

Is it an Easy Task to Create Global Alliances to Successfully Undertake Sustainable Development?

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Elena Bulmer^{1*}, Magali Riera-Roca¹ And Julio Blas²

¹EAE Business School, Madrid, Spain

²Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain

Two-page review

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were developed by the United Nations at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. They marked a path towards sustainable development by establishing eight goals that manifest common ground and establish global social objectives with deadlines that had to be met by 2015 Erling et al., [1]. After the fifteenth birthday, there was a widespread feeling among different stakeholders, including policy makers and civil society, that progress against poverty, hunger and disease has been remarkable; (and) that the MDGs had played an important role in ensuring (this) progress and that the globally agreed targets to fight poverty should continue beyond 2015” Gupta and Vegelin., [2].

On September 25, 2015, 193 United Nations countries approved the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Also known as the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs were intended to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. The SDGs were a continuation of the Millennium Goals and assumed a common vision for the year 2030 that would broaden the vision of politicians and officials beyond their short-term national interests Pogge and Sengupta., [3]. Currently, the resources of our planet are limited, whether they are economic, technological, natural, or anthropogenic, and their optimization will benefit all. To achieve this optimization, development alliances are essential in order to ensure the alignment of the interests of these different resource providers and thus promote maximum impact. These partnerships should include the broadest spectrum of stakeholders so as to potentially include NGOs, and universities, among others.

It is worth mentioning that the different SDGs are very much interconnected with each other and need to be addressed jointly to solve problems such as malnutrition and sanitation. Only then can the impact of the different initiatives be maximized. Therefore, it is essential that a holistic management approach is undertaken to address sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal 17 is about building global partnerships for development. It makes specific reference to multi-stakeholder collaboration between and amongst all sectors of society. However, although the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships may be very well described on paper, the questions linked to the main challenges are the following; How to promote collaboration between stakeholders as varied as governments, scientists, and NGOs? How will it be possible to ensure that they work together in a systematic way to achieve the shared vision of the SDGs? How will this new way of working become a new normal?

SDG 17 aims to strengthen the means of implementing and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development in the seven areas of finance, technology, trade, capacity development, policy coherence, partnerships, and data. To achieve the mission of this SDG, two main ways of working have been presented; first through the development of global alliances led by governments to strengthen cooperation and development; and second, complementing the latter with the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships that work at global, national and regional levels to pool knowledge and experiences for the achievement of the remaining

*Corresponding author: Elena Bulmer,
EAE Business School, Madrid, Spain

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sixteen SDGs. While the first sixteen SDGs are dedicated to concrete actions, SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals coordinates and facilitates the implementation of the other goals. This last purpose opens the discussion on how the different stakeholders should best work to achieve their specific goals von Schnurbein., [4]. For the Millennium Goals (2000-2015), Goal 8 was the equivalent of SDG 17, however, the latter has a greater scope in terms of stakeholder participation, and is applicable to all areas of society, including the State, the market and civil society. Undertaking a multi-stakeholder approach to governance helps to; (1) ensure the participation of a greater and more varied number of parties with different stakeholder interests, (2) identify the barriers that could hinder the participation and commitment of these actors, (3) develop a multi-stakeholder network as proposed by SDG 17. The latter will allow a better prioritization of the topics to be dealt with at the project level, as well as the development of more efficient strategies on how to better integrate and involve the different actors in the projects.

While the SDGs undoubtedly represent a step forward, they do have their limitations.

- a. They focus mainly on the economic pillar.
- b. They present a restricted view of the wide range of possible multi-stakeholder partnerships, restricted by a self-limiting classification of “public, public-private and civil society partnerships”.
- c. The creation of a repository of lessons learned from the work done through multi-stakeholder partnerships will help deepen knowledge and a shared understanding of the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships in moving towards the transition to sustainable development.
- d. There is a lack of evaluation methods for multi-stakeholder partnerships which would facilitate the accessing of evidence-based and researched information based on academic data.

The 2030 Agenda Accelerator highlights the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in that they can help accelerate the development of effective partnerships for the implementation of the other SDGs Stibbe & Prescott, [5]. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt a multidisciplinary and systematic political perspective to develop laws and implement sustainability effectively. However, it should be noted that it is not only action from regulatory authorities that is needed to implement the change, but that the meaningful involvement of all stakeholders at a global level is essential in order to fulfil the potential and the promise of SDG 17. According to SDG 17, comprehensive management is needed to promote sustainable development, as well as the creation of value of mutual benefit to all stakeholders from the successful implementation of the other SDGs. What is also essential to be able to determine the success of SDG 17 and multi-stakeholder partnerships is the use of metrics to obtain better researched and evidence-based information Maltais et al., [6]. In addition to metrics, there is a need for data and insights to be collected and disseminated to decision makers, as well as the development of policies and procedures on how multi-stakeholder partnerships can help achieve the SDGs.

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