



Asia/Pacific Snapshot: Stakeholder engagement around the SDGs during the COVID-19 pandemic

Executive Summary

This paper presents some key findings from a survey addressing the current and future impacts of COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement and partnerships for implementation, follow up and review of the SDGs. The main report - which assesses data at a global level - is available [here](#) and an Executive Summary highlighting key themes and findings can be found [here](#).

This additional summary presents a snapshot of the data from **78 stakeholders** across Asia and the Pacific who responded to the survey, providing insights from across the region on four key findings in the report. The largest single group of respondents to the survey were from civil society organisations and NGOs but a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, academia, national, regional and local governments, also responded.¹

The survey was commissioned by UN DESA and supported through a grant from the European Commission. This regional summary for the Asia/Pacific region has been developed in partnership between UN DESA and a research team from the UK GCRF Living Deltas Hub, with financial support from the Hub and Newcastle University.²

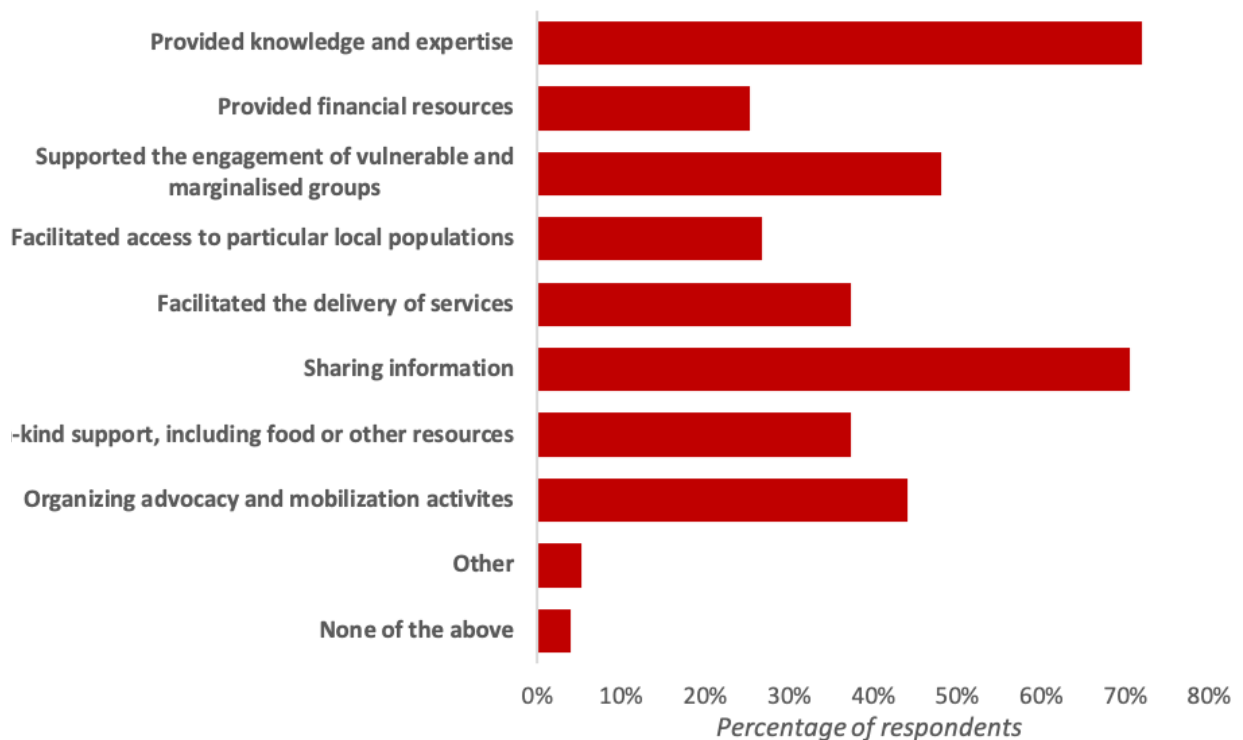
Key Messages

(1) Stakeholders are making important and diverse contributions, and creating new partnerships, to advance the SDGs in the Asia/Pacific region in the context of the pandemic.

As Figure 1 below shows, the most common contributions of stakeholder respondents were in providing knowledge and expertise (72% of 75 respondents) and sharing information (71%), followed by supporting the engagement of vulnerable and marginalised groups (48%). Stakeholder respondents also perceive a key role in organising advocacy and mobilisation activities (44%).

Figure 1

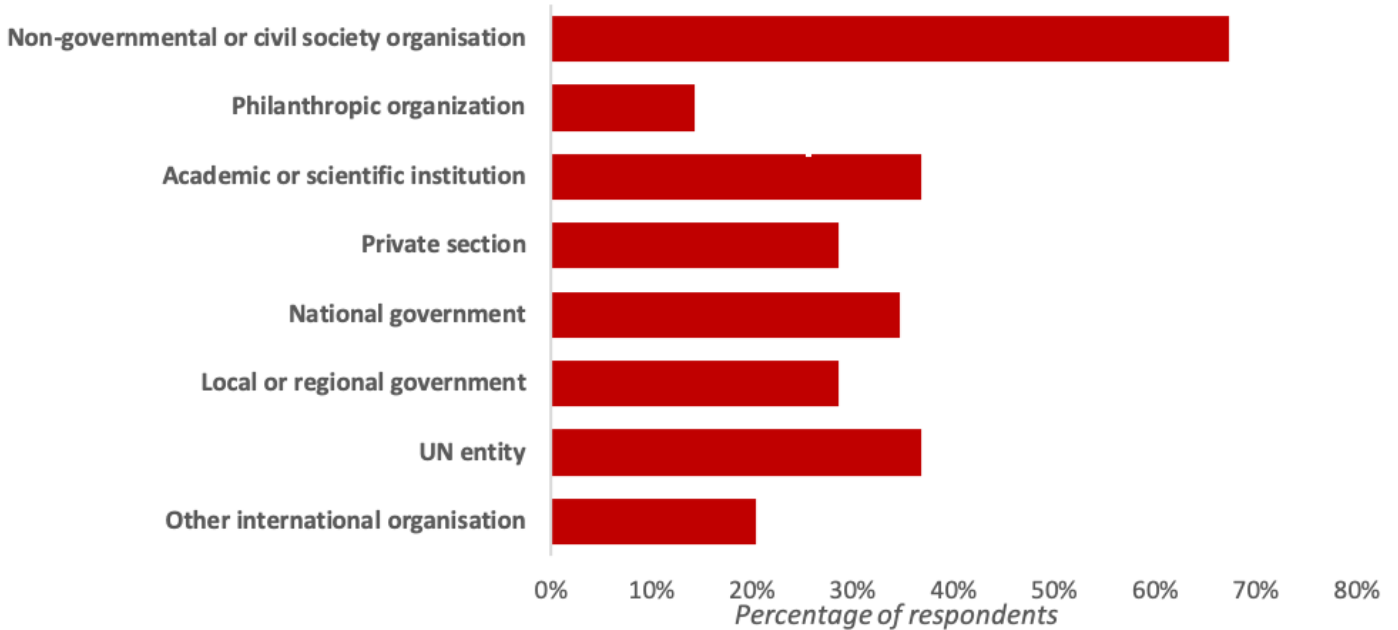
What kinds of contributions has your organization made to implementing the SDGs in the context of the COVID-19 crisis? (n=75)



Stakeholders were also asked who they have partnered with in implementation of the SDGs during the pandemic. Figure 2 demonstrates that NGOs and civil society organisations are identified as prime partners by most respondents (**67% of 49 respondents**) reflecting the same pattern as the global results. The results for other sectors are more even: UN entities (**37%**) academic or scientific institutions (**37%**), Government at both national (**35%**) and local/regional (**28%**) levels, and private sector (**29%**) are all identified as prominent partners.

Figure 2

What kinds of organizations/entities have you formed partnerships with to implement the SDGs in the context of the COVID-19 crisis? (n=49)

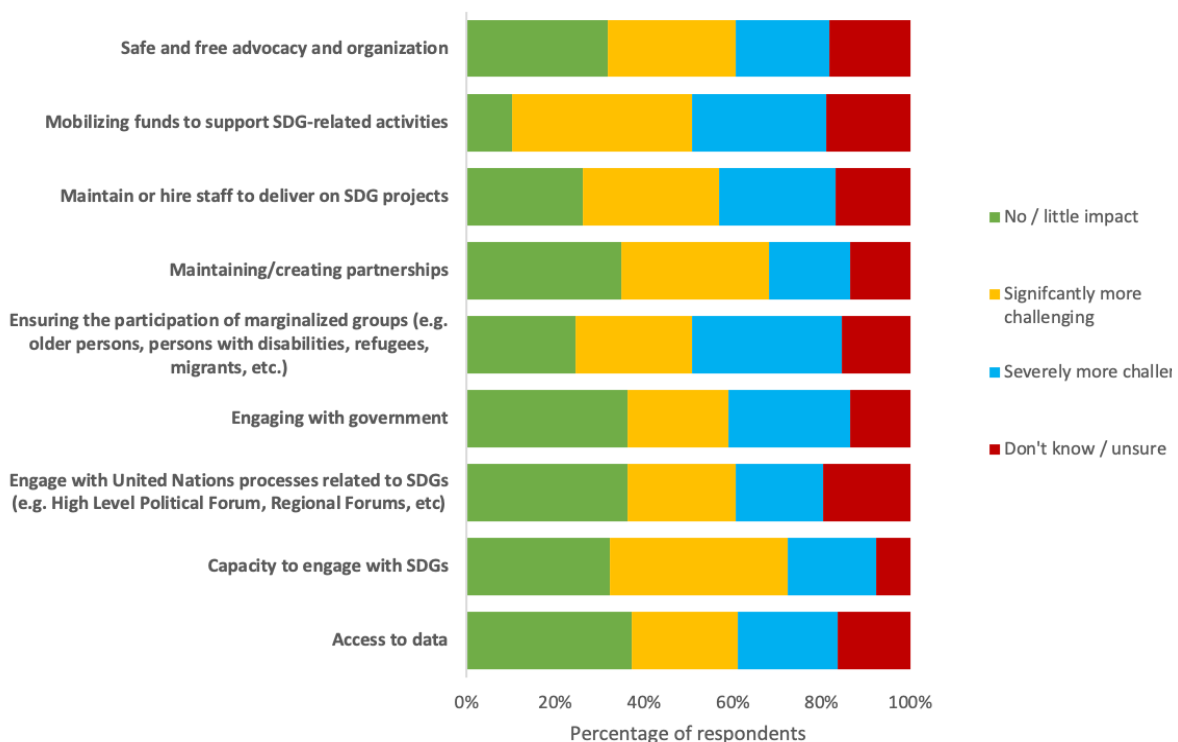


(2) COVID-19 has posed severe challenges for stakeholder organisations in the Asia/Pacific region

Figure 3, below, shows that the most severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have been to ensuring participation of marginalised groups (**identified by 34% of 65 respondents as "severe"**) and mobilising funding (**identified by 30% of respondents**). Funding was identified as a significant or severe challenge by **71% of respondents in total**. **50% of stakeholder respondents** regard the pandemic as posing a "significant" or "severe" challenge to safe space for advocacy and organisation. The impacts on creating and maintaining partnerships are reflected in **51% of respondents** identifying this area as "significantly" or "severely" more challenging.

Overall, most issues were regarded as significant or severe challenges, as indicated by the proportion of yellow and blue in Figure 3 below. Access to data and engagement with the UN were the element identified as least impacted, but all the issues were rated as significantly and severely impacted, in combination, by at least **45% of respondents**. As with the results at the global level, these challenges threaten to undermine the capacity of stakeholders to make the important contributions identified above.

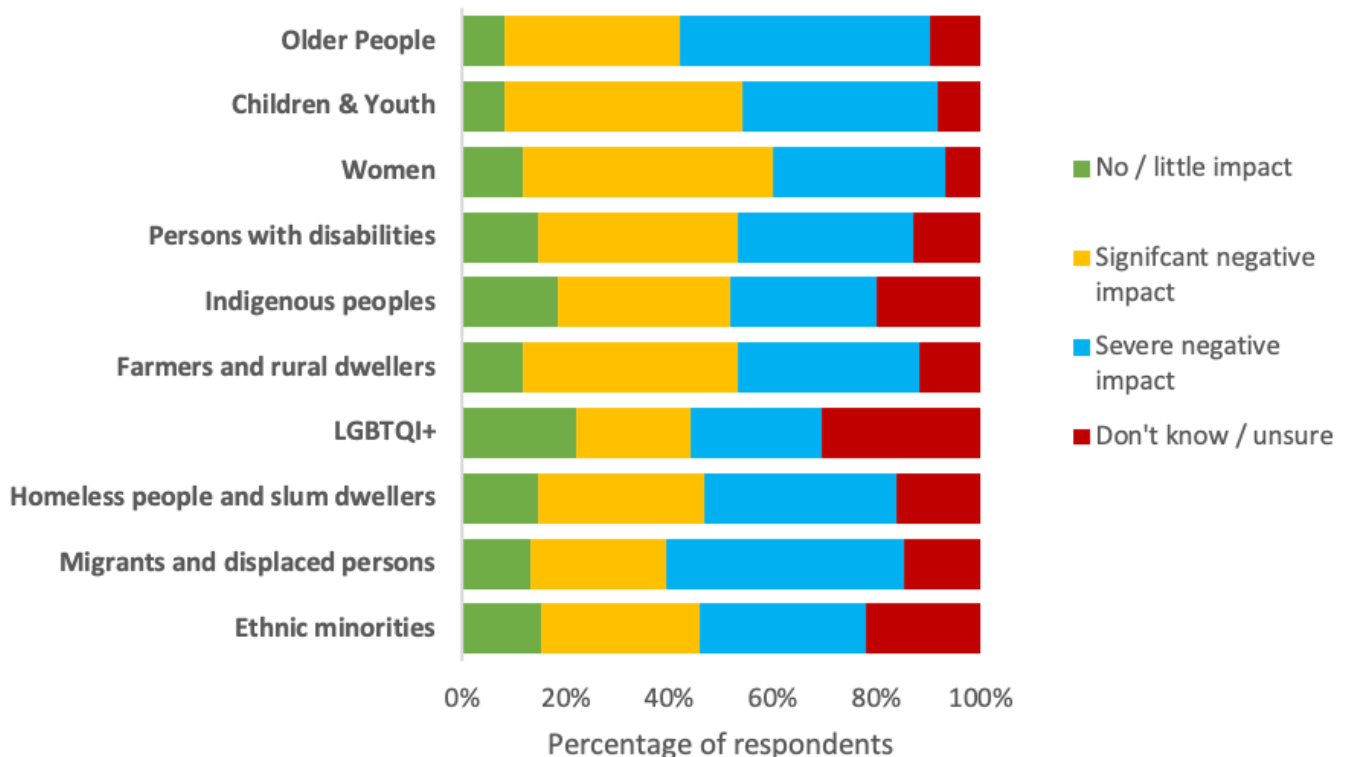
Figure 3 To what extent have the following issues become more challenging for your organization's activities around the SDGs in the context of COVID-19? (n=65-67)



(3) COVID-19 threatens progress on SDGs for vulnerable and marginalised groups across the Asia/Pacific region.

Figure 4 presents stakeholder perceptions of the impact of COVID-19 on progress towards the SDGs for vulnerable and marginalised groups. Stakeholders identified older people (48% of 52 respondents) to be those most 'severely affected', followed by migrants and displaced persons (46%). Other groups such as children & youth (38%), homeless people and slum dwellers (36%), farmers and rural dwellers (35%), women (34%), and persons with disabilities (32%) are also perceived to be 'severely' hit by the health crisis. In general, all marginalised and/or vulnerable groups are perceived as facing 'significant' and 'severe' impacts. For older people, as an example, the percentage of respondents seeing significant and severe impacts combined is 82%; for farmers and rural dwellers, 77%. For each group other than LGBTIQ+, at least 59% of respondents saw a combined 'significant'/'severe' impact.

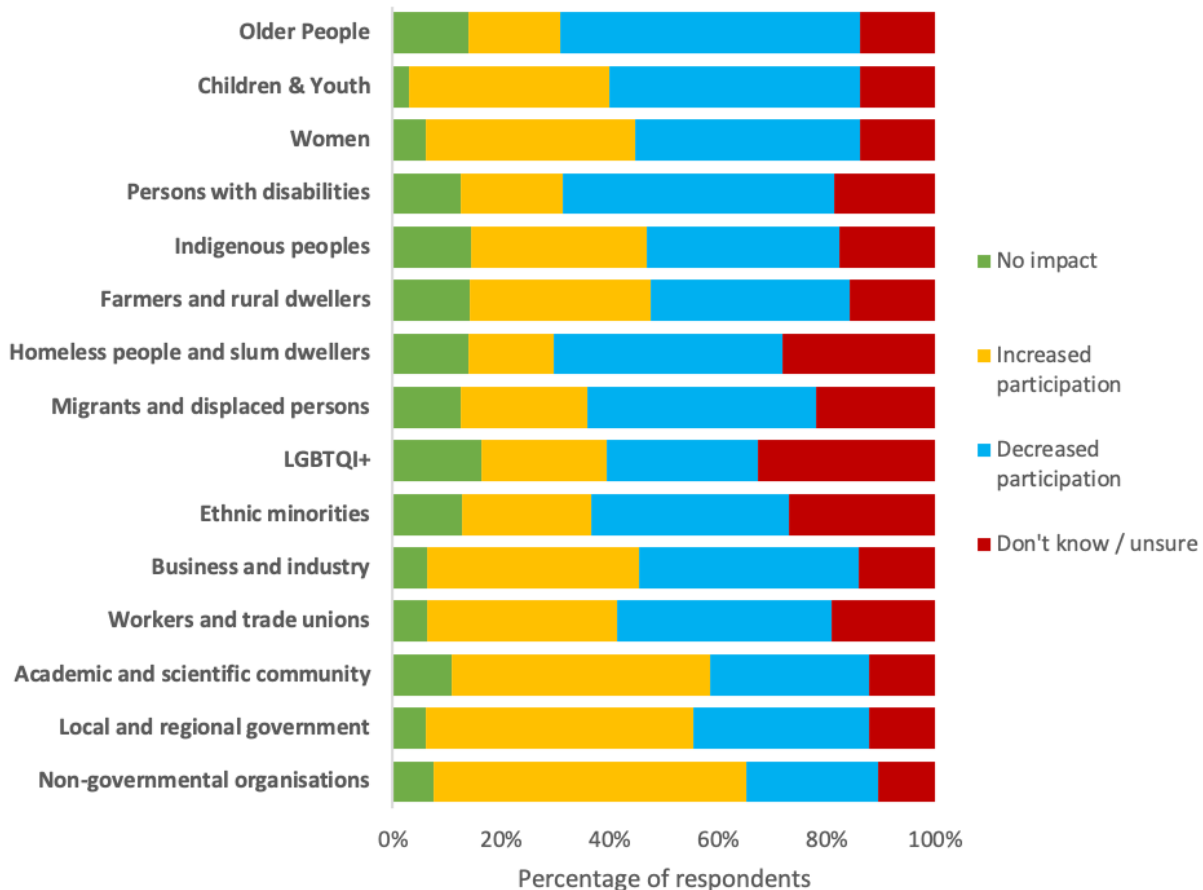
Figure 4 In your experience, to what extent has COVID-19 impacted on progress towards the SDGs for the following marginalized and/or vulnerable segments of society? n=59-62



(4) Vulnerable and marginalised groups across the Asia Pacific risk being 'left behind' by efforts at engagement in the context of COVID-19.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders perceive participation among vulnerable/marginalised groups to have decreased, as shown in figure 5 below. Older people (55% of responses perceiving 'decreased participation'), persons with disabilities (50%), and children and youth (46%) are regarded as most affected. A worrying decline in participation is perceived across all the vulnerable/marginalised groups (as indicated by the prevalence of longer blue segments in the bars), which demonstrates that the ability of these groups to participate has been impacted at different levels.

Figure 5 In your experience, how has COVID-19 affected the participation of the following groups in SDG implementation and review? n=61-65



In terms of organisations, however, there are some perceived by respondents to have increased participation in the context of the pandemic, including non-governmental organisations (**58%**), local and regional government (**49%**), and the academic and scientific community (**48%**). In these cases, the proportion of respondents seeing a positive impact clearly outweighs the proportion seeing a negative impact. In the case of workers and trade unions, and business and industry, the picture is very mixed. As with the global survey, the move to remote and digital forms of engagement and working practices is one possible explanation for the positive impact on the engagement of certain kinds of organisations.

Therefore, while the COVID-19 pandemic has had a mixed impact on organisations, all disadvantaged groups have been identified as negatively affected.

That some groups are perceived as 'left behind' in both progress and participation reinforces the need for meaningful and inclusive approaches to stakeholder engagement. However, countries' efforts at the most meaningful and inclusive kinds of engagement are perceived as most under threat from the effects of the pandemic – reflecting a similar pattern at global level. The answers to other questions asked in the survey (**addressing 18 practices of engagement around implementation and review**) provide evidence for this.

In general, Asia/Pacific stakeholders see the greatest current and potential impacts of COVID-19 as falling on efforts at inclusivity – for example, making resources available to overcome barriers to participation in implementation (**78% of 61 respondents perceiving 'severe' or 'significant' impacts here**); including 'left behind groups' in review processes (**70% of respondents**) - and on especially meaningful engagement, such as the inclusion of stakeholders in policymaking processes (**77% of respondents**).

¹Stakeholder responses were from these countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tuvalu, Viet Nam.

²This report was developed by Dr Anh Vu and Dr Jack O'Connor from the Living Deltas Hub. Dr Graham Long (graham.long@ncl.ac.uk) and Dr Emily Clough are the overall project leads for this work.