Strengthening the Multi-Stakeholder Dimension of National Development Planning and SDG Mainstreaming
This report was prepared by the consulting firm PwC with the support and management of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Sri Lanka. The text has not been edited to official publication standards and the UN accepts no responsibility for errors. The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.
# Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary ............................................................................................................. 3
2. Objective and Scope .......................................................................................................... 5
3. Approach and Methodology ............................................................................................... 6
4. Background to SDG Implementation in Sri Lanka .......................................................... 8
5. Stakeholder Engagement in the 2030 Agenda ................................................................. 12
   - Current Stakeholder Engagement Practices of Government ............................................. 12
   - Current stakeholder engagement practices of UN .......................................................... 17
   - Level of Engagement ..................................................................................................... 18
6. Mechanisms and Platforms available for Stakeholder Engagement ......................... 21
   - Government engagement with stakeholders .................................................................. 21
   - Stakeholders engagement with their constituents .......................................................... 23
   - Impact of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement ......................................................... 24
7. Key Challenges and Barriers to Effective Stakeholder Engagement ......................... 25
8. Good Practices adopted in Stakeholder Engagement ..................................................... 27
9. Recommendations ........................................................................................................... 29
10. Annexures ........................................................................................................................ 33
   - Annexure 1 – Summary of Scope and Approach ............................................................ 33
Executive Summary

Through the adaption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nation member states have committed to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The Agenda also calls for effective and inclusive stakeholder engagement to ensure the principle of “leaving no one behind”. This report sets out findings from a quick study conducted to assess the level of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sri Lanka, with a view to identifying opportunities to strengthen stakeholder engagement.

Since committing to the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken several steps to mainstream and incorporate SDGs to the national development agenda. Key among these efforts is providing the legal framework and putting in place the institutional architecture required to facilitate the implementation of SDGs. Establishment of the Sustainability Development Council as the national apex coordinating body and formation of a Parliamentary Committee to facilitate SDG dialog among the political leadership are important steps taken towards this end. Meanwhile efforts have also been made to mainstream SDGs in the public administration system by identifying responsibilities of various Government agencies in implementing the SDGs as well as better aligning the planning and budgeting process with SDG targets. The Government has also taken steps towards monitoring progress on SDGs by developing an indicator framework with responsible agencies for tracking as well as conducting a Voluntary National Review (VNR-2018). Efforts have also been carried out to build capacity of the public sector, particularly in the areas of developing SDG aligned strategies and monitoring SDG indicators.

While progress has been achieved on many fronts, momentum on some others have slackened with shifting priorities. Although there have been efforts to develop a National Policy and Strategy for Sustainable Development, the document is still at a draft stage. As highlighted in our discussions with stakeholders, lack of broader stakeholder engagement and awareness surrounding the SDGs and their impact, the need for greater localization of SDGs as well as the lack of baseline data for some indicators continue to be challenges in taking stock of the current status.

The need to strengthen engagement levels with wider stakeholder groups was acknowledged across the board. SDG dialog currently seems to be concentrated more at a Central Government level. Although there is a relatively high level of engagement inter-government and between government agencies and the UN throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring stages, engagement with wider stakeholder groups seems sporadic with limited opportunities for ongoing dialog. Further, even when efforts are made to engage with wider stakeholder groups, these efforts were often viewed by participants as superficial and inconsistent.

Key challenges in effectively engaging with wider stakeholders stem from weaknesses in the existing engagement mechanisms as well as a general lack of knowledge and understanding of how SDGs can impact stakeholders directly. The absence of a clear mandate on who is responsible for wider stakeholder engagement, lack of a cohesive stakeholder engagement plan and mistrust with regards to the purpose of engagement were challenges identified through our discussions with stakeholders. Effective engagement was also hindered due to stakeholders operating in silos, lack of deeper understanding of SDG goals and their inter-connectedness, as well as how it directly relates to them. Much of the SDG discourse being in English, lack of a common platform that encourages continuous dialog and knowledge sharing as well as lack of visibility on quantifiable progress on the SDG agenda were other factors affecting meaningful engagement. While a significant shift towards digital communication channels contributed towards maintaining engagement
between organizations and their beneficiaries post COVID-19, technological barriers still remain a challenge mainly when interacting at grassroot level.

The key to addressing these challenges is to have in place robust engagement processes and mechanisms underpinned by a strong engagement plan that ensures no one is left behind. It is however equally important to ensure that stakeholders have the knowledge and capacity to be active participants in the process. Therefore, a three-pronged approach is recommended that involves strengthening existing mechanisms, creating awareness, and building capacity. Activities recommended to further strengthen existing mechanisms include developing a detailed stakeholder mapping and streamlined engagement plan, ensuring more inclusivity through wider stakeholder engagement /representation in decision making bodies, and building and strengthening partnerships to leverage key competencies and capabilities of different stakeholder groups. It is also proposed to consider an integrated SDG awareness campaign, facilitate widespread access and dissemination of SDG related information also in local languages as well as transparency on progress and achievements in order to mainstream the SDG agenda and foster a higher level of engagement among wider stakeholder groups. It is important to continue capacity building for the public sector on an on-going basis while having mechanisms in place for institutionalization of knowledge gained. Also, efforts should be incorporated to build capacities of wider stakeholder groups on how to align their activities and measure contribution to SDG goals. We propose that these activities should happen simultaneously and continuously to ensure greater buy-in for the process which in turn is likely to translate to greater success in the implementation of the SDG Agenda in Sri Lanka.
Objective and Scope

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nation member states in 2015 as a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 2030 Agenda which comprises of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 targets within these goals, provides a blueprint to achieve this overall objective by addressing global challenges we face including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

The Agenda calls for effective and inclusive stakeholder engagement at every stage to ensure the principle of “leaving no one behind”. Furthermore, the inter-connected and indivisible nature of the 17 goals requires multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure a coordinated effort in achieving these goals.

Since committing to the 2030 Agenda in September 2015, Sri Lanka has made significant strides in creating a legal framework and institutional architecture for the implementation of the SDGs. As part of the Government’s efforts to monitor progress on the 2030 Agenda the Sri Lanka Voluntary National Review (VNR) report was prepared and presented to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018. Despite these efforts, the need to deepen the level of wider stakeholder engagement has been raised at multiple forums. While better co-ordination and cohesion in the stakeholder engagement process is required, it is imperative to create a sense of ownership of the Agenda among the different stakeholders for meaningful engagement.

To enable this process, the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office (UN RCO) of Sri Lanka engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to conduct a quick study focusing on current stakeholder engagement practices, with a view to identifying opportunities to strengthen the engagement. This study was supported by UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) through a grant with the European Commission (SD2015: Delivering on the promise of the SDGs).

This report focuses on the following key areas in relation to the implementation of 2030 Agenda:

- Current practices of stakeholder engagement followed in Sri Lanka
- Key challenges faced in the engagement process
- Opportunities to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement practices
- Challenges / opportunities in engagement posed due to COVID-19 pandemic.
Approach and Methodology

A sequential approach was followed for this assignment which involved planning and initiation, data gathering and reporting on findings to fulfil the core objectives of the UN RCO. Initial discussions were held with UN in October 2020 to better understand the scope of work as well as identify the applicable sources of information and firm up the overall approach for the study.

Our approach to the assignment involved review of literature on SDG implementation in Sri Lanka and discussions with selected stakeholders to understand current engagement practices, level of engagement, key challenges faced and identify opportunities to strengthen stakeholder engagement for 2030 Agenda. A summary of the scope and approach to the assignment is included in annexure 1.

Review of Secondary Literature and Stakeholder Mapping

Secondary research was conducted by reviewing key documents and online articles related to SDGs and stakeholder engagements, as well as online searches carried out to identify representation bodies in Sri Lanka.

The “Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda – A Practical Guide” published by the UN identifies stakeholders under “Major” and “Other” groups with the objective of ‘leaving no one behind’. Extensive online research and secondary literature review was carried out to identify key voices, entities and representative bodies in each of these stakeholder groups. In order to identify the extent to which these entities/groups represent the interests of each respective stakeholder group, we reviewed their stated mandate and goals as per the available information online. It is noted that some entities represent multiple stakeholder groups however, for this assignment we have assigned to the group that is considered most appropriate. While this listing has attempted to be detailed as possible, given that this is a quick study with limited time and that all stakeholders may not have online presence, the list populated may not be comprehensive. The list also includes relevant government stakeholders obtained through the SDG indicator mapping carried out by the Sustainable Development Council. Input was also obtained from UN agencies on the stakeholder organizations they engage with at different stages, based on which the list was further updated. This list could be considered as an initial point for identifying representative stakeholders and updated regularly based on UN’s interactions with stakeholders.

1 Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN and United Nations Institute for Training and Research. April 2020. Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda – A Practical Guide
Primary Interviews

UN agencies were approached to understand stakeholder engagement process, key challenges and opportunities for improvement. As part of these consultations, information was sought on key stakeholders each agency engages with as well as the level of engagement at each stage of the program. The key stakeholder lists obtained were consolidated with the main stakeholders list mentioned above.

Stakeholders under the “Major” and “Other” groups for primary interviews was identified based on the above mapping exercise and in consultation with UN RCO. This involved prioritization and development of a short list of key representative organization in each stakeholder groups based on their mandate/ focus area/ level of recognition/reach. Apart from the key stakeholders, other experts were also identified for discussions to understand the local context and progress on SDG implementation in Sri Lanka. Count of primary interactions with stakeholders is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Consultations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN agencies</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Groups</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Stakeholders</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Development Partners</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other experts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 37 virtual interviews were then conducted with the identified stakeholder representatives during the period of January to March 2021. Interviews were directed by structured interview guides prepared to obtain information including expectations in stakeholder participation, current practices adopted and level of engagement, channels available, used and preferred methods for engagement, challenges/ barriers for participation, key lessons learnt from ongoing initiatives and COVID-19 impact on stakeholder engagement activities.

Findings from primary interviews were further supplemented by online research and review of relevant literature to gain additional insight on current practices, challenges and best practices in stakeholder engagement.

This report captures the key findings and stakeholder perceptions in relation to the engagement process. For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the selected respondents’ answers are accurate, honest and is a general reflection of the representative groups’ point of view. Given that this is a quick study, it must be noted that we have reached out to only a limited number of representatives in a group, which however was the most representative umbrella organisation selected based on a structured approach. Also, we have not endeavoured to seek any independent confirmation of the accuracy or completeness of the information provided.
Background to SDG Implementation in Sri Lanka

Since committing to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in 2015, the Sri Lankan Government, as the main party responsible for implementing the same, has taken several steps to mainstream and incorporate SDGs to the national development agenda. Key among these is putting in place the legal framework and institutional architecture required to facilitate the achievement of SDGs. While progress has been achieved on many fronts, concerns have been raised that momentum on some of these initiatives has slackened with shifting priorities. The section below provides a summary of the progress achieved thus far on the key initiatives by the Government in the implementation of the SDG Agenda.

Government’s commitment towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda was put in motion by establishing Sustainable Development as a portfolio under a Cabinet Ministry – Ministry of Wildlife and Sustainable Development in 2015. The overarching legal framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is provided by the Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 (referred hereafter as “The Act”). The Act which was passed in parliament in October 2017, called for the constitution of a Sustainable Development Council (referred hereafter as “Council”) as the apex national coordinating body for implementing the SDGs. Accordingly, the Council was established in 2018 comprising of the Secretary to the President, ex-officio members of key public institutions in the areas of sustainable development, national planning and environment and eight other members appointed by the President.

It was felt at many levels that wider political participation was required to effectively engage and convene political powers to drive the 2030 Agenda in the country. To address this, a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) for Sustainable Development was established in 2016 to provide political leadership and parliamentary supervision for the implementation of the SDGs. The Committee consisted of 15 Members of Parliament. The mandate of the PSC included recommending and formulating national policies in relation to SDGs, coordinating among Government implementing agencies and other institutions, encouraging public-private partnerships and facilitating the financing of SDGs and periodically reviewing progress on achievement of SDG goals. The PSC ceased to function subsequent to the proroguing of parliament in 2019 and change in Government. It is learnt that in December 2020 the Cabinet moved to appoint a new inter-ministerial high-level steering committee to continue to give political leadership and guide the overall implementation of the SDGs. This high-level steering committee is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes Ministers and Secretaries across 15 Ministries to ensure wide representation across thematic areas.

---

3 Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 Section 4 (1) - 8 additional members of the Council consist of 2 members appointed by the President, 1 member nominated by the Prime Minister, 2 members nominated by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and 3 members nominated by Provincial Councils.
Strategy for Sustainable Development

As per Article 11 of The Act, the Council is tasked with preparing a National Policy and Strategy for Sustainable Development, that lays out a comprehensive and integrated policy framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Accordingly, a Draft Policy was drafted with national policy targets for each of the 17 goals together with overall strategies to achieve these goals. Although by end 2019 the draft policy was in its final stages awaiting Cabinet approval, with the change in the Government and the reconstitution of the Council, the draft policy document is now being re-visited to ensure alignment with the current Government’s policy framework (Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour). To this end the Council has carried out a policy alignment mapping between the Global SDG Framework and Government policy framework, to assess the degree of alignment. Further, the Council noted that although the existing draft policy document includes SDG policy goals and targets, the lack of a sequential implementation plan or a clear financing framework to achieve the 2030 Agenda are areas that need to be strengthened. It is noted, the SDC at the first meeting of the recently constituted inter-ministerial high-level steering committee held in February 2021, proposed the establishment of two technical committees on; (i) revising the National Policy on Sustainable Development and the Strategic Plan; and (ii) identifying and compiling the Environment related SDG indicators, to follow up on pending matters.

The Act also provides for the mainstreaming of SDGs by requiring public institutions to prepare a Sustainable Development Strategy relevant to each agency, in accordance with the approved National Policy and Strategy on Sustainable Development. As part of this mainstreaming process, the Ministry of Wildlife and Sustainable Development, then responsible institution for 2030 Agenda, carried out a mapping exercise in 2017 where roles and responsibilities of 425 statutory agencies were mapped against achievement of SDG targets.

The level to which SDG targets are incorporated into strategy varies from Ministry to Ministry. Having identified that government institutions require capacity building on developing strategies, the Council is in the process of engaging with public institutions to create awareness and build capacity on aligning SDG goals with individual institutional plans and strategies.

Planning and Budgeting

The National Planning Department (NPD) and the National Budget Department play an important role in facilitating greater alignment and involvement of public agencies in the SDG implementation process. In 2018, the NPD amended its project submission format to better align proposed projects with SDG goals and targets. To this end, a circular was issued to heads of government agencies and several workshops were also conducted by the NPD to create awareness and build capacity in strategic project preparation. Strengthening the efforts of the NPD, the annual budget call of the National Budget Department incorporated a special provision that requires government agencies to provide details of alignment to SDG targets and Indicators when providing their budget estimates. This too has been communicated to agencies through a

---

5 Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 Section 12 (1)
circular issued by the Ministry of Finance. To further strengthen the process of incorporating SDG targets into the national budgeting process, the Council is now in the process of identifying gaps in resource targeting required for the next budget cycle.

**Monitoring**

The mandate for tracking and reporting on the progress on SDG goals lies with the Council. The Council works in close collaboration with the Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), the mandated agency for national data collection, in tracking SDG progress. The Council maintains a data portal (http://portal.sdc.gov.lk/public) on which relevant line ministries and departments are required to update data on SDG Indicators. The data thus updated, is validated by the DCS after which, it is published and made available on the portal for public access.

Monitoring of SDG goals is based on the SDG indicator framework developed by the DCS in 2017. This indicator framework for Sri Lanka is based on the global indicator framework of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The framework which was published in the report of DCS in 2017 identifies 46 indicators for which data are already compiled by the DCS through ongoing censuses and surveys and administrative records, while 29 indicators for which data can be compiled by adding new modules into ongoing censuses and surveys or through new surveys and special studies. Accordingly, DCS is currently responsible for collecting data and reporting on 50 indicators. The report also identified 131 indicators for which data are available through other institutions of the National Statistical System (NSS) or specific agencies and 35 indicators corresponding to regional or global level. Data for these indicators are currently collected by respective line ministries and agencies. Currently all key line ministries and agencies within the NSS have DCS statistical units within their institutions which also facilitate data collection for SDG indicators relevant to that specific ministry or agency.

As part of the government's efforts to further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation process of SDG related projects, the Auditor General's Department has initiated steps towards taking SDGs into the purview of the Government’s auditing process by requesting every public corporation or company to report on SDG involvement in the Annual Performance Reports. The National Audit Act, No. 19 of 2018 requires to include in the annual report a ‘future projection report’ based on sustainable development. The specified report should include details of activities to safeguard the environment and mitigate any negative impact on the environment and where necessary include environment and disaster impact assessment analysis. In addition, the Parliament Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) also continues the function of monitoring progress on SDG Goals.

In addition to these ongoing efforts, the Government of Sri Lanka presented its Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the July 2018 High-level Political Forum. To this end, a ‘Task Force for Preparation of VNR’ was

---

10 Public corporation or company in which the Government or a public corporation or a local authority holds fifty per centum or more of the shares of that company.
appointed with representatives from several government institutions. Several stakeholder engagement workshops and forums were also conducted to obtain stakeholder input on the preparation of the VNR. The VNR was presented under the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” and assessed the country's progress towards implementing and achieving the SDGs.

The institutional architecture for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are graphically represented in the diagram below:

---

13 The President’s Office; the Prime Minister’s Office; Ministries of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Mahaweli Development and Environment, and Sustainable Development, Wildlife and Regional Development; the Finance Commission; Department of National Planning (NPD), Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), and the Department of Project Management and Monitoring (DPMM)
Stakeholder Engagement in the 2030 Agenda

There have been initiatives by the Government to engage with wider stakeholder groups throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring stages. However, based on the discussions held with stakeholder representatives, many outside the public sector domain were of the view that engagement activities have primarily been concentrated among the public sector, with limited opportunities for meaningful wider stakeholder participation. The following sections discuss current stakeholder engagement practices adopted at different stages based on our interactions with stakeholder representatives.

Current Stakeholder Engagement Practices of Government

It is noted multiple efforts have been made to engage with wider stakeholder groups through periodic consultation and validation workshops. Most of these multi-stakeholder consultations however have been carried out for specific purposes such as during the formulation of the SDG National Policy and the VNR rather than being an ongoing consultative process.

The table below depicts the current stakeholder engagement practices followed by key government agencies during different stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of SDC Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Establishment of Inter-Ministerial Steering Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>Provide political leadership and guide the overall implementation of the SDGs</td>
<td>15 Ministers</td>
<td>First meeting was held on 17th February 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consultative Meeting on Development of National Policy & Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2019</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td>To obtain stakeholder input for the development of the National Policy &amp; Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka</td>
<td>All stakeholder Groups</td>
<td>The series of stakeholder workshops were conducted during the initial stages of developing the SDG policy but has not been continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug to Sep 2019</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td>To obtain stakeholder input for the development of the National Policy &amp; Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Ministries, Departments and Statutory Bodies covering 26 public Institutions</td>
<td>The series of stakeholder workshops were conducted during the initial stages of developing the SDG policy but has not been continued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consultation workshop for Stakeholders for the Development of National Policy & Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2019</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td>To obtain stakeholder input for the development of the National Policy &amp; Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations / Groups / NGOs / Others.</td>
<td>The series of stakeholder workshops were conducted during the initial stages of developing the SDG policy but</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


Validation Workshop, The National Policy & Strategy on Sustainable Development of Sri Lanka,\(^\text{17}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Implementer</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Stakeholder Groups Engaged</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2020</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td>To validate findings for consultative workshops</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>The series of stakeholder workshops were conducted during the initial stages of developing the SDG policy but has not been continued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implementation Stage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Implementer</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Stakeholder Groups Engaged</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDG Mainstreaming and Data Capacity Building Workshops(^\text{16})</td>
<td>Since Jul 2020</td>
<td>To provide awareness on SDG’s and provide support to align Ministry strategies with SDG’s</td>
<td>Public sector representatives from Ministries and public institutions</td>
<td>A total of 6 workshops have been conducted for the following Ministries: Plantation Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Wildlife and Forest Conservation, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Ports and Shipping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building workshops for Line Ministries(^\text{19})</td>
<td>Sep 2018 to Jul 2019</td>
<td>Support government officials in the preparation of project proposals according to the SDG aligned new format</td>
<td>High and mid-level government officials involved in project planning at Ministries</td>
<td>Series of about 6 workshops conducted at the time of introducing the revised project submission form introduced in January 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Planning Department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{18}\) Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka website – http://www.sdc.gov.lk/events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Implementer</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Stakeholder Groups Engaged</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Council</td>
<td>To track progress on SDG indictors and provide public access to information on SDC’s</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>The portal is active. Most recent data are for 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Department of Census and Statistics</td>
<td>To provide public access to information on statistical activities done in Sri Lanka in implementing the SDGs</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>Portal is accessible, however last updated in July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>MSDW</td>
<td>The Platform was developed with the dual aims of facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement specifically for the VNR and subsequently serve as a platform for continuous stakeholder engagement in the post – 2018 VNR period</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td>Initiated during the VNR process. However, facing challenges in continuation due to technical reasons related to the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>MSDW</td>
<td>To consult all stakeholder involved in the SDG process in the country to get inputs for the preparation of the VNR as well as to create awareness</td>
<td>Government, private sector, academia, civil society</td>
<td>This series of one-off workshops were conducted specifically for the VNR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there have been efforts to engage with multiple stakeholder groups throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring stages as detailed above, several stakeholder representatives we interviewed indicated that wider stakeholder engagements have been some-what sporadic and often limited to specific activities/processes. Further even when wider stakeholder consultations are carried out, there were concerns as to if input provided was constructively included. It was further highlighted that there was a higher degree of stakeholder engagement and awareness creation by the Government at the early stages, which resulted in considerable interest among wider stakeholder groups as well. Despite this initial momentum, it was felt that this has gradually waned with a shift in focus and priorities.

It is noted that a collective of CSOs, private sector, academia, professional associations and trade unions came together as a platform, “Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform” (SLS SDG Platform) in March 2018 to conduct a ‘Voluntary Peoples Review’ on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The process involved establishing a stakeholder engagement mechanism through the SL-SDG platform, forming a team of reviewers, conducting stakeholder consultations at national and local levels and validating findings through verification reviews with stakeholders, as well as lobbying authorities through awareness sessions. The findings of the people’s review were also presented at the July 2018 High-level Political Forum.27

Key concerns raised by stakeholders regarding engagement practices currently in place include;

- Present institutional arrangements are mostly focused on the public sector
- Multi-stakeholder workshops and forums are often ad-hoc events with little follow through
- There are no formal, continuous engagement channels for non-state actors
- Lack of capacity building for non-state actors
- There does not seem to be a genuine effort to ensure that consultations and forums include representative groups to have a broad range of opinions.
- Data available for public access do not meaningfully provide information on progress achieved

Current stakeholder engagement practices of UN

Overall co-ordination of the UNSDF is facilitated through the UN Sri Lanka Coordination Structure, with the UNSDF Steering committee, having the overall responsibility for reviewing and guiding the strategic direction. The UN Resident Coordinator supported by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator (RCO) convenes the UN Country Team (UNCT) and leads the overall coordination of the UNSDF. These efforts are supported by the Program Management Team, M&E Group and Driver Groups. Additionally, Inter-Agency theme groups are convened when needed to discuss and share information on priority cross-cutting issues, such as youth and gender.28

Mechanisms in place to facilitate engagement with government and other stakeholder groups are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Consultations are held with UN agencies, where individual agency provides inputs towards the CCA based on their interactions with other stakeholders at the programmatic level. Findings from project specific monitoring feed into CCA and UNSDF through UN agency representatives involved in the process (UN Country Team, Programme Management Team, M&amp;E Group, Driver Group).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN CCA preparation process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The UNSDF Steering Committee includes representation of key line ministries in the country. Additional participants from the government are determined based on the basis of the priorities of the agenda and efforts are made to include non-government partners including civil society, private sector and development partners whenever possible.

Joint Work Plans describe the specific results to be achieved and forms the agreement between the UN agencies and each implementing partner. These joint work plans serve as information platform for UN’s activities supporting the UNSDF.

The FCS supports interagency/partner coordination, strengthening of Government-led coordination, and facilitation of UN and development partner field missions. The FCS currently covers the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

A UNCG ensures a coordinated and coherent messaging to stakeholders including general public

Most UN agencies have built in processes and mechanisms of stakeholder engagement throughout the project implementation phase.

Project specific monitoring mechanisms and tools are in place to capture stakeholder inputs. Ongoing monitoring and feedback processes ensure that individual agencies engage with stakeholders on an on-going basis.

A joint outcome report, "One Country Report", is presented to the UNSDF Steering Committee to keep the stakeholders updated on the results achieved on an annual basis.

During the penultimate year of SDF, an external independent evaluation is carried to review the extent to which the UNSDF has contributed to institutional and policy change.

Level of Engagement between SDC and other Stakeholders

While there is a relatively high level of engagement between the SDC, government agencies, and the UN through-out the planning, implementation and monitoring stages, SDC’s direct engagement with wider stakeholder groups is limited as per our conversations with stakeholder representatives. Many of our interviewees stated that they have had limited interactions with the Council. The SDC’s lack of a clear mandate and mechanism together with limited resources could be contributing factors to this relatively low level of engagement with wider stakeholders.
Detailed discussions with stakeholder representatives on the level of engagement with the SDC highlighted the following;

**Private Sector:**

Our discussions with private sector representatives from two Chambers of Commerce highlighted the fact that government engagement with the sector on the SDG National Agenda is still at a low level. Despite participating in forums and providing input at various occasions it was felt that their input was not sufficiently incorporated into SDG policy formulations and there was inadequate follow through on the interactions. Although much work is carried out by the private sector including SMEs, that directly contributes towards the achievement of several SDG goals, lack of a systematic engagement approach has resulted in their contribution not being captured in the formal monitoring process. Despite the low levels of engagement in the past, the SDC has identified the private sector as a key player for increased engagement and is actively developing a strategy to strengthen engagement with the sector at present. To this end the SDC has commenced a mapping exercise of 150 companies across 10 sectors to understand the extent to which the private sector is involved in SDG activities and has had several interactions with companies that are increasingly showing interest in participating in the SDG dialog. SDC is considering liaising with the chambers as the representing body of the sector in the longer-run.

**Academia:**

Although academia is engaged at a policy dialog level, the lack of a more coordinated engagement on SDG was identified as a barrier for deepening engagement levels with academia. It was also noted that there is a significant amount of work done by universities and other academic institutes that directly or indirectly contribute to SDG goals (e.g. through courses conducted, projects and outreach programs that involve the community etc.). It was felt this information is not captured adequately and the capabilities of academia leveraged in the overall national mechanism due to lack of a formalized engagement process.

**Youth:**

The youth groups interviewed had not directly interacted with the Council in relation to SDG agenda, although they have had interactions with the UN and other government agencies regarding issues pertaining to Youth. It was also mentioned that although there are several youth groups with a significant membership, currently there is no umbrella organization that could act as a single voice when interacting with the Council.

**Groups representing women, disabled, elderly and trade union:**

Discussions with representatives from these groups also highlighted the fact that there is very limited engagement with the Council. Oftentimes representation is sought in stakeholder engagement activities such as consultative workshops and policy discussions, however many felt that their representation was a formality rather than meaningful partnership.

**Local Authority:**

Discussion with umbrella organisation for local government bodies indicated that although there is a larger role local government including Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas can play in mainstreaming SDGs, the level of engagement has been minimal. It was indicated that there has been no direct engagement with the SDC apart from some initial engagement with the Ministry of Wildlife and
Sustainable Development during 2016/17. It was also mentioned that initiative was taken by the organisation to incorporate SDGs in the local authority’s budgeting process, which was not taken forward due to lack of guidance and support from the central government.

**Level of Engagement between UN Agencies and other stakeholders**

Discussions with the UN agency representatives provided the following key insights with regards to the level of engagement between UN agencies and key stakeholders.

**Government:**

UN agencies identify their engagement level with government (Ministries and Departments including SDC) as mostly collaborative where project plans, implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms are discussed, mutually agreed upon and regularly reviewed. Engagement is mainly through face-to-face meetings and ongoing dialog. Although UN agencies have built strong relationships with Ministries and Departments, frequent administrative and structural changes in government agencies due to changes in political leadership and the subsequent changes in focal contact points, result in the dialog having to be re-initiated. For example, constant administrative changes within government Ministries/Departments during a project cycle impact the ability to push forward an agenda due to changes in responsibilities, priorities, focus and relationships.

**Inter UN Agency Engagement:**

Most UN agencies identified the level of engagement with other UN agencies as collaborative and acknowledged that existing coordination structure for the UNSDF ensures a high degree of interaction at over all policy level. However, it was highlighted that multiple UN agencies are engaging with the same Government Agencies on different fronts and at different levels, with limited inter-agency coordination. The need for a more coordinated approach was identified to build greater confidence and effective engagement particularly with government stakeholders.

**Major and other groups:**

Engagement levels with other stakeholder groups such as private sector, academia and other community groups varies from UN Agency to Agency and depends on the projects being implemented as well as level of response from the stakeholders themselves.

UN agencies also have in place processes and platforms to engage with end beneficiaries (feed-back calling systems, field visits etc.) as part of their ongoing research/monitoring activities. Interactions with community groups by some UN agencies also include periodic focus group discussions and other forums to gain insights and inputs from stakeholder groups. It was however noted that since the CSO space is fragmented and, in some cases, lacks clear representative organisation, selection of stakeholders for consultations is largely relationship based. This sentiment was mirrored in statements by stakeholder representatives, many of whom felt that UN’s engagement tends to be somewhat concentrated among the same group of organizations that they have interacted in the past.
Mechanisms and Platforms available for Stakeholder Engagement

The UN Guide for stakeholder Engagement\(^{29}\) highlights the importance of choosing the appropriate tools and level of engagement by taking into account the purpose of engagement as well as the expectations of the different stakeholders. Following section captures the mechanisms used by the Government to engage with stakeholders and how the stakeholders reach out to their constituents.

Government engagement with stakeholders

Most of the engagement tools used prior to COVID-19 were physical interactions such as onsite workshops, forums and meetings. The use of online tools such as websites have been mainly to create awareness and inform stakeholders on ongoing initiatives and progress. As discussed above although efforts have been made to introduce multi-stakeholder web platforms for consultations, these initiatives have not been pursued consistently. Most stakeholder engagement activities have shifted to online channels such as webinars, and virtual meetings, during the pandemic. However, many stakeholders stressed the importance of continuing physical interactions to ensure greater depth and wider engagement.

Details of some of the tools used to engage with stakeholders specifically on the SDG agenda are listed in the table below:

\(^{29}\) Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN and United Nations Institute for Training and Research. April 2020. Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda – A Practical Guide
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform</td>
<td>Circulars</td>
<td>• Information provided through circulars, websites, reports and articles are freely accessible and available to stakeholders, including general public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>• Official circulars are available in Sinhala, Tamil and English. However, other information available on websites and reports are mostly only in English. Thus, accessibility to speakers of only native languages and those with limited access to online channels is a concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reports and Articles</td>
<td>• Information provided through data portals is not updated regularly and therefore lacks transparency and accurate view of the current status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td>• Representatives from diverse groups are included in most multi-stakeholder workshops and forums. However, focus group discussions and one-on-one interactions do not seem to include more marginalized groups (such as disabled persons, elderly persons, women’s groups).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Web based platforms</td>
<td>• Many stakeholders opinioned that although their input is sought through periodic engagement activities, they felt that their input was not adequately incorporated in the decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultative Workshops</td>
<td>• Many stakeholders indicated that there is very little information shared on the outcomes of the engagement activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>Validation Workshops</td>
<td>• Concerns were raised about the limited opportunities to provide feedback. It was felt that these aimed more at presenting information rather than involving stakeholders in the decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Select Committees and Working Groups</td>
<td>• Most of these tools are aimed at public sector officials and do not provide adequate opportunities for non-state actors to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and Capacity Building Workshops</td>
<td>• Public sector institutions which are the primary stakeholder group engaged at this level indicated a relatively high level of collaboration with information being shared and regular consultations to drive decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint Plans</td>
<td>• Only selected information on these activities are publicly available or provided upon request.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most stakeholders were of the view that the engagement tools currently used did not facilitate meaningful, consistent participation from broader stakeholders including marginalized groups. Although the current practices and tools had an element of inclusivity and participation, oftentimes stakeholders felt these efforts are superficial and inconsistent. Furthermore, most of the current practices lacked accountability in terms of transparency and responsiveness to stakeholders.
Stakeholders engagement with their constituents

Stakeholder groups have a range of tools and mechanisms to engage with their own constituents and beneficiary groups. These modalities could be leveraged more effectively to drive the SDG agenda. The table below lists out some of the tools used by stakeholder groups interviewed, to engage with their constituents and must be noted that it is not a comprehensive list.

### MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS

#### Private Sector
- Chamber Network
- Committees and Forums
- Seminars and Webinars
- Sustainability Awards
- Newsletters
- Surveys

#### Science and Technology
- Science popularization activities (SMS science, Inventor clubs)
- Webinars
- Young Scientists Forums
- Young Scientists’ Symposium

#### Local Government
- Physical and Virtual Meetings

#### Youth
- Youth circles at village level
- District office notice groups
- Social Media
- Monthly newsletter

#### Women
- Meetings
- Workshops
- Blogs
- Webinars

### OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

#### Academia
- Websites
- Social Media
- Outreach programmes
- Research and publications
- Surveys

#### Local Communities
- Community Meetings
- District level NGO forums
- Newsletters

#### Volunteer Groups
- Social Media
- E-mail groups
- Mobile Apps

#### Older Persons
- Elders clubs at village, district and provincials levels

#### Migrant Groups
- Physical meetings
- Website
Impact of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement

Apart from the initial disruptions caused by mobility restrictions during the lock down period, most interviewees in the Government sector and UN indicated that there has been no significant negative impact on ongoing stakeholder engagement activities.

Although a lack of adequate IT infrastructure impacted engagement activities initially, engagement levels gradually picked up as familiarization with tools such as ‘Zoom’ improved and are now almost back at normal levels as the restrictions have eased. Meanwhile, certain UN agencies highlighted the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity for the agencies to deepen their engagement at community level through involvement in the COVID-19 Response Plan and through direct engagement through digital channels.

Meanwhile most other organizations also rapidly transitioned to digital modes of communication in order to continue to interact with their constituents. Certain groups such as youth, disabled groups, older persons raised concerns as to the quality of engagement being impacted by the use of digital means, since physical interaction and field visits play a more important role for these groups. Further, poor IT infrastructure, low internet and mobile access were also identified as challenges when engaging with grassroot level groups particularly in rural areas. On a positive note, there is greater uptake of online tools and social media channels across the country post COVID-19, which can be leveraged for creating greater awareness on the SDG agenda among a wider group of people.

The key challenge however has been the shift in priorities post COVID-19. With economic recovery and health concerns taking precedence, momentum on SDG initiatives both at a policy level and implementation level have been impacted. Meanwhile monitoring activities have also been negatively impacted due to interruptions to the data collection process.
Key Challenges and Barriers to Effective Stakeholder Engagement

- **The lack of detailed stakeholder mapping and engagement plan** for the implementation of the 2030 agenda is a key barrier to effective stakeholder engagement. This has resulted in a series of ad hoc stakeholder engagement activities that have limited impact. Although a mapping exercise of public institutions was done in 2017 by the Ministry of Wildlife and Sustainable Development, a more updated mapping is required to understand the current status. Meanwhile no comprehensive mapping has been carried out to understand the broader stakeholder landscape. Consequently, many stakeholders felt that despite the dynamic and evolving nature of the stakeholder landscape the same groups/organizations were approached for stakeholder consultations repeatedly.

- **The mandate on who is responsible for seeking inputs from wider stakeholder groups is unclear.** The current institutional structure and legal framework, while providing a mechanism for engagement with government agencies, does not set a guide on engaging with wider stakeholder groups including grass root level representation. The SDC felt that Ministries should be responsible for ground level stakeholder engagement, while Ministries were of the opinion that the SDC should play a greater role in wider stakeholder engagement.

- **Lack of trust in the engagement mechanism** is another barrier for effective engagement. The general sentiment is that wider stakeholder consultation is held not to seek input or accommodate their views but simply to obtain their consensus on the plans. Many stakeholders felt that they were not consulted in framing the SDG strategy or localization of indicators except for some initial interactions in 2017/18 there has been no significant interactions with the government on SDGs. Further it was felt that even when stakeholder engagement did happen through consultations or forums, these initiatives were largely sporadic as well as activity based, without adequate follow through and involvement on outcomes. Most stakeholders identified the need for consultations to go beyond a formality of participation, to that of a more meaningful long-term engagement.

- Effective engagement is also hindered by the fact that **stakeholders tend to operate in silos** and structural changes in the Government also results in changes in roles and responsibilities with national departments and their mandates. A fragmented public administration structure with multiple agencies operating in silos has resulted in a less coordinated approach to SDG implementation. Other stakeholder groups such as academia also felt that much of the SDG work was happening in silos even within their respective spaces. Also, UN agencies identified the need for better inter-agency coordination particularly at project level for effective engagement. The UN could strengthen stakeholder engagement activities under SDG specific Working Groups.

- A key challenge impeding effective stakeholder engagement is the generally **low levels of awareness about the SDG Agenda.** SDG dialog is concentrated mainly at a policy level and even at this level a deeper understanding of SDG goals and their inter-connectedness is lacking. In spite of the SDC’s efforts to mainstream SDGs by engaging with ministries and departments to align individual line ministry plans and programs with SDGs, the process is still largely viewed as a reporting exercise particularly at administrative
levels. In depth understanding and knowledge to integrate and implement SDGs is inadequate at the regional levels as indicated from our discussions.

- Engagement from wider stakeholder groups particularly at grassroot levels tends to be low due to a lack of understanding about how SDGs directly relates to them. For example, our discussions with private sector chambers highlighted the fact that many SMEs were reluctant to actively engage in the SDG dialog due to the lack of a clear business case. Similarly, youth representatives and women’s groups also highlighted the need to create more awareness on the national SDG agenda among these groups with an emphasis on the direct benefit of achieving SDG goals to their specific needs.

- It was also highlighted that much of the SDG discourse was carried out in English which also contributed to the lack of understanding and buy-in particularly among wider stakeholder groups. Meaningful dialog in Sinhala and Tamil access with well translated documents was seen as a requirement to facilitate wider and more effective participation in the SDG dialog, particularly at local levels.

- The lack of visibility on quantifiable progress on the SDG agenda has also contributed to the relatively low levels of awareness and interest. The existing SDG indicator framework largely focuses on the public sector contribution and does not seem to incorporate a systematic mechanism to assess the contribution by other stakeholders or monitor progress. This lack of engagement with other stakeholders in the monitoring process also underestimated the progress achieved as a nation as it does not take into account the contribution of other stakeholders such as civil society, private sector etc. Further, although there are public portals on SDG indicators and their progress both on the SDC site and the DCS site, lack of information prevents regular updation of these indicators. Consequently, there is no place that general public can see Sri Lanka’s progress in terms of implementation of SDG targets.

- The Lack of a platform where stakeholders can come together on a continuous basis to share knowledge and experiences and provide input has been identified as a challenge as well. Although there have been efforts by the Government to create a multi-stakeholder platform for engagement (‘National Sustainable Development Engagement Platform’, online engagement platform for VNR), these efforts have not been pursued on a consistent basis.

- Technological barriers were identified as a challenge mainly when interacting with grassroot levels, with low internet and mobile access being a challenge when interacting with very rural communities. Face to face engagement through open houses, physical meetings and workshops etc remain important to ensure engagement of marginalized groups. It was however noted that there has been a significant shift towards digital communication channels post COVID-19 which has contributed towards maintaining engagement between organizations and their beneficiaries at grassroot level.
Good Practices adopted in Stakeholder Engagement

The following section includes some successful stakeholder engagement initiatives in Sri Lanka. These initiatives are deemed successful based on being purposeful, inclusive and proactive for quality engagement.

**SDG Action Campaign**

The United Nations in Sri Lanka together with the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Hatton National Bank, launched the SDG Action Campaign in 2017, to promote the Sustainable Development Goals around the country. The SDG Action Campaign was aimed at supporting student-led initiatives towards achieving the SDGs in Sri Lanka by educating students on the SDGs, calling for project proposals and empowering 25 selected school projects across the island with seed funding and mentoring to kick start their sustainability projects. As part of this campaign, a national call for applications was circulated to all schools offering Advanced-Level streams across the country inviting students to send in unique ideas on projects that could contribute to the 17 SDGs. The project was a successful example of a multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating awareness and action of SDGs.

**Ceylon Chamber of Commerce National Agenda Committees (NAC) Initiative**

Ceylon Chamber of Commerce is the premier forum for businesses in Sri Lanka. The NAC initiative of the Chamber is a successful example of garnering multi-stakeholder engagement to provide private sector input to Sri Lanka's reform agenda. Through this initiative, eight separate committees have been formed on key themes such as Infrastructure; Finance and Capital; Transport and Logistics, Energy, Trade, Digital Economy, Public Sector Reforms and more recently Entrepreneurship Ecosystem. Each committee includes representatives from business, government, and academia and work towards developing new insights and putting forward innovative solutions for each thematic area. The Chamber's Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) curates the work of the NACs and manages strategic outreach to take the NACs work to policymakers, business leaders, and the public.
Big- Idea Campaign conducted by the Batticaloa Municipality

The campaign was conducted as part of the Municipality’s effort to become a child friendly organization, in 2018 asked for ideas and suggestions from children and youth on how to improve their city. This campaign received over 4,000 responses. The program was supported and guided by the UNICEF office in Sri Lanka is an example of how marginalized groups were effectively consulted to obtain input.

Sarvodaya Development Model

Sri Lanka’s oldest continuing social movement, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is a community-based organization which has a presence across all 25 districts in Sri Lanka, through 3,000 active societies. The organization has adopted a “grassroot upwards” model which takes a participatory approach to development projects. District coordinators at every district assess community needs on an ongoing basis and maintain a close relationship with the communities they represent. When a development need is identified they convene a meeting with Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies (village level societies consisting of village representatives) and conduct structured consultations that are facilitated by a trained staff member of Sarvodya. The input from these consultations form the basis of project designs and project proposals for funding.

Biodiversity Sri Lanka

Biodiversity Sri Lanka (BSL) is a private sector owned and driven platform established to promote strong engagement of the corporate sector in biodiversity and environmental conservation issues in the country. The main focus of BSL, is to raise awareness on biodiversity and sustainability issues amongst the business community and initiate and implement collaborative action against challenges relating to biodiversity and the environment. As such, BSL engages with its member network across a range of industries, the government sector and other relevant organizations including international organizations to collaboratively bring about solutions to biodiversity and environmental conservation issues in the country. In addition to the one-on-one interaction with private sector institutions, BSL also engages at industry level through ongoing knowledge sharing sessions and by acting as a liaison between government and non-government/private sectors.
Tripartite Taskforce addressing labour challenges

The Tripartite Taskforce consisting of representatives from the Employers’ Federation of Ceylon, the Ministry of Skills Development, Employment and Labour Relations, as well as key labour unions in the country came together quickly to safeguard the interests of workers and employers due to the effect of the pandemic. Through successful rounds of social dialog, the Taskforce was able to come up with a mechanism to pro-rate wages based on the varied levels of deployment of staff resulting from restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19. The Tripartite Agreement was signed to protect Sri Lankan workers across all sectors post COVID-19 and the agreement was endorsed by the Sri Lankan ministerial cabinet in May 2020. The Taskforce is an example of how different stakeholder groups effectively engaged in social dialog to reach a mutually acceptable outcome in a short sphere of time.

Recommendations

Strengthening current stakeholder engagement will require a three-pronged approach of strengthening existing mechanisms, creating awareness and building capacity. Activities under these areas will need to be carried out simultaneously and should be underpinned by a strong stakeholder Engagement Plan that spans the entire process from planning, implementation to monitoring.

Strengthening Existing Mechanisms

Develop a detailed stakeholder mapping and engagement plan

A strong stakeholder engagement plan, that clearly frames the purpose for engagement, sets up a process to identify stakeholders to consult, assigns responsibilities for engagement activities, identifies the methods for consultation and measures the outcomes of the engagement process to ensure effective stakeholder engagement. It is important to incorporate engagement throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring stages in a more streamlined manner.

Effective stakeholder engagement will require a detailed stakeholder mapping for each indicator, based on localized targets. As many SDGs are linked and multiple organizations are involved in several SDG targets, it is proposed to have engagement with stakeholders on a thematic basis.
A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders is also vital for an effective stakeholder engagement plan. Changes to the roles, responsibilities and mandates of Government departments resulting from administrative and structural changes need to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders in a streamlined manner to ensure clarity on respective roles.

Ensuring wider stakeholder engagement/ representation on decision making bodies

The private sector, civil society, local government and academia have a significant role to play in SDG implementation. Early engagement with stakeholders, is key to building trust and allowing input to the decision-making process. The Sustainability Development Act currently does not have legal provisions to include non-state actors in the Council apart from representatives appointed by the President and Prime Minister (Section 4 (1) (b) of Sustainability Development Act). Nor is there a clear mechanism outlined for engagement with wider stakeholder groups at the planning stage. However, it is important to bring about greater engagement with and/or representation in decision making bodies to ensure more inclusiveness through a clearer structure for these stakeholders to meaningfully contribute at strategy level.

Building and strengthening partnerships

Different stakeholder groups have key competencies and capabilities that could be leveraged more effectively to strengthen the government’s SDG implementation efforts, particularly in the areas of creating awareness and mainstreaming SDGs in the wider community, participating in project implementation and monitoring progress.

Academic Institutions and Universities for example inherently have access to youth and community groups through its student bodies and community outreach programs and therefore are in a good position to create grassroots level awareness on SDG’s on a larger scale. Meanwhile research and data collection capabilities of academia could be used better to strengthen national level monitoring activities through more formalized partnerships with universities and academic institutions. Our discussions highlighted the fact that several universities have ongoing initiatives to collect data and monitor their contribution to SDG goals which have the potential to be implemented more broadly and be incorporated in to the national level data monitoring process conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics.

The private sector has a key role to play in SDG implementation and public-private partnerships need to be leveraged with private sector commitment towards specific goals. The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce’s National Agenda Committees (NAC) Initiative that drive the economic development agenda in key strategic thematic areas could be used as a starting point for these partnerships.

CSO groups have strong engagement mechanisms with their constituents which need to be leveraged for effective bottom-up partnerships for SDG implementation. Partnerships with NGOs and CSOs can help in better localization of SDGs and even in data collection and monitoring aspects. To encourage active participation of CSOs, it is proposed to have an enabling mechanism for engagement between NGOs and CSOs on thematic basis, which will provide a forum for civil society to participate and voice their concerns in a more open and meaningful way. Meanwhile District level committees could be strengthened to align local activities to national SDG driven policy agenda.
Implementing an integrated SDG awareness campaign

An integrated SDG awareness campaign is recommended to better mainstream the SDG agenda and foster a higher level of engagement among wider stakeholder groups. While the message of the “business case” and “value” should be tailor-made to each target group, indicating “what’s in it for them” and “how they can” impact the 2030 Agenda, the overall message should be consistent in order to avoid conflicting messages. It is proposed that an overall national communication strategy and PR campaign be developed and driven by a single coordinating body/institution with wide-spread participation of mainstream and social media, and popular media personalities. It is noted that mainstream media such as radio and television will be crucial to reach rural communities and certain marginalized groups.

Ensuring widespread access to SDG related information

Information and tools on SDG’s should be easily accessible and understandable to a wider audience including youth, SME etc. Social media channels can and should be leveraged more effectively to widen reach particularly among youth and to create a more vibrant and ongoing dialog on SDGs. There is also a need for greater effort towards making available relevant literature, key documents and tools in local languages to be more inclusive.

Transparency on progress and achievements

It is important to provide regular updates on progress achieved and highlight success stories and good practices. While the SDG portals of SDC and DCS presently available need to be updated on a regular basis, wider dissemination is also required to inform the progress against indicators. It is difficult for stakeholders to hold government accountable unless there is transparency in tracking implementation. It is recommended to have an annual Sustainability forum (similar to what is conducted by the German Sustainable Development Council) which helps the government to communicate with key stakeholders about the status and future implementation of the sustainable development strategy and the 2030 agenda on an ongoing basis.

Capacity Building

Capacity building for public sector

The Council, NPD and DCS currently conduct awareness and capacity building workshops for public sector officials particularly in the areas of strategy development and data collection for SDG indicators. There however is a need for ongoing capacity building instead of one-off, workshops or forums. There is also a need to institutionalize this knowledge, through the creation of training documents and manuals that can be easily referenced. It was also noted that sharing examples of global best practices could also add value.

Capacity building for wider stakeholder Groups
Capacity building should also be carried out for wider stakeholder groups on how to align their activities and how to measure their contribution to SDG goals. Online training modules and community-based workshops can be conducted to garner broader participation.
Annexures

Annexure 1 – Summary of Scope and Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG Implementation</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Engagement of Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National intervention</td>
<td>CCA, SDCF, VNR</td>
<td>Government, Private sector, Academia, Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic intervention</td>
<td>Planning, Implementation, Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SDGs mandated and others contributing to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identification of major and other stakeholders*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stakeholders selection process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stakeholders for COVID-19 response plan implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not a comprehensive listing exercise

- Stakeholders currently engaged with Additional stakeholders whose engagement would improve the process
- Name of stakeholders
- Level of engagement
- Degree of engagement
- Frequency of engagement
- Stakeholder groups
- Level of engagement required
- Platforms/channels for engagement
- Challenges in engagement
- Suggestions to improve engagement
- Stakeholder engagement for COVID-19 response plan

Our Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary literature review</th>
<th>Identification of stakeholders</th>
<th>Analysis &amp; Reporting:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary interviews</td>
<td>Government - 5, UN Agencies - 6, Major Groups - 12, Other Stakeholders - 12, Other DPs - 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the stakeholder expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the current practices adopted and level of engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the engagement channels available, used and preferred</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the challenges/barriers and opportunities for participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the key lessons learnt from ongoing initiatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How can stakeholders engage in the COVID-19 response plan implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>