mongolia**. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda by UN Members, the parliament of Mongolia approved the development policy and planning law, **Sustainable Development Vision2030**, which regulates the coherence of policies and defines roles, responsibilities and the accountability mechanism. According to this law, the SD Vision2030 and SDGs will be implemented through sectoral policies of which there are currently 170 in Mongolia. A major challenge is to ensure the coherence between all those 170 policies and their alignment with the SD National Vision and SDGs. The NDA which is responsible for policy coherence, has found that 25% of the SDG targets are not reflected in the SD National Vision. The NDA is using the SEI seven-point scale framework to review the 170 policies and their alignment with SDGs, prioritise areas for medium-term development policy, and prepare the roadmap for SDG implementation. The process has two steps: i) to analyse direct interlinkages, and ii) to consider indirect interlinkages. This involves consultations with experts from the government, academia and the private sector to assess challenges and prioritise key SDG targets. The successful achievement of the SDGs will depend on how the development planning system operates in the country. It involves a strong coordination mechanism for implementation and evaluation, and requires national capacities and leadership at the top. Mongolia has a SDG National Council chaired by the Prime Minister. The challenge is to increase the capacity of the institution responsible for policy coherence to bring cross-sectoral issues to the attention of the high-level decision makers.



“Governments should put more attention to ensure the capacity-building of those responsible for promoting policy coherence”



“Reducing the negative effects of domestic policies on partner countries is more important than the support we directly provide to them, because it has a more significant impact in the long run”

Cormac Ebken, Deputy Head of Division of 2030 Agenda; Reduction of Poverty and Inequality, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), **Germany**, underlined that PCSD is the key challenge when it comes to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Given that some goals come from the previous MDG agenda, and others from existing environmental frameworks, a key question is how to approach SDGs in an integrated manner. National policy making is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda, and the role of BMZ is to ensure that actions at national level avoid negative impacts on partner developing countries. In Germany, success factors for implementing 2030 Agenda include: (i) political will and high-level leadership at national level. The Coalition Treaty states that the 2030 Agenda is the guiding principle for German policies, and the government has to live up to that standard; (ii) a national sustainability strategy under the responsibility of the Chancellery which helps to engage strong ministries, such as the finance ministry, and is framed for implementing SDGs at home in support of developing countries and at the global policy level, explicitly considering the global impact of domestic actions. For example, the strategy includes indicators such as increasing the percentage of sustainably produced clothing along the supply chain or increasing the percentage of imports from LDC to European markets; (iii) having horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms to make sure that different ministries work together, including a parliamentary advisory

percentage of imports from LDC to European markets; (iii) having horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms to make sure that different ministries work together, including a parliamentary advisory

council which has a key role in regulatory impact assessments. Germany has developed a new online tool that allows policy-makers to check whether the laws they are developing can have negative impacts on other areas; and (iv) having independent actors in the monitoring and follow up system, such as the German Statistical Agency which is in charge of monitoring the German SD Strategy, to ensure transparency and accountability.



Rilli Lappalainen, Secretary General, the Finnish NGDO Platform to the EU, Kehys, **Finland**, highlighted that he was representing the civil society, but speaking on behalf of the Finnish national delegation which illustrates the way in which Finland is engaging different actors in the 2030 Agenda. He focused on the institutional architecture in Finland for implementing SDGs. A key actor is the National Commission on Sustainable Development with 60 members representing all different stakeholders and chaired by the Prime Minister. The Commission launched the Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development which provides a platform for engaging governmental institutions, businesses, CSOs and citizens to publicly commit on concrete actions for achieving the SDGs. The Finnish Development

Committee, which involves multiple stakeholders, has a key role in bringing to the debate the external dimension of the SDGs. Coordination has been strengthened through the SD Coordination Network which involves public servants from all ministries, and the Prime Minister's Office Hub which provides the secretariat for coordinating on a daily basis the implementation of the SDGs. The National Follow-up and Review Network, a multi-stakeholder group also led by the Prime Minister's Office, which developed and launched national indicators for the SDGs in a testing phase. All indicators are available online and open for feedback, with progress being reported after one year. Finland will undertake an external evaluation for assessing progress on PCSD, and a report of the evaluation will be ready by the time of the 2019 HLPF.

Viridiana Gonzalez Uribe, Deputy Director, Directorate General for Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Mexico**. Mexico has established dedicated institutional mechanisms for implementing the 2030 Agenda and several actions are evolving. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda which is led by the President and involves all ministries and governmental institutions decided at its first meeting on May 31st to reform the presidential decree, by which the Council was established, to ensure the participation of multiple stakeholders and the society in the implementation, not only the government. This was an important decision for ensuring a long-lasting commitment given that Mexico will change government in December. When the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015, the Mexican President clearly stated that for Mexico the 2030 Agenda is a commitment of State. This political commitment expressed at the highest level has allowed the country to mobilise action at all levels, scale-up efforts to enhance coherence, establish dedicated institutional mechanisms, develop a national strategy, and take important decisions, such as the alignment of the federal budget with the SDGs, working with parliamentarians to build ownership and commitment. A key challenge is to communicate how the SDGs relate to peoples' concerns and aspirations, for example for indigenous people, and what they can do to achieve them.



“The principal aim of the 2030 Agenda is to change the manner in which we are making public policies”



Philip Gough, Permanent Mission of **Brazil** to the UN, provided some highlights of the Brazilian experience with implementation of the 2030 Agenda which could help address the question of country needs. He underlined the need to ensure different layers of coherence: among the different ministries involved in implementation, among the different branches of the government; between the national and subnational jurisdictions within the country; and among stakeholders involved in implementation. The Brazilian experience with the MDGs offer key lessons for 2030 Agenda implementation on ways to improve: (i) governance for implementing international agendas. Brazil has a national commission for Sustainable Development led by the office of the president. It is a parity commission with 16 members, 8 from the central government and 8 from other stakeholders which have a fixed mandate of 2 years and are selected through a transparent process based on certain criteria. Monitoring has been improved. The congress has some pilot programmes for auditing the implementation of targets and SDGs by the government (e.g. in 2017 a pilot programme for target 2.4 on sustainable agriculture, and in 2018 a pilot for all targets in SDG 5 on gender); (ii) planning and alignment of the Brazilian multiyear plan with SDGs and targets; and (iii) dissemination of information represents a key challenge as the level of knowledge in Brazil about the 2030 Agenda is still very low given the size and complexity of the country. The government has launched an SDG Prize for specific projects with around 6000 projects already registered on several areas of the SDGs, which helps with dissemination and awareness-raising. There is considerable scope for South-South co-operation and other countries have approached Brazil for advice on how to enhance policy coherence.

Closing remarks

In her closing remarks, **Ebba Dohlman** highlighted some key points from the session, that:

- Many governments are still working in silos, both vertically and horizontally, and struggling to break out of traditional ways of working.
- There is a considerable demand for policy coherence tools, and the need for improving capacity building, peer learning opportunities, learning from past experiences.
- Many policy coherence tools are available but it takes political will to provide the opportunity for different stakeholders and policy communities to use these tools, have the space for multistakeholder dialogue and for experimenting with them;
- Everyone has responsibility for the 2030 Agenda, and collective actions and coherence are key as no single actor at the national, subnational and local level can do this alone.
- There is no quick fix and no one-size-fits-all solution, but there are many opportunities emerging to use tools, align approaches and address trade-offs in a manner that is appropriate to the national and local contexts;
- Effective communication will be essential for building commitment and engaging all actors.