

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

Special report on Voluntary Commitments and
Partnerships for Sustainable Development



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Sustainable Development in Action

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Introduction

Partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development are multi-stakeholder initiatives voluntarily undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and others stakeholders to contribute to the implementation of inter-governmentally agreed development goals and commitments, as included in Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Declaration, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) entitled “The Future We Want”, and the upcoming post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

In a development era with a mix of state and non-state actors as essential partners in the implementation of sustainable development, the importance of engagement at all levels has been repeatedly emphasized at various international conferences and their follow up processes.

The Rio+20 Conference demonstrated enhanced inclusiveness in its deliberations. With the presence of hundreds of thousands of participants from governments, the United Nations System, business, civil society groups, universities, as well those virtually following from afar, the Conference further strengthened the role of non-state actors in shaping the international agenda for a sustainable future. It created unprecedented momentum in parallel to the political process in witnessing the announcements of over 700 concrete multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments for the implementation of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The intergovernmental process duly acknowledged the complementary nature of these voluntary initiatives to the political outcome. The Secretary-General was invited, through paragraph 283 of the outcome document the *Future We Want*, to establish and maintain a comprehensive registry of voluntary initiatives - which were to be periodically updated, fully transparent and accessible to the public.

The United Nations Secretariat following its designated mandate launched the *SD in Action Registry* shortly after Rio+20. The registry, which contains detailed descriptions of all registered voluntary initiatives, also facilitates access to other registries and initiatives that promote sustainable development - or “Action Networks” as they are referred to - that have catalyzed voluntary commitments around specific themes. These include the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (SE4All), United Nations Global Compact, Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), the Action Network on Sustainable Transport, and the action network on Partnerships for Small Island Developing States, which has emerged in the lead up to the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Apia, Samoa later this year (September 2014).

In an effort to provide updated information to all stakeholders, the Rio+20 Secretariat, through the Division for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), prepared a progress report on voluntary commitments and partnerships for sustainable development in collaboration with the Action Network partners on the one-year anniversary of Rio+20, in July 2013.

The present document is the second edition of that report, its launch coinciding with the second meeting of the *High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development*, which is the designated forum at the United Nations for monitoring progress on sustainable development and follow-up on commitments made at Rio+20. The HLPF will also be the home for follow-up on progress of the post 2015 development agenda, including monitoring of the sustainable development goals, set to guide the international community at the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

It's been two years since Rio+20 and the announcement of over 700 voluntary commitments and partnerships for sustainable development. What has happened since then? Are these voluntary initiatives on track in delivering as they set out to do? How can progress best be measured? And who has the authority to do so?

This 2014 edition of the annual report on voluntary commitments and partnerships for sustainable development takes a look at how various "Action Networks" monitor progress of their stakeholder's commitments, and how progress is enforced when deliverables are off track. The report will also look at options for an enhanced effective accountability and monitoring framework of voluntary initiatives in the post 2015 development era.

Sustainable Development Action Networks and other initiatives

Sustainable Development Action Networks - referring to their focus on action and implementation - are thematically driven initiatives that aim at catalyzing new commitments within a certain thematic area. Action networks have proven to be very useful in focusing efforts within the priority area and to prompt results.

Some of the action networks covered in this report are well matured in terms of governance structure, available human resources, funding structures, networking opportunities; others are more informational in nature and have the opportunity to be further strengthened in welcoming key organizational drivers for pushing its agenda forward.

Small Island Developing States – genuine and durable partnerships

2014 is a big year for Small Island Developing States.

The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States – the SIDS Conference – will be held in Apia, Samoa (1-4 September 2014).

2014 is also the *International Year of Small Island Developing States*, which has the objective of highlighting economic, social and cultural contributions from this group of countries - and at the same time raising awareness of the SIDS Conference.

The SIDS Conference, which has the overarching theme of “*sustainable development of small island developing states through genuine and durable partnerships*”, will include - as part of the official programme and outcome of the Conference – six multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues (Partnership Dialogues), each of which will be devoted to a cluster of key priorities for SIDS, and how partnerships can address those priorities. The Partnership Dialogues will include reviews of existing successful partnerships, and act as a launch pad for new and innovative partnerships that can advance the sustainable development of Small Island developing States.

Member States agreed have agreed that a “SIDS SMART” criteria for selecting partnerships for the Partnerships Dialogues should be followed, which draws from the original SMART criteria as outlined in the first edition of this report.

The SIDS SMART criteria:

- **S**IDS-SPECIFIC
- **M**EASURABLE & MONITORABLE
- **A**CHIEVABLE & ACCOUNTABLE
- **R**ESOURCE-BASED & RESULTS FOCUED, with
- **T**IMELINES for implementation & **T**RANSPARENCY by ALL PARTIES

A web-based SIDS Partnerships Platform has been developed by the Conference Secretariat, and is available at www.sids2014.org/partnerships. It is devoted to recognizing of existing, and for the announcement of new, innovative and SIDS specific partnerships.

The impact-oriented “Action Networks” are proven to be extremely effective in raising awareness, mobilizing resources, and to catalyze actions and commitments within their respective areas of focus.

Similarly, a multi-stakeholder driven SIDS partnership framework – a *SIDS Action Network* - could be useful in raising awareness within the international community on issues related to the sustainable development challenges of SIDS, and to help drive new, and monitor progress on existing, multi-stakeholder partnerships that work towards advancing sustainable development of Small Island developing states.

An SIDS Action Network could consider including:

- **Steering Committee** - a multi-stakeholder steering committee with the objective to provide broad guidance to the network and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Members could include both SIDS member states and non-SIDS member states in order to keep the political will and visibility at the top.
- **Accountability Framework** - to enable transparent recognition and tracking of progress of multi-stakeholder SIDS partnerships and its commitments, and to facilitate feedback and capacity building for all involved partners in implementation, a accountability framework to ensure progress and accountability would be crucial to include.
- **SIDS Partnerships and Partner Platform** - dedicated web-based platform of registered partnerships to ensure transparency of deliverables, as well a network of registered partners for the promotion and identification of innovative ideas and dissemination of best practices, and opportunities for new partnerships. The platform should allow for reporting back on progress as part of the accountability framework.

Genuine and durable partnerships are based upon mutual trust, equality, respect, accountability and transparency. Partnerships in all forms for SIDS need to be enhanced and strengthened to ensure a meaningful engagement of all stakeholders in achieving sustainable development for SIDS.

A *SIDS Action Network* could make sure that SIDS remain high on the political agenda by having participating partners take part in relevant sessions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which has the mandate from Rio+20 to follow-up and review progress in implementing sustainable development commitments, including follow-up on the outcome of the SIDS Conference.

As the post 2015 development agenda is shaping up with a set of sustainable development goals at its core, it is vital that the objectives of a potential emerging SIDS Action Network or framework, and subsequently the deliverables of its multi-stakeholder partnerships, are aligned with relevant sustainable development goals and targets to ensure the full support of the international community, as well for the purpose of monitoring progress and subsequent learning.

2014 has the potential of creating a well-needed push for multi-stakeholder partnerships that advance the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States. The outcome of the SIDS Conference in Samoa in September will provide further guidance and directions.

Every Woman Every Child

The Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health (Global Strategy) was launched by the UN Secretary-General at the UN Leader's Summit for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2010 (www.who.int/pmnch/activities/jointactionplan/en/). The aim of the Global Strategy is to save and improve the lives of millions of women and children through increasing visibility and political support, mobilizing resources and catalysing a renewed effort to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the health-related MDGs (4,5,6).

The Every Woman Every Child movement, also launched in 2010, puts into action the Global Strategy to mobilize and intensify global action to improve women's and children's health. Since 2010, the movement has mobilized over 300 financial and non-financial commitments from a wide range of constituency groups, including NGOs, the private sector, global partnerships, foundations, academic and research institutions, health care professional organizations, multilateral organizations and governments (www.everywomaneverychild.org).

Partners in the Every Woman Every Child movement work together across three workstreams: implementation of commitments at the country and global level; ensuring accountability for resources and results at the global, regional and national levels; and mobilizing and keeping momentum across world leaders and global stakeholders.

The implementation of commitments at the country-level is also supported by the Health 4 Plus (H4+, which includes UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO and the World Bank), the lead technical partners for the Global Strategy. The H4+ specifically focuses on supporting countries to assess and strengthen their human resources and service delivery for women's and children's health; to tackle the root causes impacting their health, such as gender inequality, limited access to education for girls, and child marriage; and to establish the implementation of commitments.

In the last year, both the implementation of commitments to the Global Strategy and the pace of disbursements have accelerated. Progress on the implementation of commitments has been made in a number of key areas, such as increasing the training of health-workers; increasing the number of health-care facilities; improving commodity availability and supply systems, including previously neglected commodities; and increased policies for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health financing and service delivery.

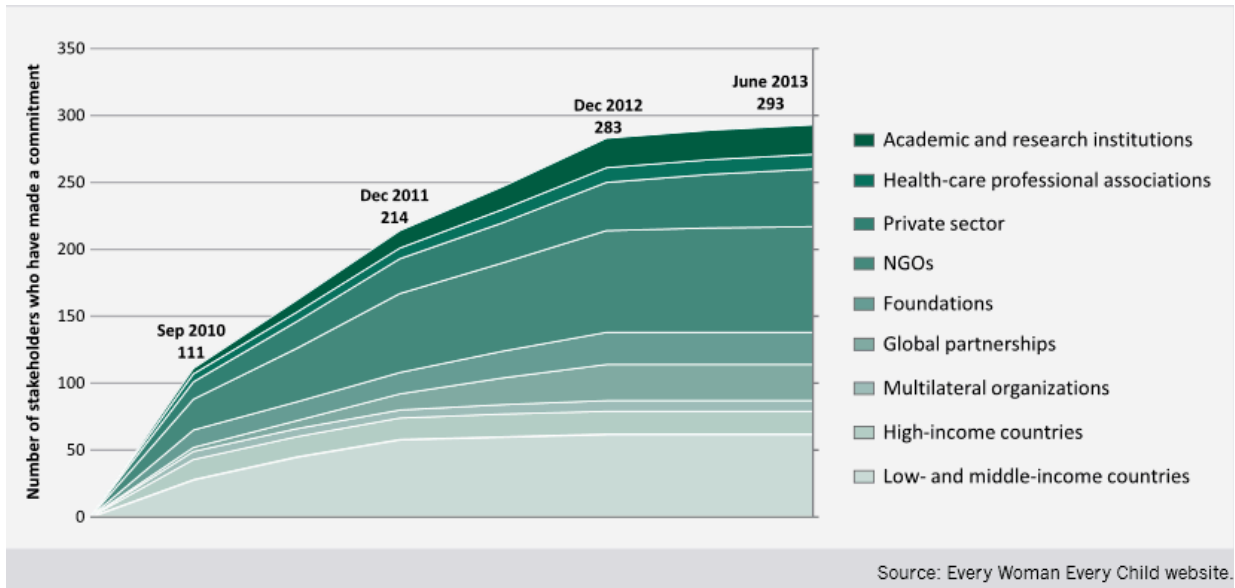
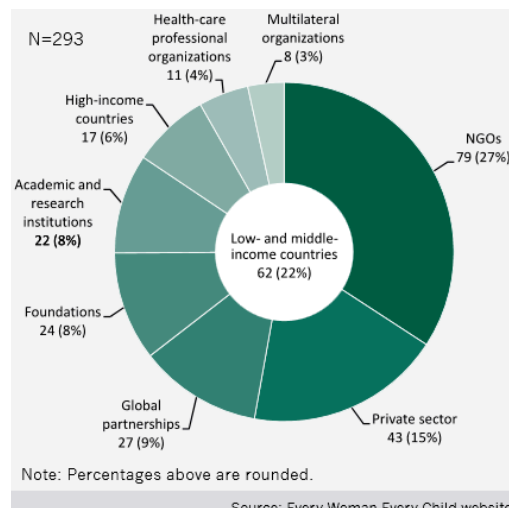


Figure 1: Stakeholders with commitments to the Global Strategy, by constituency, September 2010 - June 2013 (for the most up-to-date list of commitments, please visit www.everywomaneverychild.org).



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