Understanding different stakeholders

Roles and contributions of the different stakeholders

The nature of the ‘core business’ of each type of stakeholder leads to quite different priorities, values and attributes. In addition to these general attributes, each stakeholder brings different resources, competencies, and aspirations that can potentially – through successful partnering – be brought together around a common vision.

We provide below a general description of each of the main types of stakeholder: their societal role, what they might potentially bring to the table, how they are organised, some considerations when working with them as partners, and how to connect with them.

Since no two countries are exactly alike, this can only be indicative and, as with much of the information in this guide, you will need to adapt to your own context.

To learn more about how a particular country context - including the nature of the relationship between stakeholders - impacts on partnering go to Annex 1, page 74.
### GOVERNMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role and interests</th>
<th>Resources brought to the table</th>
<th>Organisation*</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure democratic representation of the people</td>
<td>Democratic legitimacy</td>
<td>At the top, an elected national government, led by a prime minister or president, and with a cabinet made up of ministers heading departments (ministries) across every area of government responsibility.</td>
<td>In most countries, if you don't engage governments and secure their buy-in it will be difficult create a scaleable partnership. Their “sanction” or implicit endorsement is required since ultimately they are responsible for all their citizens. When a small level partnership or pilot works well and government embraces it, the partnership can be massively scaled in short amount of time - and therefore generate huge impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver national defence</td>
<td>Convening ability</td>
<td>Depending on the size of the country, a similar structure, with separately elected officials, may be repeated at geographic levels (e.g. State and County) or within major cities.</td>
<td>Governments are generally risk averse and necessarily have bureaucracy and regulation in place which might stifle (or even prevent) innovation or slow down decision-making and implementation. The role of high-level champions can make a major difference in helping to drive non-traditional approaches (for example, by engaging directly with Mayors at city level).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain law and order</td>
<td>Mandate for long term development planning</td>
<td>Depending on the level of decentralization there will be different levels of autonomy and responsibility for collecting and spending budget at each geographic level.</td>
<td>Governments generally have a macro outlook on the country, and will have trouble dealing with “niche” social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a stable, regulated environment for trade</td>
<td>Public budget / spending</td>
<td>Each department is staffed by civil servants, with the top layer or layers usually being political appointees.</td>
<td>The public sector ability to develop and commit to partnerships is strongly affected by both political and public spending cycles. It is therefore important to be aware of, and sensitive to, such cycles and, wherever possible, use them to best effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect taxes</td>
<td>Public services delivery infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Much of the public sector around the world has limited resources, often with over-committed capacity, making it challenging for the government both to engage and, in some cases, to fully deliver the resources it might commit to a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide public services</td>
<td>National ‘hard’ infrastructure (roads, rail, water, power etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Also, depending on the country, political circumstances and levels of concentration of power may all cause significant challenges to partnership development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide public infrastructure</td>
<td>Policy, taxation and regulatory framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education / skills and capacity building (e.g. agricultural extension services)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to operate at scale and integrate approaches to deliver sustainably</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*How to connect*

Connecting to the right people in government can be tricky. As with all stakeholders, the best approach is usually through an existing contact. Alternatively, a formal approach / letter from the highest person in your organisation to someone at the appropriate level, should hopefully cascade down to someone willing to meet who may then take it further up.

*Please note that for the purposes of this categorisation we consider ‘donors’ separately, even though many significant donors are of course government agencies.*
Role and interests

- Promotion of rights, equity, social and environmental development
- Providing support and services for those in need and/or excluded from mainstream of society
- Acting as guardians of the public good including holding government to account and ensuring the proper representation and upholding of rights of the under-privileged

Resources brought to the table

- (Particularly international NGOs): Access to international knowledge and resources
- Technical knowledge / delivery capacity
- Deep knowledge of, and reach and access to, communities and people
- Legitimacy / social capital / influence (can be particularly strong in faith-based organisations)
- Ability to organise and engage people (e.g. around advocacy)

Organisation

Civil society operates at multiple levels, including local Community-Based Organisations, tribes, faith-based organisations, local and national NGOs, and international NGOs (INGOs) operating in-country. The catch-all term also includes a huge variety of types of organisation which represent or bring together women, youth, disabled, elderly, professional associations, trades unions and more. Most civil society is self-organised, with different levels of formalisation, different levels of capacity/resources, and with funding (where required) from a variety of means: philanthropy, member contributions, government or donor grants.

INGOs are usually a coalition or federation of fundraising/programming entities in traditional donor countries and country-level entities focused on implementation. The different entities are generally semi-autonomous, with an international entity (e.g. World Vision International or Oxfam International) to help co-ordinate action across the network. INGOs will usually be supported by a mix of grant funding (given by donors to deliver specific programmes) and ‘non-dedicated’ funding (e.g. from public donations) which they can assign as they wish.

There is a strong trend towards INGOs working with or through local and national NGOs, rather than providing direct implementation themselves.

Considerations

The strength of civil society – including the capacity to organise, mobilise and implement – is highly country-specific. In some cases the most vulnerable or affected populations are not really part of “civil society”.

In certain contexts, there may be very limited numbers of community-based organisations (CBOs) and NGOs, and those that are there may lack sufficient delivery capacity or operate in ways that make it difficult to fulfil the accountability requirements of donors (for example, non-compliant financial systems). This may mean that in order to partner it may be necessary to build the capacity of such organisations, including potentially providing funding early on to support their inclusion in partnership development.

NGOs in general have very little non-dedicated funding. This means that to partner with an NGO will likely mean aligning with an existing funded programme or providing funding to that NGO to allow it to bring its resources to the table in a new partnership.

How to connect

NGOs will usually be relatively accessible via contact information that can be found on their websites. However, personal introductions to specific contacts are usually the most effective. For a large or complex organisation, it is helpful to engage a staff person to help to navigate the internal system.

Other forms of civil society – community groups, tribes, faith groups, trades union – will range greatly in terms of public accessibility, anywhere from having a website with easy contact information, to needing to make a personal visit in order to find the right person.
## BUSINESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>To produce and distribute goods and services (directly, or as part of a value chain) to satisfy a public need or demand; To make a financial profit for investors / owners.</td>
<td>• A market-based / value creation approach  • Brand power  • Marketing, advertising and communications expertise  • Direct access to, and influence with, customer base and employees  • The products and services they deliver, including financial products such as micro-lending  • Technical innovation / efficiency / management  • Direct influence within its value chains, including purchasing decisions  • Infrastructure / logistics  • Financial and in-kind contributions  • (Generally) an appetite for risk  • A ‘solutions’ mindset and a focus on results  • Access to customers, employees, suppliers, peer companies, investors, training providers</td>
<td>Business is made up informal (unregistered, not paying tax, typically individuals or microenterprises market trading or very small scale production) and formal (registered) business. Some economies have high levels of informal business, some of which may be organised locally, for example, through market trader associations or farmers cooperatives. Formal business includes every size of company from registered micro-enterprises up to multinational companies. Business may be organised through business councils (e.g. UN Global Compact local network, World Business Council for Sustainable Development), industry associations or chambers of commerce which advocate for their interests with government, as well as helping to improve industry standards or tackle issues affecting the industry.</td>
<td>As described above in greater detail, the private sector brings far more, and potentially far more important, resources than money. Given its significant footprint on people (employees, customers), on the environment, on society (including through taxes), the way business operates can have a significant impact on sustainable development. Further, the greatest value of engagement can be through unleashing the power of business’s resources (its technical innovation, reach and brand value) along sides its investment and value creation approach – finding commercially viable solutions that are scalable, products and services that are affordable, value chains that are sustainable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to connect

In general, because they are small and less organised, it is usually challenging to engage with informal business, except where there are strong associations or membership bodies to go through. Larger national and multi-national companies will usually have sustainability, corporate social responsibility or public affairs units that can be a useful first port of call. The business organisations can be an invaluable resource for making connections into companies, as well as to engage as partners themselves potentially. Some organisations, such as the UN Global Compact local networks, are specifically designed to help make connections with companies and with the UN system.
## Role and interests
- To support the government in building and strengthening national capacities and delivering the national development agenda:
  - Promoting sustainable development
  - Delivering humanitarian aid
  - Upholding human rights
  - Upholding international law and maintaining peace and security

## Resources brought to the table
- Legitimacy and independence;
- Extensive technical support, knowledge and capacity
- Political connections and influence
- Global network and access to knowledge and solutions from around the world
- Norms and standards-setting
- Convening power
- (In certain cases): funding

## Organisation
The UN works through a range (10 to 20 in any one country) of different specialised agencies and programmes (e.g. UNICEF, World Food Programme) to build capacity and deliver tangible results in support of the national development agenda. The work of the UN is coordinated by the UN Country Team (UNCT), led by the UN Resident Coordinator, the designated representative of the UN Secretary General in the country. While each UN entity has its own set of activities, programmes and relationships with ministries, donors and other stakeholders, the UNCT aims to ensure the UN works as a team, formulating common positions on strategic issues, ensuring coherence in action and advocacy. In each country the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or ‘cooperation framework’ aims to align with a country’s development plan and brings together all the UN activities into one overarching document. It is signed by the government and the UN agency heads.

In most countries, achieving this more cohesive approach is still a work in progress, although the UN is investing significantly in this area, including through efforts to ensure each UNCT has a partnership specialist on staff.

## Considerations
At country level, there are often significant overlaps in mandate and even competition across UN entities. This has in the past made it challenging to identify the best UN entity to engage with.

It is important to appreciate that the UN is limited in the partnerships it is able to engage in: not only must the partnership contribute to the country’s development plans, the UN has rules about the organisations, particularly companies, it can engage with. The UN system itself has in general very little unallocated funding or resources it can put towards new programmes and may need funding – either through donors or from other partners – in order to engage fully.

## How to connect
It has traditionally been quite challenging to find the right entry point into the UN system. Having a UN insider who can assist with navigating the system and making connections can be extremely helpful.

The UN Resident Coordinator Office in country should be able to help make the connections into the right entities. Further, if there is a UN Global Compact local network, they may well also be able to make direct connections within the UN system.

* Adapted from: https://mw.one.un.org/un-agencies-and-country-team/
## Foundations

<table>
<thead>
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</table>
| • Providing funding and/or technical assistance and/or running programmes using its own sources of funding to deliver the foundation’s goals. | • Funding (often with fewer restrictions attached than other traditional funding sources)  
• Networks  
• (Potentially) technical assistance  
• (Potentially) linkages to ‘parent’ organisation (company, family) | Foundations in general are of two types: corporate foundations (such as the Mastercard Foundation, Shell Foundation), philanthropic or family foundations (such as Gates Foundation). They may be international, national or sub-national, depending on the interests of the founder(s) and the resources they have at their disposal.  
Corporate foundations receive their money from companies. The extent to which the foundation is connected with the business can range widely from one foundation to another. For instance, a foundation associated with a health company may invest or even co-invest with the company on health issues in countries that are markets for the company. Other corporate foundations may invest in the communities in which the company operates in ways unrelated to the latter’s core business.  
Philanthropic foundations usually receive their money from an endowment (cash or company shares) often set up by a wealthy family. Such foundations are completely free to spend their money how they like, often related to the interests of the original founder or current generation, if a family fund. | In general, as they are neither charities funded by individuals, nor are they public funds, foundations have considerable latitude over how they spend their funds. This means they may be willing to invest in quite innovative and risky approaches. |

| How to connect | Some foundations have open calls for proposals within their areas of interest. Others may invite you to apply, based on an existing relationship.  
Outside of open calls for proposals, it may be quite challenging to find the right people with the right interests and, most vitally, with the time to properly consider the opportunities. | |

*Note: while the term ‘foundation’ is sometimes used for an implementing NGO that accepts money from others, here we are explicitly meaning organisations which have their own sources of funding.*
## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (DONORS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing funding to a country: directly to government; through financing (usually) NGO or UN-delivered programmes; or through co-investments with the private sector.</td>
<td>(Catalytic) funding Political connections and influence Technical assistance Convening and facilitation (due to networks with government, civil society and private sector), especially in early stages of partnership formation</td>
<td>There are two types of donor: <strong>Bi-lateral donors</strong>: individual governments providing grants directly to recipient governments or funding development programmes (with funding going mainly through NGOs and the UN system) <strong>Multi-lateral donors</strong>: Institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank, that combine resources from multiple donor governments (and, more rarely, foundations) to fund programmes or provide loans or other assistance to government. (Note: the UN is described separately above.) Bi-lateral donors may run their programmes through their foreign ministry or through a specific international development ministry, and in some cases also through their environment ministries. They each have focus countries on which they concentrate their activities. Depending on the country, they may work through their embassies, through their own local offices (e.g. USAID, DFID) or through an implementing agency (e.g. Germany working through GIZ). While the overall focus of funding might be set at global level (e.g. a commitment to greater spending on climate change), for most donors, spending decisions are usually devolved to country level. However, many donors do have global programmes with specific calls for proposals that would then be applied to the country level.</td>
<td>Most bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors have signed up to ‘aid effectiveness’ principles which include both a commitment to country ownership and to coordination among themselves. Each donor develops (usually) annual plans with each partner country, setting out agreed areas of cooperation towards delivering the country development plan. These plans will usually define the envelope of the focus of activities they are able to fund. Within funded projects implemented by NGOs or consulting firms, donors sometimes set up grant or innovation funds that can be applied to facilitate partnerships. Different donors will have quite different levels of flexibility in their funding. Some can only fund through specific modalities defined globally. Others may have higher appetites for risk and innovation, particularly when it comes to smaller grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to connect

Bi-lateral donors at country level may usually be contacted through their embassies or through their implementing agencies. An introduction from the home country can be helpful. Multilateral donors may be contacted through their country or regional offices. In both cases, it is important to be aware of existing funding modalities, particularly where larger sums of money are desired.
There are multiple other stakeholders that may potentially play significant roles in partnerships, including:

**Academia** has a number of potentially important roles in multi-stakeholder partnerships:
- Playing a trusted convening role early on and/or hosting the partnership or providing the secretariat; *
- Undertaking context analysis, providing key information and essential data to the partnership;
- Undertaking monitoring and evaluation;
- Drawing out learning and developing partnership case studies;
- Empowering citizens who understand SDGs;
- Teaching to ensure skills for the new economy, etc
- Teaching (as well as research), including teacher training
- A breeding ground for innovation / leadership
- Evidence-based policy advice for joint advocacy
- Open data collection and sharing
- Strong regional and global networks

**The media** – newspapers, TV companies, social media, ‘influencers’ – bring a unique set of resources that can be particularly helpful for advocacy and/or behavioural change:
- Direct and (depending on country) trusted access to large numbers of viewers and listeners;
- Strong understanding of their ‘customers’ and ability to tell a story in the most engaging way;
- Marketing and promotion skills.

**Tribes** play a significant role in many societies, which can range anywhere between that of a community organisation and a local government. In addition to the resources mentioned under ‘civil society’ above, tribal leaders may have decision-making authority, and the ability to set local laws, that would go well beyond influence over their members. For example, in Andavadoaka, on the South West coast of Madagascar, in order to conserve the fish stock, it was essential to establish a ‘no-take zone’. The Vezo tribe leaders, engaged as partners in a major transformational programme, decreed a tribal law which regulated fishing in the no-take zone.

**Parliamentarians** – members of parliament may carry significant influence within their constituencies, and may play an important role as champions of partnerships. Opposition leaders – as potential future heads of government – can be hugely important to engage in partnerships which will need political support beyond the terms of an individual government, to ensure that a partnership is maintained even if there is a change of government.

**Trades union**, in addition to the resources brought as a civil society organisation (including representation of its members), it may bring a range of unique resources including, in some cases, special consultative status with businesses and with government, as well as a dual mandate to simultaneously ensure businesses are successful and that workers benefit fairly from business success. In other words, they are, in the main, already set up to try to deliver simultaneous business-societal win-wins.

* An overview of the role of higher education in SDG partnerships is available at the following link: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21822HESI_Global_Event_2018_Summary.pdf
DEFINING TERMS, UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE

The SDG Partnership Guidebook

Civil Society
- (Particularly international NGOs): Access to international knowledge and resources;
- Technical knowledge/delivery capacity;
- Deep knowledge of, and reach and access to, communities and people;
- Legitimacy/social capital/influence (can be particularly strong in faith-based organisations);
- Ability to organise and engage people (e.g. around advocacy).

United Nations
- Legitimacy and independence;
- Extensive technical support, knowledge and capacity;
- Political connections and influence;
- Global network and access to knowledge and solutions from around the world;
- Norms and standards-setting;
- Convening power.

Business
- A market-based/value creation approach;
- Brand, marketing, and communication expertise;
- Direct access to, and influence with, customer base and employees;
- The products and services they deliver, including financial products such as micro-lending;
- Technical innovation/efficiency-management.

Foundations
- Funding for programmes (often with fewer restrictions than other traditional funding sources);
- Capacity building;
- Technical assistance;
- Connecting and convening, power;
- Brand and influence.

Government
- For most governments:
  - Capacity and power;
  - Lead, organize, and mobilize;
  - Strategic thinking and planning;
  - Strategic/strategic thinking.

Civil Society
- Regional assistance:
- Policy, legislation, and regulation;
- Innovation/creation.

Development
- Loans/loans.

MODULE 5
UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS