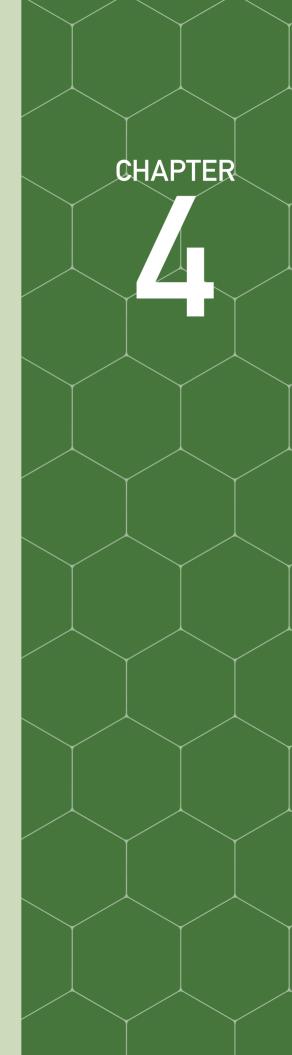# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND POLICY INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

4.1. Introduction

The importance of participation and engagement of non-State actors for the realisation of sustainable development has been recognised since the concept of sustainable development was coined. In 1992, Agenda 21, the outcome of the World Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit), which introduced the term in the United Nations setting, devoted one out of its three sections to the engagement of different stakeholder groups, stating that "one of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making".[1] In years since, it has increasingly become clear that inclusive engagement is necessary to effect the type of structural change needed to achieve sustainable development. For example, to achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production, engaging consumers who embrace sustainability values can help create demand for sustainable services and products and for the innovative business models that can deliver them.[2] The recognition of indispensable components of sustainable societies such as participation, access to information and justice is one of the strongest legacies of the Earth Summit.[3]

Mechanisms that support participatory, multi-sectoral and multi-level problem solving are needed for achieving long-term integrated approaches. Those need to involve a wide range of stakeholders, in addition to various levels of government. Also, adhering to the principle of "leaving no one behind" enshrined in the 2030 Agenda requires engagement with the full diversity of stakeholders, with a particular focus on marginalized groups and individuals.

Box 4.1. Definition of stakeholder

The notion of stakeholder has its origins in the business management literature, which defines it as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives. While the term has often been narrowly understood, Agenda 21 adopted a broad definition, systematically referring to individuals, groups and organizations. This is the definition used in this report. Specifically, for the purposes of this report, stakeholder will be used to designate an individual or a representative of a formally constituted group or organization that has or is thought to have a collective interest and can affect (e.g., informing decisions, voicing views and interests) or is affected by a policy process or action taken by herself or others that impact the policy.

Source: see footnote.[5]

This chapter explores how the adoption of mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, both at the systemic and sector levels, can affect outcomes in terms of integration. A wealth of experience has been accumulated regarding processes and mechanisms for engagement in different sectors, at different levels of decision-making, and with different constituencies. Drawing on previous experience, countries have recognized the importance of stakeholder engagement in order to enhance ownership of the SDGs and ensure effective implementation and monitoring at all levels.[4] This chapter presents a preliminary review of these experiences, focusing on how they can inform choices that countries will have to make in designing engagement mechanisms that enhance policy integration.

4.2. Engaging stakeholders for policy integration

4.2.1. Engagement and participation in Agenda 2030

Agenda 2030 highlights the importance of national participatory processes to ensure meaningful and active participation of stakeholders at all stages, from the development of national strategies to implementation to national monitoring and review. Specific SDG targets refer to participation. At a systemic level, target 16.7 calls for ensuring "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels". At the level of specific SDGs, target 6.b ("Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management"), target 10.2 ("empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all") and target 11.3 ("enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management") refer to engagement and inclusiveness in governance processes. The Agenda states that "people who are vulnerable must be empowered" and "indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to lifelong learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society."[6] The Agenda also mentions that follow-up and review processes must be "open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people" (paragraph 74d), and reviews should have a "particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind" (paragraph 74e).

SDG 17 calls for revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development and includes the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development,

which involves: (i) Enhancing 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 (Target 17.16), and (ii) Encouraging and promoting effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships (Target 17.17).

4.2.2. Why is engagement important for integration?

The comprehensive scope of the 2030 Agenda requires coordinated action between all levels and sectors of government and all stakeholders. At the most basic level, awareness needs to be raised and ownership of the SDGs needs to be increased in the whole population if the Agenda is to succeed. Beyond this, the realisation of the Agenda requires structural transformation, which in turn requires change in behaviours at the individual, organizational and societal levels. Engagement is necessary to achieve those. Non-governmental actors are themselves key drivers of change, and can help keeping the pressure on governments to act to deliver on the SDGs. At the broadest level, engagement is key to building integrated visions and strategies for the future, shared by all components of society, as a support to long-term transformation.

Solving sustainable development problems requires working across the internal and external boundaries of public organizations. As they are socially complex, solutions to sustainable development problems require coordinated action by a range of stakeholders, including state organizations (government agencies at different levels of government), but also non-profit organizations, private businesses, academia, organised civil society and individuals.

Integration requires the balancing of perspectives from different actors operating in different sectors, and by definition, this can only be done through engagement. Engagement is also critical to achieve a shared understanding of complex problems and devise integrated solutions that benefit from large societal consensus, which in turn is crucial for ensuring ownership and commitment to the possible solutions.

Lastly, engagement with vulnerable and marginalised segments of the population is necessary to deliver on another key dimension of the agenda, leaving no one behind. Therefore, government agencies can benefit from investing resources in engaging stakeholders, rather than merely concentrating and investing in traditional policy tools.[7]

4.2.3. Benefits and costs of engagement for integration

Potential benefits

Potential benefits of engagement for integration are numerous. As highlighted above, engaging stakeholders can improve policy performance by helping frame problems in more accurate ways, providing information relevant for identifying policy solutions and evaluating the implementation process.[8] Opening policy-making to the interaction with non-state actors helps governments better understand people's needs and demands and correct inequalities in terms of access to policy processes and public services. Moreover, non-state actors can be directly engaged in solving policy problems and contribute additional resources through co-production of knowledge, policy and technology.[9]

Stakeholders as beneficiaries and monitoring agents in SDG implementation can contribute direct knowledge of how services and programs work for them in practice. In some contexts, an additional benefit of involving non-state actors, particularly actors with strong community links (e.g., NGOs involved in service delivery), is that they can assist to identify and implement policy solutions that are better tailored to particular contexts and reflect the specific characteristics of communities. This can enhance policy ownership, which in turn may lead to better compliance.[10]

As mentioned above, one of the potential benefits of stakeholder engagement is its contribution to policy integration. From a procedural perspective, advancing policy integration requires changing procedures for policy-making or adding specific procedures that can sustain policy integration.[11] These changed procedures include increased interaction with non-state actors - either through formal mechanisms or informal contacts and relations. Interacting more with non-state actors would bring two main benefits in terms of policy integration.[12] On the one hand, it would make the process of achieving policy integration more democratic, as it enhances transparency, accountability, participation and helps build civic capacity. On the other hand, it would make policy integration more efficient by providing more knowledge and information and increasing the chances that policy outputs will be more broadly accepted and seen as legitimate.

While the causal mechanisms that link stakeholder engagement with policy integration have rarely been explored, some linkages can be extracted from the literature. On the one hand, stakeholder engagement in horizontal or vertical coordination mechanisms can provide information and increased awareness of integration failures at any

stage of the policy-making cycle. In such cases, inputs from engagement can contribute to coordination and integration. On the other hand, stakeholder mobilization across levels of government can improve policy integration by promoting coordinated action in pursuit of specific development goals,[13] while lobbying or grassroot mobilization can promote awareness among policy makers and implementers about issues and challenges that demand coordinated action at multiple levels.

Potential costs

Engaging multiple stakeholders for advancing integrated policy also involves costs. These must be compared to the potential benefits to be obtained in order to assess whether and how to engage stakeholders in particular contexts. The administrative costs of setting up and administering participatory processes, both in financial and human resource terms, can potentially be significant. Wide stakeholder engagement takes time and can militate against the quick policy responses that some sustainable development challenges may demand.[14] As shown by chapter 7 in this report, these two dimensions often become critical in post-conflict situations, where governments have to arbitrate between quick gains in economic and social terms, on the one hand, and restoring trust in public institutions, on the other hand, for which the creation of participatory processes and engagement with different groups of the population can be a critical means.

While bringing the perspectives of multiple stakeholders helps gain a more comprehensive and legitimate understanding of complex policy problems, engagement can make it more difficult to reconcile divergent views into commonly agreed policy solutions. Also, different stakeholders may bring siloed perspectives that represent narrow interests and thus promote policy solutions that increase fragmentation, overlaps and duplication rather than advancing integrated approaches.

Finally, managing stakeholder engagement and the expectations that engagement creates requires public administration and civil servants to build specific skills and capacities and to mobilize the necessary resources to effectively implement participatory approaches. The challenges observed in various sectors in relation to engagement and integration are discussed in more detailed in section 4.5.

4.2.4. The dimensions of engagement

There is a wide and increasing variety of engagement tools and mechanisms. The literature has adopted multiple classifications to analyze them, none of which seems to be universally preferred to the others. Broadly speaking, all these classifications consider some or all of five broad dimensions: (i) level of engagement, from provision of information to full collaboration and empowerment. This includes the decision-making power of the mechanism, as well as its formal or informal nature; (ii) who the participants are and how they are selected; (iii) level in the decision-making structure (e.g., working level versus high-level); (iv) stages of policy-making or strategic management covered by the mechanism; and (v) internal methods of work and rules of procedure of the mechanism, including methods of communication.[15]

As an example of the first dimension, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) classifies the types of engagement mechanisms by the level of interaction and expected public impact (Figure 4.1).[16] The literature suggests that one-way engagement mechanisms that remain at the level of disseminating information are less effective in advancing policy integration than two-way mechanisms that involve more structured exchanges. It has been argued that achieving a shared understanding and changing behaviors for solving complex sustainable development problems requires the highest levels of stakeholder engagement.[17]

Presumably, the more one progresses from one-way forms of engagement towards collaboration and empowerment, the more formalised the mechanisms must be. However, the relation between formalisation and impact is not always straightforward. The experience of Bolivia with participatory approaches in the formulation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process and the National Development Plan (NDP) in the early 2000s shows that top-down, formal participatory approaches without a truly participatory environment (as was done for the PRSP) are difficult to implement and may fail to produce the expected results. In contrast, non-formalised participatory processes ("participation without rules") for the NDP were more effective in producing results closer to the real demands of the population.[18]

4.2.5. Evidence of impact of stakeholder engagement

Hard empirical evidence of the effects of public engagement on development outcomes has been accumulating over the past two decades and has just begun to be systematized. A recent review of the research literature found substantial evidence of positive effects of different participatory and social accountability mechanisms across countries and sectors.[19] Similarly, a review of existing studies from 2010, covering 100 case studies across 20 countries, highlighted many instances in which citizen engagement was connected, through observable outcomes, to development processes.[20] The study found that formal participatory mechanisms were less conducive to positive outcomes in terms of inclusiveness, accountability or construction of citizenship than local associations or social movements. For the cases analyzed, the combination of different engagement strategies and collaboration of multiple actors seemed to be more effective

Figure 4.1.
Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing Level of Public Impact →

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	• Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberate polling	• Citizen Advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

Source: International Association for Public Participation, IAP2 *Public Participation Spectrum* (Wollongong: IAP2, ND), https://www2.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/IAP_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf.

for enhancing responsiveness and accountability than the use of one single engagement mechanism.

However, the empirical evidence on the impact of specific tools of engagement on policy effectiveness and other development outcomes is mixed. Some studies show that engagement through institutional mechanisms such as community monitoring may have little or no impact.[21] Others found evidence of the vulnerability of local development projects to elite capture.[22] The contrasting evidence suggests that the positive effects of engagement and participation may require additional conditions besides the design and operation of institutional mechanisms to engage different stakeholders, including the presence of collective action or social mobilization to render them effective.

Empirical evidence indicates that the presence of institutional mechanisms for engagement is not sufficient to ensure the effective participation of all groups, and particularly the poorer and more marginalised. It is also important to understand how collective actors emerge, gain capacity, mobilize and engage in contexts in which power relations are not symmetric. For example, multi-stakeholder Health Councils in Brazil were found to perform better in terms of monitoring health services and articulating alliances in areas where there is more social mobilization.[23]

For engagement mechanisms to be effective, they require an enabling environment that sustains and fosters collective action. Formal theories of collective action, for example, show that a history of collaboration enables a community to overcome collective actions problems to hold public officials accountable.[24] Other relevant factors include the integration of civil society efforts with formalised institutional arrangements, a free and capable media, leveraging ICTs, articulation of civil society efforts with political actors that can exercise their authority and use enforcement instruments, the combination of community mobilization with a few leading professionalized CSOs, and engaging actors into coalitions or networks, among other factors.[25]

Although successful mobilization of specific stakeholders may require particular conditions (e.g., personal stakes for grassroot level participation or leadership or public charters for corporate social responsibility), a number of contextual elements play a role. The World Public Sector Report 2008 provides a list of enablers, including political liberties, civil liberties, rule of law, right to information, freedom of expression, an independent judiciary, freedom of association and unimpeded operations of civil society organizations.[26] Availability of information, transparency, stakeholder and policy makers' skills and capacities for engagement, dedicated legal provisions, budget and staff, clear responsibilities

and accountability have all been mentioned among the requirements of engagement. Without conditions such as these being in place, engagement mechanisms can become ineffective or even counterproductive, fall victim to elite capture, become mere window dressing, or fail to reach and engage stakeholders.

Despite the importance of engaging stakeholders, the literature on policy integration has not focused much on the engagement and participation of external actors in policy-making.[27] Policy integration is often seen as a state-centric idea - something that falls under the responsibility of the government. However, an increasing interest in non-state governance and in the relation between policy integration and sustainability has led to more attention being paid to the question of how engagement may advance policy integration.[28]

4.3. Whom to engage for policy integration?

Different non-state actors bring distinctive benefits and value in their interactions with governments in the process of implementing the SDGs.[29] For example, the engagement of women and girls helps bring gender considerations into policy in various fields. Children and youth inclusion encourages cross-generational thinking.[30] The scientific and technological community can help strengthen the policy-science interface, help raise public awareness of sustainable development challenges (for example, climate change), provide information and evidence and identify good practices. Similarly, by engaging with the private sector, governments can better mobilise resources and technical assistance through partnerships, as well as leverage the private sector's sustainability initiatives. The private sector, as the chief producer of goods and services, is key to the realisation of all the goals, in particular ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12) and economic growth and decent employment (SDG 8).

Different groups of stakeholders require different processes and channels for engagement (e.g. individual citizens versus multinational firms) as well as different incentives to engage. As with other dimensions of integration (see chapter 3), it is conceptually and empirically relevant to distinguish engagement mechanisms at the systemic level (for example, national sustainable development councils) and those that operate at the sector level. Section 3 in this chapter is based on this distinction.

The set of sustainable development goals and targets itself can be used as a tool for preliminary identification of stakeholders in relation to specific issues. Maps of interlinkages between the issue in question and all the other

SDGs (including other targets of the same SDG) provide a natural starting point for stakeholder identification,[31] after which the usual methods and tools of stakeholder identification and mapping can be used. In practice, proper identification of stakeholders should go well beyond this preliminary stage, as illustrated later in this chapter.

Figure 4.2 takes the example of marine ecosystem management, which is encapsulated in SDG target 14.2. Actions under several targets and SDG areas other than oceans (SDG 14) potentially affect performance on target 14.2. Conversely, the management of marine ecosystems also affects outcomes in a number of SDG areas. This basic map shows that holistic discussions on this issue should seek to involve stakeholders concerned with conservation of marine ecosystems, food security, energy production, climate change, poverty alleviation, education, and many other subjects.
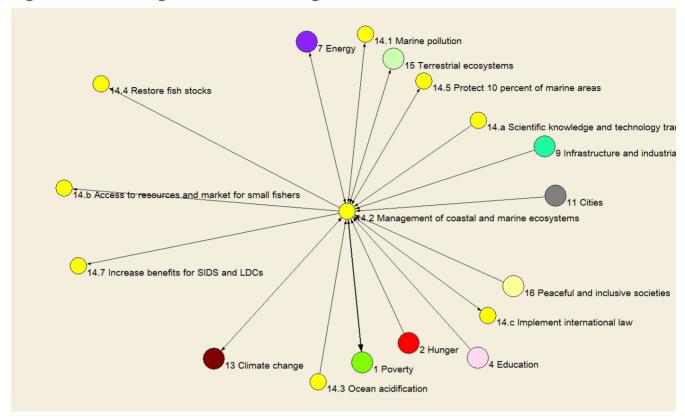
Two dimensions merit mentioning in this regard, as they are especially important: scope and geographical scale.[32] First, finding the appropriate breadth of scope to address problems is important to identify the appropriate stakeholders. As noted by experts who have mapped SDG interlinkages, the level of SDG targets often seems appropriate for this purpose.[33] Second, depending on the issue being considered, stakeholders at different geographical levels can have an impact. When working at the national level, it is important to be clear on how much international actors can influence outcomes in this area, and how this can be accounted for in policy-making.[34]

4.3.1. Selecting stakeholders to contribute to integration

Engagement mechanisms aim to represent the diversity of the relevant actors in the public policy domain. Diverse actors offer more potential resources and bring varied knowledge that opens opportunities for innovation and learning.[36]

There are many ways of selecting the actors to be engaged, depending on capacity, resources, and practice.[37] While some mechanisms are open to all, others rely on some form of sampling, use public invitations, draw on existing networks or deliberately target some actors or groups. Diverse selection mechanisms have strengths and limitations in terms of their representativeness and legitimacy and, therefore, their potential to enhance policy integration for SDG implementation.[38] For example, engagement mechanisms that are open to all are often unrepresentative of the larger public, because those with more resources and capacity may capture the process, reducing the range of inputs and therefore, the opportunities for integration. In contrast, selective recruitment may target actors that are less likely to engage yet whose views and inputs may be valuable for finding multi-sectoral solutions, and random

Figure 4.2.

Linkages between SDG target 4.2, other SDG 14 targets and other SDGs

Source: Le Blanc, Freire and Vierros, 2017.[35]

selection also ensures higher representativeness of different perspectives. If properly implemented, open mechanisms with incentives for the disadvantaged (e.g., participatory budget), mechanisms that rely on random selection, and those that involve people interested in an issue, can help strengthen policy integration.[39]

The details of how engagement mechanisms are designed play a fundamental role in achieving the objectives of engagement by creating the proper incentives for effective and inclusive involvement. For example, institutional design can help avoid the co-optation of engagement processes by groups that are better connected or have more capacities, and foster the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, especially in the cases of weaker or marginalized groups.[40] Understanding how engagement contributes to improved policy integration and effectiveness requires considering the interaction between the institutional design of engagement mechanisms, and the collective action that sustains the mobilization of social actors.[41]

Guidance or guidelines on stakeholder engagement for government agencies address some of these design issues. Some available guidelines indirectly point to the benefits

of engagement in terms of integration.[42] In some cases, such as the guidance for engaging stakeholders in the implementation of the US Every Student Succeeds Act, specific methods of engagement such as Stakeholder Advisory Panels are identified as a good way to "address complex or long-term decision-making and build consensus over time."[43] However, in general, these guidelines do not explicitly mention how stakeholder engagement may contribute to integration or how engagement mechanisms must be deployed to strengthen integration.

One notable exception is the 2016 *Guideline for stakeholder engagement on aquatic resource management-related processes* of the Government of Western Australia,[44] which explicitly indicates that the resulting synergy of engaging different stakeholders "encourages the development of *integrated and comprehensive solutions to complex problems* and increases the capacity of the Department to provide better management of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems". The Guidance relies on the IAP2 levels of interaction presented above, and identifies specific methods of engagement for each level. The framework provides specific guidance to identify key stakeholders in a systematic way, and identifies the minimum level of engagement required for particular

processes in fisheries such as formulating an overarching policy, conducting and environmental impact assessment or amending a fisheries management plan.

In the case of integrated water management, guidelines developed by the government of South Africa build on an approach that sees integration as the result from harmonizing stakeholders' needs for use of water resources. The focus is on the interactions that threaten stakeholders' use, or desired use, of water or on those processes that may impact on the desired state of the aquatic ecosystem. This aims to allow stakeholders to contribute more meaningfully, and to direct the limited resources to issues that threaten stakeholders' ongoing use of water resources.[45]

4.4. Tools for engagement: How do they contribute to integration?

This section presents examples of engagement tools and mechanisms. It first introduces the various dimensions of engagement, then presents examples at the systemic level, followed by sector-level examples and finally some considerations on multi-stakeholder partnerships. Challenges observed in relation to these three types of mechanisms are discussed in the final part of this section.

4.4.1. Engagement mechanisms at the systemic level

Governments are experimenting with different approaches to stakeholder engagement for the implementation of the SDGs. These approaches build on the lessons learned from previous stakeholder engagement efforts. For example, the national Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) are consultative bodies to engage multiple stakeholders (including representatives from business, civil society organisations, trade unions and governments) in consultations on public policy. Originated in Western Europe after the Second World War, ESCs initially provided a structured framework to address economic policy dilemmas in time of crisis; their scope was later expanded in some countries to include broader social and environmental issues.

The ESCs were created to make public policies more balanced, equitable and accountable, and not specifically more integrated. However, an analysis of the ESCs offers relevant insights for policy integration. The experience of the ESCs shows that they have helped generate national agreement on key objectives, integrated non-state actors' views into public policies, making them more responsive, and provided a platform for social actors to advance concerns that might be otherwise excluded from the policy agenda.[46] Therefore, at the most basic level of integration, ESCs have contributed to the identification of shared objectives and enhanced collaboration or cooperation between actors.
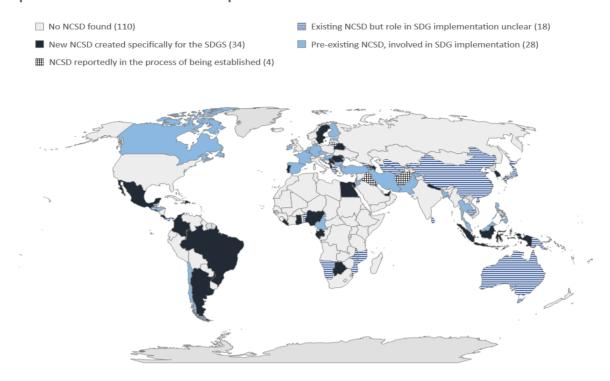
In some cases, at a higher level of integration, they have also contributed to shared problem resolution and more integrated strategic policy planning among different actors.[47] The examples of Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark or South Africa show the contribution of ESCs in shaping national policies and strategies that integrate both economic and social dimensions.[48] The ESCs have faced challenges, particularly in developing countries, related to limits in the range of actors represented, absence of representation of specific groups such as the rural poor, and limited credibility in certain contexts.[49]

Another engagement mechanism on which countries are building is National Councils on Sustainable Development (NCSDs). NCSDs were first identified as institutional components in Agenda 21 in 1992 to promote sustainable development at the national level. The aim was to address challenges related to integrated decision-making through multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral national mechanisms. Some of those NCSDs - comprising representatives from academic, scientific, business and NGO backgrounds - contributed to monitoring governments' progress in implementing sustainable development strategies. However, experience showed that the influence of NCSDs on most policy-making process often remained low.[50] Many countries have operating national sustainable development councils today, many of which have been assigned an explicit role in SDG implementation (see Figure 4.3).

According to a recent OECD survey, in the SDG context, stakeholder engagement has taken place at different policy stages, including: the adaptation and prioritization of Goals to the national context; the development of national SDG implementation plans; SDG implementation; and the identification and development of indicators. Interestingly, about one-third of the countries surveyed replied that they would involve stakeholders in horizontal coordination mechanisms.[51] Examples of engagement mechanisms at the systemic level covering different phases of the policy-making cycle are presented in Table 4.1.

Some efforts to engage stakeholders in the SDGs have focused on raising awareness and disseminating information about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Activities to raise awareness are very diverse, including the organization of workshops, conferences, events, communication and outreach campaigns, including the use of social media. These initiatives, which are generally ad-hoc, time-bounded, and not institutionalised, are often organised in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSO). Countries have also highlighted the importance of education to raise awareness about the SDGs, and have started to integrate SDGs into educational curricula and programmes. For example, in South Korea, contents related to SDGs have been included in textbooks for primary and secondary school students.[52]

Figure 4.3.
World map of National Sustainable Development Councils as of 2017

No NCSD found (110)　　　　　　　　　　Existing NCSD but role in SDG implementation unclear (18)

New NCSD created specifically for the SDGS (34)　　Pre-existing NCSD, involved in SDG implementation (28)

NCSD reportedly in the process of being established (4)

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Many countries have promoted stakeholder participation in SDG implementation through dedicated discussions, advocacy and consultation activities.[53] Consultations aim to gather inputs from different stakeholders for formulating national strategies and plans for SDG implementation. They can be conducted both in face to face and in online settings and through different approaches such as roundtables, seminars, workshops, bilateral discussions and online channels. For example, France has launched consultative workshops on the implementation of the SDGs as well as an online public consultation. Morocco has organized several consultations on the localization of the 2030 Agenda, with inputs from civil society representatives. Peru has organized large national consultations on the SDGs, both in the lead up to the 2030 Agenda between 2012 and 2014, and more recently in 2017.[54] In Brazil, Belgium

Table 4.1. Generic examples of systemic level engagement mechanisms at different stages of the policy cycle

Leadership	Legal/ regulatory	Planning/ Design	Implementation	Monitoring and evaluation
• Awareness raising efforts on the SDGs • Engagement with groups of the population left behind	• Setting up of formal consultation mechanisms • Resources allocated to engagement mechanisms	• (ad hoc) public consultations for the elaboration of a national SD strategy • NSDC leading the design or revision of the national SD strategy • Participatory planning • Participatory budgeting	• Multi-stakeholder partnerships • Stakeholder coordination in institutional mechanisms for implementation	• Learning networks (sectoral and systemic levels) • Participatory monitoring and review (by governments or oversight institutions) • Participatory development of indicators and data collection

Source: Authors' elaboration.

and Italy, consultations have been organised through civil society networks to broaden the number of participants and reach out to specific groups (e.g., academia, youth, consumers) and sub-national levels.[55]

Besides these efforts, countries are engaging stakeholders in SDG implementation through diverse types of institutionalised mechanisms. For this purpose, they are adapting existing institutions or creating new ones. There is no single blueprint, but rather great variation in terms of the resulting engagement mechanisms. Institutional structures for engagement may involve several types of stakeholders, operate at various levels of government and perform their functions at different stages of the policy-making cycle. Also, while some of these structures are led by governments, others are led by non-state actors. Some institutions have decision-making powers while others are advisory bodies.

Some countries are using newly established institutions for engaging non-state actors in SDG implementation. These include Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, Honduras, Kenya, Maldives, Mexico, Sweden and Thailand, among others. One form of stakeholder engagement is to include stakeholder representation not in the high-level body that provides overall strategic direction for SDG implementation, but at the technical or thematic level. For example, in Kenya, stakeholders are represented in the SDGs Coordinating Department that has been established within the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, which provides the overall coordination. The Department is supported by an Inter-Agency Technical Committee (IATC) comprising officers from key government ministries, departments, agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector.[56] Similarly, in Colombia, the newly established technical secretariat of the High-level Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals interfaces with representatives from civil society, the private sector, academia, and has strong stakeholder participation. Honduras exemplifies a different institutional arrangement, in which stakeholders are represented both at the high-level commission and the technical committees for SDGs. Stakeholders represented include the private sector, workers and farmers' organizations, academia, organised civil society, and municipal governments.[57]

In other countries, such as Brazil, Botswana, Benin or Thailand, the central coordinating mechanism responsible for steering for SDG implementation also provides a platform for stakeholder engagement. Brazil created the National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016 as "an essential institutional coordination mechanism for the achievement of SDGs in the Country".[58] The Commission, whose members represent the national and local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia, advises the Brazilian government in the continued implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Costa Rica represents a slightly different case. Stakeholder engagement has been institutionalised through a non-hierarchical National Pact, signed by the three branches of government, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, local governments, the private sector, and universities.[59]

Other countries are engaging stakeholders around SDG implementation through pre-existing institutional mechanisms and processes. These include Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Philippines, South Korea and Switzerland, among others. For example, in Estonia, the Sustainable Development Commission[60] acts as a stakeholder forum and performs advisory functions in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. In Belgium, the Federal Council for Sustainable Development facilitates broad multi-stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of national, federal, and regional sustainable development strategies. In Switzerland, the 2030 Dialogue on Sustainable Development facilitates discussion among the private sector, civil society, and academia about sustainable development.[61]

Some multi-stakeholder structures are government-led, such as Korea's Presidential Committee on Green Growth, a government Committee established in 2009 that has developed an integrated strategy for sustainable development. While it is mainly composed of government officials, it has mixed government-private sector membership.[62] In contrast, the Council for Sustainable Development in Germany is an example of non-government led multi-stakeholder institution. The Council brings together 15 notable individuals from civil society (trade unions and other stakeholders appointed by the Chancellor) to represent the environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development in both the international and national dimensions.[63] Since 2001, the Council has been advising the government on its sustainability policy and has been promoting dialogue on sustainability issues. It has also presented recommendations and put forward stakeholder proposals for implementing the SDGs.

In some cases, multi-stakeholder structures have purely advisory functions rather than decision-making competencies. For instance, Turkey's Sustainable Development Solutions Network, established in June 2014, brings together people from civil society, academia, and the private sector to discuss and provide advice on attaining sustainable development in the country. The Network works closely with different organizations in the country to generate research and proposals and stimulate problem-solving at the global, national and local levels.[64]

In terms of the level of government, some engagement structures are created at the local level. For example, the Local Sustainability Alliance of Korea, established in 2011, has been supporting SDG implementation. The Alliance set up local institutional and organizational frameworks to collaborate with local stakeholder groups, including local communities and governments, to address the SDGs and targets.[65]

Other structures, such as the government-led Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, are mainly operating at the national level, although they may also involve representatives from other levels of government. The Commission was established in 1993 to enhance Finland's commitment to sustainable development. It is led by the Prime Minister and includes different ministers, high-level government officials as well as members of civil society such as representatives from municipal governments, church groups, trade unions, NGOs and the scientific community.[66] This is one of the mechanisms of Finland's integrated approach to stakeholder engagement (whole-of-society) for SDG implementation. (Box 4.2).

The Finnish example also illustrates one way of mobilizing non-state actors that is consistent with government actions for SDG implementation. A great number of initiatives request and publish voluntary commitments by different actors – government and other stakeholders (e.g., private sector, civil society). Registries often aggregate and publish commitments from different initiatives. For example, in the context of

Box 4.2. Finland's whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation

Whole of society approach in Finland

Revised Society's Commitment to sustainable development, 8 national goals for 2050, SDG's integrated

Government Report on the 2030 Agenda implementation "National Implementation Plan"

Society's Commitment -tool, commitments made by public sector, companies, civil society & individuals

Sustainable development & CSR plans of individual companies & organisations

Implementation

Finland has integrated the SDGs into its national context by mapping the existing national strategy, consisting of eight national goals for 2050, to the 2030 Agenda. The country promotes a whole-of-society approach to the achievement of the goals.

A national participatory stakeholder process was used for the assessment of the sustainable development situation, challenges and opportunities that supported the formulation of the national action plan. Non-state stakeholders were involved in the process from the start, and also had a chance to comment on the resulting report and to identify the next steps for implementing the SDGs.

SDG implementation in Finland also relies on a collaborative approach. A public, online "Society's Commitment for Sustainable Development" Tool (https://commitment2050.fi/) has been created, where stakeholders from all parts of society can make public commitments that contribute to the goals. It provides an open, voluntary and concrete way for individuals, companies and organizations to participate in SDG implementation. As of December 2017, over 300 commitments had been submitted. Companies or organizations with existing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs are also encouraged to submit their commitments, so as to make their CSR commitments more visible and part of a broader stakeholder engagement across the society. The online tool also helps in involving stakeholders in governmental efforts. The interaction between the government's National Implementation plan, societal efforts, large or small, and CSR efforts from companies and organizations through the online tool helps enhance policy coherence in SDG implementation among stakeholders.

Sources: See footnote.[67]

the SDGs, a global registry of voluntary commitments to sustainable development has been created, which includes almost four thousand commitments as of early 2018.[68] SDG 13 on climate change is another area in which voluntary commitments from non-state actors are numerous.[69]

In terms of integration, voluntary commitments may offer certain advantages. They can provide space for cooperative efforts that would enhance integration.[70] Also, they give actors flexibility, can be initiated quickly and adapted to the local context, which would enhance the potential for more integrated solutions. As they provide reputational gains to the actors involved, they can also contribute to learning from integrated solutions to sustainable development problems and support their replication and dissemination. However, one of the challenges is the lack of mechanisms for tracking and monitoring commitments. With limited accountability, it is difficult to ensure that those commitments are implemented. Low compliance with voluntary agreements and limited possibilities for sanctions are barriers to policy integration.[71] Moreover, only to the extent that they reflect relevant shared values will voluntary commitments be more easily enforced and provide a stronger lever for integrated approaches.[72]

Stakeholders can provide relevant information to help government address uncertainties in the implementation of the SDGs and contribute to monitoring and reviewing SDG implementation. Efforts to engage stakeholders in monitoring, review and reporting are limited but gaining increasing attention at both the global and national levels. At the global level, the number of non-state stakeholders engaged in the SDG follow-up and review process has increased steadily since 2016. Over 2,000 non-state stakeholders participated in the HLPF 2017. Stakeholders were invited to be part of official country delegations (e.g., Azerbaijan, Brazil, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Uruguay) and, in some cases, they had a speaking role during the presentations at the HLPF (e.g., Argentina, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria, Slovenia, Sweden and Thailand).[73]

Many Member States recognise the importance of engaging stakeholders in the process of preparation of the VNRs, although the extent of engagement and the methodology varies from country to country. In many countries, stakeholder groups have been consulted (through offline and online mechanisms) and given opportunities to provide inputs to VNR. Countries like Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Costa Rica, Denmark, and Ethiopia shared draft reports with stakeholders for their feedback and comments, and Denmark and Sweden included an annex based on information provided by stakeholders.[74] Some countries have also highlighted the efforts from stakeholders to conduct their own parallel or complementary reviews of SDG implementation (e.g., Portugal, Brazil).

At the national level, some countries have mobilised stakeholders for the development of national SDG indicators and to contribute to data collection. In the Philippines, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) organised two technical workshops in 2015 and 2016 with the participation of CSOs, academic institutions, donors and government officials to assess the SDG indicators in the country context, identify data availability, prioritise the global indicators and agree on 23 complementary national indicators for SDGs 2, 3 and 5.[75]

Countries like Belarus, Denmark, Ethiopia and Nigeria have engaged stakeholders for the development of tools for data collection as well as to complement governments' efforts to collect data for SDG monitoring. In Nigeria, for example, stakeholders were invited to provide inputs to the data mapping process.[76] In Denmark, the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) has contributed to the development of a community-based tool for collecting disaggregated data to monitor the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in relation to the SDGs.[77]

The impact on policy integration of these efforts to mobilise and engage stakeholders is little known. There is no systematic evidence yet on the performance and effectiveness of engagement mechanisms – both informal and institutionalised- and how they may contribute to a more integrated implementation of the SDGs. The possible impact of stakeholder engagement on policy integration may be mediated by institutional design factors (such as the configuration, membership, etc. of engagement mechanisms), whether these mechanisms are linked with decision-making power (e.g., decision-making versus advisory bodies), as well as by specific contextual factors such as previous patterns of stakeholder mobilization in the country. Moreover, as illustrated by the example of Finland, a critical factor could be whether countries prioritise stakeholder engagement as a critical cross-cutting issue and use their national sustainable development strategies to align different yet complementary efforts to mobilise and engage stakeholders substantially throughout the entire SDG process.

Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) as well as other monitoring and oversight mechanisms can be important sources of information to shed light on the characteristics, performance and potential impact of engagement efforts for SDG implementation. (See Box 4.3).

4.4.2. Engagement mechanisms at the sector level

As noted above, institutional attempts at integration at the level of specific sectors or issues have been widespread. Evidence on engagement at the sector level is often found in field-specific literature, making a systematic analysis a massive undertaking well beyond the ambition of this chapter. Table 4.2 presents selected examples of engagement in different

Box 4.3. Assessing stakeholder participation as part of audits of SDG implementation readiness by SAIs

As part of ongoing audits of governments' efforts to prepare for SDG implementation, supreme audit institutions (SAIs) may provide valuable information on whether and how government are engaging stakeholders. SAIs may build on their experience in auditing participatory approaches and components of government policies and programmes to assess relevant issues related to stakeholder engagement for the SDGs, including:

What are the levels and sectors of non-state actors involved in integrating SDGs?

How have the views of different stakeholders been taken into account in aligning national plans and policies to SDGs?

Have relevant stakeholders been included in institutional mechanisms for coordination of SDG implementation?

Have relevant stakeholders been included in the process to establish national goals and targets/ national indicators?

Is there a plan to manage and coordinate efforts of stakeholders in support of SDG implementation?

What efforts have been undertaken by non-state actors to support SDGs, such as mobilizing partnerships, raising awareness, etc.?

Results from such audits will be available in 2018 and 2019 for several countries. Some SAIs have already explored these issues in their audits of preparedness for SDG implementation. In Brazil, the audit concluded that the federal government did not have a long-term national plan for SDG implementation which ensures participation of non-state stakeholders (in contrast with other experiences in the country such as in the States of Pernambuco and Minas Gerais).

While conducting these SDG-related audits, SAIs themselves are seeking to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders to go beyond their traditional sources of information and evidence collection as well as to ensure wide dissemination of the findings of SDG audits and proper follow up and implementation of the audit recommendations.

Sources: Authors and Tribunal de Contas da União 2017, "Audit report on Brazilian government's preparedness for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals," TC: 028.938/2016-0

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sectors, based on a limited review of specific sectors across different SDGs. The level of stakeholder engagement as well as the structures and approaches to foster stakeholder engagement seem to vary across sectors and within the same sector from country to country (e.g., for climate change).[78] For example, the lack of institutionalization of collaborative practices has been noted in documents related to clean energy,[79] and transport planning in developing countries,[80] but good examples were also found for these and other sectors such as nutrition, integrated water resource management (IWRM), climate change, ocean and forest management. Participatory approaches that foster a high level of stakeholder engagement in planning and decision-making processes have been highlighted, for example in ocean and forest management.

The types of structures for stakeholder engagement used in various sectors include multi stakeholder networks and platforms, multi-sectoral committees or councils, and advisory and expert committees. Consultation approaches also include public hearings, workshops, consultations through open meetings, and incorporating stakeholders in teams responsible for preparing strategic documents (e.g. policies, plans or programmes).

The types of stakeholders engaged seem to vary within and between sectors. For example, looking at poverty reduction, the literature has noted that poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) tended to engage largely urban-based NGOs, including many with strong links to international NGOs or donor agencies.[98] Academia has played an active role in domestic initiatives related to climate change in Asia,[99] as it has been included in national advisory panels (e.g. Japan) and inter agency coordination mechanism on climate change (e.g. Republic of Korea). The private sector and local governments are also actively represented in this sector.[100]

The example of the water sector illustrates the variety of approaches. Diverse formal and informal structures are used to engage stakeholders in water policy-making. These may range from conventional public hearings and participation of civil society as observer in the planning phase of policy-making (e.g., South Korea)[101] to water councils[102] (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, United States), which are institutionalized consultation platforms for civil society, the private sector and academia to provide inputs to public authorities on issues related to water management, including but not limited to the policy planning phases. Other engagement modalities include outreach and communication programmes between basin agency personnel and stakeholders (e.g.,

Table 4.2. Selected evidence of stakeholder engagement in specific sectors

Sector or issue	Example of engagement mechanisms observed
Poverty reduction (SDG 1)	Variety of informal and formal structures for stakeholder engagement. The poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) approach resulted in engagement by civil society organizations in poverty policy debates, as per a study that assessed PRSP implementation worldwide. New national networks of civil society organizations were formed around poverty policy, often with sub-committees grouped around sectoral or other special interests.[81] (E.g. Poverty Observatory in Mozambique that included more than 440 different civil society groups)[82]
Nutrition (SDG 2)	Effective structures for multi-stakeholder engagement that include a broad variety of stakeholders used in some countries (e.g. Senegal, Brazil)[83] The literature stresses the key role of advocacy to galvanize and maintain action[84]
Integrated water resources management (SDG 6)	Various types of formal and informal structures: outreach and communication programme between basin agency personnel and stakeholders in the basin (Indonesia); multi-sectoral committees or councils with representatives from national and sub-national governments (Brazil; Costa Rica; Canada); advisory committees with representatives from subnational levels and water user sectors (Australia).[85] Some structures (e.g. multi-sectoral multi-stakeholder committees) played a leadership role and mobilization occurred on water issues (e.g. Brazil), or were considered as good fora for information generation and sharing (e.g. Canada).[86]
Energy (SDG 7)	Platforms for multistakeholder engagement created in some countries with some initiated by the private sector (IDCOL in Bangladesh). Those platforms involve, among others, civil society organizations (CSOs), civil servants and private sector representatives.[87]
Integrated transport (SDG 11)	Importance of involving a variety of stakeholders upfront in transport planning, and throughout the planning and implementation process stressed in many reports (mostly in developed countries).[88] Relevant mechanisms/tools for engaging stakeholders in transport planning and implementation highlighted in the literature documenting Australia's experience[89]
Sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12)	Literature outlines lack of regular consultation mechanisms and processes in some countries (of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and Baltic States) to influence governments' decision-making on SCP[90] Budget made available by a few countries to support engagement on SCP (e.g. Singapore's plans to finance NGOs' engagement in networking, promoting cooperation and encouraging exchange of ideas on sustainable lifestyles)[91]
Climate change (SDG 13)	Civil society participation arrangements and level of engagement vary from country to country. Establishment of small technical expert groups, and larger participatory events to raise awareness and reach consensus highlighted in literature as common participatory mechanisms for climate change planning.[92] Based on a study in Asia,[93] academia has played an active role in domestic activities related to climate change (e.g. Advisory Panel on Climate Change created in Japan 2008). Private sector and local governments more actively represented than before (e.g. large coalitions of sub-national government such as Under2 led from the State of California; business alliances such as 'We Mean Business' that include more than 680 companies and investors worldwide).[94]
Ocean management (SDG 14)	Effective participative mechanisms for integrated ocean management outlined in literature. These mechanisms involved active multi-stakeholder participation in the planning process, and public consultations They involved a diversity of stakeholders (e.g. ocean industry and resource user groups, community interests, NGOs, science and research community, local authorities, general public, aboriginal communities).[95] Active involvement of ocean resource users in marine fisheries planning processes reported in several cases in Europe.[96]
Forest management (SDG 15)	Approaches to involving local stakeholders in forestry have multiplied over the years. Great variety of structural arrangements (e.g. top down or bottom up). Some approaches provide local or community stakeholders with an important role in the forest planning and decision-making process and can include devolution of forest management responsibility from the central government to local communities and/or entail sharing forest management roles amongst multiple stakeholders, including the private sector.[97]

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indonesia), water colloquia (e.g., South Africa) or water forums (e.g., Ecuador) to raise awareness and to identify gaps in knowledge. Multi-sectoral committees or councils with representatives from national and sub-national governments such as watershed and river basin committees[103] (e.g., Brazil, Costa Rica, Canada) are used to tackle specific issues such as water pollution as well as to allow for the public's general participation in water policy-making. Advisory committees with representatives from subnational levels and water user sectors (e.g., Australia), local deliberative forums, online information and dialogue facilities and comprehensive community development programmes[104] (e.g., Australia) and associations of water users[105] (e.g., Burkina Faso) are also among the different ways in which multi-stakeholder engagement platforms have been established. All these approaches and tools have been effective in promoting information-sharing (e.g., Canada)[106] and consultation for policy planning, and to a certain extent, for policy implementation but less so for advancing more active forms of engagement such as collaboration and empowerment. Research has also found engagement in water policy monitoring and evaluation to be weaker than in policy planning and implementation phases.[107]

In terms of enabling conditions, effective use of technology[108] and decentralization seem relevant factors in fisheries and other sectors. Successful decentralization was found to be an enabling factor of engagement around the issues covered by SDG 6. Decentralized development planning[109] also figures among the enabling factors for engagement modalities to lead to sustainable fisheries. Successful decentralization and local governance[110] have in some cases led to wider engagement in forest management and to reduction in deforestation.[111]

Engagement approaches in forest management also seem to have been further enabled with transparent and inclusive deliberative methods and awareness-raising and training for all stakeholders[112], particularly for those without prior knowledge on the cost and benefits of different resource exploitation schemes.

4.4.3. Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Generally speaking, the set of stakeholders relevant to integrated decision-making depends on the issue being considered. In this context, a relevant type of mechanism for engagement is the multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP). MSPs are founded on principles of shared risk, cost and mutual benefit. They vary in terms of their purpose, scope, complexity, geographic scale (local, regional to national, global), diversity, size and composition. Partnerships are motivated by diverse factors and objectives, with varying governance structures and distinct operational challenges.[113] MSP leadership can be varied too, from government-led to private-sector led to civil-society-led.

The emergence of multi stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development can be traced back to the 1992 Earth Summit, where Agenda 21 called for a ''Global Partnership for Sustainable Development'' and alluded to multi stakeholder partnerships between public, private and community sectors to support implementation.[114] A decade later, a set of principles for multi stakeholder partnerships was drawn up as input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.[115] In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasized the central and integral role of partnerships to facilitate global engagement in support of the implementation of all the Goals and targets.[116] The 2017 Ministerial Declaration at the high level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) further stressed that multi-stakeholder partnerships that are cross-sectoral and effectively integrated are instrumental for contributing to achieving poverty eradication in all its forms and the SDGs.[117] Thus, high hopes have been placed on MSPs in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Several countries have put forward multi-stakeholder partnerships or frameworks for those in relation with the SDGs. The Netherlands has a broad coalition of over 75 different stakeholders referred to as the "Global Goals Charter NL". Participants ranging from companies, to banks, to civil society organizations, have signed the charter and are contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. As highlighted above, Finland's whole-of-society approach to the achievement of the goals encourages stakeholders from all parts of society, including companies or organizations with existing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, to make public commitments that contribute to the goals.

At the sectoral level, MSPs have been increasingly prominent over past decades. Examples include the well-know "vertical partnerships" in the health sector, such as the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). Climate change is another sector where MSPs are important. The emphasis on the role of partnerships was especially strong in the preparation and the follow-up of the Paris agreement on climate change in 2015.[118]

Since the adoption in 2015 of the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, there has been an increased focus on the role that philanthropy and philanthropy-based partnerships could play for sustainable development through both financial and non-financial means.[119] The role of philanthropy in development has become more visible in recent years as has its role in partnerships. In the drive to better tap the resources from philanthropy, the "SDG Philanthropy Platform" was set up as a collaboration between philanthropy and the greater international development community,[120] so that they can engage better in integrated approaches for the

implementation of the SDGs. The first four pilot countries are Colombia, Ghana, Indonesia and Kenya. Various actions will be undertaken, including "mapping" the ecosystem of actors in priority areas, including reputable grantees, as well as identifying accessible and productive entry points to support governments in integrated implementation of the SDGs.

4.4.4. Challenges and opportunities

Evidence on the impacts of stakeholder engagement in terms of improving policy integration and coordination is scarce. In many sectors, there are examples of positive effects of stakeholder engagement on development outcomes, but also contradictory evidence. For example, local initiatives based on civil society engagement were found to successfully uphold mangrove forest conservation in Ecuador while similar initiatives had no effect in cooperation with respect to fisheries, for instance.[121]

Engagement at the national level often fails to target the most relevant actors to advance integrated implementation due to the criteria used for identifying the actors to be engaged. In some cases, actors are selected based on pre-existing contacts and working relations with government institutions[122] but not necessarily on the potential value they can bring to address complex problems. Government officials may also fear negative public reactions if they include certain actors, or be wary of engaging some external actors due to potential bias or politicization of technical issues.[123] Another relevant consideration is trust. Effective engagement requires building trust between government and stakeholders. Governments often engage with familiar actors with whom they have engaged before, because building trust takes time and requires interaction between the actors to define roles and responsibilities and build rapport and relationships (e.g., specific activities where they meet each other and reflect together).[124] Moreover, the capacity of actors to engage meaningfully with government is another relevant precondition that is often not addressed. While the limitations of selecting stakeholders for convenience, influence, or political considerations should be recognized and articulated, an analysis of 79 engagement case studies in the natural resource management literature concluded that less than half of the case studies (44%) mentioned how or why particular stakeholders were chosen, which raises questions about the representativeness of those efforts and the inclusion of potentially marginalized groups.[125]

Moreover, when stakeholder engagement structures are purely formal but there is no genuine engagement and incorporation of stakeholders' views and inputs, some negative outcomes may occur. In the water sector, lack of genuine engagement in the early days of the policy planning process in some experiences (e.g. Australia) led to significant misunderstandings and community backlash

that affected implementation and integration.[126] In relation to energy, lack of consultation and opportunities to participate in policy and regulatory processes, both nationally and at the subnational level, have also been noted.[127]

Typical challenges facing engagement and participation highlighted in the literature may also affect the impact of engagement mechanisms on integration. For example, differences in power, capacity and resources between the public, civil society, government institutions and the private sector can result in outcomes that heavily favor one or several of the stakeholders. This has been a recurrent concern in particular in natural resources sectors, such as extractive industries.[128]

Lack of variety of stakeholders engaged has been an issue, for example in relation with poverty eradication strategy processes in the early 2000s (see above). Similarly, limited involvement of communities in nutrition-related planning and processes has been noted in some countries.[129] With respect to transport planning and implementation, the literature notes lack of mechanisms for stakeholder engagement in some regions.[130]

Stakeholders have different knowledge, values and preferences across groups of stakeholders but also among individuals within pre-defined groups.[131] The lack of coherent preferences among stakeholders has implications for policy integration. First, engaging more actors can increase transaction costs and make it more difficult to achieve synergies, undermining integration.[132] Second, decisions made with stakeholder inputs may be more affected by the particular actors engaged in each policy process than by the larger composition of the stakeholder groups represented. The selection of actors based on pre-defined stakeholder categories, for example, may fail to ensure a wide representation of views and interests.[133] Therefore, the processes and procedures to identify and select stakeholders to be engaged matter, as they will affect the results of decision-making.

Investing time and resources in the selection process, and having clear procedures and criteria for selecting stakeholders contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the engagement as well as its outputs and outcomes in terms of integration.[134] At the sector level, however, the literature recognizes that the identification of stakeholders is challenging, and different classifications of stakeholders usually coexist. For example, in fisheries, academic classifications that distinguish between principal and secondary stakeholders (the latter meaning those with more indirect interests) do not exactly match the mapping of stakeholders that exists at the policy level (e.g., the EU's Common Fisheries Policy).[135] Therefore, some guidelines on stakeholder engagement provide specific guidance to government entities on how to systematically identify key

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Box 4.4. National Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations, NGOs

In Europe, many CSOs and NGOs working on development and sustainable development issues are involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through the EU. Cross-sectoral and multi-level efforts are critical for the implementation of the Agenda. Before the final adoption of the SDGs, civil society groups working at the EU level made a decision to work in an integrated way to promote a coherent approach--breaking silos--to SDG implementation. SDG Watch Europe brings together organisations working on a series of issues including social justice, women, youth, culture, transparency, and the environment, and works at multiple levels (local, national, regional). The alliance accepts national members from EU countries in addition to European level organizations.

Source: Deidre de Burca, Advocacy Coordinator, National Forum of NGOs. See also, their webpage https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org/.

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stakeholders in particular sectors (for example, through specific questions that can be used as prompts to consider relevant dimensions).[136]

The importance of awareness raising in the public is noted in several sectors, for example regarding the potential benefits of integrated transport[137] and sustainable consumption and production.[138] Studies on the latter highlight the need for governments to fill information gaps to influence consumption and production patterns through, *inter alia*, publicly available databanks, public information campaigns, education, label information, and disclosure of information by producers on their overall social and environmental values and practices.[139]

The need for adequate financial support for participation has also been highlighted (for example, in processes related to clean energy and integrated transport).[140] Although this is rarely a focus in the literature, there are examples of instances of resources being provided to support stakeholder engagement, such as Singapore's plan to finance NGOs' engagement in networking, promoting cooperation and encouraging exchange of ideas on sustainable lifestyles.[141]

Importantly, political factors play a key role in determining the existence of engagement mechanisms, the way they are designed and allowed to function, and their ultimate impacts on policy. Engagement mechanisms that are assessed as successful by some criteria (e.g. because they genuinely impact decision-making) may threaten interests in place and be vulnerable to political changes. More generally, the public administration literature underlines that engagement is a strategic policy tool that governments can use to influence the outcomes of political processes.[142]

Evidence in terms of how MSPs can contribute to policy integration is scarce, and the topic does not seem to have been systematically studied in the academic literature. However, specific examples suggest that MSPs can be at odds with integration and coherence at the national level. It has been highlighted that vertical partnerships in health could in some cases encourage fragmentation and undermine efforts to strengthen national health systems.[143]

Some MSPs have been criticised for reinforcing a siloed, sectoral or 'projectised' approach to development problems and solutions, which might undermine the potential for addressing the drivers of systemic change and scaling up impact through a more integrated programmatic approach.[144]

Fragmentation and limited coordination of development partners' interventions and associated instruments is a well-known constraint to integration, as it promotes siloed approaches.[145] Country-level support from development partners is often scattered across multiple actors and initiatives. It is often challenging to align and coordinate efforts from development partner agencies. Also, actors that receive support may respond to development partners' specific interests and priorities, which may in turn create incentives for fragmentation. To promote integrated approaches, development partners could commit to at least not exacerbate the barriers for integration and improve coordination with other development partners in supporting stakeholder engagement across sectors and government levels. Also, better coordination within each development partner agency between programs that support non-state actors (e.g., civil society) and those that support specific sectors may also help enhance synergies for SDG implementation. Development partners may also facilitate dialogue among different non-state actors and between them and governments at all levels to contribute to create the enabling conditions for more integrated approaches.[146]

It seems clear that "more engagement" does not automatically result in more integration. In fact, strengthened engagement is compatible with maintained fragmentation, duplication and work in silos, inasmuch as institutions and processes in each sector or issue areas develop a constituency of non-State actors who pursue narrow interests. Low capacity of non-state actors may also limit the impact of stakeholder mobilisation and engagement.[147] Also, as engagement mechanisms often fail to engage vulnerable or marginalised groups, they can contribute to further marginalisation. Moreover, stakeholder initiatives such as oversight efforts by CSOs in specific sectors (e.g., health, education) often take place as purely local

> ## Box 4.5. Vertical integration of participatory approaches: Textbook Count in the Philippines
>
> Textbook Count was a collaborative program undertaken by the Philippines' Department of Education and Government Watch (G-Watch) between 2003 and 2007. The primary objective of the initiative was to ensure that public school students were provided with the adequate amount of quality textbooks. Textbook Count helped to reduce the unit price of textbooks from between 80 and 120 Philippine Pesos (PHP) in 1999 to between 30 and 45 PHP in 2006, shortened the average textbook procurement cycle by half, and improved the Department of Education's trust rating.
>
> The success of the initiative in terms of effective oversight of the delivery of books (reducing corruption and enhancing efficiency) can be explained by the vertical integration of coordinated actions between national CSOs, reformists in government and broad-based civic organisations. CSOs monitored each link in the supply chain – including contracting, the quality of production of the textbooks, and the multiple levels of the Department of Education's book distribution process. Citizen monitors covered 70-80% of the textbook delivery points in the country. The private sector was engaged to ensure the distribution of books. Joint government-civil society problem solving sessions resolved issues identified.
>
> Textbook Count helped support government officials who favored enhanced participation, transparency, and accountability. Since the programme's weakest link was at the provincial level, while the strongest monitoring capacity was at the local and national levels, the intermediary level was a critical place where coordinated efforts between different actors were needed. Finally, the programme exemplified the importance of understanding the complexity of multi-level and multi-faceted actions, the engagement of different actors, and the scope and limitations in terms of making gains in governance-related processes sustainable.
>
> *Source*: Aceron J 2016, "Mobilising citizens for transparency and accountability in education through Textbook Count," Ateneo School of Government and Accountability Research Center. Available from: https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/12380/MAVC_CStudy_Philpp_Education_FivePager_FINAL2.03.pdf

and disarticulated initiatives which may not be sufficient to gain leverage vis-à-vis the state to promote more integrated approaches to sustainable development.[148]

In contrast, some examples of stakeholder engagement show the potential of more integrated approaches across levels of decision-making (from the local level to district, provincial, national and transnational arenas) that do not involve the adoption of centralised, top-down forms and mechanisms of engagement by the national government. Examples like Textbook Count and the reproductive health law in the Philippines (see Box 4.5), the right to food campaign in India, and the Community Food Councils and the maternal mortality observatory in Mexico illustrate the impact of bottom-up participatory approaches that work across levels of decision making, through different patterns of engagement with the state, cutting across the state-society divide and involving soft forms of coordinated action to address specific development problems or seeking broad policy change.

4.5. Conclusion

Advancing and achieving the ambitious goals of the Agenda 2030 requires the engagement of all groups of society at all levels. The contribution of multiple stakeholders is key

to produce the complex and reinforcing changes promoted by the SDGs, in their integrated and interdependent nature. Stakeholder engagement has the potential to make an important contribution to policy integration in SDG implementation. Engagement can provide policymakers with better information from the ground, help better define priorities and needs, and create ownership of policy solutions. This is particularly the case when addressing complex problems that require cross-sectoral work and changes in behavior, as is the case with the SDGs.

There is an extreme variety of engagement mechanisms around sustainable development across countries, both at the systemic level in the overall course of SDG implementation and in relation to sector issues (e.g., water management). While evidence of direct impact of engagement on development outcomes is starting to emerge, there does not seem to be much evidence yet of the impact of engagement on integration. Theoretical arguments point to both benefits and drawbacks of engagement in this regard, but it is clear that the balance of costs and benefits can be highly idiosyncratic, both across countries and sectors.

In spite of this scarcity of information, impacts can in part be inferred from challenges that engagement mechanisms face. It seems clear that "more engagement" does not automatically result in more integration; for example, strengthened engagement in sectoral mechanisms can

reinforce existing silos and entrench fragmentation. By the same token, to the extent that successful integration relies on balanced consideration of perspectives of multiple actors, engagement processes that fail to address power and resource imbalances among participants may actually lead to policies that give privilege to narrow interests, with negative impacts on politically weaker stakeholders or sectors, the precise outcome that integration efforts seek to avoid.

At the same time, there are examples of countries moving towards more integrated forms of engagement – including across sectors and levels of governments. These exemplify the potential for engagement and horizontal and vertical integration to be mutually reinforcing.

From the perspective of this report, special attention should be paid to ensuring that the selection of stakeholders takes into account their capability to support objectives in terms of policy integration around specific SDGs.[149] Further, government institutions can specifically support the involvement of actors that represent and bring the perspective of under-served constituencies.[150]

The capacity of actors to engage strategically either at the systemic level (e.g., national SDG coordination institutions) or in specific SDG sectors is also critical to advance integrated

approaches. Governments could help strengthen the capacity of stakeholders that may contribute to integration and encourage them to work together and to form alliances or partnerships, so that more actors can be engaged, their knowledge and information pooled together and their actions aligned. As more actors engage, it is important to ensure that interactions across alliances and partnerships do not exacerbate the complexity of the problems that engagement sought to address in the first place.[151]

More research would be necessary to fully understand how engagement contributes to integration. Ideally, this research should be cross-sectoral and comparative in nature, and based on clear benchmarks for measuring outcomes in terms of integration. It could explore some of the critical dimensions that would help translate engagement into integrated approaches for SDG implementation, such as: which actors are being engaged; what are the appropriate mechanisms (both formal and informal) to engage particular actors that may contribute to integration in relation to specific issues and contexts; the value (e.g., information sharing, coordination) that different actors bring on different SDG issues and related programmes; and the alignment of engagement strategies with the expected outcomes in terms of integration, among other issues.

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