Advancing Country-Led Action to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

Mobilizing Systemic Change to Achieve the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an unprecedented global commitment to improve the lives of billions of people. Adopted in 2015 by 193 UN member countries, the SDGs comprise 17 goals which are closely interrelated – including commitments to end hunger and poverty, improve health and well-being as well as ensure environmental sustainability.

The SDGs call for a new level of coordination among countries, sectors and stakeholder groups. Leaders from all sectors will need to join together to develop new collaboration models, innovative business strategies, proactive policy and meaningful civil society engagement to drive action and transformation on the ground.

The ambitious and interconnected nature of the SDGs calls for “System Leadership,” a new approach to bring about change in complex environments by:

- Aligning diverse actors around a common vision and goals
- Empowering widespread action and innovation
- Enabling shared leadership and mutual accountability

The System Leadership approach can be applied to mobilize multistakeholder action on any topic or geographic scale. It is a mindset and set of approaches designed to orchestrate large-scale action towards shared goals in situations where no single organization can achieve this alone.

Supporting Country-Led Action and Collaboration

The World Economic Forum mobilizes multi-stakeholder action on key global issues, drawing from the System Leadership approach. The Forum engages a wide range of leaders and builds networks as well as partnerships to accelerate impact.

At the country level, several Forum initiatives have developed partnership platforms to drive coordinated action. This includes the New Vision for Agriculture (NVA) initiative, which has developed a model for country-led action that catalysed action in 21 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. These efforts have mobilized significant private-sector investment and opportunities for millions of smallholder farmers. The NVA Country Partnership Model offers a practical framework for mobilizing multistakeholder collaboration in support of national goals, and can be applied in any sector to help achieve the SDGs. It is based on five guiding principles (Figure1).
Building Multistakeholder Collaboration at Country Level: A Practical Guide

The NVA Country Partnership Model builds on the partnership experience of the World Economic Forum New Vision for Agriculture initiative. This includes Grow Africa, Grow Asia and initiatives in India and Latin America. Collectively, these have galvanized $10.5 billion of investment commitments, of which $2.5 billion has been realized, reaching over 10.5 million farmers to date. The NVA’s Guide to Country-Led Action outlines the partnership model and lessons learned from these initiatives. It serves as a dynamic resource for stakeholders in all sectors.

The cycles of partnership evolution can be summarized in three main phases: Design, Implement, and Adapt & Scale (Figure 2). Across these three phases, eight key steps can be distilled from the experience of the NVA partnerships. These eight steps may occur in order or cyclically. They represent a core set of activities that successful country partnerships have undertaken along their journeys.

**Figure 2: Three Phases of Partnership Evolution**

1. **Engage**
   - Identify and engage influential champions across stakeholder groups
   - Partnerships often begin with a bold aspiration that requires multistakeholder leadership. Engaging the right leaders to drive and champion the effort is critical to its success.
   - In Tanzania, a new partnership was catalysed by the President directly inviting senior leaders to align private sector investments with Tanzania’s agriculture strategy.

2. **Align**
   - Develop a shared partnership agenda
   - Partnerships often include a vision statement, shared priorities and high-level, aspirational, time-bound targets for impact.
   - In Vietnam, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development engaged with the private sector and academic experts to create a partnership agenda to support Vietnam’s 10-year plan.

3. **Structure**
   - Establish the partnership structure
   - As the partnership transitions to action-planning, structures provide necessary coordination and management to formalize the partnership’s mandate for action, thereby building ownership and commitment to the agenda. Structures can vary based on local needs. However, three levels of leadership (Figure 3) are normally involved including a Direction Setting-Group, Working Groups dedicated to specific focus areas, and a Secretariat to coordinate the partnership.
   - In Indonesia, the PIAgro Secretariat is developed and funded by private sector champions, reflecting their strong support in collaboration with others. A three-person Secretariat team provides support to the full network of partners on stakeholder engagement, knowledge sharing and reporting progress.

   **Tip:** Create structures for shared ownership and transparency. A neutral, independent Secretariat and multistakeholder governance are structural elements that can help give an equal voice to all partners.
Plan

Define specific goals and action plans to deliver impact

Goals and action plans are important and should be defined by each Working Group as well as for the overall partnership. Coordination across all projects will align and reinforce common goals.

Grow Africa has mobilized US $10 billion of investment commitments and reached nearly 10 million smallholder farmers. Integrated value-chain programmes supported by Grow Africa are working to translate that commitment and US $2.35 billion has been realized to date.

Tip: Use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as simple and meaningful measures of progress.

Implement

Implement action plans on a project-by-project basis

Plans are executed within Working Groups; each group may define one or multiple projects over time.

In Indonesia, multiple companies and other market players are working together in a precompetitive collaboration model, pooling resources and competencies to improve the corn supply chain.

Tip: Demonstrating "quick wins" can help expand the network and increase buy-in.

Scale

Scale and institutionalize proven models

Scaling up partnership activities will maximize impact as well as expand the depth and breadth of the partnership’s scope of activity.

Grow Asia supports five countries and is now leveraging digital services and financing solutions to benefit more farmers.

Tip: Leverage best practices, new models and technologies from within the partnership and beyond.

Review

Review partnership strategy and structures

All sectors are living, constantly evolving systems. So partnerships must be flexible and adapt to remain relevant. Partners should review strategies and structures periodically and as required by transitions in leadership.

In Mexico, the partnership was rebranded with a broadened and ambitious agenda after political transitions brought new leadership.

Adapt & Scale

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6 Advance

Leverage milestones to drive progress

Gatherings of high-level leaders provide unique opportunities for the partnership to advance the agenda. Organize meetings in-country or link to global events where senior leaders can lend support and promote progress.

In Maharashtra, India, project leads, government coordinators and key stakeholders met twice a year to report progress, showcase successful projects and engage with the Secretary of Agriculture on strategic issues.

Tip: Use partnership meetings as deadlines to drive progress.
Examples of Initiatives Supporting Country-Led Action

To meet a growing demand for collaboration platforms and achieve the SDGs, the World Economic Forum has catalysed or supported a number of multistakeholder initiatives that work to translate global goals into country-led action. Several such platforms are profiled below, and additional examples of initiatives addressing issues such as infrastructure, development finance, economic competitiveness and inclusive growth, gender parity and skills development may be found at www.weforum.org.

New Vision for Agriculture (NVA). Established in 2009, the NVA is a global platform to strengthen food security, environmental sustainability and economic opportunity through a market-based and multistakeholder approach in agriculture. The initiative has mobilized country-led action in 21 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It established the Transformation Leaders Network linking 150 action leaders and experts to exchange best practice on partnerships. See: www.weforum.org/agriculture.

2030 Water Resources Group (2030WRG). The 2030WRG is a unique public-private-civil society collaboration that drives action on water resource reform in water-stressed developing countries. At the invitation of Governments it establishes national multistakeholder platforms, including private sector and civil society that collectively can address the water challenges in their country. At present it engages in 13 countries/states and has in total more than 500 partners. See: www.2030wrg.org.

The Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA 2020). TFA 2020 is a global public-private partnership to reduce the tropical deforestation associated with commodities such as palm oil, soy, beef, and paper and pulp. In West and Central Africa, TFA 2020 has fostered the signing of the Marrakech Declaration for the Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa – a pledge to place sustainability at the heart of the expanding palm oil industry by 7 countries covering 13% of the world’s tropical forests. See: www.tfa2020.org.

Internet for All is an initiative which aims to connect tens of millions of new users to the Internet around the world. The project establishes enduring digital and physical platforms at the country level to facilitate multi stakeholder collaboration on Internet inclusion. Working with 50 partner organizations, the initiative accelerates innovation, coordinates investment, strengthens policy environments, and aligns development programming. Country programs have been launched in East Africa’s Northern Corridor (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan) and in Argentina. A program in South Asia will be launched in 2017. See: https://www.weforum.org/projects/internet-for-all.

How to Get Involved in a Partnership

Stakeholders can play a role in initiating, developing or supporting country-level action to achieve the SDGs. Diverse organizations can contribute expertise from sectors such as:

- Companies
- Governments
- International organizations
- Civil society
- Research and academia
- Farmer organizations

Different stakeholders can play distinct roles in the partnership, as catalysts, champions, drivers or enablers. A neutral facilitator is often needed, particularly in the early stages of the partnership.

Building a multistakeholder partnership is a journey and partners continue to improve and refine their approach over time. The World Economic Forum is committed to collaborating with diverse partners and stakeholders to work towards that future – and together translate the vision of the SDGs into action on the ground.

Five Distinct Partnership Roles

- **Catalyst.** Provide a call to action to galvanize new efforts.
- **Champions.** Help lead and drive new partnership efforts, establishing the partnership strategy and structure.
- **Driver.** Coordinate and mobilize activities across a broad network of stakeholders.
- **Enablers.** Contribute expertise and networks, and align with the partnership.
- **Facilitator.** Serve as a trusted convener to facilitate dialogue and alignment.