Partnerships and the Sustainable Development Goals
By: Naima Samuel and Amelia Clarke

This is a pre-publication version.

Please use this citation:

Partnerships and the Sustainable Development Goals

Naima Samuel and Amelia Clarke

This chapter discusses partnerships and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using a systematic literature review, an overview of the current academic articles on the topic is provided. The chapter details which SDGs are being pursued through partnerships, at what scale, in what countries, and through which sectors (public, private, and/or civil society). It synthesizes existing empirical research on partnerships in the context of the SDGs in terms of partnership definitions, types, roles, contribution to the SDGs, and challenges. Future research directions are also offered.

1.0 Introduction

Partnerships are formal relationships that bring together diverse stakeholders and their resources to work towards a shared goal (Sondermann and Ulbert 2021). Partnerships for sustainable development initiatives have been increasing since the 1990s (Gabay and Ilcan 2017). In 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets were adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (United Nations 2021). The SDGs emphasize a need to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships across sectors by leveraging synergies between goals and emphasizing intentional and transformative action (Hussein et al. 2018; Mikhnevich 2020; Moreno-Serna and Purcell et al. 2020; Moreno-Serna and Sánchez-Chaparro et al. 2020). Goal 17 in particular calls for strengthening the means to implement the SDGs globally through partnerships and associated strategies for sharing resources, capacities, knowledge, and finances (Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021; Ordonez-Ponce et al. 2021; Stott and Murphy 2020).

This chapter details a systematic literature review on partnerships for the SDGs to understand how partnerships contribute to SDG implementation. The purpose of conducting the review was to synthesize existing empirical research on partnerships for the SDGs, to define partnerships in the context of the SDGs and discuss the current state of knowledge on the contribution of partnerships to SDG implementation. The research questions that guided the search were:

1.   What is the current state of knowledge on partnerships and the SDGs?
2.   Which SDGs are being pursued through partnerships, as described in academic literature?
3.   What gaps exist and what areas can be focused on for future research?

This chapter is divided into four sections. After this brief introduction, the next section details the methods used and steps followed in conducting the literature

search. The third section discusses the results of the review and presents descriptive and thematic analysis on key findings. The last section provides a conclusion with a summary of recommendations for future research.

2.0 Methods

A systematic literature review methodology was selected because of its wide-spread use in management research and the transparency it offers (Siemieniako et al., 2021). Similar to other systematic literature reviews (Clarke and Crane 2018; Guzzo et al. 2020; Siemieniako et al. 2021; Traxler et al. 2020), the academic literature search was conducted using a series of steps that entailed reviewing and screening articles.

The search for literature was conducted using three databases, namely ProQuest, Scopus, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected for their comprehensiveness. Document titles for articles published between January 1, 2015 and June 12, 2021 were searched as a title search was likely going to yield the most relevant articles. This date range was chosen due to the date of the SDGs which were established in 2015.

The search was conducted for full-text peer-reviewed articles. The search terms used were "Partnership" and "Sustainable Development Goals", and synonyms of these terms. For partnerships, the synonyms used were "Collaboration", "Cooperation", "Alliance", "Multi-stakeholder", "Collaborative Governance", "Collaborative Planning", "Co-Management" "Partner", "joint venture", and "PPP". The synonyms used for the SDGs were "UNSDG" "SDG" "Global Goal", and "Agenda 2030". A wildcard asterisk* was used for most of the search terms to ensure a wide range of potential literature was searched. The search was tailored to functionality in each database.

Overall, the combined searches from the three databases yielded 283 articles in total, including duplicates. The 283 articles were checked for both keywords in the title, screened to remove duplicates, and then screened for English language empirical articles from journals and book chapters, resulting in 74 articles being selected. Following this, abstracts of the 74 articles were reviewed to determine their relevance to the research topic and fit based on a definition of formal partnerships. Articles that focused on informal engagement, donor relationship and supply chains were removed. After the screening process was completed, a total 51 articles met all criteria and were selected for the systematic literature review. These articles were deductively and inductively coded using NVivo software.

3.0 Results and Analysis

This section discusses the results of the systematic literature review, grouped as descriptive analysis and thematic analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

The first dimension of the 51 articles analyzed is the year of publication. There were fewer publications in the earlier years, as expected, given that the SDGs were adopted in 2015 and research on the SDGs would take time to conclude and be published. The highest number of publications were in 2020 with a focus on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), followed by 2018. The increased number of articles in 2020 highlight the traction that research on partnerships for the SDGs is gaining.

As shown in Figure 2.1, across the 51 articles, the highest number of articles presented research undertaken on a global scale and the lowest on the sub-national scale. Several articles did not specify the scale at which research was being conducted. Most of these studies focused on regional cooperation and cross-border partnerships for advancing the SDGs. The number of articles at the national and local scale were the same, indicating that there is greater interest in understanding partnerships for the SDGs at the international level, perhaps given the scope and nature of the SDGs.
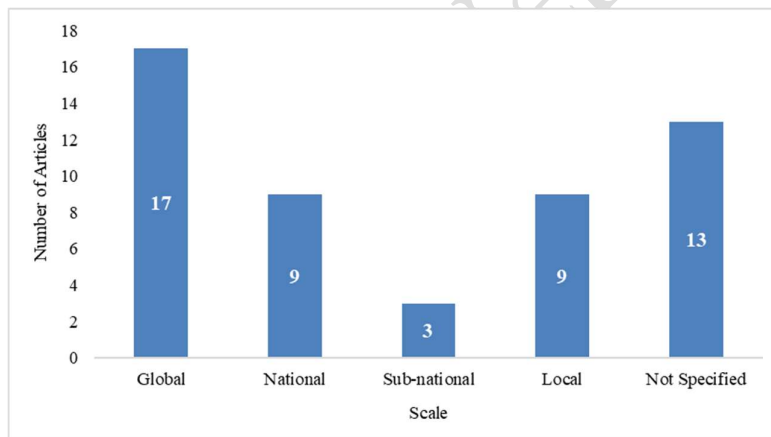

Figure 2.1 Number of articles by scale

As shown in Figure 2.2, in terms of sectors engaged, the highest number of articles were on private-sector research, followed closely by the public sector, and then civil society. It is important to note that a vast majority of the articles studied more than one sector, hence articles are counted more than once for research done on cross-sector partnerships. While the number of articles on partnerships involving civil society were fewer, a common theme among the articles (as expanded in the thematic analysis) was the importance of increasing engagement with civil society organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). About one fourth of the total number of articles did not specify which sector was engaged.
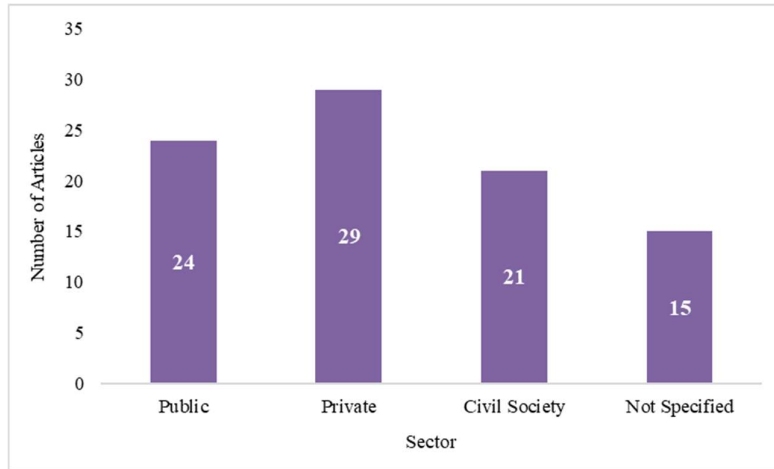
Figure 2.2 Number of articles by sector

Given the focus of the literature search, it did not come as a surprise that research in majority of the articles was on Goal 17 - Revitalizing global partnership for sustainable development. In understanding partnerships for the SDGs, several articles analyzed the role and contribution of partnerships towards the SDGs using the framework of Goal 17. Goal 11 - making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, had the second highest number of articles. A little less than one fourth of the total articles mentioned the SDGs broadly without concentrating on a specific goal, while a small number of articles addressed all SDGs. For more details, see Figure 2.3.

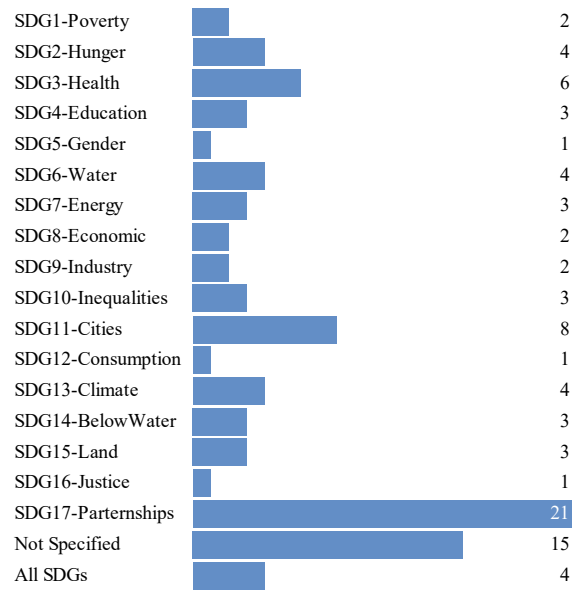|	
SDG1-Poverty	2
SDG2-Hunger	4
SDG3-Health	6
SDG4-Education	3
SDG5-Gender	1
SDG6-Water	4
SDG7-Energy	3
SDG8-Economic	2
SDG9-Industry	2
SDG10-Inequalities	3
SDG11-Cities	8
SDG12-Consumption	1
SDG13-Climate	4
SDG14-BelowWater	3
SDG15-Land	3
SDG16-Justice	1
SDG17-Parternships	21
Not Specified	15
All SDGs	4

Figure 2.3 Number of articles by SDG

With regards to the country focus, most of the articles conducted research on partnerships across multiple countries, while many did not focus on a specific country. Europe had the highest number of studies, with Spain having three articles. It is clear that this topic is being researched all over the world, as shown by the countries listed in Table 2.1.

Country	Number of Articles
Australia	1
Bangladesh	1
Brazil	1
China	2
Ethiopia	1
Fiji	1
Ghana	2
Ireland	1
Mexico	1
Nigeria	1
Peru	1
Poland	1
South Africa	1
Spain	3
Sweden	1
Ukraine	1
Multiple countries	22
Not specified	9

Table 2.1 Number of articles by country

Research on partnerships for the SDGs is spread across various journals from diverse fields of discipline including management, tourism, social work, health, finance, public administration, education, engineering, and politics among others. By far the highest number of articles were from the journal *Sustainability*, which is an international peer-reviewed open access journal that emphasizes interdisciplinary research on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Of the 51 articles selected for the review, 14 were in Sustainability, two were in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, nine were book chapters, and the remainder were in 26 other journals.

Journal	Number of Articles
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	2
Sustainability	14
Other Journals	26
Book Chapter	9

Table 2.2 Number of articles by journal

Thematic Analysis

The first theme analyzed is partnerships definitions, followed by types of partnerships, role, and contribution of partnerships to the SDGs, and lastly challenges associated with leveraging partnerships to advance the SDGs.

Partnership Definitions

Partnership is a term that has over time been used on many occasions to represent an agreement between two or more parties that chose to cooperatively work towards achieving common goals and vision. The term partnership has been used interchangeably with other terms such as "Collaboration", "Cooperation", "Alliance", and "Collaborative Governance" (Almeida and Davey 2018; Al-Saidi 2021; Baimenov and Liverakos 2019; Escher and Brzustewicz 2020; Eweje et al. 2021; Florini and Pauli 2018; Kurniawan and Indriati 2017; Romero-Luis and Gertrudix 2020). While long ago there existed a distinction between partnerships and cooperation (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019), in the past 50 years development cooperation language has shifted to encompass partnership, with consensus that use of cooperation in the context of sustainable development implies partnering to achieve shared development goals (Berrone et al. 2019; Bull and Mcneill 2019; Cooper and French 2018). Partnerships have allowed multinational organizations to achieve global alliances across boarders through the implementation of new and existing ideas, perspectives, and approaches to resolving different interests (Eweje et al. 2021).

Partnership can be seen as a form of governance that innovatively allows parties involved to reap the benefit of sharing resources and expertise thereby contributing to regional development. An example of this is the case of tourism, and partnerships for medical, sport, and food tourism, whereby two or more tourism organizations come together to realize an opportunity or find a solution to a problem that each could not successfully solve on their own (Florini and Pauli 2018). In academia, partnership is defined as the voluntary non-hierarchical interaction between public, private and/or civil society sectors that forms the basis of shared risk and responsibilities (Banerjee et al. 2020). Partnerships can be formed with different social actors such as is the case with multi-stakeholder partnerships which involve collaboration between multiple state and non-state actors (Banerjee et al. 2020; Berrone et al 2019; Bull and Mcneill 2019; Berrone et al 2019; Castillo-Villar 2020; Eweje et al. 2021; Ferrer-Roca et al. 2020; Horan 2019; Sondermann and Ulbert 2021). For example, PPPs help in forming relationships between different actors to provide an avenue for stakeholders to share their knowledge, review and improve standards for business operations, ensure resources are available to all actors, and can help bring about change to existing practices within governments, corporations, and the population at large (Bull and Mcneill 2019; Cooper and French 2018; Haque et al. 2020).

Partnerships have also been defined as an institutional arrangement that serves as a means to implement the SDGs by shaping the governance of environmental, economic, and social issues (Almeida and Davey 2018). According to the United Nations, partnerships are a collaborative and voluntary relationship between a number of parties that aims to strive towards a common purpose (Haque et al. 2020). While looking at partnerships as they relate to sustainable development, it is useful to consider the institutional and actor perspectives of partnerships. Where the institutional approach seeks to define the partnership role and function within an environmental governance domain, the actor perspective focuses on actor-specific goals

and how partnerships can be used to advance these goals (Almeida and Davey 2018).

Partnerships with mutual economic benefits have been a huge part of economic history even though most of such collaborations followed a top-down hierarchical structure of governance between business and the state that focused on a modernist paradigm that assumes a static world in equilibrium (Eweje et al. 2021). Through joint efforts, corporations work towards meeting common goals and benefits. This commitment usually acts as a positive attribute that brings about high-level working relationships between corporations that strive towards common objectives (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). Although management studies have discussed inter-organizational relationships extensively since the 1980s (Escher and Brzustewicz 2020), it was not until 1992 at the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro that partnerships were recognized for achieving sustainable development (Stott and Murphy 2020). Shortly after, partnerships continued to gain recognition in development activity during the mid-1990s through the report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on "Shaping the Twenty-First Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation". Thereafter, the UN General Assembly resolution "Towards Global Partnerships" in 2000 highlighted the notion of leveraging partnerships for international development. Initially, partnerships in the sustainable development context were centered mostly around collaboration between the public and private sector. Presently, partnerships for sustainable development are focused on broad alliances between civil society, government, people, and the private sector, to secure a future for generations to come (Stott and Murphy 2020). In sustainable development literature, research on partnerships gained momentum shortly after the SDGs were adopted in 2015, because of the emphasis placed on cooperation at all levels as essential to accomplishing the SDGs (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019).

In international law and policy literature, partnerships are seen as a voluntary institutional agreement with multiple stakeholders, which plays a vital role in the governance of environmental issues between different nations through implementing commitments and goals agreed upon by the parties involved (Almeida and Davey 2018). As part of these collaborations, each party involved is able to share a common pool of resources, benefits as well as a number of commonalities in their socio-economic, physical, and cultural spheres (Al-Saidi 2021; Banerjee et al. 2020).

Partnerships can be formed to put together diverse and potentially complementary assets such as skills, resources, and competencies with a common purpose of bringing about systemic change within society. For such partnerships three elements are critical in their quest for systemic change: 1) the partnership formation stage, that defines the value-adding purpose of the partnership to be established between the parties involved, 2) convey the goals of each of the partners for transformational change by identifying critical factors that aid in the transformational stage of the partnership, and 3) establishing a facilitation function that allows different

stakeholders to oversee and respond to any challenges that might arise as part of the partnership (Moreno-Serna and Purcell et al. 2020).

Types of Partnerships

Just as partnership definitions have been constantly evolving over the years, so has the idea of what types of partnerships need to exist within a collective collaboration among different stakeholders. The term cross-sector partnership has been used to refer to various types of partnerships including partners from the public, private and/or civil society sectors. PPPs are a form of cross-sector partnerships that are established between public groups and one or more private actors to provide a public good or service through combining the resources of the private partners with the management of the public group (Berrone et al. 2019; MacDonald et al. 2018). Alliances between the private sector and civil society are termed business-NGO partnerships (Eweje et al. 2021). Cross-sector partnerships can be contrasted with same-sector partnerships, such as business joint ventures. Business-to-business relationships, like cross-sector partnerships, may be formed at the regional, national, and global scale (Escher and Brzustewicz, 2020).

In the context of the sustainable development, two types of partnerships for implementing the SDGs are outlined in the 2030 Agenda, namely: global partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) (United Nations 2015). Global partnerships are led by governments with the aim of improving international cooperation by bringing together all sectors to mobilize resources for implementing the SDGs. MSPs are voluntary and aim to support global partnerships by sharing knowledge, technology, expertise, and financial resources for implementing the SDGs and can be sub-national, national, regional, or global (Castillo-Villar 2020; Eweje et al. 2021; Horan 2019; MacDonald et al. 2018). Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSIs) is another type of partnership that although not clearly defined, is viewed by some as more effective in addressing complex issues when compared to other approaches to partnering for the SDGs (Florini 2018; Fowler and Biekart 2017).

A different approach to classifying partnerships is in the context of geographical boundaries. Partners can form alliances internationally and at the regional levels, which for example, may not necessarily be formed based on matters of the state but might be based on affairs that impact business communities or civil society groups. These types of alliances are generally non-profit and private in nature and non-governmental entities are responsible for implementing and directing such cooperation (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). An example of multi-stakeholder partnerships that promote global and regional development is the "South-South cooperation initiative" which is established to provide mutual benefit and solidarity to its stakeholders in the form of knowledge sharing, financial resource and exchange of skills and information (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019).

Collaborations between different countries can be approached through multilateral, bilateral or horizontal cooperation (Almeida and Davey 2018; Hussein et al. 2018). Multilateral cooperation between several countries that share common political, regional, or sectoral interests is another type of technical partnership which

address cooperation specific issues and goals through utilizing funds and resources of partnering countries. Through a multilateral cooperation, countries with specific areas in need of further development get assistance from other partnering nations for their socio-economic development in the form of transferring techniques, knowledge, abilities, technologies, or experience (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). Bilateral cooperation is a partnership between two governments or two institutions within two countries usually established and managed through the embassies or other government agencies of the respective governments (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). One example of such partnerships is cross-border tourism partnerships (Ferrer-Roca et al. 2020; Fowler and Biekart 2017). Horizontal cooperation is a collaboration at an inter-country or inter-regional level to acquire technical skills, knowledge, and exchange and develop expertise among countries at the same level of development (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). Such partnerships have been applied in Southeast Asia to address concerns regarding productivity, environment, and poverty and to help achieve SDG targets (Florini and Pauli 2018).

Geographically, another form of partnerships is regional cooperation which provides a framework for public and private institutions to collaborate across regions (Kurniawan and Indriati 2017). An example is the collaborative partnership between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states which was formed among states in the Middle East (Al-Saidi 2021). This partnership has been influenced by changing alliances and political turmoil and is seen as cooperation model that has its partnership characteristic under question for having a lot of difficulties compared to other models (Al-Saidi 2021).

There are also partnerships at the sub-national level. Indeed, many partnerships related to implementing one or more of the SDGs are found at the local scale including large tri-sector partnerships (MacDonald et al. 2018; Ordonez-Ponce et al. 2021), smaller tri-sector partnerships (MacDonald et al. 2018), public-private partnerships (Berrone et al. 2019; Haque et al. 2020), and civil society-business partnerships (Movono and Hughes 2020). These partnerships can involve a wide variety of partners, including local governments, universities, schools, sports clubs, chambers of commerce, non-governmental organizations, small businesses, larger companies, etc. (Escher and Brzustewicz 2020; Ordonez-Ponce et al. 2021). A collaborator type that is unique to the local scale is citizen groups, which for example may contribute through citizen science (Shulla et al. 2020; Wuebben et al. 2020). As almost all SDGs have a local aspect to them, and SDG 11 in specifically about sustainable communities and cities, sustainability-focused partnerships are common at this scale (MacDonald et al. 2018; Ordonez-Ponce et al, 2021).

Other approaches to defining types of partnerships can be based on methods of studying partnerships such as the Ladder of Partnership Activity which identifies three methods of studying partnerships: single collaborative arrangements, external effects of partnership, and societal governance system (Almeida and Davey 2018), or models with specific strategies such as autonomous, dependence, globalization-convergence, hybrid, and elite models (Haque et al. 2020). Partnership types have also been defined in other diverse ways including based on function (process-

oriented, project-oriented, and product-oriented), characterized by actors and sectors, outcome-focused, or based on choice of partnership structure (Stott and Murphy 2020).

Role of Partnerships

During the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, the concept of "partnership paradigm" was introduced which led to sustainable development being shifted to the pluralist approach of governance (Eweje et al. 2021). The partnership paradigm which has within it many partnership classifications and other types of collaborative arrangements, speaks to the perception of cross-sector partnerships, and their progression along the collaborative continuum (Eweje et al. 2021). In this paradigm, prior to the 1990s when economic growth was more stable, emphasis was placed on efficiency and providing support to achieve outcomes, with clear delineation between roles across sectors. In the mid-1990s when partnerships gained recognition in sustainable development, the perception shifted to new collaborative frameworks that were more effective, efficient, and inclusive, and that resulted in a blurring of boundaries across sectors (Eweje et al. 2021). With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 goals, particularly Goal 17, the role of partnerships in supporting implementation of the SDGs was more clearly defined, through the endorsement of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships across the public sector, private sector, and civil society to advance the SDGs (Moreno-Serna and Sánchez-Chaparro et al. 2020). Partnerships are hence viewed as a framework of sustainability governance, to advance towards shared goals and objectives (Almeida and Davey 2018). Multi-stakeholder partnerships across sectors contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through strategies for sharing knowledge, expertise, financial resources, as well as capacity building and monitoring and reporting (Movono and Hughes 2020; Eweje et al. 2021).

Partnerships are viewed as a prerequisite for achieving goals, particularly the SDGs, because of their ability to address complex transnational issues (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019; Eweje et al. 2021). The urgency of environmental, social, and economic issues calls for concerted efforts among stakeholders and the sharing of resources for sustainable development actions (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019). The scope and interconnectedness of the SDGs requires the joint efforts of several entities and an effective mechanism for collaboration among multiple actors as no single goal can be accomplished using a siloed approach. There is a need for both state and non-state actors to work together to address issues and support development efforts (Berrone et al. 2019; Eweje et al. 2021). Interdisciplinary efforts across sectors are hence important for planning and implementing the SDGs given the complexity embedded within these transformative actions (Brolan et al. 2019; Bull and Mcneill 2019). Scholars have noted the importance of the government playing a more prominent role in strategizing to develop partnerships, policies, and plans, and highlighting the priority of partnering for the SDGs (Banerjee et al. 2020; Eweje et al. 2021; Kurniawan and Indriati 2017; Lalaguna and Dorodnykh 2018; Owusu-

Manu et al. 2020). Partnerships with diverse entities from the private sector play an equally important role in the implementation of the SDGs by adding expertise, knowledge, and resources to address sustainable development challenges (Castillo-Villar 2020; Florini and Pauli 2018; Lalaguna and Dorodnykh 2018).

Understanding the motivations of the various stakeholders is important for partnerships to be effective in their role of supporting implementation of the SDGs. According to Stott and Murphy (2020), motivations can be classified as instrumental or integrative. Instrumental motivations are those in which efforts are seen as a means to an end while integrative motivations are those where efforts are undertaken to build relational connections and are driven by a desire to interact with and join a community. Motivations can also be categorized as extrinsic and intrinsic (Stott and Murphy 2020). Research indicates that building reputation, corporate social responsibility, and rising stakeholder expectations are the primary benefits sought by actors from the private sector, while access to financial resources and funding support for sustainable development activities is the main reason for the public sector and civil society to partner with other actors (Eweje et al. 2021; Florini and Pauli 2018; Haque et al. 2020). Partnerships therefore play a critical role in sharing resources, knowledge, finances, expertise and engaging all actors in efforts to implement the SDGs.

Contribution of Partnerships

The behavior and dynamics of an ecosystem is influenced by the combined connections and interactions of the agents of that ecosystem, and consequently, the interdependent efforts of actors to help advance the success of the overall system (Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021). Working together to find synergies enables actors to co-create value and understand how combined efforts can help advance shared goals (Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021). Actors determine value based on perceived benefit to the actor and the ecosystem at large. In the same vein, partnerships play a central and strategic role in contributing to sustainable development. It is important to understand the potential for collaboration between the various stakeholders and the perceived value of the collaboration to ensure successful implementation of the SDGs (Almeida and Davey 2018). Identifying common interests and trade-offs help facilitate synergies among stakeholders and create a shared sense of purpose. Due to the complexity and magnitude of the SDGs, a substantial number of resources, funding, knowledge, and technology are needed to accomplish the goals (Almeida and Davey 2018; Berrone et al. 2019). This is made possible through partnerships, which strategically overcome gaps by providing cost-effective solutions, knowledge, innovative tools, infrastructure, financing, and resources across economic, social, and environmental domains (Berrone et al. 2019; Horan 2019; Mago 2017). In addition, researchers found that partnerships increase efficiency, promote innovation and co-learning, enable risk sharing, and help create social value by incorporating interests of various actors (particularly local actors) going beyond economic interests alone (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019; Banerjee et al. 2020; Berrone et al. 2019; Brolan et al. 2019; Horan 2019). Partnerships also have the potential for

yielding a more integrated approach to executing transformative action (Almeida and Davey 2018; Horan 2019). Trade-offs and limitations that could hinder progress towards the SDGs can be overcome through partnerships by encouraging engagement and dialogue among stakeholders on critical policy issues and challenges (Almeida and Davey 2018; Horan 2019).

Scholars note that this potential of partnerships is largely unrealized and there is need for generating partnerships that can help advance transformative action more effectively (Castillo-Villar 2020; Florini and Pauli 2018; Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021). Historically, collaborations targeted towards supporting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not meet intended goals as expectations and roles were not clearly understood (Florini and Pauli 2018). In addition, the effectiveness of partnerships as a means to accomplishing the SDGs has been questioned (Rob 2021).

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in recent years, several cross-sector partnerships have emerged at local, sub-national, national, regional, and global levels that use integrated efforts to advance transformative action. Some distinct partnerships among these include cross-sector partnerships focused on education and research, information, and data sharing, and involving civil society organizations (Castillo-Villar 2020; Haas et al. 2021; Horan 2019; Mago 2017; Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021; Thinyane et al. 2018). According to scholars, universities have an important part in achieving the SDGs because of the research potential and academic and professional networks they have established (Mago 2017; Moreno-Serna and Purcell et al. 2020). In recent years, collaborations between universities and industry, civil society organizations, and governments have increased significantly, particularly in the United States, European Union, Japan, United Kingdom, and Indonesia (Castillo-Villar 2020). Using an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach, universities help promote innovation in implementing the SDGs and contribute towards knowledge sharing and engagement across sectors and countries (Clifford and Zaman 2016; Palm and Lilja 2020). Partnerships with universities also help create awareness and educate society on the call for action in the SDGs thereby encouraging students to drive transformative action as well as provide insight into the SDGs and how to effectively implement them (Clifford and Zaman 2016; Lalaguna and Dorodnykh 2018; Palm and Lilja 2020). Scholars note the need to strengthen North-South research collaborations to effectively utilize the potential of such partnerships (Mago 2017).

Similarly, partnerships can help drive a data revolution to provide disaggregated data for decision-making, and capability to track and monitor progress towards accomplishing the SDGs (Gabay and Ilcan 2017; Florini and Pauli 2018). Digital platforms encourage innovative collaborations between diverse stakeholders (Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021). Partnerships focused specifically on data sharing or building platforms to better coordinate efforts contribute to improving dissemination of knowledge and ensure accountability while promoting transparency (Gabay and Ilcan 2017). Partnerships centered on data sharing enable actors to make more

informed decisions, achieve synergies, and effectively tackle issues associated with implementing the SDGs (Haas et al. 2021; Thinyane et al. 2018).

Partnership platforms enable the creation of a shared vision and provides a safe public space for engagement across sectors (Florini and Pauli 2018). Likewise, partnerships with non-profit and community organizations help contribute to having a more inclusive approach to implementing the SDGs through greater involvement and empowerment of citizens, and by incorporating the views of racialized and marginalized groups in decision-making (Horan 2019; Movono and Hughes 2020; Romero-Luis and Gertrudix 2020; Shulla et al. 2020; Thinyane et al. 2018).

Challenges

In making contributions to the accomplishment of the SDGs, it is important for actors to gain from the partnerships and achieve outcomes such as increased knowledge and social capital, and for actors to have the capacity to partner in the first place, particularly when the approach is voluntary (Horan 2019; MacDonald et al. 2018). The design of the partnership, and the actions taken by individual partners, can impact the outcomes that can be achieved (Ordonez-Ponce et al. 2021). Research indicates that clarity is lacking on measuring performance, as well as on rewarding voluntary efforts (Bull and Mcneill 2019; Shulla et al. 2020).

While the call for collaborative action is to be inclusive (Lalaguna and Dorodnykh 2018), involvement of actors from all levels is challenging. In addition, power imbalances can create complexities and challenges particularly for vulnerable populations around inclusion despite efforts put into creating community-based partnerships (Gabay and Ilcan 2017; Mago 2017). Ensuring participation in a partnership has over the years become more and more complex. With many different national and international policies and standards governing the roles and responsibility of partnerships for the SDGs, finding the right approach that meets such needs in addition to matching the goals of all stakeholders can be a challenge (Almeida and Davey 2018; Eweje et al. 2021). Different institutes are placing preference on resource allocation, goal achievement measurements, and knowledge and expertise based on their unique agenda for the SDGs, so not all goals are considered thereby limiting the level of socio-economic development a partnership can bring about at the national or global scale (Al-Saidi 2021; Banerjee et al. 2020).

National governments and scientific and technological institutions consider it a challenge to measure achievement of the SDGs based on funding allocation, due to budget restrictions within a partnership (Almeida and Davey 2018). Many developing nations do not see the value of university partnerships with international institutions, as they fail to see the benefit such partnerships can bring to their research (Clifford and Zaman, 2016). Social participation among stakeholders can also be an issue when trying to establish a shared vision and direction that would guide the implementation of the partnership goals (Almeida and Davey 2018). Apart from that, many partnerships in the global South have experienced low priority, lesser tangible results from the partnership efforts, and lack of coordination and equity when it comes to participation, as the partners from the North tend to be more

dominant in the decision-making process than the non-state actors, hence delaying progress towards the SDGs being met through such partnerships (Al-Saidi 2021).

National and sub-regional partnerships may face the challenge of limited resources to sustain the partnership long-term. Hence such collaborations would have to lend from external sources to achieve their targets (Chatterjee, 2019). There is a need to continue engagement efforts with new and existing partners through actively having constructive dialogues, learning exercises that have a mutual benefit for all stakeholders, and coming up with action-driven approaches that are based on a common interest and provides a sustainable solution to the developmental challenges present at the national, regional, and international level (Eweje et al. 2021; Lalaguna and Dorodnykh 2018).

Another challenge with measuring achievements for such partnerships is that in many cases the partnering companies might not want to be evaluated by a third party assessing other aspects of the business other than financial profits (Florini and Pauli, 2018). Additionally, many partnerships experience a difference in legal structure, incentives, mind-sets, and policies within the different stakeholder organizations. To bridge this gap, both partnering companies need to come together for educational and training programs that would allow them to establish new governance practices and policy framework as well as institutionalizing a system to measure achievement in a standardized manner (Florini, 2018, Haque et al, 2020, Horan, 2019).

4.0 Conclusion

Partnerships have long been viewed as a means for accomplishing shared goals. In recent years, partnerships have gained recognition as an effective approach to solving "wicked problems" and addressing development challenges (Eweje et al. 2021; Florini 2018; Oliveira-Duarte et al. 2021). Partnerships have the capability to foster transformative action by bringing together diverse stakeholders from every sector to co-create value and reach a common goal. These efforts are successful when stakeholders commit to shared values, engage, and communicate effectively, respect diverse perspectives, and promote an inclusive community (Sianes and Vela-Jiménez 2020). The results from the literature search conducted reveal that partnership definitions and types vary, but the contribution of partnerships is most pronounced in bringing together diverse stakeholders to mobilize resources, raise awareness, and bring about change in policies and practices, to create innovative solutions for implementing the SDGs (Bull and McNeill 2019; Eweje et al. 2021; Haque et al. 2020).

Like in any other topic, partnerships come with their fair share of challenges. From identifying stakeholders with common goals, understanding the different approaches and mindsets, selecting appropriate measurements and reporting methods for accountability, enabling partners to implement, ensuring communication between partners, having appropriate ongoing decision-making, to finding individuals with expertise in partnerships (Florini 2018; MacDonald et al. 2018; Ordonez-

Ponce et al. 2021), each stakeholder must carefully assess their approach to match the needs of the partnership in order to form sustainable partnerships that are equitable, provide mutual benefits, and achieve their mandates. Another challenge is that metrics for evaluating partnerships are still in the early stages of development and defining metrics that would apply to all forms of partnerships can be complex (Florini 2018). Scholars outline trust, co-operative relationships, mutual influence, commitment, active communication, and joint learning as critical factors for effective partnerships (Mago 2017; Moreno-Serna and Purcell et al. 2020). In addition, for partnerships to be successful it is crucial that governments take a more integrated approach in the developmental policies; ensuring that SDG implementation is embedded as part of the objective of these partnerships and get other members of the state as well as the public more involved in shaping policies (Baimenov and Liverakos 2019; Banerjee et al. 2020; Berrone et al. 2019; Humphreys et al. 2019). This can be done by defining the priorities, mission, and expectation of the partnership (Baimenov and Liverakos, 2019).

The literature provides multiple recommendations on how to address challenges raised. However, they can be impersonal, targeted towards structures rather than stakeholders and their capacities (Florini 2018). The literature also does not extensively address metrics for measuring the success of partnerships for the SDGs and reporting and communications on progress (Sukhonos et al. 2018). This is particularly relevant given that the SDGs offer specific targets and indicators for measurement. Further research can therefore be conducted to expand on the aforementioned areas. Additionally, greater attention needs to be given to understanding how to create more inclusive partnerships for the SDGs, taking into account the views of racialized and vulnerable groups (Horan 2019; Movono and Hughes 2020; Stott and Murphy 2020; Thinyane et al. 2018).

References

Almeida A C L, Davey P (2018) Partnerships for SDG 11 implementation in Brazil: Understanding the vulnerabilities and common interests from a multi-stakeholder perspective. International Journal of Environmental Sustainability 14(3-4): 1-17. doi:10.18848/2325-1077/CGP/V14I02/1-17

Al-Saidi M (2021) Cooperation or competition? State environmental relations and the SDGs agenda in the Gulf cooperation council (GCC) region. Environmental Development 37. doi:10.1016/j.envdev.2020.100581

Baimenov A, Liverakos P (2019) Cooperation and partnerships for international development in the era of the SDGs. In: Baimenov A, Liverakos P (eds) Public Service Excellence in the 21st Century. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, p 319-339.

Banerjee A, Murphy E, Walsh P P (2020). Perceptions of multistakeholder partnerships for the sustainable development goals: A case study of Irish non-state actors. Sustainability (Switzerland) 12(21): 1-15. doi:10.3390/su12218872

Berrone P, Ricart J E, Duch A I et al (2019). An evaluation model for public-private partnerships contributing to the sustainable development goals. Sustainability (Switzerland) 11(8). doi:10.3390/su11082339

Brolan C E, McEwan C A, Hill P S (2019). Australia's overseas development aid commitment to health through the sustainable development goals: A multi-stakeholder perspective. Globalization and Health 15: 1-19. doi:10.1186/s12992-019-0507-5

Bull B, Mcneill D (2019). From market multilateralism to governance by goal setting: SDGs and the changing role of partnerships in a new global order. Business and Politics 21(4):464-486. doi:10.1017/bap.2019.9

Castillo-Villar R (2020). Identifying determinants of CSR implementation on SDG 17 partnerships for the goals. Cogent Business & Management 7(1). doi:10.1080/23311975.2020.1847989

Clarke A, Crane A (2018). Cross-sector partnerships for systemic change: Systematized literature review and agenda for further research. Journal of Business Ethics 150(2): 303–313. doi:10.1007/s10551-018-3922-2

Clifford K L, Zaman M H (2016). Engineering, global health, and inclusive innovation: Focus on partnership, system strengthening, and local impact for SDGs. Global Health Action 9(1). doi:10.3402/gha.v9.30175

Cooper N, French D (2018). SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals-cooperation within the context of a voluntarist framework. In: French D, Kotze L J (eds) Sustainable development goals: Law, theory, and implementation, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, p 271-303.

Lalaguna P D Y, Dorodnykh E (2018). The role of private–public partnerships in the implementation of sustainable development goals: Experience from the SDG fund. In: Filho L W (ed) Handbook of Sustainability Science and Research, World Sustainability Series, Springer, p 969-982.

Escher I, Brzustewicz P (2020). Inter-organizational collaboration on projects supporting sustainable development goals: The company perspective. Sustainability 12(12): 4969. doi:10.3390/su12124969

Eweje G, Sajjad A, Nath S D, Kobayashi K. (2021). Multi-stakeholder partnerships: A catalyst to achieve sustainable development goals. Marketing Intelligence and Planning 39(2): 186-212. doi:10.1108/MIP-04-2020-0135

Ferrer-Roca N, Guia J, Blasco D (2020). Partnerships and the SDGs in a cross-border destination: The case of the Cerdanya valley. Journal of Sustainable Tourism. doi:10.1080/09669582.2020.1847126

Florini A (2018). Professionalizing cross-sector collaboration to implement the SDGs. In: Desai R M, Kato H, Kharas H, McArthur J W (eds) From summits to solutions: Innovations in implementing the sustainable development goals, Brookings, p 106-125.

Florini A, Pauli M (2018). Collaborative governance for the sustainable development goals. Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies 5(3): 583-598. doi:10.1002/app5.252

Fowler A, Biekart K (2017). Multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable development goals: The importance of interlocutors. Public Administration and Development 37(2): 81-93. doi:10.1002/pad.1795

Gabay C, Ilcan S (2017). The affective politics of the sustainable development goals: Partnership, capacity-building, and big data. Globalizations 14(3): 468-485. doi:10.1080/14747731.2017.1286167

Guzzo R, Abbott J, Madera J (2020). A micro-level view of CSR: A hospitality management systematic literature review. Cornell Hospitality Quarterly 61(3): 332–352. doi:10.1177/1938965519892907

Haas B, Haward M, McGee J, Fleming A (2021). Explicit targets and cooperation: Regional fisheries management organizations and the sustainable development goals. International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics 21(1): 133-145. doi:10.1007/s10784-020-09491-7

Haque M N, Saroar M, Md A F, Syed R M (2020). Public-private partnership for achieving sustainable development goals: A case study of Khulna, Bangladesh. Public Administration and Policy 23(3): 283-298. doi:10.1108/PAP-04-2020-0023

Horan D (2019). A new approach to partnerships for SDG transformations. Sustainability (Switzerland) 11(18). doi:10.3390/su11184947

Humphreys D, Singer B, Lawlor K et al (2019). SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals-focus on forest finance and partnerships. In: Katila, Pia, Pierce, Carol et al (eds) Sustainable Development Goals: Their Impacts on Forests and People, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p 541–576.

Hussein H, Menga F, Greco F (2018). Monitoring transboundary water cooperation in SDG 6.5.2: How a critical hydropolitics approach can spot inequitable outcomes. Sustainability 10(10): 3640. doi:10.3390/su10103640

Kurniawan T, Indriati F (2017). Introduction: Collaborative governance in dynamic public-private-society relations to achieve sustainable development goals. Development and Society 46(3): 421-426. doi:10.21588/dns/2017.46.3.001

MacDonald A, Clarke A, Huang L, et al (2018). Multi-stakeholder partnerships (SDG #17) as a means of achieving sustainable communities and cities (SDG #11). In: Filho W L (ed). Handbook of Sustainability Science and Research, World Sustainability Series, Springer, p 193-209.

Mago S (2017). North-south research collaboration and the sustainable development goals: Challenges and opportunities for academics. In: Halvorsen T, Ibsen H (eds) Knowledge for justice: Critical perspectives from southern African-Nordic research partnerships, African Mind Publishers, p 163-173.

Mikhnevich S (2020). Pursuing balance: Analysis of the PRC's implementation of trade and investment SDGs in cooperation with leading partners from the least developed countries. International Organisations Research Journal 15(1): 7-30. doi:10.17323/1996-7845-2020-01-04

Moreno-Serna J, Purcell W M, Sánchez-Chaparro T et al (2020). Catalyzing transformational partnerships for the SDGs: Effectiveness and impact of the multi-

stakeholder initiative el día después. Sustainability 12(17): 7189. doi:10.3390/su12177189

Moreno-Serna J, Sánchez-Chaparro T, Mazorra J et al (2020). Transformational collaboration for the SDGs: The alianza Shire's work to provide energy access in refugee camps and host communities. Sustainability 12(2): 539. doi:10.3390/su12020539

Movono A, Hughes E (2020). Tourism partnerships: Localizing the SDG agenda in Fiji. Journal of Sustainable Tourism. doi:10.1080/09669582.2020.1811291

Oliveira-Duarte L, Reis D A, Fleury A L et al (2021). Innovation ecosystem framework directed to sustainable development goal #17 partnerships implementation. Sustainable Development. doi:10.1002/sd.2191

Ordonez-Ponce E, Clarke A, MacDonald A (2021). Business contributions to the sustainable development goals through community sustainability partnerships. Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal 12(6): 1239-1267. doi:10.1108/SAMPJ-03-2020-0068

Owusu-Manu D, Adjei T K, Sackey D M et al (2020). Mainstreaming sustainable development goals in Ghana's energy sector within the framework of public–private partnerships: Challenges, opportunities, and strategies. Journal of Engineering, Design and Technology. doi:10.1108/JEDT-06-2020-0255

Palm K, Lilja J (2020). On the road to agenda 2030 together in a complex alliance of Swedish public authorities. Environment, Development and Sustainability. doi:10.1007/s10668-020-01032-1

Rob V T (2021). Navigating governance tensions to enhance the impact of partnerships with the private sector for the SDGs. Sustainability 13(1): 111. doi:10.3390/su13010111

Romero-Luis J, Gertrudix M (2020). Citizen science and citizen energy communities: A systematic review and potential alliances for SDGs. Sustainability 12(23): 10096. doi:10.3390/su122310096

Shulla K, Filho L W, Sommer J H et al (2020). Channels of collaboration for citizen science and the sustainable development goals. Journal of Cleaner Production 264. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.121735

Sianes A, Vela-Jiménez R (2020). Can differing opinions hinder partnerships for the localization of the sustainable development goals? Evidence from marginalized urban areas in Andalusia. Sustainability 12(14): 5797. doi:10.3390/su12145797

Siemieniako D, Kubacki K, Mitręga M (2021). Inter-organisational relationships for social impact: a systematic literature review. Journal of Business Research 132: 453–469. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.026

Sondermann E, Ulbert C (2021). Transformation through 'Meaningful' partnership? SDG 17 as metagovernance norm and its global health implementation. Politics and Governance 9(1): 152-163. doi:.17645/pag.v9i1.3656

Stott L, Murphy D F (2020). An inclusive approach to partnerships for the SDGs: Using a relationship lens to explore the potential for transformational collaboration. Sustainability (Switzerland) 12(19). doi:10.3390/SU12197905

Sukhonos V, Makarenko I, Serpeninova Y, Qasimova G (2018). Classification and prioritization of stakeholders' information requests according to sustainable development goals: Case of cross-sector partnership in Ukrainian food production industry. Problems and Perspectives in Management, 16(4): 126-140. doi:10.21511/ppm.16(4).2018.12

Thinyane M, Goldkind L, Lam H I (2018). Data collaboration and participation for sustainable development Goals—a case for engaging community-based organizations. Journal of Human Rights and Social Work 3(1): 44-51. doi:10.1007/s41134-018-0047-6

Traxler A, Schrack D, Greiling D (2020). Sustainability reporting and management control – A systematic exploratory literature review. Journal of Cleaner Production, 276: 122725. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122725

United Nations (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda. Accessed 27 Sep 2021

United Nations (2021) The 17 Goals - Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/goals. Accessed 27 Sep 2021