



Corporate Foundations as Partnership Brokers in Supporting the SDGs

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The article seeks to understand whether corporate foundations (CF) proactively incorporate SDGs and agree on their role to act not only as direct financiers but also as brokers facilitating the process of cross-sector partnerships.

To what extent do CF consider SDGs in their processes and activities? To what extent do CF perceive themselves as initiators of cross-sector collaborative arrangements to support SDGs?

Half of the interviewed CFs did not even use the SDGs as a reference for their activities. Furthermore, those CFs that used the SDGs as a framework were only partially translated them into core foundation processes. The majority (60%) of the respondents disagree that it is CFs' role to initiators of cross-sector partnerships.

[#corporations](#) [#foundations](#) [#partnerships](#) [#SDGs](#)

Background & Context



- Agenda 2030 remains the most relevant high-level policy framework for aligning actions of a diverse set of actors and guiding progress towards sustainable development. **Engagement of the private sector in SDGs is particularly important** for more significant innovation, efficiency and impact.
- **Companies can only generate significant contributions to SDGs in partnership with civil society and/or governmental actors**, as some SDGs are highly complex and outside the direct sphere of their key capabilities and responsibilities.
- **The core contribution of foundations to the achievement of SDGs may be playing the partnership brokers' role beyond filling the funding gap.** This is in light of the scale of funding requirements to meet SDGs and the limited philanthropic resources.
- **CFs, in particular, due to their unique characteristics as well as roots and links to both corporations and civil society, can understand and combine the logic of two worlds**, and are well-placed to initiate cross-sector collaborations by convening, translating, collaborating and mediation between actors.
- **CFs can also have an impact on their founding companies regarding alignments of core business activities as well as organizational processes with the SDGs.**

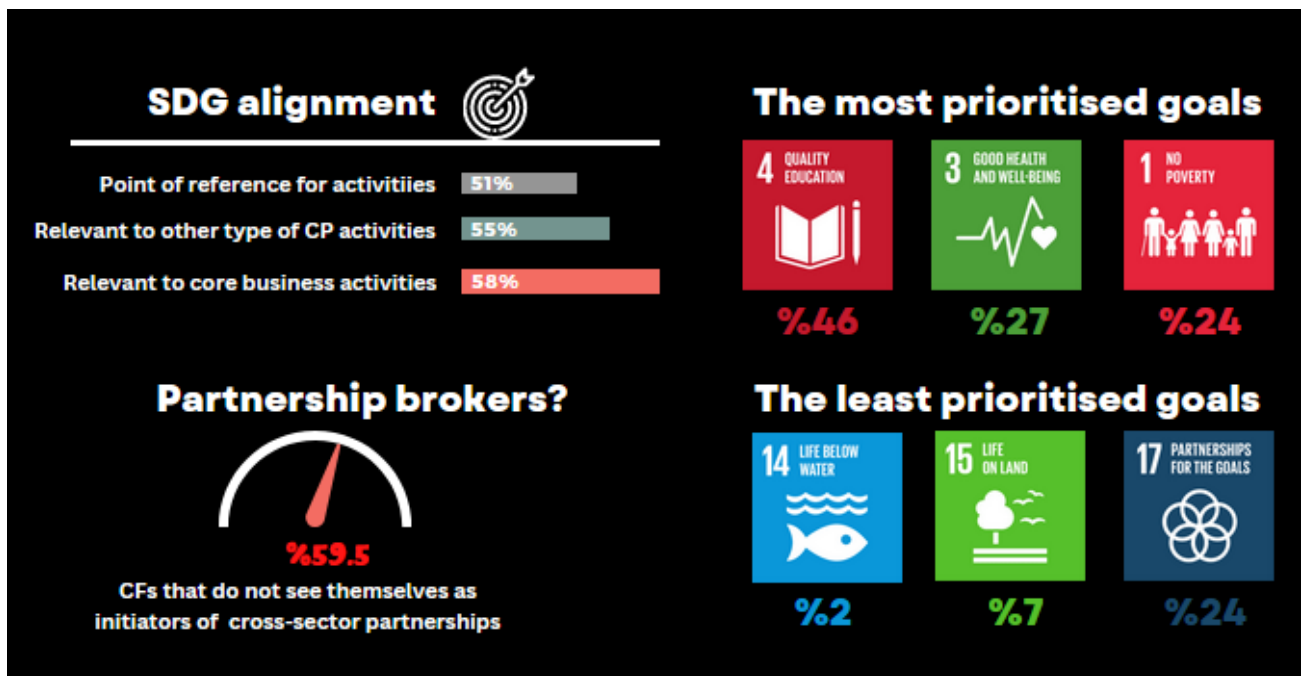
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Take aways & Learnings



- This study **collected data** from a total of 408 CFs (CFs in 200 from Switzerland, 11 from Liechtenstein, and 197 from Germany) through an online survey of foundation managers.
- **The SDGs to which the CFs contributed most** were SDG 4 (Quality Education, 46%), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities, 32%), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being, 27%), and SDG 1 (No Poverty, 24%), thus largely excluding goals concerning environmental issues.
- A **shift in perception** from CFs role in SDG engagement from intermediary of corporate philanthropic funds to partnership broker **was not observable** for majority of CFs in the sample surveyed. CFs do not fully grasp or have an awareness of their role as partnership brokers and their potential to leverage corporate resources.
- **Half of the interviewed CFs did not even use the SDGs** as a reference for their activities. Those CFs that used the SDGs as a framework were only partially translating them into core foundation processes.
- CFs face the **loss of an immense opportunity** to align their own activities and to engage the business sector and civil society in a meaningful way for the development of goals toward systemic change.



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