A Study of Partnerships and Initiatives Registered on the UN SDG Partnerships Platform

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Executive Summary

Partnerships, of all kinds and at all levels, are central to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This report offers an in-depth analysis of the initiatives and partnerships registered on the UN Partnerships for SDGs online platform. It aims to address five key areas:

(1) The composition of the registered partnerships, initiatives and commitments
(2) How these partnerships and initiatives contribute to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
(3) How these partnerships and initiatives are governed, and how they evaluate and report their activities
(4) Challenges and enabling factors reported by the partnerships
(5) Other findings from the research – (i) on what these initiatives want from the UN and the Partnerships platform, and (ii) on the role of the SDGs in learning within these initiatives
(6) A focus on UN-associated partnerships and initiatives – those where the UN is a partner, or where the UN is the lead (or sole) entity.

The report's analysis is based on two sources: a compilation of data from the UN platform, drawn from registration (3967 records) and update forms (494 records), and a new online survey of initiatives and partnerships, advertised by email to registered initiatives, Jan-Feb 2019 (900 complete responses, approx. 23% response rate).

A mix of textual and data analysis techniques were used. The data compilation from the UN platform has limitations: notably a low reporting rate, and different registration formats. It is skewed to an extent by the approx. 1400 commitments and initiatives added from the Ocean Conference in 2017 - all with more data, and all SDG 14-related.

Overall, the report finds *diverse initiatives and contributions*, but *common challenges*. It concludes with recommendations (i) to consider how the UN Platform could better facilitate partnership activity and (ii) for further research to build a richer understanding of the partnerships emerging around the SDGs.

(1) The Composition of registered partnerships and initiatives

- Registered partnerships are spread across all regions, with most activity in Asia and Africa. Most initiatives (approx. 60%) are comprised of 2-10 partners, with some (10%) single-entity initiatives; a significant minority are very large partnerships – 8% with over 100 partners. Most are led, convened or facilitated by NGOs (59%); with much smaller proportions of private sector, academic government and UN entities (12.6%-6.6%) leading these initiatives.
- All kinds of constituencies are involved in these partnerships - NGOs/CSOs are found to be the largest constituency of partners (26.6% of partners across all partnerships), ahead of academic and scientific institutions, private sector, governments, international organisations and UN entities. The numbers of initiatives registered on the Platform are growing, increasing by 10% in 2017-2018.

(2) The contribution of these initiatives and partnerships to the SDGs

- Initiatives are widely distributed across the goals. Most contributions are to Goal 14, whilst Goal 10 has the fewest. 50% of initiatives/partnerships in the platform data address only one goal. The rest address multiple goals – sometimes indicating breadth, sometimes indicating an interlinkage/nexus focus.

- Initiatives make different kinds of contributions – indirect/enabling/technical resources and deliverables are more prevalent than commitments of financial resources or delivery of quantifiable outcomes on SDG indicators.

- Different levels of adaptation to the SDGs are reported. 71% of respondents have adapted their objectives. Alignment of funding and staffing (29%), or structures (44%) to the SDGs is much less common. Relatively few initiatives (38%) report adapting their partnership strategies.

- There is evidence of partnerships adding distinctive value – 65% of respondents report partnerships are generating new solutions; 68% additional learning; and 62% increased scale. There is evidence of extensive sharing of resources within partnerships - though learning, expertise, and access to networks are shared more extensively than finance or technology.

(3) Governance and review

- Partnerships and initiatives take a variety of approaches to decision making; generally, partnerships are communicating weekly or monthly, and meet (face to face or electronically) to make decisions (79%).

- Governance by consensus, notwithstanding these meetings, is less usual – 45.6%. Around 60% of respondents report wider consultation within and outside the partnership as part of their decision-making process.

- 65% of responding initiatives review performance in regular internal meetings. 60% report progress against objectives annually, and present these reports to external stakeholders. Relatively few initiatives report having clear criteria for evaluation (45%) and fewer still make their progress reports publicly available (42%).

(4) Challenges and enabling factors

- Finance is identified as a key challenge for all sizes, scales, and locations. The participation of marginalised groups, time, and the context initiatives operate in, are also prominent challenges. Transparency is not widely perceived as a major challenge.

- Enabling factors, as identified by respondents, also reflect these challenges - especially finance. Communication and coordination, however, also emerge as important themes.

- Participation of vulnerable and marginalised groups is a challenge emphasised by the SDGs. In other cases, the challenges and enabling factors identified are well-established issues for partnerships of all kinds. It might be interesting to reflect that the SDGs are not emphasised more as an enabling factor or context.

(5) Findings on other themes

(i) The support initiatives would value from the UN:

- Initiatives indicate that finance, technical expertise, and access to UN events and processes, would be the most valuable ways that the UN could support their work.
- With regard to the UN Partnerships platform itself, initiatives would value more regular communication, more opportunities for learning and sharing experiences, and more opportunities to access support.

(ii) Learning:

- Learning emerges from survey data as a key resource – respondents identify it as created by partnership, and shared between partners. There is evidence of partnerships/initiatives learning from key aspects of the SDGs. Over time, this learning can be expected to translate into new practice.
- There is also evidence that different constituencies of partners have taken up different learning from the SDGs.

(6) A focus on UN-associated partnerships

- UNDP (251 mentions) and UNEP (192 mentions) are the most common UN partner organisations in registrations on the Platform. Overall, UN entities are mentioned as part of 854 initiatives in the data. UN-associated partnerships tend to operate at the international scale to a greater extent than other types, and are more likely to register across multiple SDGs (averaging over 3).
- The largest concentration of UN-associated partnerships is around goal 14, followed by goal 17 and goal 13. The fewest UN-associated partnerships address goal 10, followed by goal 16 and goal 9.
- In some ways, UN-associated partnerships show more engagement with the SDGs, as could be expected. They have completed update reports for the Platform more regularly, but this rate is still very low – 13.5%. UN-associated partnerships have adapted their objectives to the SDGs to a greater extent than other partnerships (77%), though not necessarily their structures (48%), staffing or funding (37%).
- UN associated partnerships are more likely to register deliverables targeting policy and governance, events, and capacity building: they are slightly less likely to target the kinds of outcomes – increases or reductions in wider populations - associated with 'service provision'.
- The governance of UN-associated (or led) partnerships is not found to be significantly distinct, though UN-associated partnerships are slightly more likely to meet, make decisions by consensus, and consult more widely. UN-associated partnerships tend to have slightly more comprehensive processes of review (e.g. 53% have clear criteria for evaluation).
- UN associated (and UN-led) partnerships - as with partnerships generally - see finance as the biggest challenge by some margin, followed by time, coordination, participation of marginalised groups, and the contexts in which they are operating.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, the analysis emphasises the diversity of initiatives and partners registered with the platform, in terms of their makeup, functions, geographical distribution, their governance, and the ways in which they contribute to the SDGs.
- The report finds some initial, welcome evidence that the SDGs being incorporated into partnerships' and initiatives' structures and objectives.
- The report has also presented evidence from respondents that partnerships are genuinely perceived as adding value – and identified some particular aspects of that value.
- The prominence of finance as a key concern across all initiatives is not unexpected, but is still striking. Further investigation is needed on how, and how far, the funding landscape is enabling multi-stakeholder SDG implementation, how this might be improved, and what further role the UN could play.
- Engagement with the UN Platform is clearly limited, as evidenced by reporting rates. This should prompt reflection on the purpose of the platform and its future role: should it function as a more passive repository of commitments and searchable directory of initiatives (and if so, how could it fulfil this function better)? or, is there more scope for making it an active platform, encouraging coordination and learning? This reflection, in turn, should be situated in terms of the role the UN is willing and able to play in cultivating an 'ecosystem' of partnerships for the SDGs.
- This analysis has reported on the 'state of play' for these SDG partnerships – but what should the basis for evaluation be, or the standard against which to assess these findings? – it is not easy to highlight gaps, or areas of strength, without understanding the wider context of the 'global partnership for sustainable development'. There is a clear need to better understand how these initiatives and partnerships function, and the different kinds of roles diverse partnerships play in implementation of the SDGs.

1. Introduction and context

This project sets out to analyse the partnerships and initiatives registered on the UN's SDG Partnerships platform. Partnership is central to implementation the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Efforts to realise the SDGs are underpinned by "a revitalized and enhanced Global Partnership" that will "facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the goals and targets, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources".[1] Reflecting this, Goal 17 contains specific targets on encouraging a global system of partnerships around the SDGs:

"17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships"

The SDGs, then, are to be realised through a 'partnership of partnerships'. This generates a question of how (and to what extent) this activity is to be coordinated, and how this ethos of effective partnership is to be fostered.

The focus of this report is on the UN Partnerships for SDGs online platform ('Partnerships platform'), created as an online registry of voluntary commitments, initiatives and partnerships that support SDG implementation. As part of a wider effort to "encourage and promote effective partnerships" amongst all kinds of stakeholders, the platform offers a framework within which initiatives can register, share their activities, learn from the activities of others, join networks, and report their progress.[2] Reflecting this 'partnership of partnerships', the platform is a 'registry of registries', bringing together activities registered through the Ocean Conference 2017, the 2016 Global Sustainable Transport Conference, the 2014 SIDS Conference, and the 2012 Rio+20 Conference. It encourages registering initiatives and commitments to be aligned to SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-based, and Time-bound – deliverables.[3]

The report sets out to assess the 'state of play' for initiatives registered with this platform - investigating their contribution to SDG implementation, key themes around governance and review of partnerships, and putting a particular focus on what can be said about partnerships that are themselves led by UN entities, or count UN entities amongst their partners. The analysis draws on data on current registered partnerships and initiatives supplied by UN DESA - in particular, spreadsheets of registered partnerships and submitted progress updates. To supplement these sources, the research team undertook, with the cooperation of UN DESA, a short online survey of registered initiatives. The report also features throughout a series of boxed case studies describing different initiatives, and collects a further body of

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[1] UN (2015) *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/Res/70/1 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E, Para 60

[2] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/about

[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/about#criteria

case studies in an annex (Annex A). The text of the survey is also attached as Annex B. These methods, and their limitations, are discussed later in this introduction.

The immediate analytical context for this report comprises two recent reports analysing aspects of the UN partnership system. The 2017 *In-depth analysis of Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments* drew on detailed data available in the context of new goal 14 commitments to map commitments against individual targets under goal 14 and to examine the geographic distribution of commitments.[4] Summing different commitments together, the report offers figures for the total financial value of these commitments and their joint contribution to the protection of marine areas. The report also offers an analysis of gaps in different kinds of contributors and contributions to different targets, and reflections on how these commitments could be reported against and monitored. The *In Depth Analysis of SIDS Partnerships*, 2018, assesses the overall trend in terms of numbers of partnerships and geographical spread, and tries to map partnerships against SAMOA Pathway priority areas.[5] It also attempts to identify challenges and best practice by drawing on the discussion at the SIDS Regional Partnership Dialogue.

This analysis is similar in spirit to both of these models, though operating under some specific constraints. Like these two reports, the spread of partnerships and initiatives globally and thematically, and their potential contributions, are considered. Types of partners and reporting rates are analysed. However, the analysis here has a wider focus, looking at all partnerships and initiatives, across all goals, globally - and this necessitates a less detailed analysis in some respects. Whilst initiatives registered through the Ocean Conference often provide relatively detailed information about focus targets and specific deliverables and financial contributions, this is not the case across all the diverse initiatives registered on the platform. The online survey is a distinctive, valuable new resource for this report. It was used to address limitations in available data on governance, reporting, challenges, and enabling factors. In these respects, it allows the report to offer a more in-depth evaluation of registered partnerships.

Section 2 of this report analyses the contribution of these initiatives to the SDGs: what can be said about the different kinds of contributions, how far these can be summed, and more broadly how far initiatives and partnerships are aligned to the SDGs. **Section 3** addresses the management, governance, and review mechanisms of partnerships and initiatives. **Section 4** identifies and discusses the challenges and enabling factors identified by partnerships. **Section 5** reports on two further themes - a specific analysis of what initiatives want from the UN (and from the Partnerships platform itself) and a further analysis of the place of learning in partnerships. **Section 6** focuses on partnerships associated with UN entities (where UN entities are either lead entities or partners), breaking down some of the findings in sections 2 to 5 for this specific set of initiatives.

In what remains of this introduction, the report (i) briefly outlines the methods employed and key limitations faced in this work and (ii) offers an overview of the composition of registered partnerships.

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[4] UN (2017) *In-depth analysis of Ocean Conference Voluntary Commitments to support and monitor their implementation* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17193OCVC_in_depth_analysis.pdf
[5] UN (2018) *In depth analysis of Partnerships for Small Island Developing States* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20883SIDS_partnership_analysis_formatted_final_web.pdf

(i) Methodology and limitations

This project relies on two data sources: data from the UN's registry of partnerships (3967 records) and a survey written and implemented by the research team (1050 complete or 'good partial' responses). The registry data reflects the data the UN has collected since launching the partnerships website in 2015; any partnership/initiative can register its details, including the partners involved, the goals and associated targets, the proposed deliverables and the resources committed to the project. In practice, many partnerships did not fill in all categories. The registry data also includes registrations that were collected as part of the 2017 Ocean Conference and the SIDS conference; these contain some additional fields, which the report has indicated, and drawn on, where appropriate. The analysis is based on the data that was collected up until the start of December 2018. The research team used the statistical package R to clean the data and produce a series of basic statistics.

In order to provide more depth and insight beyond the data from the UN's registry, the research team launched a short survey to help understand more holistically how partnerships operate and how the SDGs shape their work. The survey launched on 5 February and closed on 15 February. It reached respondents through an email sent by UN-DESA on 5 February, and a reminder on 11 February. The survey was also advertised on the UN's Partnerships platform. The research team received just over 900 completed responses, and approximately 150 more that were at least 50% complete. Due to time constraints, the survey was only distributed in English. It is possible that this limited the scope of survey respondents, and if the survey is run in the future translation into other languages would be an important consideration. Responses to the survey were anonymous. This encouraged honesty on the part of the respondents; however, it did mean that the responses could not be linked to the information given as part of the registry data, which limited some possible forms of analysis.

Future iterations on this work might look to improve the analysis in various respects. The questions posed in the survey give only limited insight into the different roles that organisations take in partnerships - for example the different ways that organisations interact. Whilst the survey operates on a distinction between responding organisations, who are assumed to have some kind of leadership, facilitating, convening or administering role, and other partners, this picture is oversimplified. Furthermore, the report often uses 'lead entity' to encompass all of these different functions and relationships that could usefully be distinguished. The survey, too, does not inquire into the role of Action Networks who appear to have a significant function in the partnership systems around the SDGs.[6] For reasons of length, the survey did not pose questions about coordination between partnerships, even though maximising coordination and learning between partnerships clearly offers benefits for SDG implementation.

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[6] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/actionnetworks

(ii) An overview of the partnerships and initiatives registered with the platform

Combinations of data from the registry and the survey illustrate the diverse compositions of the initiatives, commitments and partnerships registered on the UN Platform:

Some are new to the registry, and to the SDGs - others have already been completed*:* The data supplied to the project in December 2018 records 3967 partnerships and initiatives, an increase of 10% over 2017. Counting of the most recent registrations shows that a sizeable proportion of recent registrations continue to be associated with the Ocean Conference and Goal 14: 71 of the most recent 200 registrations are marked as relating to this Action Network.

The UN's own analysis on the platform[7] shows a sharp rise in registered initiatives from 2146 in 2016, to 3620 in 2017, an increase of approx. 68%. The Ocean Conference in 2017, which saw the registration of approx. 1400 initiatives and partnerships, appears to make a major contribution to this increase.[8]
It should be noted that at least 451 initiatives have recorded completion dates that precede the agreement of the SDGs ("completion date" of 2014 or earlier); others have passed their projected completion date, though it cannot be ascertained from the Platform whether these are still active.

Some are single-entity initiatives, others are partnerships between many actors: It is difficult to determine from registry data how many of the registrations are from single-entity initiatives. It should be noted that of 3967 Partnerships records, 429 left 'partners' blank. The 'lead entity' field - identifying the type of organisation that was fulfilling convening, facilitating or leading roles in partnerships - was only filled in by commitments made in the context of the 2017 Ocean Conference. These issues created problems for accurately analysing the makeup of partnerships from registry data.

Analysis of survey data can supplement these initial figures. The survey asked respondents to indicate the numbers of partners in their partnerships, as Fig. 1 below shows. By far the largest proportion of responding partnerships (53% - 575) contained 2-10 partners. 10% were single-entity initiatives and commitments. The numbers of much larger partnerships, though small, are still significant in indicating the sheer diversity of registered initiatives. 4.6% had between 101 and 500 partners, and 3.7% had over 500.

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[7] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26213sdgs.fw_2.fw.png, and data on the Partnerships platform homepage: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/
[8] https://oceanconference.un.org/

Fig. 1: How many organisations are involved as partners in your initiative/voluntary commitment, including your organisation? (n=1084)
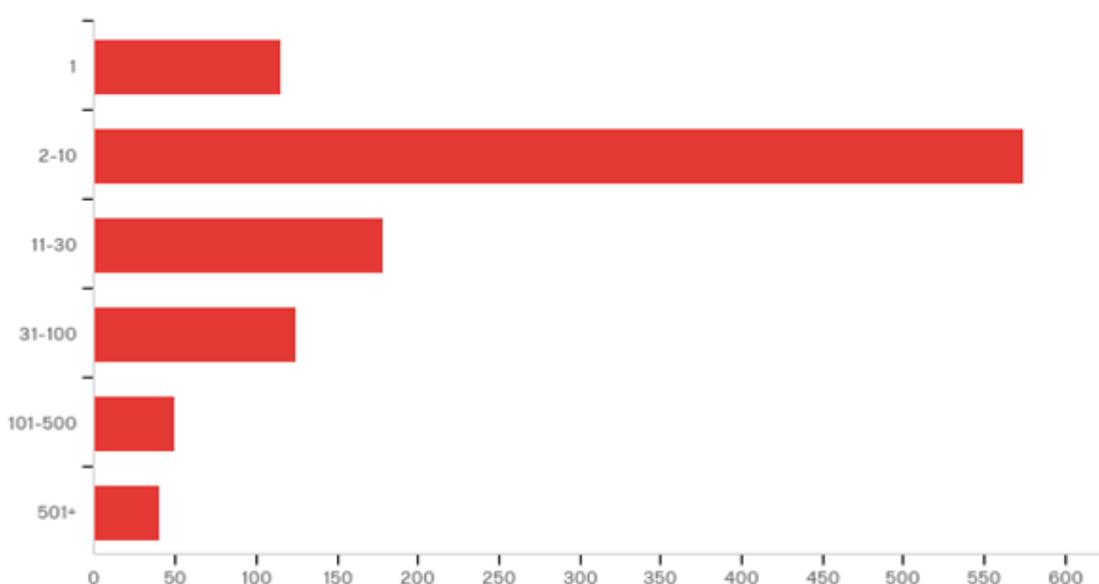
These partnerships are made up of – and led by - diverse constituencies of actors: Of the 3967 partnerships that are part of the UN's Partnership registry, this report estimates that 766 (20%) contain academic partners and 1164 (31%) contain national government bodies.[9] The diversity of terms and definitions used for 'third sector' or 'VCSE' actors complicates an analysis of the prevalence of civil society or non-governmental organisations (CSOs, NGOs). The situation for private sector actors – given the vast number of unique ways in which they could self-identity – is similar.

In order to understand the make-up of partnerships more effectively, the team asked two questions in the survey on types of organisations involved in registered initiatives. The first asks the type of organisation for the respondent who is answering the survey, and the second asks the respondent to identify which types of organisations are in their partnership. The survey results show high levels of participation for academic and governmental bodies. 44% of the partnerships in the survey had academic institutions in their partnership, either as a lead or a partner and 38% of partnerships had governmental institutions involved. The research team also found through the survey that 82% of responding partnerships/initiatives – an overwhelming proportion - involved an NGO or CSO as a lead or partner.   The private sector is was involved in 43% of the partnerships/initiatives surveyed. UN entities, and to an extent other intergovernmental bodies, are discussed in more detail in Section 6 of this report. Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 break down these results: Fig. 2 shows the data for types of partners involved; Fig. 3 for the identity of respondents (as the contact points for the partnerships, this analysis takes them as 'lead' entities).

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[9] This analysis estimated the number of academic partnerships by looking for partnerships including the terms "Universi", "School", "Ecole" and "College". The number of government partnerships were estimated by looking for partnerships including the terms "Department", "Minist", and "Government".

**Fig.2: Which types of partner organisations are involved in your partnership? (n=951)**
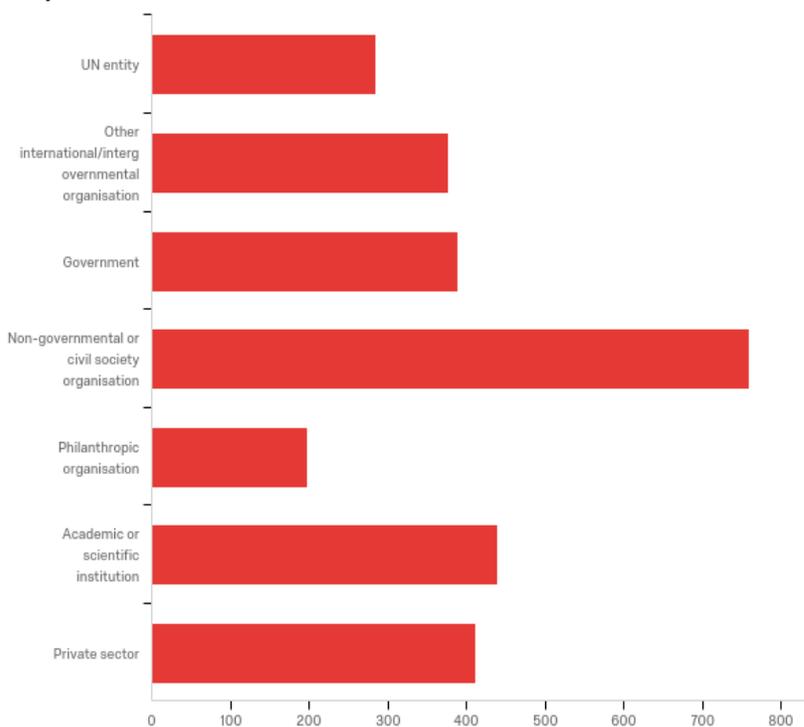
Fig.3: Which of the following best describes your organisation? (n=1083)
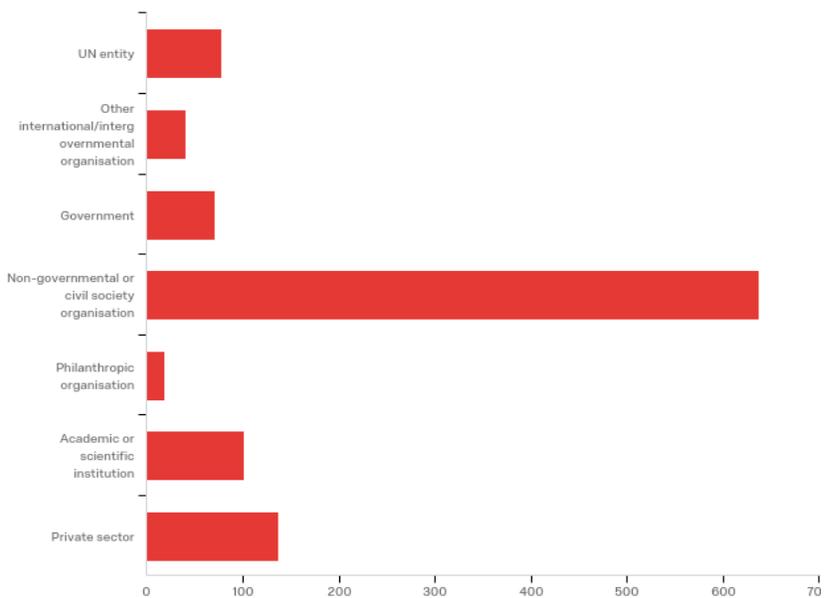
Partnerships and initiatives are distributed unevenly across the globe: Analysis of survey data shows where responding initiatives operate.[10] As Fig. 4 (below) shows, the largest sets of responding initiatives identify themselves as working in Sub-Saharan Africa (47% of respondents) and South and South-East Asia (41%). Clearly, there is a wide spread here, and a spread also across both developed and developing countries. On this data, far fewer partnerships operate in Latin America (21%) than in Sub-Saharan Africa or South and South-East Asia. Though this might be explained by the language bias created by the survey - and the platform itself - only being available in English, it might reflect other, wider issues.

Fig.4: Which region(s) does your partnership/initiative operate in? (n=898)
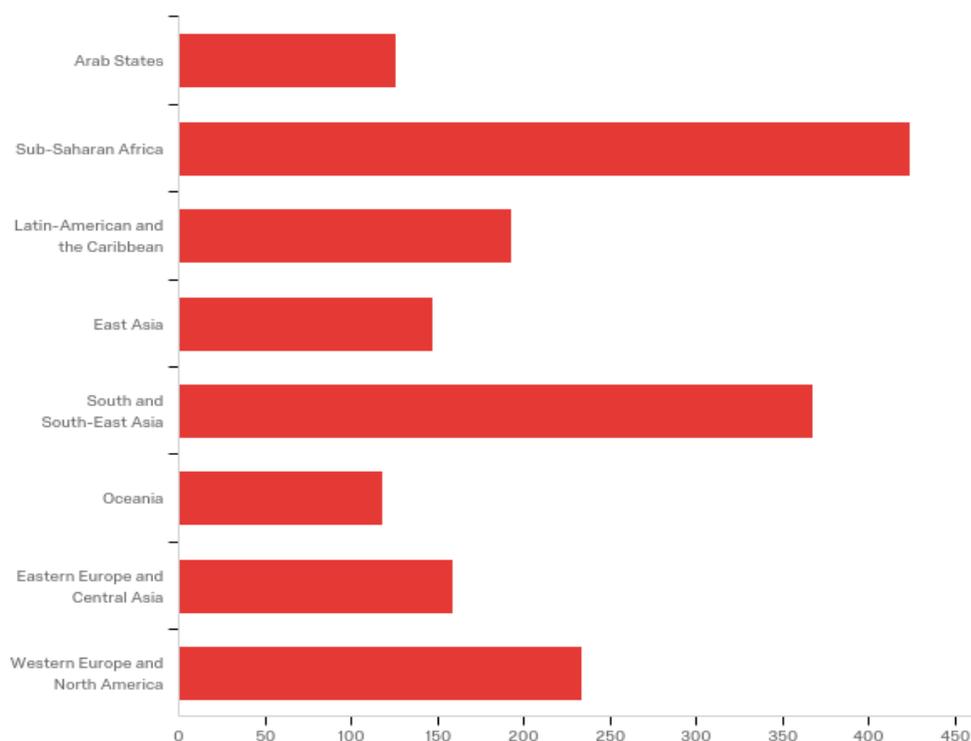
By far, the majority of partnerships/initiatives only operated in one region. As the following chart (Fig. 5) shows, the number of partnerships operating across larger sets of regions steadily decreases; however, there is a slight increase in the number of partnerships that operate across *all* regions. This set of global partnerships is the third largest "group" of partnerships, after those that operate in one or two regions.

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[10] The data from the UN registry had a field for 'region' and 'country' which might have been used for a geographical analysis. However, the region field was rarely completed by initiatives; the country field was completed to a greater extent, but time prohibits a country-by-country analysis.

Fig. 5: Number of regions that partnerships/initiatives are operating in (n=977)
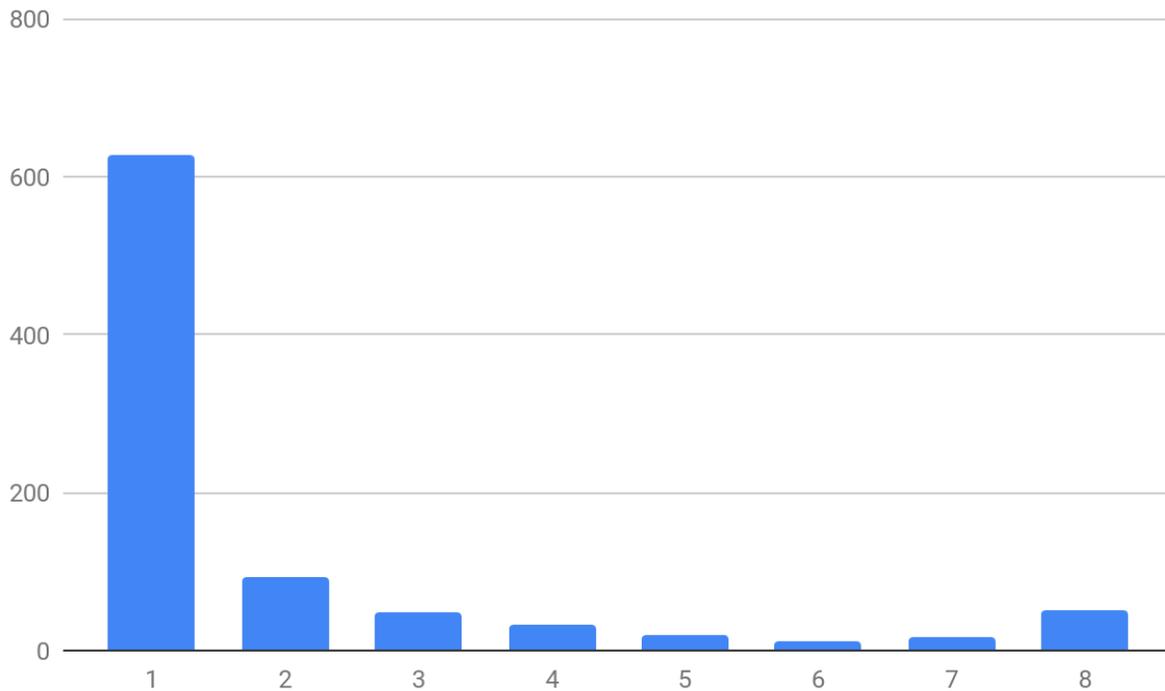
Partnerships operate at different scales: Respondent initiatives and partnerships were asked to identify the scale of their operation as local or subnational, national, and international (Table 1 below). Whilst the largest group of respondents identified as operating at an international scale, responses were divided between local (25.9%), national (30.7%), and international (43.5%) levels of operation. This is consonant with the responses above on the number of regions partnerships operate in. Initiatives indicating "local" or "national" scope would operate at these levels in one region, with many of the international initiatives operating across regions - and some being truly global in reach.

Table 1: Scales at which partnerships/initiatives operate

Scale of operations	%	Count
Local or subnational	25.87%	237
National	30.68%	281
International	43.45%	398
Total	100%	916

There are different regional distributions for the scales on which partnerships operate. Partnerships active in Eastern Europe/ Central Asia, Western Europe/ North America, East Asia, Arab States, Latin America and Oceania are international in scope to a greater degree (75% or more of such partnerships). By contrast, there is a notable local/subnational and national focus to the partnerships active in Sub-Saharan Africa (51% local and national combined) and South/ South-East Asia (49%)

Table 2: Scales of operation for initiatives, by regions

	Local or subnational	National	International	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	95	119	204	418
	22.73%	28.47%	48.80%	100%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	4	14	140	158
	2.53%	8.86%	88.61%	100%
Latin-American and the Caribbean	15	31	144	190
	7.89%	16.32%	75.79%	100%
Western Europe and North America	20	23	187	230
	8.70%	10%	81.30%	100%
Arab States	6	20	99	125
	4.80%	16%	79.20%	100%
Oceania	8	14	96	118
	6.78%	11.86%	81.36%	100%
East Asia	17	18	111	146
	11.64%	12.33%	76.03%	100%
South and South-East Asia	86	91	186	363
	23.69%	25.07%	51.24%	100%
Total	229	266	388	883
	25.93%	30.12%	43.94%	100%

Coupled with the finding that a large number of partnerships - especially those operating at subnational or national levels - operate in only one region, these statistics might indicate that a distinctive balance of partnerships and initiatives are active in South and South-East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, with many more working at smaller scales and being specific to those regions.

2. The contribution of partnerships and initiatives to the SDGs

2.1 Distribution of partnerships/Initiatives across SDG goals

An analysis of the distribution of initiatives across the goals they registered as contributing to (Fig.6 below) shows that Goal 14 records twice as many initiatives (1642) than the next (goal 8 – 743). Goals 10 (176), 9(239), and 16 (241) record the lowest number of associated initiatives and partnerships.

Fig. 6: Initiatives/Partnerships addressing SDG goals (n=3967)
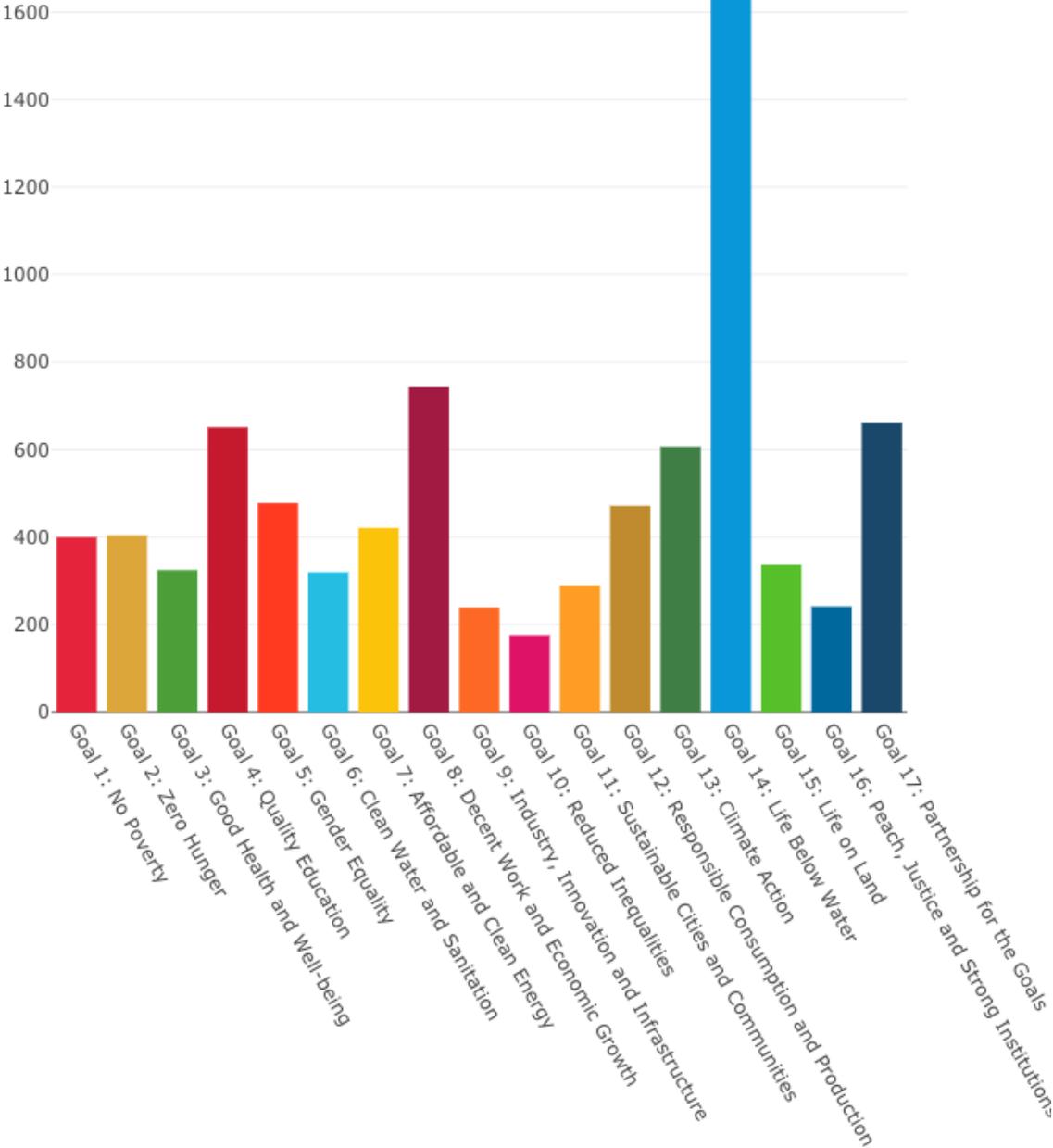
Further analysis of the Partnerships platform data indicates that 50% of initiatives target only one goal, but it is not uncommon to tackle 2-4 goals (approx. 25% of initiatives), and some tackle all 17 - see Fig. 7 below. In general terms, reporting patterns across *targets* is much more difficult. Roughly half of initiatives do not specify in their registration data which targets they contribute to within particular goals; and a significant proportion of those that do, specify 'all' under each goal they identified.

Fig. 7: Number of SDG goals selected by partnerships/initiatives
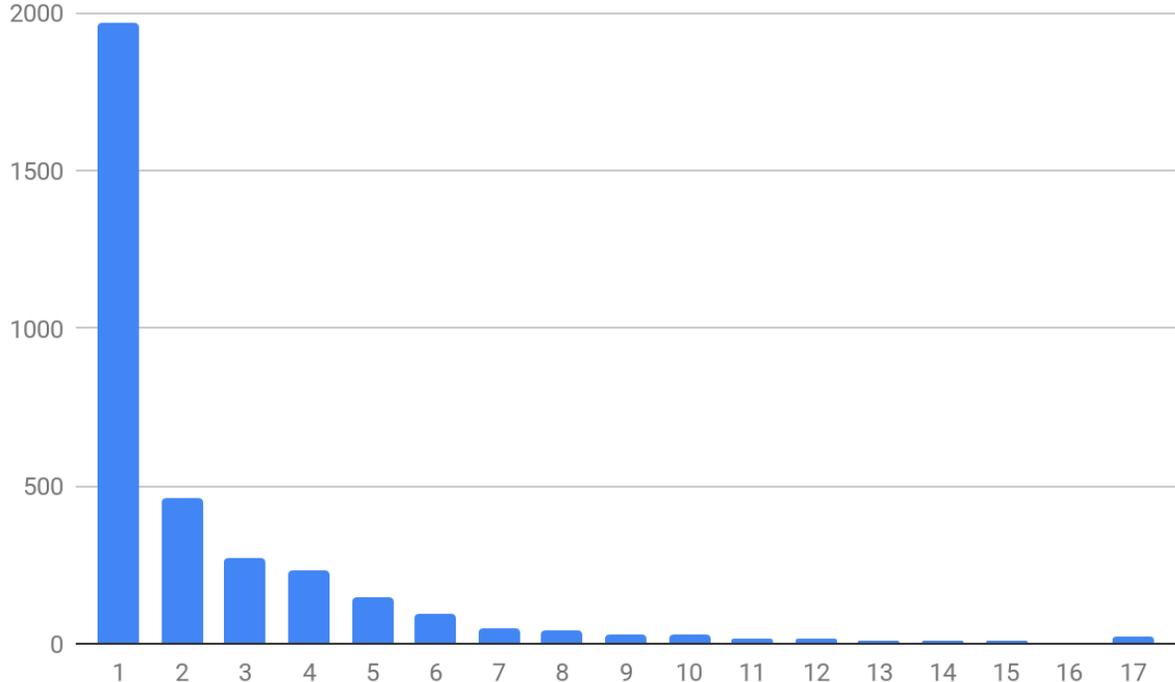
The following case is an example of an initiative that focuses on a subset of targets within one goal:

> *'Parliamentarians Advancing Anti-Corruption through UNCAC' is an initiative to strengthen the capacity, engagement, and mechanisms around parliamentary oversight of Pacific countries' integrity and anti-corruption, through the framework of the UN Convention Against Corruption - addressing a range of targets under goal 17. This partnership is comprised of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) Oceania, UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) Project, UNDP, and UNODC.*
> *To enhance the role of national parliaments in Oceania in combating corruption, GOPAC facilitates South-South learning exchanges by Pacific parliamentarians, primarily during Parliamentarian Induction programmes undertaken by UNDP and partner Pacific parliaments, in co-operation with UNODC and the UN Pacific Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) Project. GOPAC and UNDP have also partnered*

> *to produce a Toolkit for Parliamentarians on UNCAC Implementation which is used in Inductions and follow up workshops. Similar engagement comes via GOPAC, UNDP and the Islamic Bank's partnership to produce Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: A Parliamentary Handbook.*
>
> *This work is facilitating through existing membership of GOPAC by individual parliamentarians and through dedicated chapters – in Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Australia.*
>
> *The initiative reports good progress, with new chapters in formation across Oceania in Niue, Nauru and Tuvalu. In 2017, two new parliamentary chapters were established at Parliaments of Samoa and Fiji. Its SDG16 and anti-corruption development work continues in other Pacific Parliaments, and GOPAC has been praised for its role in regional UNCAC activities.*

It is very hard to gauge from the registry data how many initiatives target the interlinkages and synergies *between* goal areas - rather than targeting a broad *range* of goals. Nevertheless, survey data indicates that a number of respondents show awareness of SDG interlinkages (the theme of how organisations are learning from the SDGs is addressed in detail in section 5.3 below), and there are cases throughout the goals that address interlinkages or nexuses between issues and goals.

As one example of a nexus-focused initiative, 'Sustainable Energy for Blue Island Economies' is an initiative that explicitly aims at an intersection of different SDG areas:

> *The SIDS-SIDS Partnership on Sustainable Energy for Blue Island Economies is a network of regional sustainable energy centres for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean and Africa. The key objective is increasing sub-regional cooperation and technical capacities to reduce barriers to the uptake of sustainable energy and the growth of climate resilient markets, industries and innovation. These centres use regional approaches and methodologies to complement and accelerate SIDS efforts on awareness raising and advocacy, promoting investment, innovation and entrepreneurship, knowledge and data management, policy and regulation as well as capacity development. The network provides a platform that improves the understanding of synergies between SDGs, especially SDG14, SDG7, SDG9, SDG13 and SDG 5. The focus is on sustainable ocean energy technologies, the nexus between energy, coastal and fresh water protection, potable water production and waste management, as well as between sustainable energy and small-scale fishery in SIDS, while mainstreaming gender throughout the process. Central members of the SIDS-SIDS Partnership are the Pacific Community (SPC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Small Island Sustainable Energy and Climate Resilience Initiative (SIDSDOCK), as well as the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PCREEE), the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE)and the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), with funding from the governments of Austria, Spain and other international partners.*

2.2 Implementation rate

On the basis of available data, little can be said about the implementation rate of these initiatives and partnerships: that is, how they have progressed. The amount of updates received by the Platform, including reports for initiatives due to have completed, is relatively low. This lack of systematic reporting poses a serious challenge for estimating the contribution and implementation rate of these projects. Overall, 8% of partnerships on the UN's registry as of December 2018 had filed an update. Of the 1900 projects that had completion dates before the end of 2018, only 4.5% had filed an update. In section 6, Table 8 (p55) sets this out in greater detail for UN-associated and non UN-associated partnerships, and in section 5, the analysis engages with the question of what might encourage engagement with the Platform.

2.3 Deliverables and resources

2.3.1 Deliverables

482 initiatives in the registry data identify between 1-4 specific deliverables for their projects, and the number and kinds of these deliverables can be assessed as a way to gauge how initiatives are contributing to the SDGs. In order to do this, the research team devised a taxonomy of different kinds of contributions and then used that to assign a code to each of the deliverables. The ten categories were: *Written technical outputs (e.g. contributions to evaluation and monitoring; reports; indicator development); Events/presentations; Public or large scale communication/expression (e.g. art or public information); Targeted reduction/increase (absolute or proportionate) within a population; Capacity-building/training within organisations; Policy and governance change; Networking/ forming a network; Developing a plan/strategy/programme/framework; Educational course/ programme/curriculum; Other*

The results are presented in Fig. 8 below. The diversity of different kinds of deliverables is very clear - "other" (a catch-all category for those that did not fit in any of the clearest types) being the most numerous. It is clear, too, that whilst a significant number of deliverables took the form of projected direct impacts on populations of people, often in line with SDG targets and indicators, these are outnumbered by somewhat less direct communicative and capacity building outputs – such as technical reports and presentations, training and capacity building within organisations, policy change, planning, and network development.

Fig. 8: Types of deliverables, by number recorded (n=482)
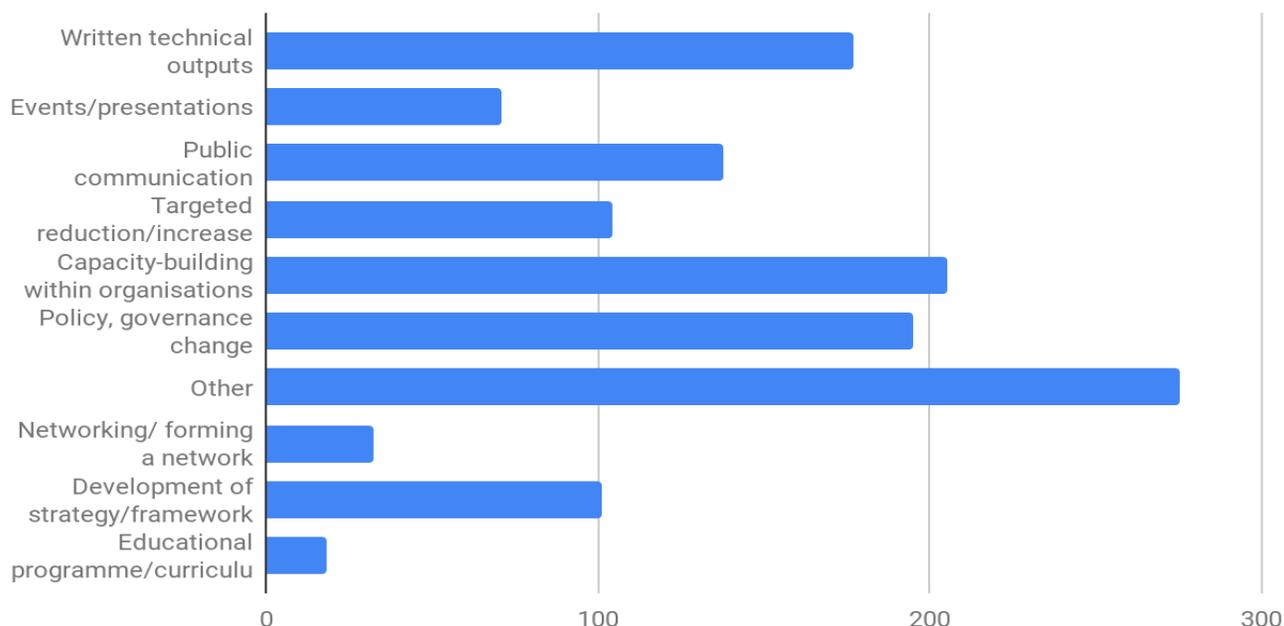
These findings reinforce both the diversity of partnerships and the diversity of contributions to SDG implementation. That numbers of more indirect, enabling, driving and supporting deliverables outweigh the direct impacts delivered is neither unexpected nor unwelcome in itself. Indeed, some SDG targets are deliberately non-statistical in nature - demanding policy change, capacity building, improved curricula. Clearly, too, the SDGs cannot be achieved without an enabling environment of data and learning, and Agenda 2030 specifically demands evaluation and monitoring. This report cannot assess, then, whether there is a shortfall in partnerships reaching their SDG implementation potential, or whether there is a 'gap' in delivery. Or, even if so, how the contributions of partnerships might be orchestrated towards particular kinds of contributions.

These diverse deliverables can be illustrated with two examples. "Tracking performance of SDG 3" is an example of a partnership that aims to deliver improved care outcomes to a wide population:

"Tracking performance of SDG 3" - a partnership between Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy (RCRA), Makerere University, Mountains of the Moon University, and Uganda's Ministry of Health - targets integration and coordination across core health, nutrition, education, psychosocial and child protection services in Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo districts, Uganda.

The initiative strengthens health service delivery and interlinkages between public and private health systems. It conducts training, offers scholarships to vulnerable children and sponsorship to university students working on HIV and TB. It also aims to establish 3 medical centres across these districts focused on care and support to people living with HIV.

The initiative comprises three key elements:

(i)Identifying orphans, vulnerable children, youth and their caregivers who are at a high risk for HIV infection, malnutrition and other health issues and linking them to services

ii) Establishing strong and effective service networks of community-based clinical & socio-economic service providers

iii) developing a mobile-based application and integrating it into case management

Through these objectives, the initiative aims to reach a minimum of 26,767 households, translating into 160,604 orphans and other vulnerable children, youth and their caregivers, by the end of 2019.

The Jordan Institute for Women's Leadership Programme, by contrast, delivers training as a way of contributing to SDG 5:

The Jordan Institute for Women's Leadership Programme is led by the Amman Center for Human Rights (ACHRS) since 2010, and works to rectify the low participation of women in political and economic life across the Middle East, directly addressing multiple targets of goal 5. It promotes political participation, economic empowerment, and community leadership through an intensive training programme, focusing on professional women who have the potential to become transformational public servants and civil society activists.

Participants are offered a 144-hour intensive programme which is held over a period of 6 to 12 months, with established dates and topics agreed upon by the participants. Trainers come from Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. The programme comprises a tailored mix of lectures, participatory workshops, seminars, and visits to different countries to meet academics, activists, parliamentarians and politicians.

The programme is entirely designed by ACHRS members, and implemented in cooperation with the Forum for Future, Finn Church Aid, Canada Fund for Small Initiatives, the Amman Forum Society for Human Rights, and Karama. The programme is largely staffed by volunteers, and funding is identified by ACHRS as a constant challenge.

Between 2010 and 2018, 170 young women ranging from the age of 22 years to 40 years from Jordan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, and Palestine, have graduated from ACHRS.

2.3.2 Resources

The data from the UN Partnerships platform also allows for analysis of the types of resources partnerships and initiatives have committed as part of their registration. 482 Registrations contain such information. As Fig. 9 below shows, partnerships are contributing roughly equal numbers of different types of resources. The largest type of resource offered is staff/technical expertise, followed by financing and in-kind contributions. Partnerships also identified a number of "Other" resources brought to bear. An informal analysis of these resources suggests that common additional resources include scientific research and equipment, such as boats or facilities for Goal 14-oriented partnerships.

Fig. 9: Types of resources partnerships have committed to contributing (n=482, with 1009 total resources committed)
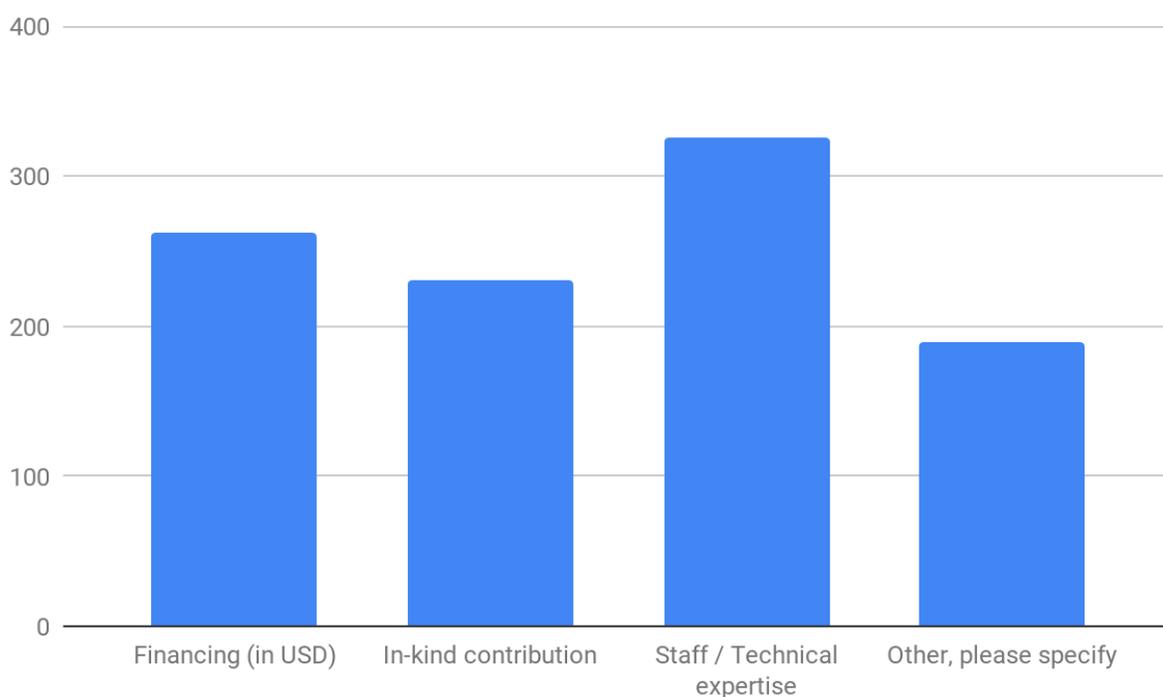
2.4 Alignment with the SDGs

The survey also tried to gain an understanding of how the SDGs were impacting on the practice of initiatives and partnerships, especially since adaptation to the SDG framework might be an important step in both *contributing* to the SDGs effectively and being able to *report* this contribution. This report's findings do show evidence of initiatives and partnerships undertaking some adaptation to the SDG context. A relatively high proportion of initiatives (71% of respondents) have aligned their strategic objectives; a much lower proportion have aligned their organisational structures at a deeper level, e.g. staffing and budget (29%). The results are presented in Fig. 10 below.

Fig. 10: In what ways, if any, have you adapted the practice of your partnership/initiative to better support the SDGs? (n=912)
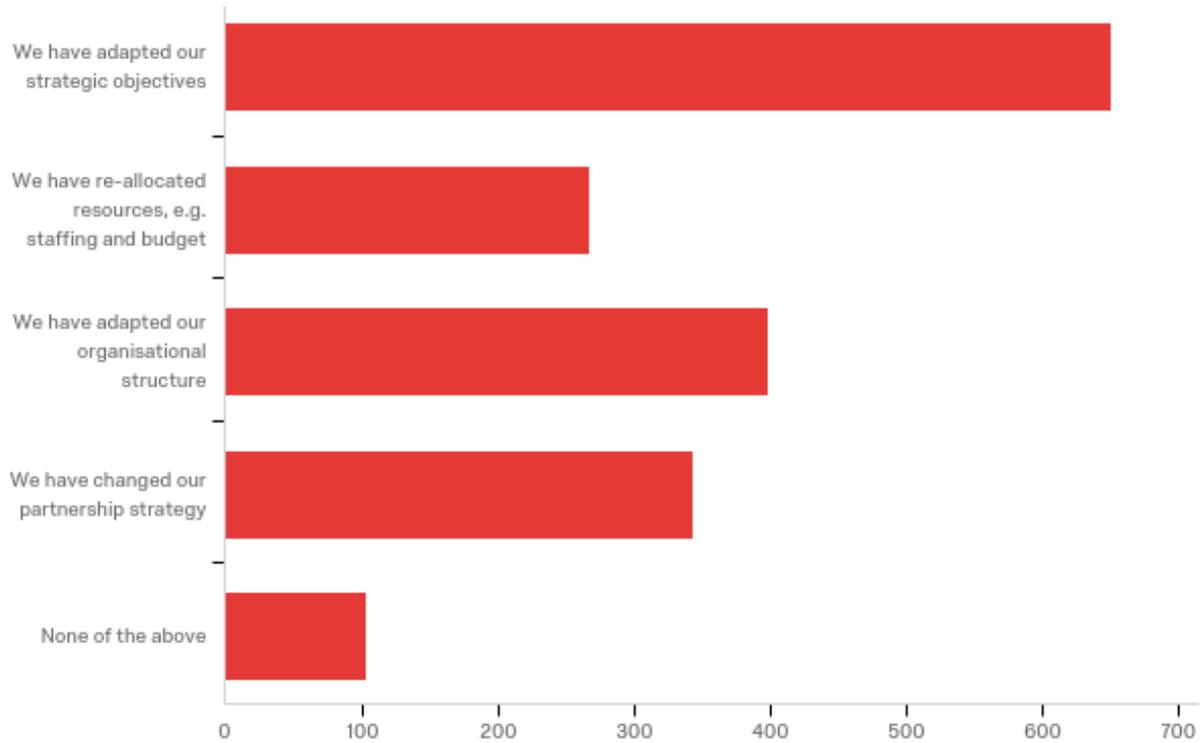
The finding on adaptation of objectives is unsurprising, given that as part the registration process initiatives are asked which SDGs and targets they contribute to. To answer this question, the initiatives can be assumed to have undertaken at least *some* mapping of their objectives against those of the SDGs.[11] If anything, an even higher figure might be expected. It is perhaps interesting to note that a relatively low number of initiatives report adapting their approaches to *partnership* in response to the SDGs (38%). In the context of the emphasis on partnerships in the 2030 Agenda, this finding warrants further investigation.

Table 3 below shows the proportion of respondents from different kinds of lead entities in partnerships/initiatives who have adapted in response to the SDGs in these different ways.[12] Partnerships facilitated by different types of lead entities exhibit slightly different patterns. Initiatives led by UN entities, government, NGOs/CSOs, and the private sector show the strongest adaptation of strategic objectives to the SDGs. By contrast, this is lower for initiatives led by other intergovernmental

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[11] The interpretation taken here is that 'adaptation' can be a matter of degree, and overlap with alignment and mapping.
[12] The results for UN-associated partnerships are discussed in Section 6 of the report: the table here breaks the data out by 'lead entity'.

organisations, academic and scientific institutions and philanthropic organisations. Initiatives led by (or composed solely of) governments, UN entities and academic/scientific institutions show the highest levels of re-allocation of resources (37-32%). Partnerships led by 'other international organisations' show the lowest levels of overall adaptation to the SDGs, though they record relatively high numbers on changes to organisational structure and partnership strategy.

Table 3: Adaptation to the SDGs amongst partnerships/initiatives with different lead entities

	We have adapted our strategic objectives	We have re-allocated resources, e.g. staffing and budget	We have adapted our organisational structure	We have changed our partnership strategy	None of the above	Total
UN entity	50	21	24	21	7	63
	79.37%	33.33%	38.10%	33.33%	11.11%	100%
Other international organisation	21	6	14	12	6	31
	67.74%	19.35%	45.16%	38.71%	19.35%	100%
Government	39	19	22	16	5	51
	76.47%	37.25%	43.14%	31.37%	9.80%	100%
Non-governmental or civil society organisation	390	154	256	216	51	540
	72.22%	28.52%	47.41%	40%	9.44%	100%
Philanthropic organisation	8	4	8	5	3	15
	53.33%	26.67%	53.33%	33.33%	20%	100%
Academic or scientific institution	48	26	24	22	19	81
	59.26%	32.10%	29.63%	27.16%	23.46%	100%
Private sector	85	33	45	43	13	115
	73.91%	28.70%	39.13%	37.39%	11.30%	100%
Total	641	263	393	335	104	896
	71.54%	29.35%	43.86%	37.39%	11.61%	100%

As a case study showing alignment with the SDGs, the SDG6 Integrated Water Resource Management Support Programme aligns its internal structure to Goal 17:

The SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme is a large, global initiative between Global Water Partnership (GWP), UN Environment-DHI Centre on Water and Environment, Cap-Net UNDP, and GWP's network of Regional and Country Water Partnerships, with its 3,000-plus institutional partners. The programme connects a blend of governments, civil society and the private sector partners to provide practical support to countries in the implementation of SDG 6.5 - and through this, other water-related SDG targets. The initiative supports the official SDG monitoring and reporting processes at country level and helps countries design and implement responses that directly promote measurable progress.

The structure of the initiative is aligned to SDG 17 in its component parts - financing, policy and institutions, monitoring, knowledge and capacity building, and strengthening of partnerships. The initiative is monitored through GWP 's monitoring and evaluation system, enabling an ongoing analysis of outcomes and impact through the collection and documentation of updates from Regional and Country Water Partnerships.

During the baseline data drive for SDG 6 in 2017, the Programme has advanced SDG reporting in more than 30 countries. Together with UN Environment-DHI (with UN Environment being the custodian agency of SDG 6.5.1), GWP convened 34 workshops to collect the official country data for 6.5.1, in line with Stage 1 of its action plan. In 2018 and the beginning of 2019, using the baseline data for 6.5.1, GWP, with Cap-Net UNDP and UN Environment DHI, has started implementing Stage 2, working with countries to implement SDG 6.5.1. Four countries have been engaged in Stage 2 so far, with another eight planned during the remainder of 2019.

The largest obstacle thus far has been to have maximum ownership by national governments to engage on SDG 6 implementation. Making the case that implementing SDG 6, and sustainable water management practices in particular, has benefits for achieving SDGs outside of SDG 6 has been key in working closely with governments on the Programme.

2.5 The potential additional impact of partnership

The cumulative impact of all these different kinds of partnerships/initiatives on SDG implementation is very hard to calculate. The project was also interested, though, in the additional impact *partnership* might be contributing. A 2018 report by UN DESA and TPI highlights the concept of the "partnership delta", the impact "greater than the sum of the parts" added by partnership working.[13] A question on the survey allowed the research team to test this idea, at least to an extent. Some of the response options are taken from that report, testing things that might be part of this additional value; others are drawn from Agenda 2030's identification of what partnerships could add. Overall, the finding here is positive. Data from the survey indicates that partners regard their initiatives as generating new solutions, larger scale impacts, and additional learning, to a greater extent than each organisation could individually. In terms of contributions to SDG implementation, too, this is positive. In the context of the "transformative" ambition of the SDGs, the potential additional contribution of partnerships to new solutions and greater scale (and to a lesser extent, as identified in Fig. 11, even "system-wide change") is especially welcome. It is also interesting that finance and system-wide change are identified as being moved less by partnership working.

Fig. 11: In what respects, if any, has your partnership generated additional impact or value that the partners could not have generated alone? (n=867)


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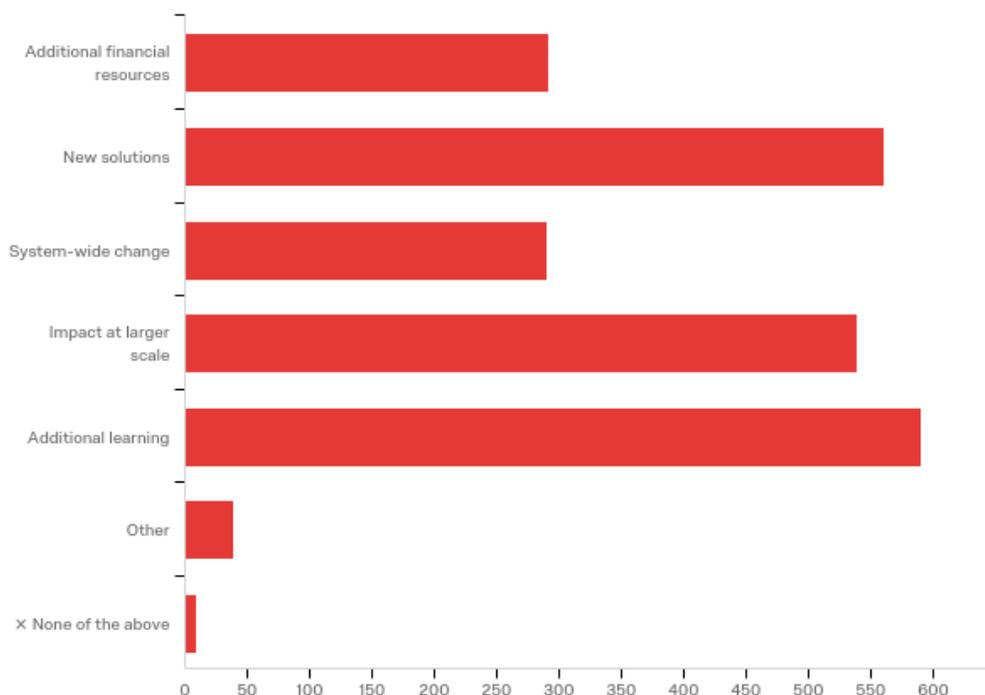
[13] TPI/UN DESA (2018) *Maximising the Impact of Partnerships for the SDGs* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2564Maximising_the_impact_of_partnerships_for_the_SDGs.pdf, p10

2.6 Sharing of resources within partnerships

In addition to exploring the added value of partnership, this report can say more about how partnerships operate and, specifically, *what kinds* of resources are shared. As identified in the introduction, a specific target of the SDGs is that multi-stakeholder partnerships are encouraged to "mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources". The survey tested this with a question that asked about support given and received in partnerships. The results are presented in Fig.12 below. The figures for support given and received are broadly similar.

In both 'incoming' and 'outgoing' categories, *knowledge and expertise*, as well as *learning* and *access to networks*, are shared to a greater extent than *technology* and *financial resources*, or *other goods and services*.   This might be taken to indicate that sharing within these partnerships is only fulfilling part of the ambition of target 17.16. Financial and technological support are received by lead or facilitating organisations to a greater extent than they are given; other goods and services are given to a slightly greater extent. This *might* indicate something about the terms of exchange within partnerships between the lead entities and others, though the report cannot analyse this further.

Fig. 12: Support given (n=876) and received (n=875) by lead organisations within partnerships
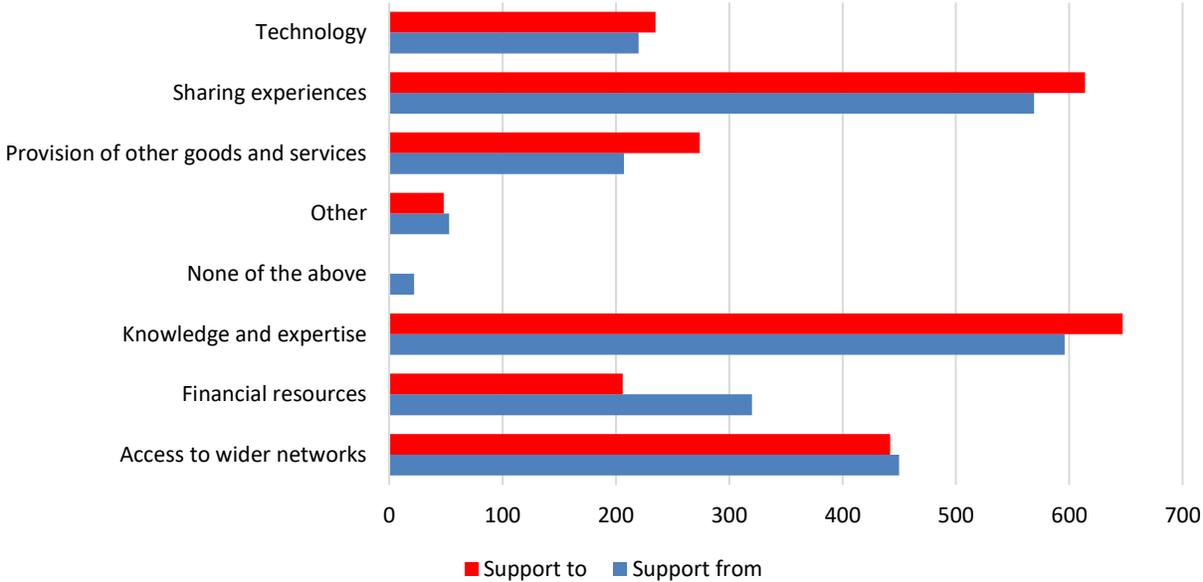
Breaking down these results by regions (given that most respondents only operate in one or two regions) allows for limited analysis of regional patterns of sharing, as presented in Table 4 (outgoing support) and Table 5 (incoming support).

It seems clear that partnerships across different regions recorded very similar, high, levels of sharing of certain resources - knowledge and expertise (always 80-95%), and sharing of experiences (always 80-90%). There are also suggestive differences that would merit further analysis. For example, responding entities representing partnerships active in Africa and South and South-East Asia give out less financial and technological support (30.2% and 35% respectively) to their partners compared to partnerships active in Oceania and East Asia (45.5% and 43.3% respectively). The gap in financial resources received *by* lead organisations *from* partners (44.9% and 43.8% vs 48.7% and 50.7% for the respective regions) is much narrower.

This analysis is crude, and subject to significant limitations and uncertainties. Further investigation, though, might offer scope for reflection on target 17.16's ambition for multi-stakeholder partnerships: sharing not just "knowledge and expertise", but "finance and technology", to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, but "*particularly developing countries*".

Table 4: Types of Support given by lead organisations, by region of activity[14]

	Knowledge and expertise	Financial resources	Technology	Access to wider networks	Sharing experiences	Provision of other goods or services	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	336	118	124	241	319	161	391
	85.93%	30.18%	31.71%	61.64%	81.59%	41.18%	100%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	139	62	59	109	132	62	149
	93.29%	41.61%	39.60%	73.15%	88.59%	41.61%	100%
Latin-American and the Caribbean	160	69	54	123	150	76	179
	89.39%	38.55%	30.17%	68.72%	83.80%	42.46%	100%
Western Europe and North America	194	77	80	155	185	102	215
	90.23%	35.81%	37.21%	72.09%	86.05%	47.44%	100%
Arab States	110	46	39	85	99	51	119
	92.44%	38.66%	32.77%	71.43%	83.19%	42.86%	100%
Oceania	105	51	43	83	94	52	112
	93.75%	45.54%	38.39%	74.11%	83.93%	46.43%	100%
East Asia	128	58	53	95	115	59	134
	95.52%	43.28%	39.55%	70.90%	85.82%	44.03%	100%

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[14] This table does not include the numbers of those who chose "Other" or "None of the above"; these categories were very rarely chosen.

	Knowledge and expertise	Financial resources	Technology	Access to wider networks	Sharing experiences	Provision of other goods or services	Total
South and South-East Asia	299	118	127	209	279	127	333
	89.79%	35.44%	38.14%	62.76%	83.78%	38.14%	100%
Total	685	234	247	472	649	300	803
	85.31%	29.14%	30.76%	58.78%	80.82%	37.36%	100%

Table 5: Types of support given to lead organisations, by region of activity[15]

	Knowledge and expertise	Financial resources	Technology	Access to wider networks	Sharing experiences	Provision of other goods or services	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	314	177	112	254	299	117	394
	79.70%	44.92%	28.43%	64.47%	75.89%	29.70%	100%
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	130	70	57	97	117	48	151
	86.09%	46.36%	37.75%	64.24%	77.48%	31.79%	100%
Latin-American and the Caribbean	145	80	60	114	139	55	181
	80.11%	44.20%	33.15%	62.98%	76.80%	30.39%	100%
Western Europe and North America	182	97	84	148	171	72	216
	84.26%	44.91%	38.89%	68.52%	79.17%	33.33%	100%
Arab States	96	55	41	79	94	36	121
	79.34%	45.45%	33.88%	65.29%	77.69%	29.75%	100%
Oceania	96	55	41	80	86	38	113
	84.96%	48.67%	36.28%	70.80%	76.11%	33.63%	100%
East Asia	114	69	51	92	107	44	136
	83.82%	50.74%	37.50%	67.65%	78.68%	32.35%	100%
South and South-East Asia	273	145	113	205	256	96	331
	82.48%	43.81%	34.14%	61.93%	77.34%	29%	100%
Total	633	354	234	467	603	221	802
	78.93%	44.14%	29.18%	58.23%	75.19%	27.56%	100%

[15] This table does not include the numbers of those who chose "Other" or "None of the above"; these categories were very rarely chosen.

The following two case studies represent examples of partnerships that share different kinds of resources. The PCSD Network offers a model focused on knowledge exchange and mutual learning:

The Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Partnership brings together governments, international organisations, civil society, think tanks, the private sector, and other stakeholders with the aim of enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development in support of SDG 17.14. Through knowledge sharing and peer learning, the 44 members of the PCSD Partnership collaborate to:

- *· Generate evidence-based analysis and improve understanding of SDG interactions and their policy implications.*
- *· Build capacities to analyse policy coherence challenges, track progress, and assess the effects of policies on sustainable development.*
- *· Support national efforts for monitoring and reporting progress on SDG Target 17.14 to "enhance policy coherence for sustainable development".*

Experience shows that PCSD is challenging to operationalise and communicate to decision-makers and the public. It is also a difficult target for which to track progress, with the methodology for global indicator 17.14.1 still under development.

PCSD can be a "hard sell", and some Partners find attracting funds for their projects particularly challenging. This makes it difficult to undertake country case studies or to replicate, test and apply existing initiatives in more than one location. Resource constraints are also a common challenge particularly in developing countries committed to pursue PCSD where some of the partners operate. Yet, the PCSD Partnership, which aims at knowledge-sharing, has managed to fulfil many of its core initiatives. This encourages potential partner institutions that work on similar issues to exploit complementarities, add value to ongoing work, and avoid duplication.

The Toilet Board Coalition shares access to networks and promotes collaboration, but specifically in the context of creating a marketplace where finance and training can accelerate commercial projects:

The Toilet Board Coalition (TBC) is a large-scale global coalition involving multinationals, development agencies and large NGOs. Founded in 2014, the TBC is a unique business-led partnership with the ambition to address the global sanitation crisis by accelerating the Sanitation Economy – a brand new marketplace for innovation, entrepreneurship and investment. The TBC is enabling private sector engagement; connecting large and small companies; and ensuring close collaboration between private, public and non-profit sectors with the common goal to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6), universal access to sanitation. In doing so TBC aims to unlock a full system of natural and biological resources, as well as information about human health and behaviour, that has been largely untapped. TBC aims to transform sanitation systems from an unaffordable public cost to an untapped business opportunity.

The TBC runs the Toilet Accelerator, the world's first Accelerator Programme dedicated to sanitation entrepreneurs in low-income markets. This enables the engagement of leading multinational businesses, global sanitation experts and social investors to mentor promising business models for a 6-

12-month period with the aim that they will be integrated into markets through private investment or partnership to achieve commercial viability and scale. New in 2018 the TBC began working with governments and partner organisations beyond the traditional sanitation stakeholders to develop strategic projects to advance the evidence base for, and accelerate the impact of, the Sanitation Economy.

3. Governance and review for partnerships

One rationale for using a survey was to get a better sense of how *partnerships,* in particular, are governed, especially in the sense of how they make decisions and how often they communicate - and also how they approached evaluation and review. This section presents the main findings.

3.1 Governance

3.1.1 Decision making

The survey asked respondents about decision-making and communication. The governance question used an example of a recent decision as context: "thinking about a recent strategic decision your partnership has taken, which of the following were important elements in your decision-making process? (choose as many as applicable)". 873 respondents gave their views. As the numbers of choices below indicate, many ticked multiple options: 17% of respondents chose between 5-7 governance mechanisms, while 39% of partnerships chose 1-2 and 43% of partnerships chose 3-4.

Fig. 13: Thinking about a recent strategic decision your partnership has taken, which of the following were important elements in your decision-making process? (n=873)
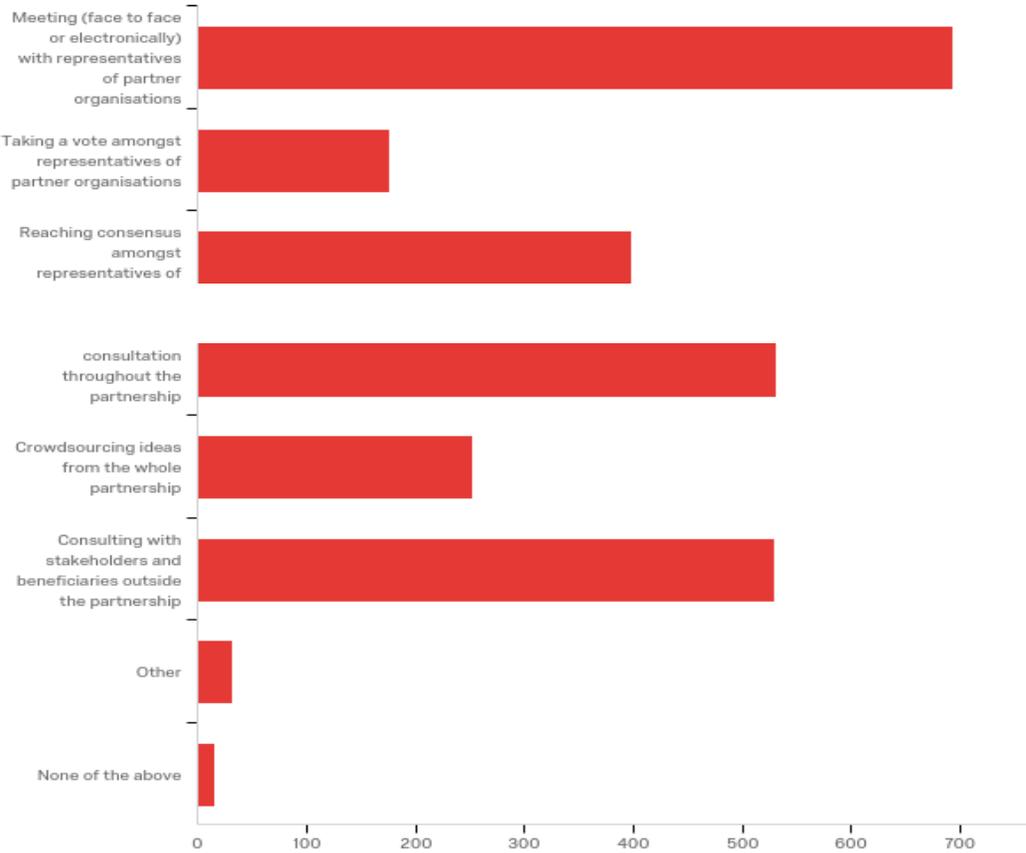
It is clear that meetings are a central feature of governance and coordination, as identified by 80% of respondents. Lower proportions are recorded for reaching consensus on strategic decisions as an approach to partnership governance (45.6%). Whilst some initiatives use voting (20%), it is clear that not all the decision-making process is accounted for here: clearly, too, not all these meetings end in consensus. Consulting with stakeholders outside the partnership was undertaken by 60.6% of respondents, wider consultation within the partnership by 60.8%.

In general, governance within partnerships - consistent with this data and with analysis of particular cases - seems to vary between partnerships with a high level of coordination, and much looser networks enabling ad-hoc cooperation on specific small-scale projects that only involve a limited number of partners and local stakeholders. In particular, partnerships around a specific SDG or target can be governed at different levels - achieving wider strategic objectives as well as facilitating problem-solving and addressing specific local issues on a ad-hoc basis, with smaller subsets of relevant stakeholders.

For example, Power For All is a partnership that includes over 200 partners from the private sector, government, research institutes/ academia and civil society working together to facilitate the dissemination and implementation of decentralized renewable energy systems. All members have signed a common declaration supporting decentralized renewable energy and collaborate around projects on an ad-hoc basis along with a coordinating core team at Power For All:

Power for All is a global network accelerating universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy -- SDG 7 -- through renewable, decentralized electrification solutions such as mini-grids and standalone solar. It is focused on ending energy poverty within a decade for the roughly 1 billion people living without access to electricity, 80% of whom are in in rural areas. To achieve this, Power for All 1) highlights the wide-ranging quality-of-life benefits of decentralized renewable energy through research and communications (such as better healthcare and education, access to clean drinking water, gender equity, job creation and increased income); 2) advocates for an enabling policy and finance environment facilitating the uptake of "off-grid" solutions; and 3) mobilizes the broader sector including consumers, civil society and government to activate energy access markets. Its mission is to work with both the public and private sector to create systemic change in the way communities are electrified, enabling the transformation of rural economies through policy reform via e.g. reducing tariff barriers and skills training; working with investors, banks and multilateral agencies to mobilize capital for the entire value chain via e.g. earmarking specific funds and financing business models such as pay-as-you-go; collaborating with development agencies and foundations via directing funds that enable the energy impoverished to generate and use their own energy; and working with the broader decentralized renewable energy sector to drive higher quality and efficiency. These objectives help to increase the uptake of decentralized renewable power by energy consumers, which in turn further grows the legitimacy of the sector. The more than 200 partners of Power for All include private start-ups and

3.1.2 Communication

As a gauge of partnership activity, and also to get a sense of how partnership was facilitated, the survey also asked about the frequency of communication amongst partners. By far the majority of partnerships responding communicated weekly or monthly, as per fig. 14 below. The analysis found little variation among lead organisations in the communication pattern of their partnerships.

Fig. 14: How often do you communicate with your partner organisations on average? (n=957)
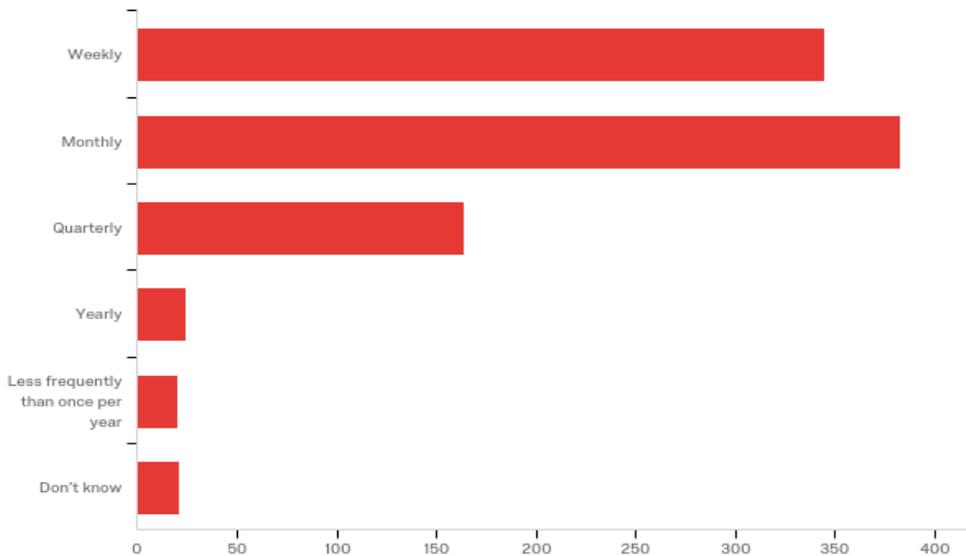

3.2 Review and reporting

Initiatives are using a range of different review and monitoring processes, as shown in Fig. 15 below. A majority (65% of responding partnerships) review performance in regular internal meetings, 60% report progress against objective annually, and present these reports to external stakeholders. Relatively few respond as having clear criteria for evaluation (45%) and fewer still make their reports available publicly (42%). These finding might indicate that further progress could be made in the transparency and rigour of partnership reporting. It may be, for example, that even though organisations have rigorous internal reporting mechanisms, partnerships are not effectively captured by such mechanisms, or are not subject to similar levels of review. Alternatively, the informality of some partnerships might hinder rigorous evaluation, even as that informality is central to the effectiveness of the partnership. The UN platform might be part of an institutional effort to address potential gaps in evaluation by offering a framework to facilitate reporting against SMART objectives. However, current overall levels of reporting to the

platform are extremely low (8%), indicating that it is not currently fulfilling this function. In the conclusion, this report addresses the wider question of the role of this platform in coordinating or facilitating partnerships around the SDGs.

Fig. 15: Please tell us which of these features are present in your initiative/partnership's approach to review and evaluation. (n=887)
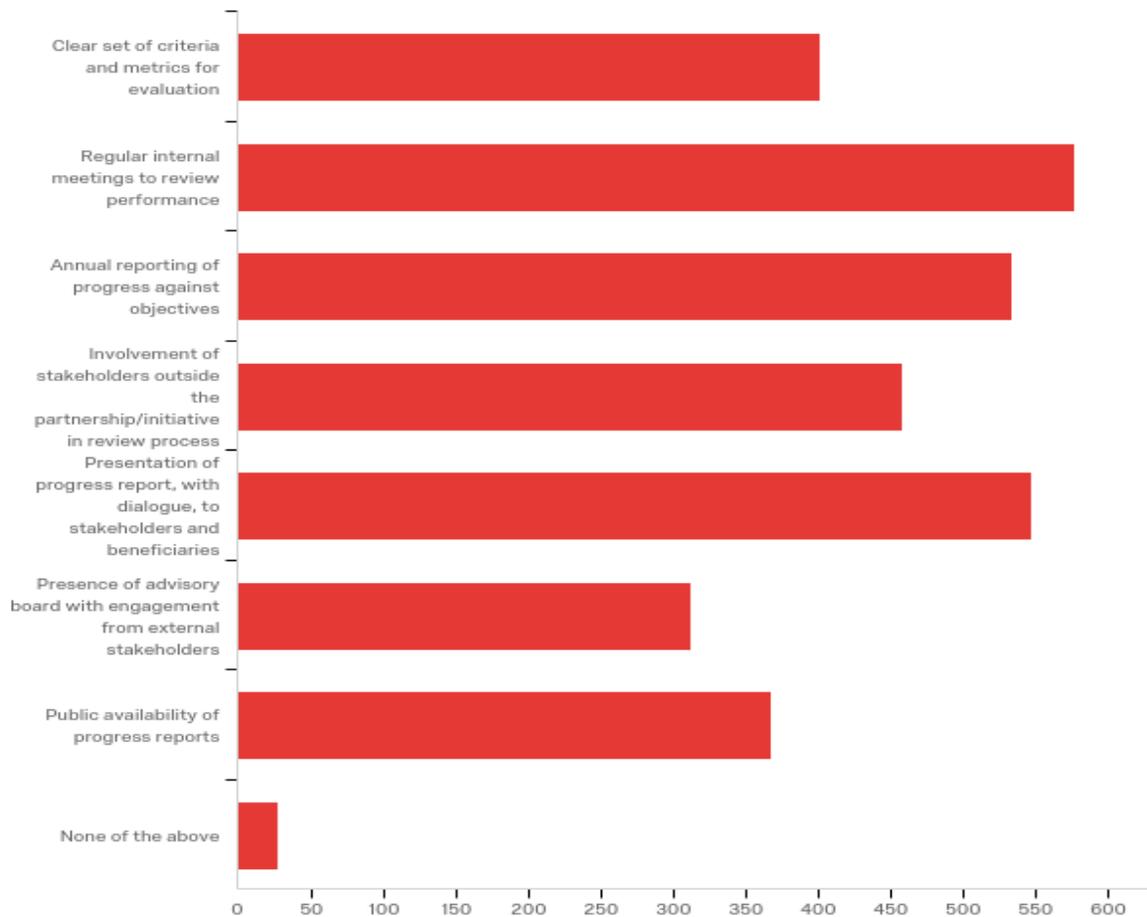
The case study below, of the "Ridge to Reef" platform, indicates how some of these aspects of governance and monitoring are found in the multi-level governance of a regional partnership:

Case study
The Pacific Islands National Priorities Multi-Focal Area "Ridge-to-Reef" (R2R) program aims to maintain and enhance Pacific Island countries' ecosystem goods and services through integrated approaches to land, water, forest, biodiversity and coastal resource management that also contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience. Experience has shown that an

integrated approach from ridge to reef (and ocean-ridge to reef) is necessary for poverty reduction, sustainability, and capacity enhancement for small countries with few human resources to undertake projects. Hence, each country is planning to adopt specific aspects of R2R.

The R2R program as a whole has a strong governance and reporting structure: an R2R Program Steering Committee (PSC) meets annually to review progress, provide strategic guidance and advice, and coordinate programmes. Regional and National Program Coordination mechanisms have been put in place to ensure National, regional and Inter agency coordination of the programme's supporting projects, and National inter-ministerial committees provide oversight of national-level reporting and approaches.

Overall, the project operates through a series of national multi-focal area R2R demonstration projects which address national priorities and development needs while delivering global environmental benefits. These align with Global Environmental Facility (GEF) focal area strategies on Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Climate Change Mitigation, International Waters and Climate Change Adaptation. Alongside the value of demonstration, R2R develops key knowledge tools in the form of synthesis reports. These are disseminated online and supported with multi-media products, as well as embedded in larger capacity-building initiatives. Traditional knowledge is respected alongside the deployment of appropriate, small-scale technology.

4. Challenges and enabling factors

4.1 Challenges

This section draws on two sources of data to analyse the challenges identified by partnerships and initiatives. First, the research team asked survey respondents to rate a set of common challenges identified in academic literature and in previous UN reports on partnerships. The results follow in Fig. 16 below. For each factor, Fig. 16 shows how far respondents viewed this as *not a challenge*; *a small challenge*; or *a significant challenge*.

Finance was overwhelmingly identified as a significant challenge - 71.3% of 868 respondents viewed this as significant. The other challenges widely found to be significant were the participation of marginalised groups (28.6%) and the context in which initiatives were operating (28%). Here, context could be inclusive of political factors, but also geographical obstacles or institutional constraints, or a combination of these factors. Time, coordination and momentum are recognised as important challenges too, 65-70% view these as either small or significant. Transparency and opportunities for reflection are most widely viewed as not a challenge, with 54% of respondents identifying transparency not being a challenge (37.6% for opportunities for reflection).

Fig. 16: To what extent were the following elements challenges for your initiative or partnership? (n=868)
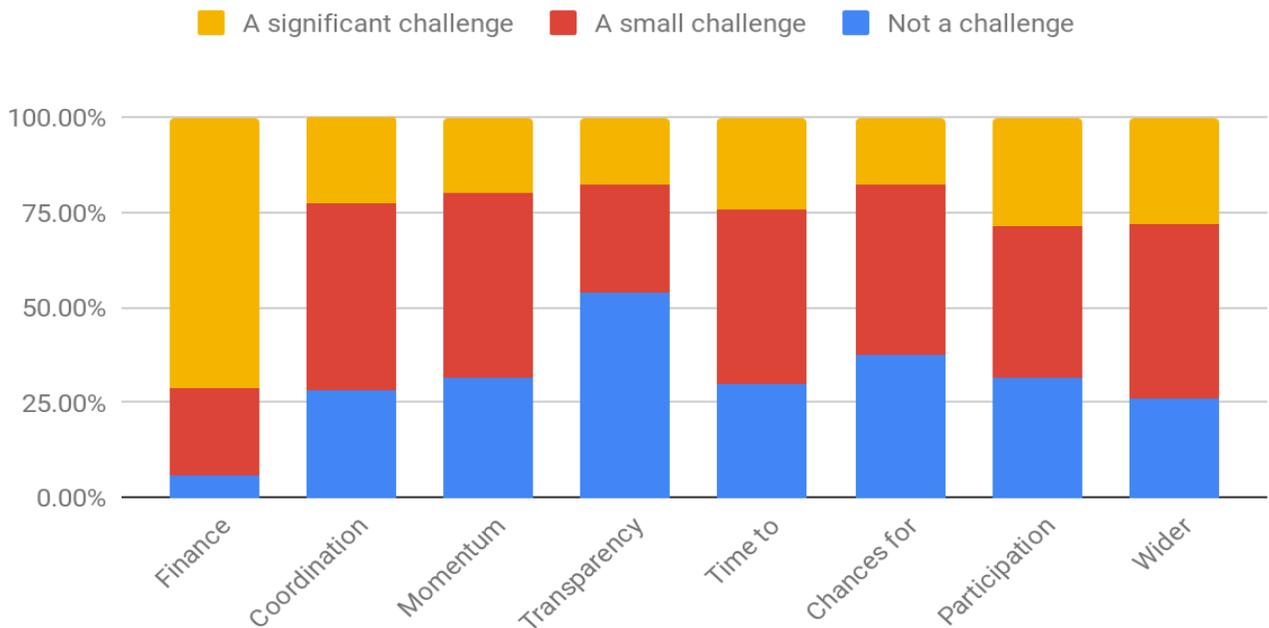
These survey findings are confirmed by the limited available data on challenges from the registry data. The progress reports completed by 494 initiatives contained a field which invited initiatives to report challenges encountered. 302 of the records (i.e. approx. 60%) contained nothing under 'Challenges', leaving 192 entries in the 'Challenges' field - although within this a small number of participants recorded a response along the lines of 'no significant challenges'.

A textual analysis of this data was undertaken, though caveats should be noted: notably, the initial findings below do not systematically account for context (for example, where a challenge is identified, but then identified as having been overcome). Nevertheless, the findings are included here as broadly supportive of the pattern of challenges identified by survey respondents.

Finance/funding/resource issues were the most commonly mentioned challenge identified by some margin, identified in around 100 cases. The second most common theme, which overlaps with resource issues, concerned problems associated with geography – i.e. remote, rural, or desert areas, particularly the difficulties in access, and the lack of technology in remote or rural areas. Finding and retaining suitable staff appeared as a challenge in a number of responses. A lack of support from government was mentioned explicitly in 13 of the responses. A lack of awareness of the SDGs or issue area, or of recognition of the partnership or programme was mentioned in 10 cases. The difficulties of working with multiple partners was a further identifiable theme.

These findings are not unexpected. Finance is recognised as a perennial challenge for initiatives of all sizes, at all scales. The data does not allow us to see whether finance is a challenge to the *expansion* of an initiative, or a challenge to its *survival*. Other factors, again, reflect the findings of existing literature on multi-stakeholder partnerships. The participation of marginalised and vulnerable groups is a challenge posed especially sharply by the SDGs and their pledge to "leave no-one behind". That this is widely perceived as a challenge might indicate the need for greater learning, training and capacity-building in this area; though it might, equally, just indicate how difficult it is to ensure the participation of those who face barriers to participation by definition.

4.2 Enabling/success factors

Data from the registry was not available on the elements that were considered most important to the success of partnerships. To address this problem, an open question, inviting respondents to identify enabling factors, was included in the survey - "What factors would you identify as the most important to the success of your partnership or initiative?". There were 707 responses to this question. Here the report summarises the most common and prominent themes from these answers, before presenting a representative sample of quotes. As a reflection of finance as the most significant challenge, finance was also considered an important contribution to success: "finance" and "financial" were mentioned 434

times. A further large cluster identified issues widely held as integral to partnership - communication (49) collaboration (29), coordination (27), cooperation (27) all feature prominently. Engagement - of partners and wider stakeholders - is mentioned 32 times. The impact of a supportive - or unsupportive - political context is reflected by 13 mentions of "state" and 11 of "political".

Fig. 17: Commonly occurring words in responses to "success factors" question (n=710)

Some representative longer reflections are offered here as a resource for discussion and learning.

"Clear objectives; cooperation and coordination amongst partner organizations, including through existing sharing of ongoing and planned activities, and regular exchange of other relevant information; mobilization of resources; regular review of progress; and adjustment of performance, as necessary."

"An inclusive approach, which involves all stakeholders, since the beginning, in the design, the implementation and the evaluation of the initiative."

"Ensuring the engagement from different stakeholders, focusing on a long-term financial planning, and keeping up the momentum of the initiative with external stakeholders and partners."

"There are many factors: 1) well visioned relationship with healthy discussion 2) Well scheduled plan and action 3)Finance and healthy environment among stakeholders"

"Project management capabilities of partners; alignment with other, similar initiatives/donors; pooling of resources; government support or at least stability of regulations/law"

These success factors, overall, tend to indicate that SDG oriented partnerships and initiatives face the same central issues as multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives in all contexts. This is to be expected to an extent, though it might be significant that SDG-specific enabling factors or challenges do not emerge more prominently. This does not mean that the SDGs as a framework, political developments associated with the SDGs, or the momentum created by the SDGs are not enabling factors; however, few respondents cite any SDG-specific factor as the *most* significant enabling factor in their answers.

The project updates in the case of the GoTeach initiative identify some of these challenges:

GoTeach is a collaborative initiative between SOS Children's Villages and DHL. It addresses the challenge of youth employability, with an emphasis on youth coming from underprivileged backgrounds, aiming to ensure that no one is left behind in the achievement of decent jobs for all.

The young people living under the care of SOS Children's Villages programmes are connected to employees from Deutsche Post DHL Group through different activities to advance the young people's careers. Through this partnership DHL and SOS work to prevent marginalization and to motivate and educate young people to take the right steps in establishing a sustainable and financially independent adult life. GoTeach is a long-established programme. Since the initiation of the programme in 2011, GoTeach has expanded to 35 countries, in South America, Africa, MENA, Europe and Asia. Over this time, the programme has engaged more than 13,100 youth and 6,400 DHL employees as volunteers.

The partnership has plans to develop the programme in existing partner countries - increasing the number of youth reached in the countries; improving the existing programmes; learning from and replicating successful interventions and making the programme more effective and efficient. New countries will be reached by making the programme scalable and adaptable, offering tools so that other can adopt this successful model.

GoTeach report a common challenge for the initial stages of partnership working – the time needed to find a common understanding and to get to know the partner, the structures and different company cultures. A pilot year gave the programme time and flexibility to grow, and the chance to establish a trustful and open relationship. On a local/national level the main - and again, common - challenges identified are time, resources and communication.

5. Other trends and observations

5.1 The role of UN support

The survey asked respondents about aspects of the UN's role in facilitating partnerships and initiatives. This section presents the results around two key themes: the UN support that would be most valuable, and respondents' thoughts on the Partnerships platform itself.

5.1.1. UN Support

Respondents to the survey were asked "What types of support from the UN would most benefit your initiative / partnership efforts?" and had an open text box in which to respond. The analysis below presents observations on prevalent responses, and also quotes a representative sample of the longer answers.

By far the type of support felt of most support was financial. Searching for "financial" and proximate terms returned approximately 400 references, from 740 open comments. This is an unsurprising result, reflecting the funding difficulties that emerge as a key challenge for partnerships at all levels and scales. "Technical" support, "expertise" and "capacity building" were mentioned approx. 150 times, again indicating particular challenges partnerships face, and perhaps a specific role the UN could occupy. "networking", "access", and "events" also feature prominently, in approximately 140 responses. This reflected a sense in such responses that the UN could provide greater access to fora and spaces for partnerships and initiatives, and facilitate more involvement in UN-organised events.

Roles for the UN in "collaboration", "learning" and "promotion" featured, to a lesser extent (20-30 times), in answers. Below, a visualisation of these responses as a word cloud - Fig.18 - shows just how prominent finance was in responses.

Fig. 18: Commonly occurring words in responses to "support from the UN" question (n=740)

Some representative longer answers are provided below:

"Increased exposure through local / international UN networks; an ability to apply for funding for our project through the UN and their partners or to have access to funding; connection to local UN bodies in India who can assist/mentor our team and/or partner with us on the ground."

"We need a few technical experts on the subject [to] accelerate our movement, good guidance from the respective UN departments. We need Clearance from UNESCO, ILO, UNCTAD, WTO, etc. and at least some guidance for financial support by which we can strive to initiate our Partnership."

"Communication (web platforms) that helps to disseminate our work, meetings to expose our projects like the HLPF Learning Session that has helped us to share knowledge with our partners and meet new stakeholders."

"Finance, capacity building, participation in relevant UN meetings, accreditation/recognition from the UN to boost my organization's chances to access support from donor agencies."

"Helping us and our partnership to be more visible, so that others might join, and enhance collaborative action, scale, and impact."

"Facilitating the relationship with vulnerable communities. Strengthening or supporting technical aspects that facilitate the relationship with vulnerable communities. financing experiences that allow the approach to vulnerable populations."

"It would be useful to receive case studies and examples of best practices from successful partnerships relevant for practitioners"

5.1.2 Greater engagement with the platform

Respondents were also asked "What would make you engage more regularly with the UN Partnerships platform?" as a way to examine further how initiatives regard the UN platform, and how they see its specific role in facilitating coordination and learning between partnerships. The question was framed in this way partly in recognition of the low reporting rate documented elsewhere in the report. Respondents gave different kinds of responses to this question. For some, answers reflected a desire for the platform to provide access to the kinds of support identified in 5.1.1, funding especially. Others viewed the platform as a space for peer learning and exchange, and wanted to see it function better in this respect. The most common response indicated that greater contact and communication was desired (30 responses on "communication"; 20 mentioning "updating"; 13 "contact"; webinars and more "face to face" contact, and "sharing" - 53 responses). That this communication should be "regular" was mentioned 53 times. The word cloud visualisation below indicates these focal issues very clearly.

Fig. 19: Commonly occurring words in responses to "what would make you engage more" question (n=710)

Some sample responses are included as a resource for reflection:

"Permanent contact mechanisms to be maintained active between United Nations and all multi stakeholders, engaging opportunities and facilities from the United Nations in order to help more stakeholders being involved"

"To promote our active engagement, we should have access to regular information and feedback"

"More regular, structured communication between the platform and our organisation (similar to liaison office) Coherence/ synergy between our organisation's reporting requirements and the platforms"

"More direct communication, deadlines given in advance ideally months prior, more support, face to face interaction, collaborative spirit of invitation, better virtual interface on platform, rooted in real people, places, to know there was something to not just give but to gain from the experience, equally respect all players' time and resources"

* Regular reminders to update with links in the e-mail/comms to do so; * More communication from the UN on our projects (at present it seems like they just sit there and tick a box); * Regular forums/meetings to engage with other UN partners in similar regions in order to build networks and develop regional relationships in order to tackle the issues together and share ideas/learnings; *

"Regular communication/updates on the progress of the Platform and where I can be engaged."

Respondents also had specific technical suggestions and feedback on the platform:

"A more stable and user-friendly system (i.e. easy access to update on the status of program that contributed to the partnership)"

"An open platform for exchange of ideas and success stories"

"an online discussion forum to facilitate interaction"

5.2 Learning in partnerships

Learning emerges strongly in responses to the survey as a resource shared within partnerships. In section 2.6 above, "knowledge and expertise" and "shared experiences" were the two most shared categories of resource (p29). It also emerges clearly as something generated by partnership - in responses on the added value of partnerships under section 2.5, "additional learning" was the most commonly selected element of added value from partnership, recorded by 68% of respondents.

In addition to these findings on the prominence of learning between organisations, a specific question was asked in the survey to generate data on how *the SDGs* were influencing the learning of organisations. The options offered here combined some of the practical ways that the SDGs might frame the work of partnerships (communication, objective-setting), with some of the key commitments or transformative aspects of the 2030 Agenda (interlinkages, leave no-one behind, stakeholder engagement).

As Fig. 20 below shows, the SDGs appear to have facilitated learning among organizations with regards to better understanding the connections between different issues of sustainable development (selected by 69% of respondents), the value of working with the participation of stakeholders (67%), how to set objectives and activities (64%), how to communicate the values of the partnership (58%) and the importance of focusing on marginalised/vulnerable groups (54%). That the SDGs have influenced the understanding of initiatives in these sorts of respects is not a surprising finding, though evidence of this is welcome. There is evidence here, especially, of the interconnected and indivisible nature of the agenda, and a norm of stakeholder participation, being important insights.

Fig. 20: Have the SDGs influenced how your partnership/initiative understands any of the following? (n=912)
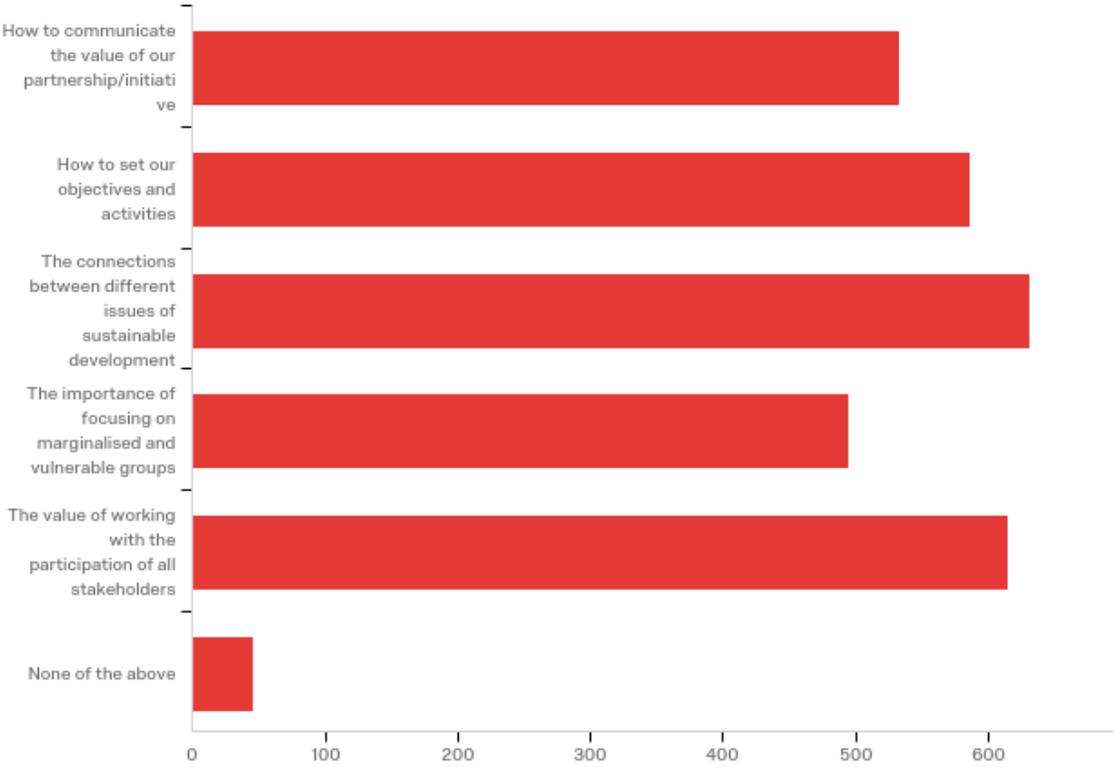

Table 6 below shows how partnerships led by different kinds of entities viewed the role of the SDGs in their learning. Learning how to communicate the value of the partnership was particularly relevant for initiatives led by UN entities, IGOs and the private sector (64-71%), while initiatives led by NGOs and academic institutions, in particular, learned to value the connections between different SDGs and working with the participation of all stakeholders:

Table 6: Responses on how SDGs have influenced understanding, by lead organisation

	How to communicate the value of our partnership /initiative	How to set our objectives and activities	The connections between different issues of sustainable development	The importance of focusing on marginalised and vulnerable groups	The value of working with the participation of all stakeholders	Total
UN entity	46	46	39	30	36	65
	70.77%	70.77%	60%	46.15%	55.38%	100%
Other international/intergovernmental organisation	20	20	22	16	19	31
	64.52%	64.52%	70.97%	51.61%	61.29%	100%
Government	27	32	38	26	34	51
	52.94%	62.75%	74.51%	50.98%	66.67%	100%
Non-governmental or civil society organisation	314	354	380	317	381	544
	57.72%	65.07%	69.85%	58.27%	70.04%	100%
Philanthropic organisation	7	9	7	8	6	15
	46.67%	60%	46.67%	53.33%	40%	100%
Academic or scientific institution	37	44	57	35	54	81
	45.68%	54.32%	70.37%	43.21%	66.67%	100%
Private sector	74	72	80	55	73	115
	64.35%	62.61%	69.57%	47.83%	63.48%	100%
Total	525	577	623	487	603	902
	58.20%	63.97%	69.07%	53.99%	66.85%	100%

These results were relatively constant across different regions. Learning can, in the right environment, translate into organisational change. It might be expected, longer term, that these areas of learning become embedded in the practice of these differently-led (and perhaps differently focused) initiatives.

Learning, as evidenced in the data, primarily occurs within partnerships either as (i) capacity building and best-practice learning from each other's experiences or (ii) as provision of information and exchange of knowledge via web-based tools and face-to-face meetings or training.

For SDG 14, the Ocean Recovery Alliance offers an example of using two web-based tools to facilitate learning on how to reduce plastic pollution:

> *The Ocean Recovery Alliance brings together new ways of thinking, creativity, collaborations and technologies to introduce innovative initiatives and projects that improve the ocean environment. It collaborates with the UN Environment Programme, the World Bank, the business and technology sectors as well as various stakeholders to address global plastic pollution in innovative ways and leverages their capabilities and institutional capacities. It operates several sub-projects on marine plastic pollution, some of which are complementing each other. The Plastic Disclosure Project helps the service and manufacturing industry to determine the baseline of their current plastic use, recovery, recycling and re-use of plastic along value chains by establishing an annual reporting mechanism to facilitate measuring, reporting and verification. It also improves the efficient use of resources and helps to manage reputational risks. The focus is on building capacity and expanding knowledge on how to improve the involvement of all individuals and departments and enable them to take on a leading role in the area of creating a circular economy within the respective industries. Global Alert is a web-/app-based tool that allows to report and map plastic pollution in waters, both rivers and oceans. It thereby enables community participation to report and address problems, catalyzes active watershed stewardship of rivers, increases global awareness and provides the tools for effective monitoring. It also offers a number of local initiatives in Hong Kong and the Pacific Region to increase awareness and improve education on ocean pollution.*

Coordination and regular engagement among stakeholders is critical for successful and lasting learning. This enables the exchange of experiences in formulating and drafting initiatives' policies and in turn facilitates the uptake of technologies or encourages behavioural changes. Especially, hearing policy-making and implementation experiences from other countries and regions can inspire stakeholders to draw lessons and avoid 're-inventing the wheel' - as well as taking reflections on board for how policies can be improved and unintended consequences be minimised.

The SIDS-SIDS Partnership on Sustainable Energy for Blue Island Economies offers such a framework for regular exchange between different stakeholders and reflection on each other's experiences to facilitate capacity building:

> *The SIDS-SIDS Partnership on Sustainable Energy for Blue Island Economies is a network of regional sustainable energy centres for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean and Africa. The key objective is increasing sub-regional cooperation and technical capacities to reduce barriers to the uptake of sustainable energy and the growth of climate resilient markets,*

industries and innovation. These centres use regional approaches and methodologies to complement and accelerate SIDS efforts on awareness raising, promoting investment, innovation and entrepreneurship, knowledge and data management, policy and regulation as well as capacity development. The network provides a platform that improves the understanding of synergies between SDGs, especially SDG14, SDG7, SDG9 and SDG13. The focus is on sustainable ocean energy technologies, the nexus between energy, coastal and fresh water protection and waste management, as well as between sustainable energy and small-scale fishery in SIDS. Central members of the SIDS-SIDS Partnership are the Pacific Community (SPC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Small Island Sustainable Energy and Climate Resilience Initiative (SIDSDOCK), as well as the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PCREEE) and the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) with funding from the governments of Austria, Spain, Norway and other international partners.

In many cases partnerships engage with each other via SDG-specific web-based platforms to facilitate the exchange of information and disseminate lessons learned, For example, the One Planet Network includes over 700 organizations from all regions and focuses on promoting a common agenda to implement SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) via its web-based platform that offers a range of opportunities for organizations to engage with each other:

The One Planet Network is an implementation mechanism for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and formed specifically to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP). Spanning across more than 700 organizations, the network focuses on promoting a common agenda on the implementation of SDG 12: Encouraging the use of tools and solutions for the shift to sustainable consumption and production; being an authoritative and coherent voice in the shift to sustainable consumption and production; and demonstrating the impacts of sustainable consumption and production and its role in addressing key environmental, economic and social challenges of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and beyond. It generates collective impact through six multi-stakeholder programmes: Public Procurement, Buildings & Construction, Tourism, Food Systems, Consumer Information, and Lifestyles & Education. For all information related the progress and activities of the One Planet network, a knowledge management platform is accessible at www.oneplanetnetwork.org.

The One Planet Network contains major issue-specific programs and networks such as the Sustainable Rice Platform and the Sustainable Tourism Training Program. Together with the over 1000 reports, briefing papers, handbooks and workshop announcements provided in the Global SCP Resource Database, One Planet Network provides a wealth of examples and knowledge for stakeholders to draw inspiration and learn lessons from successful cases across the world. It offers further resources for

implementation and meaningful networking with a members' directory, exchange spaces and links to other knowledge platforms.

A specific recommendation for wider and more 'sustainable' learning would be to generate resources - like the ones offered in the case above - that allow a transfer of the lessons learned beyond ad-hoc 'teaching' of individuals to preserve and transfer the lessons learned over time both within and between partnerships. The SDG Partnerships platform itself might offer the necessary digital infrastructure for such open access learning repositories.

6. UN-associated partnerships

This section of the report focuses on the presence and role of UN Programmes, Funds, Specialized Agencies, and other entities in partnerships. It examines (6.1) the total number of partnerships, where the UN is associated as a partner or as a lead entity, and outlines which UN entities are involved most frequently. It then examines (6.2) whether UN-associated partnerships are found to be different in terms of their governance and reporting structures, what they share with partners, their size, or the level at which they operate. Throughout, the term "UN-associated" is used to cover both partnerships in which the UN is a partner, and partnerships in which the UN is a lead entity. This constituency will be internally diverse in ways that might be important for the findings below. UN entities might be one of many partners, or one of few; central to the partnership - even to the point of facilitating it, without being identified as the lead contact point on the platform - or peripheral to its activities. The analysis here cannot take account of this internal diversity, and so is offered only as a starting point for more detailed investigation.

6.1 UN entities as partners and lead organisations

6.1.1 UN entities as partners

Data from the registry of 3967 initiatives and commitments indicate that UN entities are part of 854 initiatives and partnerships. The research team is confident that the numbers here are not an *over*statement, but numbers from this textual search might *understate* the presence of UN entities as partners. From our survey data, UN entities are identified as partners by 284 responding partnerships (approximately 30% of all responses). Other international/intergovernmental organisations are identified as partners by 376 partnerships: it is plausible that some organisations strictly UN entities (perhaps most prominently the World Bank, but also FAO, ILO, WHO as examples) were sometimes recorded in this category.

The following table examines the occurrence of mentions of these UN bodies as partners. UNDP and UNEP are the UN bodies mentioned most frequently.

Table 7: Presence of UN entities as partners in registered initiatives

Records that mention UN Programmes, Funds, Specialized Agencies, other Entities, as partners	
UNDP/United Nations Development Programme	251
UNEP/United Nations Environment Programme	192
UNESCO	125
World Bank	117

|	
FAO	106
WHO/World Health Organization	72
UNICEF	67
ILO/International Labour Organization	56
United Nations Industrial Development Organization/UNIDO	46
UN-Women	29
UN-Habitat	27
UNDESA/UN-DESA	18
UNU	17
IFAD	15
United Nations office for disaster risk reduction/UNISDR	14
UNAIDS	13
UNOCHA/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	8
UNCRD/United Nations Centre for Regional Development	7
UNWTO	6
UNOSSC/United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation	5

6.1.2 UN entities leading partnerships

The UN Partnerships platform registry does not capture the lead partner as part of its registration process; however, partnerships were asked to provide this as part of the registration process for the Ocean Conference in 2017. From this subset of registry entries, UN entities led 256 partnerships. A detailed breakdown of UN "lead entities" from registry data is not provided here, since this data is only available for this subset. UNDP (63), UNEP (37), UNESCO (27), and UNIDO (17) are the UN entities most frequently identified, in the content of these Ocean Conference commitments, as leads. In our survey of partnerships, the answering respondent identified themselves as UN entities 7.2% of the time (78 respondents).

6.2 The characteristics of UN-associated partnerships

6.2.1 Goals addressed by UN-associated partnerships

Fig.21 below shows the distribution of goals identified by UN-associated partnerships in the platform data. The pattern is broadly similar to that for partnerships generally - with Goal 14 the most common, by some margin. However, more UN-associated partnerships, compared to others, identify themselves as addressing aspects of Goal 17. Goal 10 and Goal 16 show the lowest number of UN-associated partnerships. Compared to other partnerships, UN-associated partnerships tend to identify a high number of SDGs - the mean is 3.1 for such partnerships, compared to 2.6 for others.

Fig. 21: Goals addressed by UN-associated partnerships (n=854)
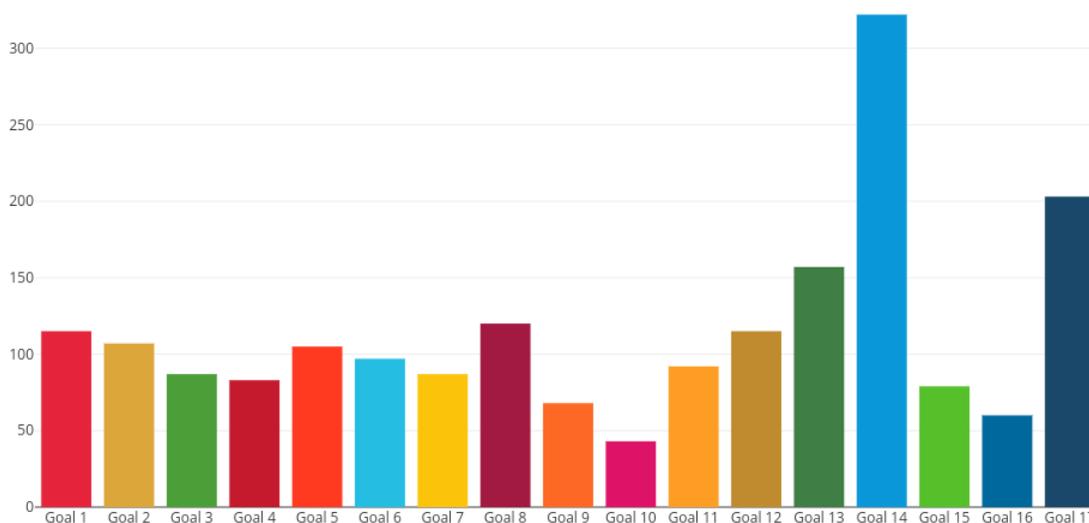
6.2.2 Reporting Rates for UN-associated partnerships

The data allows for analysis of whether UN-associated partnerships are engaging more regularly and systematically with the Partnerships platform. The expectation might be that partnerships already linked to the UN system would perform better in these respects than others (for example, perhaps through greater awareness of the platform, or more commitment to SDG partnership reporting). Data from the registry and progress updates was used to examine whether UN-associated partnerships and initiatives were more likely to file reports to the UN's Partnerships platform. This report does not find much evidence to this effect. Overall, few organisations filed reports to the system, as noted earlier. Looking at the overall registry, 7.5% of partnerships with no UN partner filed a report, while 13.5% of

partnerships with a UN partner had filed a report (Table 8 below). This is a significantly higher reporting rate, but it is still very low.

Table 8: Number of reports filed in the UN's Partnerships registry, by whether or not a partnership included a UN entity

		No Reports Filed	Filed at least one report	Totals
All registered partnerships	No UN Partner	2481	203	2684
		92.44%	7.56%	100.00%
	UN Partner	742	112	854
		86.89%	13.11%	100.00%
	Total	3223	315	3538
Partnerships with completion dates 2018 or earlier	No UN Partner	1094	61	1155
		94.72%	5.28%	100.00%
	UN Partner	314	23	337
		93.18%	6.82%	100.00%
	Total	1408	84	1492

6.2.3 Deliverables from UN-associated partnerships

Overall, those UN-associated partnerships that specify deliverables identify a diverse range - as with initiatives more generally. The chart below – Fig. 22 - compares the distribution of deliverables identified by UN-associated and non-associated partnerships. A higher proportion of deliverables from UN-associated partnerships are concerned with capacity-building, events and presentations, network creation, and are policy/governance focused. A slightly smaller proportion target service delivery that would directly generate changes in a wider population (7% compared to 8%), on this evidence.

Fig. 22: Distribution of deliverable types by UN-associated partnerships and others
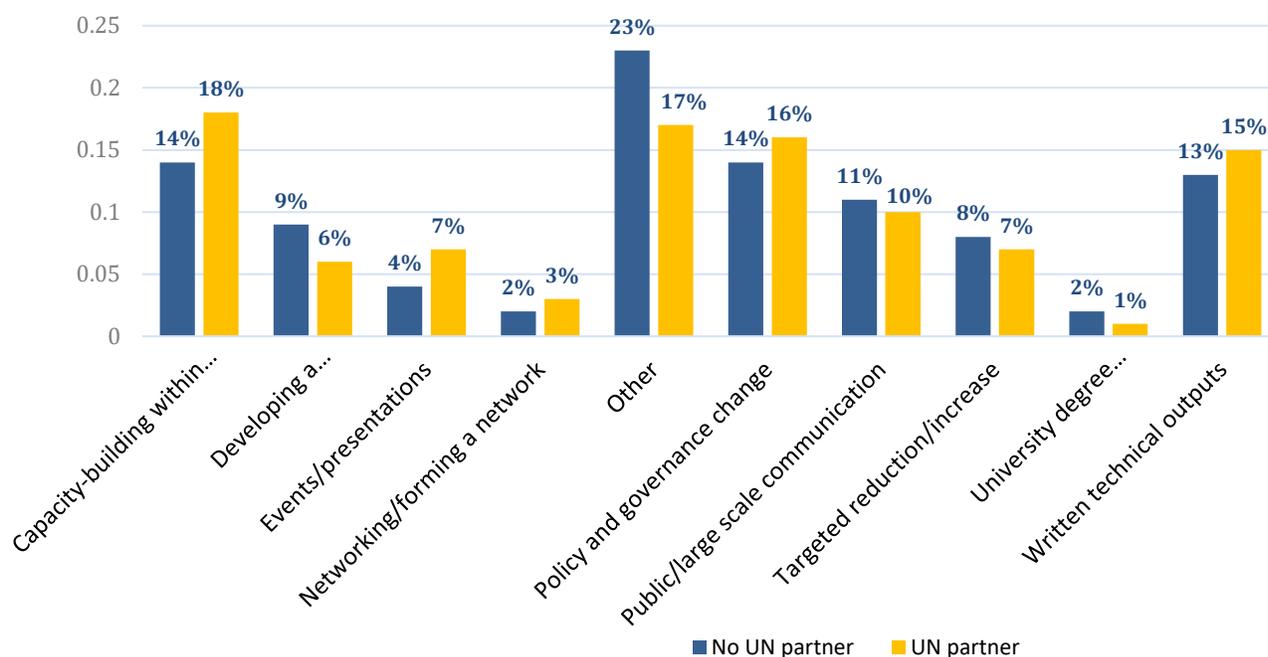

6.2.4 Alignment with the SDGs

UN-associated partnerships have adapted their objectives to the SDGs to a greater extent than other partnerships (77% of respondents). However, this is not necessarily reflected in deeper organisational change, for example in structures (48%), staffing, or funding (37%). Referring back to Table 3 on page 26, it might be surprising that UN-led partnerships and initiatives exhibit the second lowest percentage agreeing that they have adapted organisational structures in response to the SDGs (38%) - though, clearly, this could reflect well-aligned initial structures, or the constraints faced by these particular partnerships/initiatives.[16] Notwithstanding such complications, this figure is 10 percentage points lower than for UN-*associated* partnerships - a result that might warrant further investigation.

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[16] It should be noted, too, that the question on "lead entity" was asked both of partnerships and single-entity initiatives, whilst the 'types of partners involved' question on the survey was only asked of partnerships.

Fig. 23: Adaptation of UN associated partnerships to the SDGs (n=248)
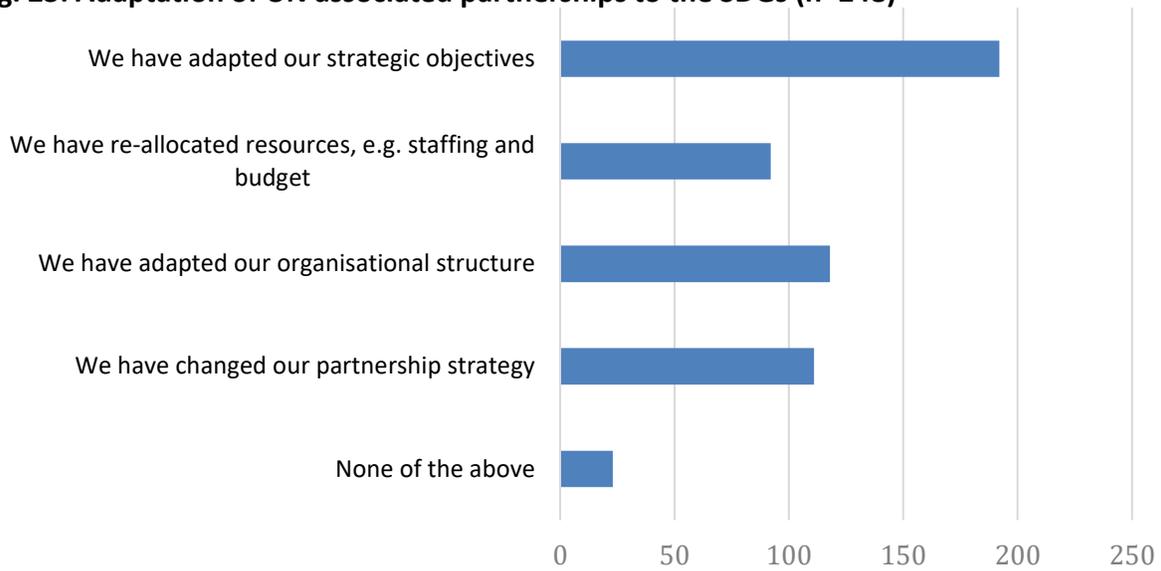
6.2.5 Governance for UN-associated partnerships

As shown in Fig.24 below, 85% of responses from UN-associated partnerships indicated that they met to make decisions, 54% reached consensus amongst partners on these decisions, and 67% consulted inside and outside the partnership. These proportions are slightly (5-7 percentage points) higher than for partnerships generally.

Fig. 24: Features of governance for UN associated partnerships (n=257)
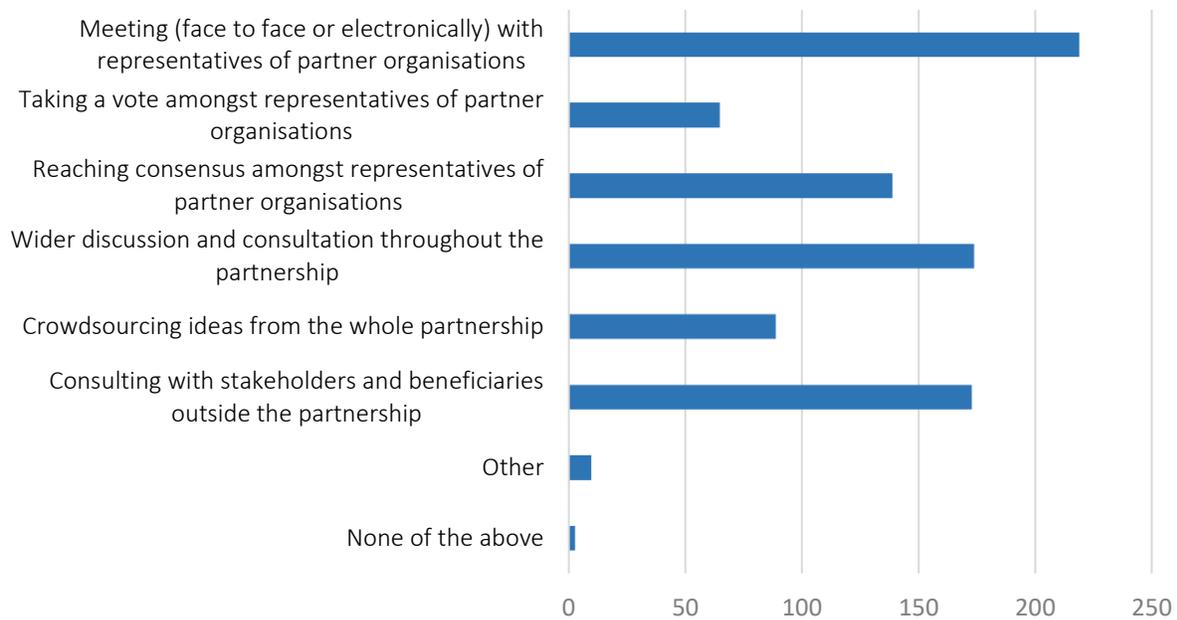
6.2.6 Review and evaluation for UN-associated partnerships/initiatives

UN-associated partnerships tend to report slightly more comprehensive processes of review, but again there are no marked differences here. 70% of UN-associated partnerships undertake annual reporting of progress against objectives, and 69% of UN-associated partnerships involve internal and external stakeholders in evaluation. 53% make progress reports public and 53% also say they have clear criteria and metrics for evaluation.

Fig. 25: Evaluation processes of UN-associated partnerships (n=237)
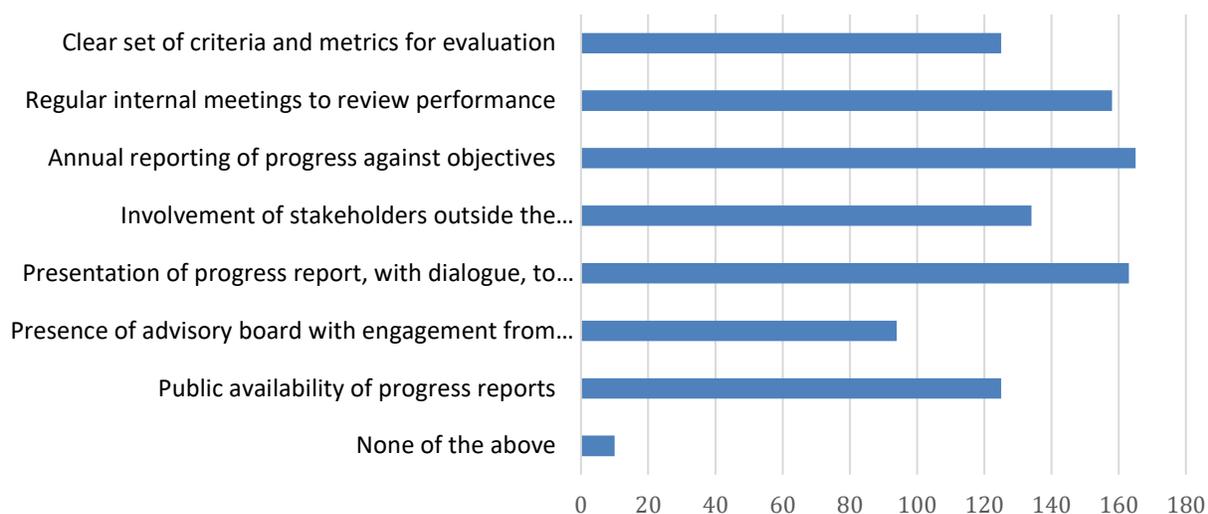
6.2.7 Challenges for UN-associated and UN-led Partnerships

This report finds that UN-associated partnerships share the same pattern of challenges as other responding initiatives and partnerships. Finance is identified as the largest single issue, followed by time, coordination, and ensuring the participation of marginalised groups. It might be thought that divergence from these patterns would be expected most where a UN entity is the lead partner - that is, taking on a larger organisational role at the core of an initiative and partnership. However, a closer examination of this subset - those partnerships 'led' or facilitated by a UN entity - shows no significant divergence from the general pattern (as shown in Fig. 26 below).

Fig. 26: Challenges as perceived by UN-led partnerships (n=57)
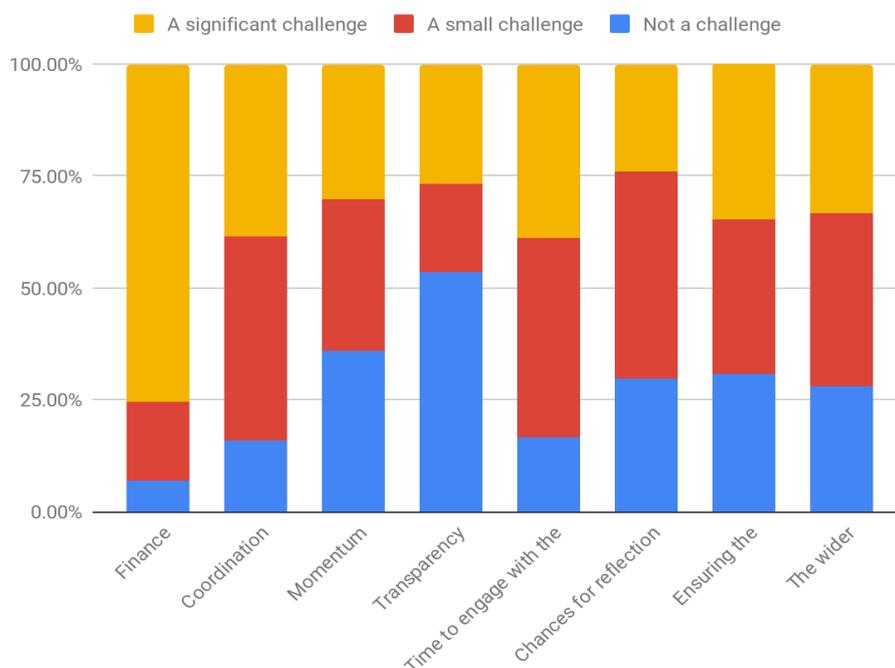
This report has already featured one partnership hosted by a UN entity: the One Planet Network (page 51) which is supported by UNEP. Another is the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GABC):

The Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GABC) is a major UN-hosted international partnership that raises ambition to meet the climate goals of the Paris Agreement by focusing on reducing carbon dioxide emissions from the buildings and construction sector, which accounts for almost 40 per cent of total energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. This major initiative launched at the UNFCCC COP-21 as part of the Lima Paris Action Agenda aims at supporting and accelerating the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and putting the buildings and construction sector on the below 2 degree C pathway. GABC is a global network with 110 members from 26 countries including national ministries, sub-national governments, research institutes, the private sector, civil society organisations and environmental NGOs. The focus is on retrofitting existing buildings and future-proofing investments in new buildings, mobilizing all actors along the value chain and encouraging supportive policy frameworks. Key work areas are education and awareness, public policies, market transformations, finance and building measurement, as well as data and information. Regional roundtables foster match-making between GABC members to cooperate in selected areas to accelerate zero-emission, efficient and resilient buildings solutions, knowledge exchange and sharing of best practice policies, tools and data, as well as offer expertise for capacity building. It provides a Global Roadmap for the transition towards a low-carbon, energy efficient, and resilient buildings and construction sector and the Global Status Report that increases transparency on GHG emission developments in the buildings and construction sector.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, this report underscores the sheer diversity of initiatives and partnerships registered on the Partnerships platform, contributing to SDG implementation in a range of ways and capacities. Particular sections have aimed to evaluate aspects of this diversity. Section 1 addressed the constitution of these partnerships and initiatives, their regional coverage, size and scale of operation. In the context of the coverage of developing countries, the relatively low number of partnerships from Latin America is worth highlighting as an area for further analysis. It might be, here, that the language the platform is offered in is a factor. It might also be that the Ocean Conference registration captured commitments from some regions more than others. The prevalence of civil society organisations and NGOs as partners and as organising partners reinforces the need for questions of partnership to be placed in the context of the UN's developing relationship with civil society stakeholders.

Section 2 outlined what can be said from available data - and that has not already been said, for example, in the Oceans report - about how these initiatives contribute to the SDGs. Here, the Goal 14 focus of many initiatives registered through the Ocean Conference is very evident, and patchy data on focus targets, reporting of implementation, deliverables and resources makes offering some kind of total aggregate contribution impossible. Aggregating these aspects, though, might also be inappropriate. SDG targets are themselves diverse, and demand diverse contributions from a range of actors in order to be implemented globally. Furthermore, the SDGs are underpinned by wider commitments - to universal implementation, interlinkages, and implementation that "leaves no-one behind"; also to review processes at all levels and concrete "means of implementation", usefully complicating any account of implementation. These registered initiatives and partnerships are themselves only one part of a picture of implementation. Without knowing what other actors are contributing, and where they are focusing efforts, this report cannot offer any meaningful assessment of how these partnerships fit into that larger architecture.

The analysis, though, has addressed the *how* of implementation, the ways in which these initiatives can contribute - for example, the kinds of deliverables and resources in play. The findings on the way that partnership is adding value, and on what these partnerships share, also help to give a richer picture of how partnerships operate, and how they might realise additional value in the ways envisaged in the 2030 Agenda. It is clear from survey data that many partnerships and initiatives have been influenced by the SDGs, especially in terms of aligning their objectives to SDG targets, and that the SDGs can transform the knowledge and operations of actors. However, this analysis does not yet see evidence of the SDGs having as much of an impact on the structures and budgets of organisations. This might not be considered surprising - organisational change takes time, as has growing awareness of the SDGs. This is a limitation worth noting, however.

It might be considered surprising how informal the governance and evaluation processes and structures of partnerships are (section 3). Again, this speaks to the diversity of different kinds of partnerships who have registered. Some, clearly, undertake regular, systematic review and govern by broad consensus across the partnership, with the engagement of external stakeholders. Others, from available data, do this much less systematically.

In terms of challenges and enabling factors (section 4), the finding that finance is the single biggest challenge is unsurprising, but gives a clear sense of the context in which these partnerships and initiatives are operating. If SDG implementation is to be realised through these kinds of voluntary initiatives and partnerships, and these partnerships do not necessarily generate extra finance themselves (as shown in the findings above on where partnership add value), then aligning and maximising available funding is one of the surest ways to strengthen the partnership system around the SDGs. There is no expectation that the UN can generate new funding and direct it towards partnerships, but the UN might consider ways to recognise this need on the part of initiatives.

Section 5 highlighted the perceptions of initiatives on how the UN, and the platform in particular, could support their activities, and these themes are returned to in the closing recommendations below. On learning, the survey findings suggest that this occurs in multiple directions within partnerships. Methodologically, it is difficult to measure learning and there are limitations with regards to data availability as well as level of detail in the survey responses. Gaining a better understanding of 'who learns what from whom' would be valuable to identify best practises, especially in promoting self-perpetuating learning beyond the limited time frame of a project. While learning within partnerships is crucial in order to implement objectives and make use of emerging opportunities, there are also lessons to be learned *across* partnerships.

UN-associated partnerships (section 6) make up a significant component of registered initiatives and survey respondents. It is significant that UN-associated partnerships, while reporting a little more, and aligning their objectives more frequently to the SDGs, do not escape the same challenges, and do not handle governance or accountability in markedly different ways. They are also not significantly more aligned, structurally, to the SDGs. It is not clear to this team how great the expectation should be for UN entities to be 'leading the way' in mainstreaming the SDGs into the structures of their partnerships, or at what kind of speed this might be expected, but this area bears further investigation.

It should also be recognised, though this has not been a focus of the report, that commitments, initiatives and partnerships are importantly different. The organisational elements of the Partnerships platform - how far the UN wants to amalgamate these different kinds of things, how far it wants to encourage a diversity of different kinds of registrations, or how far it desires selectivity or balance - are important questions. Since the activities of many NGOs can be characterised in terms of some kind of contribution to the SDGs, mass registration of initiatives might carry its own dangers in terms of the administration of the platform. Relatedly, the platform faces issues of housekeeping, such as whether to leave completed initiatives on the platform - as examples for others to learn from - or prune them, so as to keep the registry more manageable.

These reflections prompt two larger recommendations. The first, more practical, recommendation is for the UN to reflect on the *vision* for this platform, and its place within larger UN efforts to energise, curate, or orchestrate partnerships around the SDGs. It is clear that partnerships want - even need - UN support. It is a matter for further reflection, though, how and how far the UN *could* (or should) support these partnerships, and through what kinds of ways. The platform generates an incomplete picture of partnerships for the SDGs, and it also generates an incomplete picture of UN support. Perhaps, for example, the partnerships who are not registered or did not respond to the survey are engaged more deeply with the UN system elsewhere. Nevertheless, the UN might consider whether this platform is to remain a more passive repository of commitments, and if so, how it might function better as a framework within which initiatives can organise their own reporting or find and contact each other. If it is considered instead a springboard for implementation, relying on the engagement of initiatives and in return rewarding initiatives for their engagement, then it might function better as a more interactive space, with more communication between partnerships, and between partnerships and the UN - as many respondents appear to want. The platform might, for example, develop a specific role in supporting sustainable learning within and beyond specific partnerships to allow for greater sharing and capacity building across the partnership system.

The second recommendation is for *further research*, to better understand the nascent 'partnership ecosystem' accompanying the SDGs. It is clear that the kinds of partnerships registering on this platform might play a variety of different roles in implementation - from coordination, technical inputs, and advocacy, to financing and service delivery. It is clear, too, that what *these* partnerships should be doing, (or what is missing), depends on where and how other actors in the 'global partnership for sustainable development' are contributing. Hence, judging gaps is a difficult exercise - as is how to encourage or signal the need for particular kinds of partnerships. On one model, greater registrations around specific themes could be encouraged by focus events and networks around particular goals - as demonstrated by the Ocean Conference and 'Call to Action' in 2017. Equally, though, it might be that partnerships could be directed precisely to fill the gaps *left* by other actors clustering around prominent international events or agreements. What signals should be given to partnerships, as a way of encouraging them to fill particular roles in this global 'partnership of partnerships', remains an important question for deliberation. This discussion should rest, in turn, on better understanding what partnerships do around the SDGs, how they work, and how they *ought* to work.