



Partnering for the SDGs

Building up the system of support to help mainstream collaboration for sustainable development

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Part I: SDGs and Partnerships

Part II: The Partnering Support System

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Part I: Partnering and the SDGs

Introduction

In September 2015, the UN announced the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Effective, multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, business, NGOs, donors and communities is central to achieving these goals. Such collaboration will be needed at a scale and quality that goes far beyond current efforts.

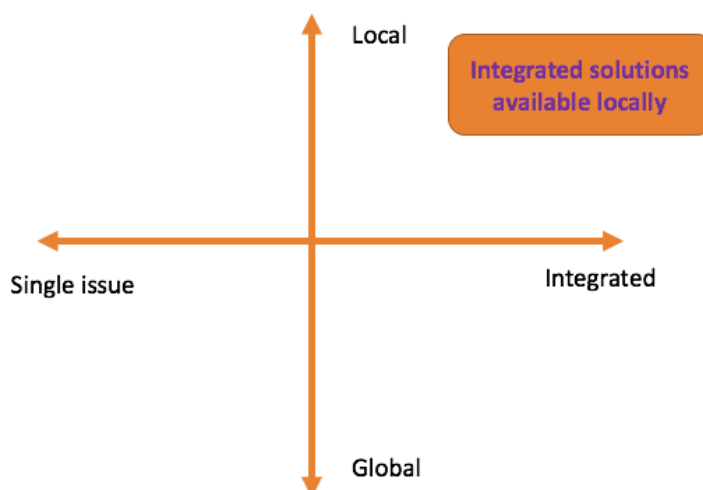
This document provides an integrated, five-level framework to enable the unleashing of collaboration for the SDGs. It has been developed based on existing extensive research undertaken by TPI and others, and further developed and corroborated through desk research and a series of interviews with leading thinkers in the partnering field.

The integrated framework (see the 'Call to action' section of this document), while it remains a work in progress, is presented with cautious optimism. The analysis of interviews and desk research reveals repeated calls for 'something cross-cutting', yet also coherent and not overly complicated, to enable partnership action for the SDGs. The five level approach attempts to fulfil that call and has received critical endorsement from a wide range of actors from all sectors of society.

About this document

This document is closely linked to TPI's mapping of the support infrastructure that is currently in place to enable partnering and collaboration (see Part II). Taken together, both pieces of work help to demonstrate the size and nature of the gaps between current practice, and start to uncover next steps in addressing the gaps. Both parts also actively seek to relate to the other outputs from the PEP Facility.

An underlying assumption of this work is that we need to make integrated solutions available locally; partnerships until now have been focussed too much at the global level, and too much on single issues. Insufficient consideration has been placed on local context and the need for more holistic solutions integrated across related SDG issues. SDG implementation will require focus on the top-right quadrant of the diagram below.



With the resource available, this is necessarily a light touch research report and neither this document or the mapping claim to be comprehensive. However, both attempt to provide a constructive contribution to the ongoing global partnering conversation; and both parts are offered in the spirit of the following inquiry: *What will it take to unleash the potential for collaboration to help achieve the SDGs?*

Approach

The lead writer for this paper is Dave Prescott, TPI Senior Associate, along with Darian Stibbe, TPI Executive Director. Special thanks to Rob van Tulder, PRC, for his comments which we have attempted to reflect in this report.

The inputs for this piece of work are as follows:

- A 2014 report produced by TPI for the GPEDC, co-written by Darian Stibbe and Dave Prescott, entitled 'Unleashing the power of business: A practical roadmap to systematically scale up the engagement of business as a partner in development'. The report involved interviews with forty people from all sectors, four roundtables held around the world, a global survey and online discussion events.
- Desk research (see 'further reading' section)
- A series of semi-structured interviews with leaders in the field (the list of interviewees is provided below)
- A version of this five-level integrated framework was presented at the PEP Co-Design Lab at The Hague in January 2016, with informal feedback given.

Interviews

Questions

The questions below were used as the basis for the semi-structured interviews, providing insights for both this piece of work and part II on 'Mapping the landscape of existing support infrastructure for SDG partnerships'.

Scene-setting

- As it relates to your organisation, how would you characterize the overall landscape and institutional political and business drive towards collaboration for the SDGs?

Mapping of partnering support initiatives

- What are you doing / planning to support partnership development at scale, and at what level (global / regional / country-level)? This might include:
 - advocacy / raising awareness / showcasing partnerships;
 - supporting the enabling environment for collaboration (e.g. dialogue, policy support);
 - mechanisms for catalysing / brokering collaboration;
 - building skills and capacities for effective partnering;
 - financially supporting collaboration.
- What other significant actors / specific initiatives (including any country-level government-led programmes) can you tell us about?

Partnering landscape needs analysis

- What's missing? What needs to be done to more systematically drive collaboration for the Global Goals at the necessary scale, whether global, regional or country-level?

Interviewees

The individuals listed below were interviewed for both parts of this report. The selection was made on the basis of two considerations: 1) participation in a Netherlands-convened roundtable lunch on the topic of the Global Partnerships at the UNGA as part of the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals in New York in September 2015; and 2) leaders in the area of partnering with existing relationships with TPI.

During the interview process, new introductions were made in a 'snowballing' process. This list is by no means comprehensive but demonstrates a reasonable cross-section of thought leaders and

expert practitioners which, when combined with the other inputs listed above (including, 30 to 40 interviews for the 'Roadmap'), attempts to provide a valuable contribution to the ongoing global discussion on partnering.

Matthew Cousins, Scaling Up Nutrition; Lisa Dreier, World Economic Forum; Robin Gorna, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; Susan Myers, UN Foundation; David Nabarro, United Nations Secretary General's Office; Jane Nelson, Harvard CSRI; Karen Newman, UNDP / SDG Fund.

Note on interview process

The people in this list receive regular requests for interviews, which places a premium on their time. Each time they are approached to have a conversation on a similar subject, the risk of interview fatigue increases. Therefore, an attempt was made for the interviews to be 'co-creation' processes responding where possible to the needs of the interviewee, rather than survey processes which simply extracted information.

These interviews yielded some valuable insights which are reflected in the two TPI documents. However, it was also clear that the forms of non-verbal communication (for example, the way in which questions were interpreted, the particular emphasis placed on certain concepts, the telling silences) provided further insights which are difficult to capture in a static text document¹.

Partnering in the SDG era

The effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships, while dependent on many factors, will increasingly be tied to their ability to manage and share knowledge and expertise about the issues, processes and solutions they are promoting. The Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are truly universal in nature - they apply to all countries, and all sectors. This universality will require, inter alia., that the knowledge and expertise managed and possessed by multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be shared as widely as possible in order for it to reach beyond immediate constituencies and communities and to have an impact on a global scale.

UN DESA, December 2015²

While goal 17 of the SDGs explicitly talks about a 'global partnership for development', and has a target (17.17) specifically related to multi-stakeholder collaboration, the reality is that all of the goals necessarily require the involvement of, and significant collaboration across, all societal sectors. Further, the goals are highly interconnected. Water, for example, is an essential component of health and sanitation and agriculture. This represents a radical difference between the MDGs and the SDGs, referred to by one interviewee as the difference between 'old style thinking' (in silos) and 'new style thinking' (in cross-cutting, intersectoral, interdisciplinary systems).

The different styles of approach for implementing the MDGs and the SDGs are illustrated below.

¹ Based on the experience of this interview process, it suggests that future discussions of a similar nature should be recorded (either as audio only, or with video as well), rather than simply noted down as static text files. This can be done at low or no cost with open source technology. Interviewees must be reassured that such files will only be shared with trusted colleagues. Audio and video footage can be more effectively shared than written notes; such footage contains greater level of nuance than static text; and it can be used as source material for other researchers.

² UN-DESA, December 2015, p. 4.

Table 1: MDG vs SDG style thinking around development³

← MDG-style	SDG-style →
← Need to focus on specific issues in specific geographies in order to achieve sufficient concentration of effort and achieve impact	Need for holistic approaches across issues and geographies to tackle systemic challenges →
← Most funding is linked to the achievement of short term outcomes	Longer term investment required for transformational change →
← Requirement to demonstrate impact and low tolerance of risk leads to using tried and tested approaches to achieve development outcomes	Need for innovative approaches with greater long term potential but greater risk of failure →
← Development community used to more rigid, strong-tied structures	Need for agile, flexible, loose-tied structures →
← Top-down planning, 'development by design' approach	Emergent planning based on the coalescing of interests and local resources around particular issues →

The need for a rapid uptake of 'SDG-style' working has multiple implications. For example, it places a premium on collaborative working, and sometimes this is effectively captured by the word 'partnership', sometimes it is not. In the words of one interviewee:

*"We want people to realise that partnerships are extremely unwieldy, they are very slow at delivering results, there are huge transaction costs, and they are not necessarily the best mechanism for every need. We'd like to help educate people about the pros and cons of a partnership approach as one tool in the toolbox, and when it makes sense to use that tool, which we think is for **complex, long-term, system-level improvements**. People need to go into partnerships with a realistic idea of what they can and can't do."*

Another implication of SDG style thinking is that it creates significant data visualisation and interpretation challenges. The diagram below is taken from a recent UN-DESA paper which shows the SDGs as an integrated network of targets. The system map annexed to this current document is another attempt to 'visualise complexity' by showing what the partnering support system looks like. Still-emerging fields such as systems thinking, social network analysis and data visualisation appear to be essential for the SDGs. Organisations that are familiar with such techniques tend to be large consultancies and research academics: these are not entities that are traditionally accustomed to operating on the increasingly open source basis required by the SDGs.

³ Note: A similar version of the information above, framed in slightly different language but making essentially the same point, appears on page 9 in the CLI document produced for PEP in the table entitled 'The shift in leading complex change in collaboration for SDG implementation'

Figure 1
The SDGs as a network of targets

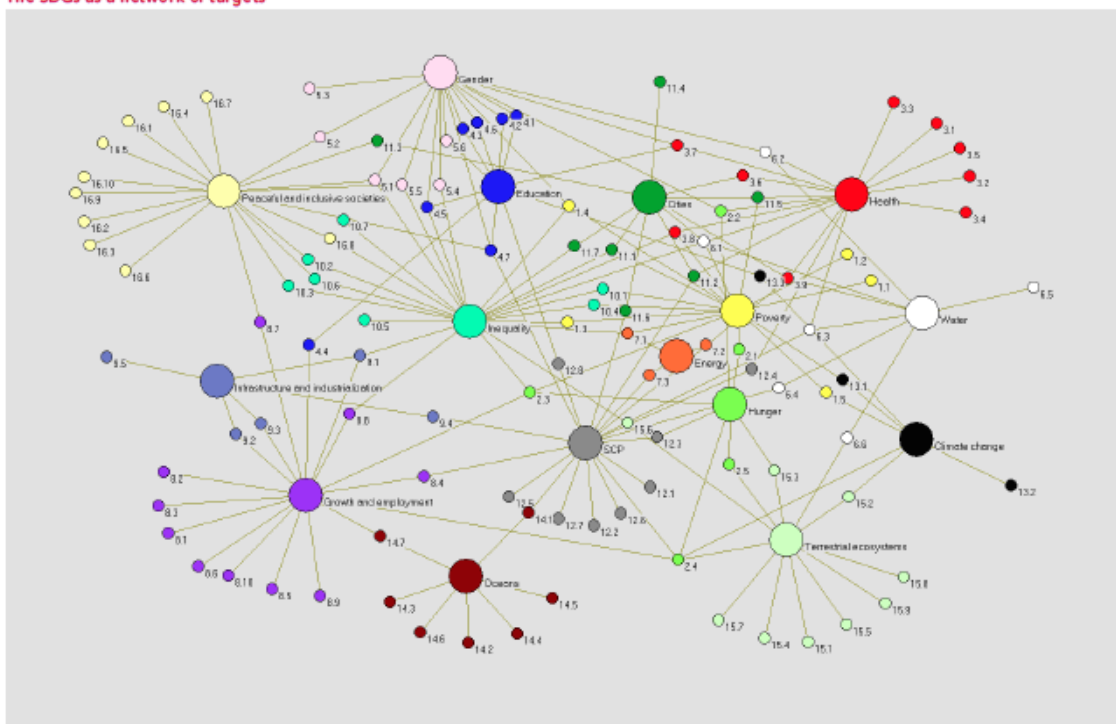


Figure 1: SDGs as a network of targets

Another point about the SDGs and partnership relates to accountability. The United Nations has made it clear that it will not itself be responsible for ‘implementing the SDGs’. Its self-appointed role is to help countries - when they ask for help - and to be the forum where they talk about implementation, share data globally, and report on their progress to each other⁴.

Since we are all now responsible for implementing the world's development agenda, this means, to put it mildly, that ‘we all have bigger jobs now’ (in the words of one interviewee)⁵. As job descriptions are rewritten, as organisational and partnership strategies are rehashed, and as new platforms spring up to try and respond to these new demands, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed.

Luckily, none of us are alone. We can learn from each other, share successes and failures rapidly. Experiential learning, undertaken while attempting to actively build partnerships, with input from experienced mentors and support from a peer network, is emphasised as critical:

“Given how the whole sector is evolving on the fly, and in real time, through experimentation, we observe people learning by doing. That’s the best way to develop the skillset – through actual experience – sitting in an executive training session for one week where someone is saying, rather formulaically: ‘Stakeholders have different values and perspectives’, means it’s hard to make it real – but when you’re sitting in front of another stakeholder who is telling you that they don’t understand what you’re saying, you learn much more quickly. Learning by doing is the most powerful way to build the relevant skillsets and mindsets, but you create the risk of everyone falling down the same rabbit holes and reinventing the same wheels. So, if you’re encouraging learning by

⁴ <http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/2741-countries-not-un-responsible-for-implementing-17-sdgs>

⁵ This verbal flourish should be set against the insight from one interviewee who notes that, even in New York, where the SDGs have received most fanfare, only a tiny minority of people beyond the ‘UN bubble’ have actually heard of them, let alone are doing anything differently as a result of them.

doing, you have to also have facilitated sharing of learning, so that people get enough experience to understand what the issues are, and there is a network of peers who can share learning with one another."

If the approach outlined in the quote above suggests a pragmatic way forward for those who are embarking on new partnership action, what are the options available for those in existing partnerships, established during the MDG era and undergoing the radical transition period to the SDGs?

*"A gap that really seems like it needs to be addressed is how existing partnerships link up together **when needed**. 'When needed' might be more at the country level – eg Every Woman Every Child has a new global strategy for women and children's health (the underpinning for EWEC). This is a new strategy updated this year based on five years' experience to date. It found that up to 50% of gains in health come from investments in other sectors (education, nutrition, water and sanitation). So the question is, how does a partnership which has been about maternal and newborn health take into account those realities? And how do you present a coherent view and way of working together to new partners in order to take the work to the next level?"*

The challenges of understanding when to make interlinkages, between partnerships and between other actors in the partnering community, is likely to become more complex rather than less complex. As the alignment and communication challenge grows, so does the challenge of engaging business, whose place at the development table has now been established beyond doubt.

"Considering the private sector, for example, a company probably doesn't want to be approached by separate partnerships on 1) nutrition, 2) health, 3) sanitation. The company understands that all the issues are interlinked – how can the partnerships that are set up across that spectrum of issues work together on related issues? They can't all be one partnership, which would be unmanageable, but how do they show the picture of how they are connected? Part of the solution is building common platforms at country level."

One interviewee noted the need for 'match-making' between "the specific needs at the country level (and other geographic levels), and the assets and capabilities that the entities involved in partnerships are able to provide." The point is well-made and raises several challenges relating to

There is a real urgency to get this work right. Powerful advocates are needed for the 'new way of thinking' which, despite its complexity, its tendency towards abstraction and its apparent disregard for pragmatism, nevertheless represents something important. This needs to be communicated, and it needs to be communicated powerfully. For example:

There's an awful tribalism in so much of governance and development where people cluster around their sectoral loyalties, their disciplinary loyalties and even their institutional loyalties – and that is incredibly destructive. It's destructive in security, when different parts of the French police and security apparatus bicker while people are being shot in a concert hall. It's extremely unsatisfactory in the UN when different agencies can spend three, four, five years bickering about how to approach an issue like malnutrition, which is so evidently cross-sectoral. And it's appalling in government when different ministries, or even different local government offices don't work together because people bitch at each other all the time. So there is a massive amount to be gained by encouraging these intersectoral and interdisciplinary approaches, and the techniques are not straightforward, but they can be learned.

So, what might SDG-style partnering look like? One interviewer (speaking from experience) recommends loose, open networks rather than formal, rigid structures:

If you want to be open and welcoming to all, it's harder to do that if you are in a very rigid structure because there's always people who are inside and outside the structure. Or there will be constituencies that elect representatives, and so on. This is frankly where the most interesting research and analysis can be done.

More formal structures can also be important, but understanding which type of partnering structure to use for what purpose is a critical question. The multiplicity of structural forms available adds another layer of complexity to the question.

This brief analysis of interviews and desk research has demonstrated is the need for a cross-cutting or integrated approach to dealing with partnerships for the SDGs at multiple levels and geographic scales, which is both coherent and manageable, while also reflecting the complexity and urgency of the agenda. Such a cross-cutting approach necessarily involves collaboration between multiple organisations in order to harmonise and align efforts, spot gaps, use core competencies of organisations and so on. The next section, the 'call to action', attempts to articulate this need.

A Call to Action

Or, time to get serious about unleashing collaboration for the SDGs

The SDGs reflect the fact that the prosperity of business, the prosperity of society and the prosperity of the environment are fundamentally interlinked. While collaboration is easier said than done, it is only through robust collaboration can we hope to optimise and maximise value from the human and natural resources available to us.

Urgency is needed. We need to think big, to be ambitious, to step up. We need to work collectively, as a movement, if we are to achieve impact at scale.

If we are to achieve the level of collaboration required to deliver the SDGs, action is required across five levels, at all geographic scales:



Taken together, action across these five integrated levels can create the incentives, the capabilities, the knowledge and the opportunities to unleash collaboration on a grand scale.

Description of each level

Individuals

Definition: Individual people are at the heart of effective partnering, and are at the heart of this integrated framework.⁶

People need partnering competencies in order to work collaboratively with others. This includes creating a collaborative mindset, developing the understanding of other types of organisation and sectors, the importance of relationship-building and technical partnering knowledge and skills.

The need here is to provide contextually-relevant partnering training to thousands of people per year across the world, which helps to build the collaborative mindsets and skills needed to deliver the SDGs.

The opportunity is to develop a scalable, self-funded training capacity that can deliver high quality, online and in-person partnering competencies to NGOs, government and business. This training can be delivered in multiple formal and informal settings, but always with a core focus on experiential learning.

Organisations

Definition: Organisations across all sectors (government, business, civil society, academia, and informal networks) need to be 'fit for partnering'⁷

In order to unleash collaboration, organisations of all types need the right leadership and strategy, systems and processes, incentive structures skills and a partnering culture to enable effective partnering. Organisations should be able to assess the degree to which they are institutionally 'fit for partnering' and take steps to adjust and continually improve, contributing to the common body of knowledge as they learn.

The opportunity is to apply existing and further develop new methodologies, and share lessons learned for organisations on how to engage in effective partnering practices.

Partnerships

Definition: Cooperation between government, business, NGOs and other stakeholders in which they agree to work together, jointly assuming risks and responsibilities, combining their resources and competencies to achieve common partnership goals, and thereby achieving both business and development benefits more efficiently and effectively⁸.

New partnerships should be established in ways that enable rapid learning from similar experiences that have gone before, to avoid previous mistakes and to avoid continuously 'reinventing the wheel'. In order to do this, we need shared language, understanding of the partnering process, accessible tools, and more effective forms of evaluation and learning[3].

Existing partnerships should be able to quickly learn from one another in order to adapt to the new thinking required by the SDGs.

Both technical partnership specialists and a wide range of major users of partnerships will collaboratively collect, evaluate and review effective partnering practice by leaders in this space.

These approaches to effective partnering practice must be extensively disseminated, along with tools and training to support adoption and implementation.

⁶ PBA's work on developing the 'interior condition' of individuals, and TPI's 'MUST have' partnering competency framework are

⁷ See thepartneringinitiative.org for further information on what it means to be *fit for partnering*.

⁸ This working definition is taken from 'Unleashing the power of business: A practical roadmap to systematically engage business as a partner in development' (TPI, 2015)

The opportunity is to develop continual improvement in effective partnering practice, to enable partnerships to operate at their highest potential, to learn quickly from each other and to demonstrate impact effectively.

Platforms

Definition: Facilities, hubs, centres, accelerators or structures with the aim of catalysing a step-change in quality, quantity and effectiveness of partnering approaches⁹

In order to unleash the collaboration agenda, beyond individual partnerships, in-country platforms (operating at both national and sub-national levels) as well as regional platforms will serve a critical role. These independent platforms, which can either be created anew or wherever possible be adapted from existing entities, can then be networked globally for shared learning and support.

The need is to share good practice in the development and operation of partnering platforms, to build connections between existing platforms through which experience and learning can be rapidly shared, and to catalyse the development of new platforms where gaps exist.

System

Definition: the 'partnering space' within which individuals, organisations, partnerships and platforms operate (at local, national, regional and global levels).

System maps and data visualisation can help us to better understand the nature of the activity underway at this level. Such interventions can help to identify the interlinkages between and across the four levels, spot gaps and blockages, and seek opportunities to improve flows of partnering knowledge and expertise.

These knowledge and expertise flows can be unlocked in multiple ways, ranging from better frameworks and policies at the national level, stronger relationships between partnering practitioners, and more accessible forms of knowledge-sharing.

Ultimately, system leadership requires bold-yet-humble, experienced individuals operating with a collaborative mindset for the common good: this is why individuals are at the heart of this integrated framework.

Concluding thoughts

The SDGs require a whole range of new skillsets, including the need for systems thinking. Many individuals and organisations appear to perceive the SDGs as simply a re-hash of the MDGs, but with more targets: however, this misses the essential point that the SDGs are something new. They represent a serious attempt at applying systems thinking to achieve societal transformation on a global scale¹⁰

Several attempts have been made, or are underway, to broker connections between large partnering entities. One example is the attempt by PMNCH to form an 'alliance of alliances', bringing together large partnerships to share lessons on issues relating to governance and accountability, right through to pragmatic discussions such as how secretariats are funded. Another example is the work undertaken by the GPEDC to bring together partnerships to share learning. Such activities appear to be undertaken in an *ad hoc* way, and with limited follow-up.

There is an opportunity to facilitate these interlinkages between leading partnering practitioners in more systematic and cumulative ways, and by capturing and disseminating the learning in as

⁹ CLI's work on partnering fundamentals is relevant here, for example the definitions of different partnership forms, and the review of success factors and building blocks.

¹⁰ See for example, 'Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets' (UN-DESA Working Paper no. 141, March 2015); interview with David Nabarro who refers to the MDGs as 'old style thinking' and the SDGs as 'new style thinking'; and a recent report commissioned by the World Economic Forum, based on the experience of the New Vision for Agriculture, and which calls for 'System Leadership'.

many creative and accessible ways as can be imagined. Existing platforms should be used for this wherever possible.

The PEP Facility could act as a valuable and dynamic repository for such learning, and strengthen the partnering support system (see Part 2, below). However, in order to play this role effectively it will need legitimacy at multiple levels:

- *Policy legitimacy*: the ability of the PEP Facility to resonate with policy makers, and potentially to achieve a formal or informal mandate from an entity, probably linked to the United Nations.
- *Practitioner legitimacy*: demonstrating alignment with other similar partnering efforts in ways that are valuable and openly seek to harmonise, rather than duplicate or appear to compete.
- *Research legitimacy*: the quality of work undertaken by PEP needs to be methodologically robust, and the methodologies should be open to scrutiny, using good practices from the academic research sector.

If it can find its niche, achieve legitimacy, and be bold and ambitious, PEP has the potential to genuinely push forward the practice of collaboration to achieve the SDGs globally.

Part 2: Partnering support landscape

Introduction

As set out in part 1, while there are good examples of collaboration around the world that are achieving real impact, achieving the level of scale of collaboration required needs a much more concerted and active effort to *make partnerships happen*. A robust and effective 'partnering support system' needs to be in place to build widespread understanding, develop partnering competencies and spread knowledge, broker and support high quality collaboration, and provide systematic mechanisms that can engage all societal actors and innovate new partnerships.

The working definition of the partnering support system is: the set of actors of all kinds (whether organisations, initiatives, platforms, individuals etc.) that together makes accessible the necessary support, catalysis and capacity building at the appropriate level to drive widespread development of collaborative action.

This document sets out to provide a high level snapshot of the state of partnering support globally. It attempts to bring together in one place an idea of the variety of initiatives and programmes out there that, while currently mainly operating independently, could potentially be more effective with an appropriate level of coordination, exchange and shared language and standards. The paper also seeks to identify the major gaps in the support system both to inform the development of PEP and to help other organisations and initiatives orient themselves with the needs that are out there.

It must be noted that with the resources available, this is not a major research project, but is necessarily light touch and makes no claim of being comprehensive. Potentially this initial foray could lead to the development of a living, breathing database helping to make it much easier for development actors of all kinds to access support around the world. In the meantime, this exercise has highlighted a number of organisations with whom it will be useful to have early 'alignment conversations', in order to ensure that PEP is not seen as a new entrant or somehow jumping on the bandwagon, but an entity that draws on a long track record (through the combined experience of its five initiating partners), which is seeking to usefully fill a gap.

The emerging information about the current support system is set out in three ways: 1) an overview of the types of support available, with a number of key organisations and initiatives highlighted to provide examples and colour; 2) an Excel file of the various initiatives found in the research; and 3) an early attempt at a system-mapping approach which includes both the 'nodes' (the organisations / initiatives) and the interconnections between the nodes (the flows of knowledge, joint activities, funding etc.).

The Partnering Support System

Within the partnering support system, we identify six distinct roles together with illustrative examples, noting that organisations might play multiple roles simultaneously:

- [SHOW] **Showcasing / pledging initiatives:** Programmes that raise awareness and build understanding of the role of collaboration for the SDGs, which may include calls for action / collection of pledges (often with focus on the private sector)

e.g. UN High Level Political Forum's 'Partnerships for SDGs' platform, USCIB's Business 2030, Business Fights Poverty, Devex Impact

- [INTER] **Intermediaries:** platforms, initiatives and organisations that catalyse partnerships (multi-stakeholder initiatives, UN and other development agencies, NGOs, business or other membership organisations)

e.g. UN Global Compact, Zambia Business in Development Facility, UNDP, World Vision, Centre for Responsible Business in India, SAGCOT, Western Cape Economic Development Partnership,

Business Fights Poverty, SDG Partnerships hub [hosted by Business Fights Poverty], UN Global Compact local network, SDG-Fund, GPEDC, UN Foundation

- [CONSULT] **Partnership facilitators / consultants:** skilled professionals able to take partners through a robust partnering process to ensure alignment of interests and robust, effective partnerships (individuals, consultancies, universities or intermediary organisations)

e.g. Independent brokers; niche consultancies; specialist departments within major consultancies (e.g. FSG, Accenture Development Partnerships, Bain, ADP, PwC, KPMG, BCG)

- [CB] **Capacity building organisations:** providing training in effective partnering for individuals; supporting organisational development (consultancies, universities, training organisations)

e.g. Partnership Brokers Association, Collective Leadership Institute, The Partnering Initiative, Singapore University Tri-Sector Partnership Course, UN System Staff College

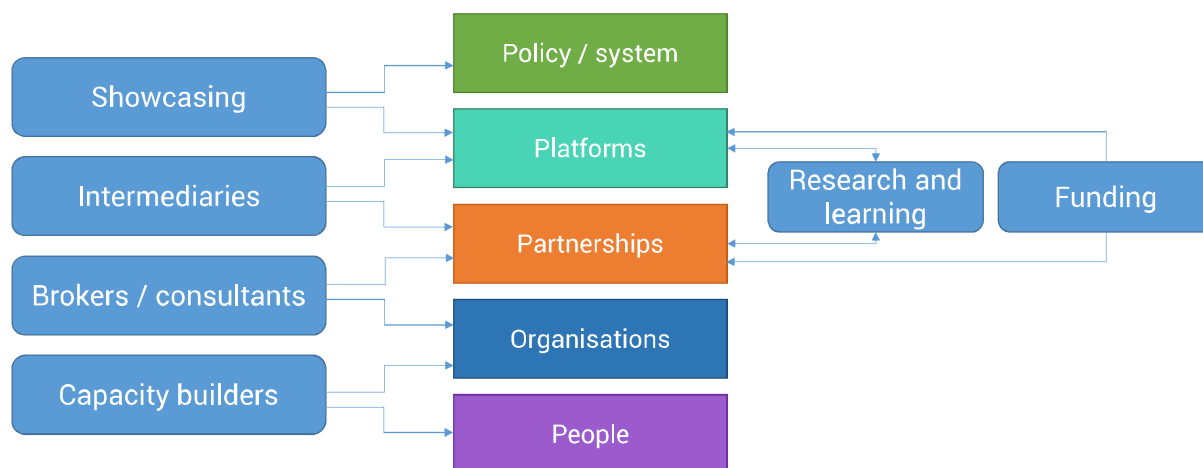
- [LEARN] **M&E and learning organisations:** undertaking M&E of platforms and partnerships; drawing out learning; communicating / sharing knowledge (universities, knowledge institutes, consultancies, development agencies)

e.g. Partnership Resource Centre, Collective Leadership Institute, The Partnering Initiative, Partnership Brokers Association, Harvard CSRI, Business Fights Poverty, Fundacao Getulio Vargas, ESAMI, Devex Impact, ODI

- [FUND] **Funding organisations:** financially or otherwise supporting the development of public-private partnerships (potentially by supporting intermediary organisations or platforms) and financial support for implementation (donors, foundations etc.)

e.g. Sida [ZBIDF and other initiatives], Dutch MOFA [PEP / NVA / Water etc.], Danish MOFA [3GF], USAID [Global Development Alliance], DfID [Business Fights Poverty], GIZ [new German national platform], IDB [partnership support], Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [health], Grantmakers for Effective Organisations [systems grantmaking], Ford Foundation [knowledge]

These interlink with the five levels set out in part 1 as follows:



Entities within the support system may operate at one or multiple levels from global through regional to national and sub-national (vertical integration). They may also explicitly target cross SDG issues (horizontal integration).

Entities which are vertically integrated, such as national / local platforms operating within a global programme have particular potential to provide value within the support structure, since:

- a) They can operate at the same level where partnerships are actually implemented and so can be much more context-specific, based on local priorities and the realities on the ground, and designed around the interests and available resources of the partners - i.e. they can create more appropriate, implementable solutions, which maximise value from what's there;

- b) They can optimize the benefits of integration into the bigger system - using international or national policy frameworks, access to good practice knowledge and experience of others, sharing of material / capacity building etc.; connection with financial flows (whether donor funding or other forms of investment); and
- c) They develop valuable insights and knowledge that can be passed back up the system to inform others.

Key elements of the support system

Spotlight: Global Partnerships

Global Partnerships are issue-based collaborations with ambitions for global impact through some combination of policy advocacy, showcasing and *calls to action* to gather pledges, knowledge development and exchange, channelling of financial flows, supporting in-country action, and catalysing collaboration.

While mainly set up in the MDG era, they contribute to many of the SDGs in different ways. The Global Fund is an example of what is essentially a top-down, multi-sectoral global trust fund which acts through distributing funding to the country level for action on AIDS, Malaria and TB, with an array of organisations (including the private sector) delivering on the ground. While others have attempted or considered similar models, it relies on raising huge funding at global level, removed from the specific foci of interests of those contributing, to create impact on the ground.

Other global partnerships, such as Scaling Up Nutrition and, increasingly, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, operate globally and nationally, facilitate collaboration at a country level, to utilize the resources that are available locally.

In this section, we provide a range of examples to illustrate the support system, as well as assessing the gaps and existing and potential 'macro' activities that can systematically strengthen the system.

Showcasing / pledging initiatives

On the whole major showcasing / pledging initiatives tend to operate at the global level. A number come from the UN, including many of the 'Global Partnerships'¹¹) but also from business organisations.

For example, one of the Global Partnerships, Every Woman Every Child is a multi-stakeholder movement to implement the United Nations' Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. It seeks commitments of all kinds from all sectors of society, which it showcases and tracks through its website.

The UN and the US Council for International Business both have online showcases of partnerships for the SDGs.

Gaps

Pledging initiatives commonly suffer from the challenge of how to track and report on the pledges that are made on action towards the SDGs. While companies and other organisations might receive publicity for announcing action, it is then hugely difficult to monitor to ensure that that action took place and the impact that it had.

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Showcasing of initiatives tend to suffer both from the challenge of keeping databases up-to-date but also the fact that data is spread around a great number of competing databases, so there is no single place to go to view all information on a topic.

Potential 'macro' interventions

1. Work with pledging initiatives to design common procedures for reporting on implementation of announced action;
2. Create common interoperability standards for databases of partnerships to allow the aggregation and sharing of data, and common approaches to keeping the data up to date.

Intermediary platforms and organisations

There is a rich and growing array of intermediary entities bringing the different sectors together around particular issues and facilitating dialogue and supporting the creation of partnerships.

Most major business organisations with a sustainability focus play a significant role in brokering collaboration around topics of interest to their members, either as business coalitions or multi-stakeholder partnerships. For example, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, runs global programmes across a range of value chain and sustainability issues, usually with action on the ground taken in collaboration with a range of partners.

There is also a growing understanding within and action by UN Agencies (most notably UNDP) of the role they can play as a catalyst or broker of partnerships, even if they themselves are not partners. World Vision is an example of a major NGO that has understood the essential need for collaboration and is acting as a broker of partnerships, mainly at the local level.

A number of **platforms** specifically designed to catalyse and support partnership action are being set up across multiple geographies and issues. Such platforms are likely to be most successful when the issue resonates sufficiently with the participant organisations both in terms of topic and geography - i.e. there is sufficient *specificity of interest* with the organisations - and where there is sufficient *commonality of interest* across the organisations that they can coalesce around the issue to explore and take forward collaborative action.

What this means in practice is that platforms operating purely at global level will largely focus on issues of global advocacy and/or knowledge exchange rather than specific action in country. Where more direct action is desired and there is a mismatch between the levels at which a partnership is agreed, and at which it is actually implemented, there is a risk of 'Davos Syndrome'¹². This describes problems in implementation that come about for two reasons: firstly, without the most relevant people in the room, the local context may not have been sufficiently taken into account and so the agreed partnership solution may not be the most appropriate; and secondly, the local representatives of the organisations - those actually expected to contribute their time and other resources on the ground - may not have the same incentives and sufficient interest in taking the partnership forward.

Much more geographically extensive than partnership platforms are mechanisms for public-private dialogue (PPD). PPD provides an opportunity for discussion between government and business, usually around what government can do to create a more supportive business environment, although in a number of cases (e.g. Rwanda), this has widened across development issues. While dialogue is of course a pre-cursor to collaborative action, most PPD results in policy reform rather than partnership. Nevertheless, these existing mechanisms potentially provide an excellent substrate on which to build partnership platforms.

¹² Coined by Darian Stibbe of The Partnering Initiative, the term 'Davos Syndrome' comes from observations that agreements to partner made by CEOs and Executive Directors at meetings such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, often suffer problems when it comes to actual implementation by the people on the ground.

Key examples

World Economic Forum

The main cross-issue, cross-sector organisation operating globally is the World Economic Forum (WEF). WEF is the 'International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation' and brings 'together the world's foremost CEOs, heads of state, ministers and policy-makers, experts and academics, international organizations, youth, technology innovators and representatives of civil society in an impartial space with the aim of driving positive change'.

WEF takes deep dives into a number of key global challenges, driving action down to the regional and country level. One of their most successful programmes, and one of the best examples of vertically integrated platforms out there, is the **New Vision for Agriculture**. At the global level, this programme facilitates leadership commitment to action through dialogue, commitment building and collaboration among multiple stakeholders, and promotes innovation and best practice by facilitating exchange of innovation, experiences and best practices among stakeholders and regions. Through its **Grow Africa** and **Grow Asia** platforms, it supports transformation in agricultural systems by catalysing and supporting action-oriented, multi-stakeholder partnerships at regional and country levels.

Scaling Up Nutrition

[SHOW] [INTER]

One of the most successful and integrated platform for partnerships is the SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) initiative, a 'global movement led by countries'. Operating in 56 countries it supports advocacy and garners commitments from all sectors in country. In a number of countries it plays an active role in brokering collaboration among the sectors for transformational action. Along with vertical integration, it is also seeking much strong horizontal integration, looking to work more strongly with other related initiatives such as the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

UN Foundation

[SHOW] [INTER]

The UN Foundation's role is to support partnerships between the UN, business and other societal sectors. It also acts as a backbone organisation for a number of the Global Partnerships including Every Woman Every Child and Sustainable Energy for All.

UN Global Compact

[SHOW] [INTER] [CB]

The UN Global Compact, the 'world's largest corporate sustainability initiative', is a 'call to companies to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals'. While the focus has been mainly on the former, in its new strategy, the organisation is looking towards its array of Global Compact Local Networks to play a significant role in brokering collaboration between its members and the United Nations System. This approach was successfully prototyped with the support of The Partnering Initiative in Colombia, Brazil, India and Kenya, and a programme put in place to build the capacity of local networks to play the role. While there is serious potential in the UNGC to become a network of brokering platforms, capabilities and resources within the local networks are mixed and some are in a much better position than others to play that role.

In addition, the UNGC runs a number of global programmes, such as the CEO Water Challenge that support collaboration on particular topics, as well as an online partner matchmaking service across a variety of issues.

Gaps

Platforms that can systematically catalyse partnerships are few and far between, particularly at the country level. In an ideal world, there would be such mechanisms (or alternatives providing

the functionality) in place across all SDGs (in a horizontally integrated way) and at all geographies from global to village level. Of course, it is not realistic to expect such a comprehensive system to be put in place, however, a paper under development by World Vision and The Partnering Initiative¹³ looks in detail at how such a system could be grown organically over a period of time, wherever there is a sufficient coalescence of interest and leadership, and, where possible, building on existing structures and resources.

One area where the creation of national and sub-national platform would create particular value is to be provide to ensure vertical integration between global partnership efforts and action on the ground. Further, while the global partnerships struggle for horizontal integration at the global level, it is the country level where there is real potential to develop more holistic / integrated approaches through, at minimum, coordination of efforts.

Macro interventions

Business Partnership Action (BPA), a Global Partnership Initiative (The Partnering Initiative, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK, Colombia and Zambia), supports the creation of locally-owned and run country-level platforms to more systematically engage with business and catalyse and support partnerships for development.

It has developed or contributed to platforms in Zambia, Colombia, Mozambique, Kenya, Singapore and the Philippines. Both through the experience of creating new platforms, and through developing a coalition of platforms that exchange knowledge and experience, it aims to prototype, improve and codify what is an essential, scalable approach towards mainstreaming country-level public-private collaboration.

Partnership facilitators / consultants

Expert, neutral support that can take nascent partnerships through an effective process and instil good partnering practice will both speed up partnership creation and ultimately result in greater value creation and impact.

There are a growing number of consultants – independent brokers, niche consultancies / not-for-profits, and specialists within major business or development consultancies. The partnering specialist support organisations include three of the PEP Partners (CLI, TPI and PiP); Global CAD - a global network of experts promoting partnerships to find innovative and sustainable solutions to global challenges; and Be-linked, operating mainly in francophone countries among many others. Notable specialists in consultancies include Accenture Development Partnerships, Monitor Deloitte, Boston Consultant Group, KPMG among others.

Several of the specialist partnering organisations mentioned above already operate in an informal alliance, working together wherever valuable, passing on opportunities to the organisation with the most appropriate skills and experience.

Closely connected to cross-sectoral partnering, FSG's Shared Value Initiative has created a Consulting Affiliate Network, a consortium of independent consulting firms around the world that are trained to provide shared value consulting services to corporations, governments and civil society organizations.

Gaps

While the number of consultants is growing, in particular with one or two-person niche consultants, in most countries there is not a sufficient supply of affordable, expert support available for partnering. At the same time, there is in general a lack of understanding of, and therefore demand for, expert external support, with help often being sought only once partnerships have gone wrong rather than at the beginning when it can make the most difference.

¹³ To be launched April 21st in New York.

Potential macro interventions

Three elements to macro intervention include:

- A campaign to build understanding of the value of expert partnering support
- A public registry of support available to help make it more easily accessible
- An approach to quality recognition – potentially through common professional certification

Capacity-building organisations

The number of organisations providing training in cross-sector collaboration is surprisingly limited. Those known to have trained significant numbers (in the low thousands) include the PEP partners: the Partnership Brokers Association, Collective Leadership Institute and The Partnering Initiative – with different foci. The Netherlands-based training and consultancy organisation, MDF, also offers courses in 'Making partnerships work'.

There are also dedicated university courses in Singapore and in Indonesia. While clearly not a dedicated capacity-building organisations, it is worth noting that World Vision has trained over 1000 of its own staff in partnering at the local level, partly based on PBA material.

Course are not distributed evenly around the world, with the majority taking place in Europe. Given the geography and the international cost, they are not widely accessible to the majority of the planet.

It is difficult to judge the degree to which partnering is included within the curricular of relevant university degree and other courses. It appears to be a regular topic in courses related to sustainability, such as the University of Cambridge's Masters in Sustainability Leadership or Forum for the Future's Leadership in Sustainable Development Masters. However, at least in the experience of the writers of this report, it does not seem to have been widely adopted in more mainstream courses, for example around public policy or business administration.

Gaps

There is a huge global need to build the skills, understanding and competencies for collaboration, (a need which outstrips the stated demand). Training, mentoring, coaching, peer-to-peer exchange and learning etc. need to be made available in the most accessible and appropriate forms, potentially online,

Macro interventions

- TPI is developing with World Vision the Partnering Academy, a consortium of international NGOs, with an agenda to make blended learning on partnering accessible. This includes the development of online training as well as cascading high quality, affordable training down to the country level.
- A campaign could help to spread partnering as a key competence into existing relevant courses. The creation of standard open source partnering material could help institutions to integrate it.

M&E and learning organisations

Along with the PEP Partners, there are a variety of organisations operating globally that – to a greater or lesser extent – draw out learning from collaboration including Harvard CSRI, FSG, Business Fights Poverty, Fundacao Getulio Vargas, ESAMI, Devex Impact, and ODI.

Specifically on M&E, all the PEP partners have developed their own approaches and are actively supporting a range of partnerships' M&E activities. The growing number of consultants mentioned above in many case provide partnership review and evaluation services, and many of the organisations providing 'traditional' development evaluation (mainly around impact) are either working with partnership specialists or developing competencies on the partnership efficiency / health check side.

The Partnership Resource Centre works collaboratively with a number of universities around the world, and the Annual Review of Social Partnerships brings together academics both through an annual conference and around its eponymous publication.

Gaps

There is currently no 'standard' approach to M&E and few organisations have extensive experience of implementing M&E of partnerships.

Anecdotally, most partnerships do not build in M&E as part of their implementation, and few have learning mechanisms built in.

Macro interventions

- Creation of, or building up of, a network of academic and research institutions that support partnership learning and measuring in country while exchanging experiences and lessons-learned globally.
- Encouragement for partnerships to build MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning) into their programme plans as part of good practice.
- Further development and testing of M&E approaches that can then be spread across research organisations and M&E specialists.

Funding organisations

There is a general trend across donors to much more strongly support public private partnerships for development either in specific issues (e.g. the Netherlands supporting water and agriculture) or more generally (USAID's Global Development Alliance and Germany's PPP support). In addition, donors such as the UK's DFID, Germany and the Netherlands are strongly supporting inclusive business which, in most cases, are based on cross-sector collaboration.

There is also a trend among some donors towards the funding of NGO coalitions – rather than individuals NGOs – in delivering development programmes. The jury is out as to whether these forms of 'enforced' partnership have led to the genuine innovation that partnering can bring.

Many of the global partnerships and other multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and Cities Alliance are supported by multiple donors through trust funds. Individual governments also support specific initiatives of interest to them, for example Sweden with the Global Child Forum and Denmark with the Global Green Growth Forum.

A number of the major foundations including Bill and Melinda Gates, Rockefeller, Citi and Ford, many of which have come out of companies, understand the role of business in development and support a variety of partnership programmes and multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Specifically related to SDG implementation, the SDG Fund supports the development of partnerships at country level involving the United Nations.

Gaps

In a siloed culture, it can be difficult to get funding that cuts across different development areas.

While there is clearly a trend towards supporting public private collaboration, within many donors it tends to be through separate funding facilities rather than being mainstreamed across departments as one essential tool in the armoury.

There is a huge need to build and fund the support structures, platforms, dialogue spaces, backbone organisations etc. that can help to catalyse partnerships. This investment can unlock resources from all sectors of society on development challenges.

Macro interventions

- Build donors' (of all kinds) understanding of how funds can be used to create longer term, sustainable impact through catalysing collaborative action.
- Support donors in integrating the partnering approach (particularly with the private sector) across their whole set of objectives, rather than have PPP as a separate area.

Collaboration across the support system

There are a range of examples of both informal and informal collaboration across the major actors in this space.

One of the strongest clusters of organisations (at least in the experience of TPI), representing multiple geographic scales, issues and types of support organisations, is around Business Fights Poverty (BFP) - UN Foundation - UNDP (Business Call to Action) - SDG-Fund - DfID - WEF - Harvard CSRI - The Partnering Initiative, working both formally and informally together. One example to demonstrate the strength of this cluster is that BFP, a long-established online platform (with a membership of more than 15,000 users), has a new SDG-Partnerships Zone which is supported by the UN Foundation and DfID. Among a huge amount of related content, the zone features a series of reports written by various combinations of BFP, Harvard CSRI and The Partnering Initiative, including an SDG-Fund branded report (BFP and Harvard CSRI) on UN - business partnerships for the SDGs, informed by a private sector advisory board. The launch of the report took place in the margins of the UN General Assembly as part of a series of events involving all of the above organisations working in various combinations.

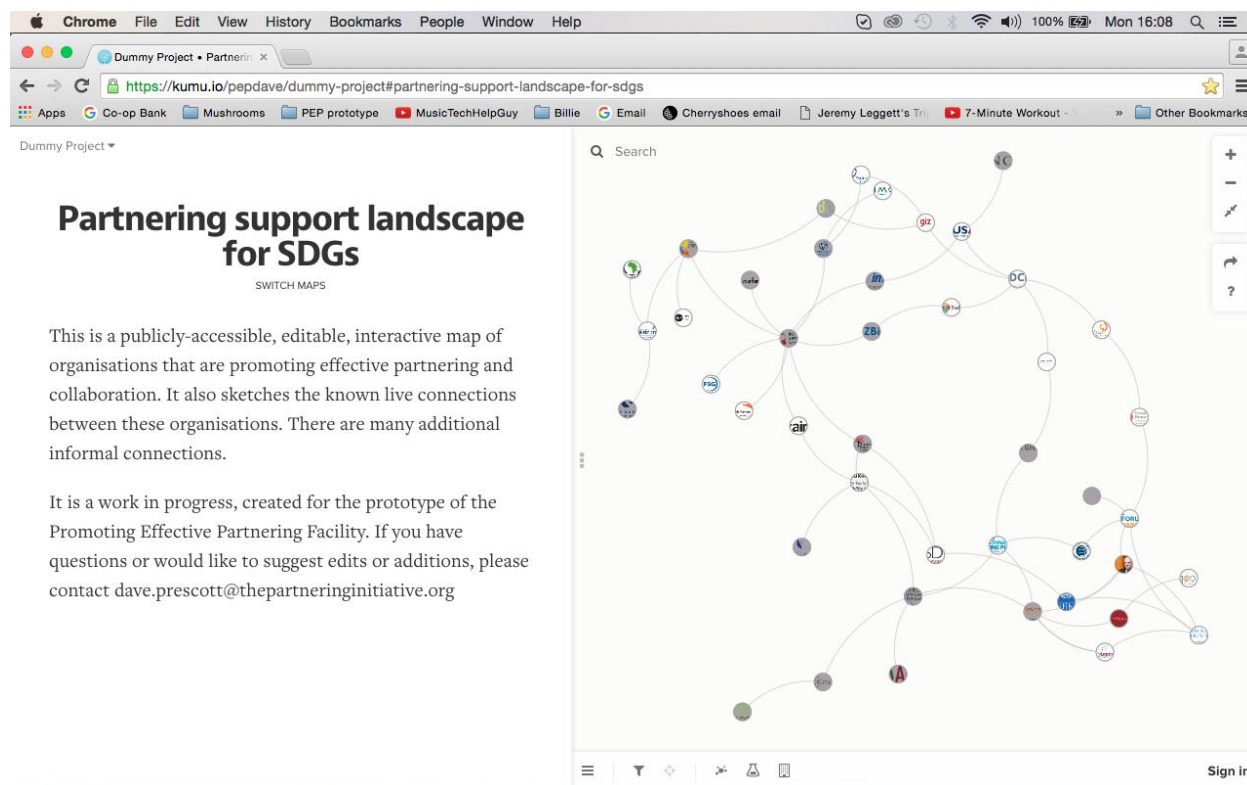
Conclusions

Currently the support system exists in fragmented format, with individuals and niche organisations often playing multiple roles across categories. Unleashing collaboration implies a step-change in the quality and strength of this support system, the interlinkages between the different players, and a willingness to rapidly and meaningfully share knowledge and expertise.

PEP has the potential to play an important role around the 'macro' activities that can strengthen, and make more accessible, the global support system for partnering and in so doing to

At the same time, PEP needs to build on, build up, and work with what is already there in order to gain acceptance within, and provide value to, the community of partnering support. Otherwise it risks being seen as a competitor initiative which will seriously hamper its progress from the outset.

Appendix 1: Towards an open source, publicly-accessible map of the partnering support system



The map above shows an attempt to use innovative open source software in a creative way, in order to help unlock the knowledge of partnering support organisations and the connections between them. It is an experiment in data visualisation: an attempt to model an approach that can be adapted and enhanced by others. It is a tool that, with further work and investment, could be made available through PEP's website.

The map above consists of two types of information: organisations that can be described as part of the support structure for partnering; and the known, formal connections between them.

Organisations are represented as bubbles, and connections are represented as lines. Either type of feature can be clicked on and information appears in the left hand window. The information can be visualised in multiple ways: the list of icons along the bottom include filtering and clustering options which allow the user to click on various categories.

Applied system thinking?

The map represents an attempt at applied systems thinking, of the type called for by the SDGs. It provides an initial sketch of the organisations that may play a role in helping answer our core inquiry 'what will it take to unleash the potential of collaboration to contribute to the SDGs?' – and shows some of the known connections between them.

It is not exhaustive – all maps are partial and incomplete – but it is the first time that a partnering support landscape analysis has been presented in this way. It attempts to reflect the spirit of co-creation that emerged during the workshop at the The Hague, as a well-intentioned contribution to the common good, which aims to help, harmonise and clarify significant actors and the known connections between them.

Open sourcing

The system map is presented on a freely available, open source platform called Kumu. It can be embedded into the PEP Facility website. System maps can be generated by anyone using an Excel spreadsheet. They can be rapidly iterated and developed. Editing rights can be shared.

These are all important features because landscape analysis exercises are often conducted on a confidential basis, the information goes rapidly out of date quickly, and there is significant duplication of effort with multiple similar maps on hard drives all over the world, which all feels like an epic waste of valuable resources.

Categorisations and selection criteria

Organisations have been included in this initial test version of the map on the basis of: 1) desk research and interviews undertaken by TPI as part of its Scope of Work; 2) feedback gathered during the Co-Design Lab in The Hague (e.g. the addition of regional and local platforms); and 3) organisations that attended the co-design lab at The Hague.

Currently two categories are used in the map: geographical location of the entity (global, regional, national or local), and type of entity (platform, alliance etc). The categorisation and tagging needs further work in order to make the map sufficiently robust for publication.

Questions include the following: Which other organisations should be included, and on what basis? Should large consulting firms be included, for example? What about large companies that provide partnering supporting functions as part of their core business strategies, such as Unilever, Anglo American or SABMiller? Ultimately, what will be most helpful to the partnering community? What will add harmony and integration? What will accelerate flows of knowledge and expertise?

Next steps needed to develop map

If there is broad agreement that this approach to system mapping has wider value, the immediate next steps needed in order to start sharing it more widely are as follows:

1. Agreement on the process of categorisation, including basic information about the 'connections'
2. The development of a simple 'how-to' guide (a public version of this document) for potential users of the PEP website who are new to this form of data visualisation
3. Agreement on the basis on which editing rights for the map should be shared

Appendix 2: Further reading

Building partnerships for sustainable agriculture and food security: A guide to country level action, (January 2016), World Economic Forum

Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Interim reference guide to UN country teams (October 2015), UNDG

Partnerships for Sustainable Development Goals: A legacy review towards realising the 2030 Agenda (December 2015), UN-DESA

Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (September 2015), United Nations

The role of the private sector in development effectiveness: Common components for success in future partnerships (November 2015), GPEDC

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: In support of Every Woman, Every Child: Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (November 2015), PMNCH

Business and the United Nations: Working together towards the sustainable development goals: A framework for action (2015) Business Fights Poverty and Harvard CSRI

Turning ambition into reality: Platforms and partnerships for delivering agenda 2030 (2016) New York University Center for International Co-operation