

# Philanthropy and crises Roles and functioning of philanthropy in times of societal upheavals

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## PHILANTHROPY, THE 2030 AGENDA AND DIPLOMACY

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5515 words

**Motivation:** An increasing number of philanthropic organisations (inter alias, POs) are contributing to the SDG implementation and are involved with the multi-stakeholder process at the UN and other international Organisations. POs' interest in participating in the SDG process has over the years increased due to the multiple crises that the world has to face caused by pandemics, war, food insecurity, poverty and climate change. Their interventions and impact are greatly felt in the international policy making and governance arena with mixed results and implications.

### **Purpose:**

Being part of such a UN multi-lateral and multi-actor process is different compared with the traditional forms of engagements of POs who tend to engage more vertically and more PO driven. UN processes imply that POs must be able to understand and equipped the capacities to effectively participate in the horizontal and multi-level nature of UN processes. In turn such capacities imply sufficient level of mastery on the use of diplomatic competencies such as alliance building, framing of issues, policy negotiations, agenda and standard setting and apply multi-party negotiations skills.

**Approach and methods:** The article reviews current PO engagements with the 2030 Agenda and the international Organisations (UNGA, UNDESA, and UNDP). The methods include analysis of relevant secondary literature and personal interviews with experts involved with the PO-SDG-UN nexus.

**Findings:** The results of the analysis show that an increasing number of IOs welcome POs and provide mechanisms of engagement (UN, UNDESA, UNDP, WHO). But it is too early to identify clear results of the current influencing attempts by POs. Evidence is also not yet sufficiently available in regard to POs alliance building with other non-state actors and attributing effect of the alliance regarding the policy choices and change.

**Policy implications:** POs are increasingly taking part in the SDG and UN processes and creating intermediary actors or organisations and platforms for greater scale and impact. Future research and capacity building are required to support POs who want to venture into the complex environment of international relations and diplomacy. They need to acquire respective skills and knowledge and possibly rethink their business model and operational modalities.

### **Keywords**

POs and SDGs; multi-stakeholder interactions, postmodern diplomacy, POs and relations with state and non-state actors.

### **Data sources**

Published articles, books and press releases from the UN and UN Agencies, also from POs and other non-state actors including academic literature pertaining to the research topic. Interviews.

## **1. The SDGs at the cross-road of multiple crises**

The most recent press release of the United Nations<sup>1</sup> is a very somber summary of the many crises the world is facing including severe and mutually reinforcing shocks — the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and resulting food and energy crises, surging inflation, debt tightening, as well as the climate emergency and civil unrest— battered the world economy in 2022. Against this backdrop, world output growth is projected to decelerate from an estimated 3.0 per cent in 2022 to 1.9 per cent in 2023, marking it one of the lowest growth rates in recent decades, according to the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2023, launched in June 2023.

The UN Secretary General António Guterres was quoted saying “This is not the time for short-term thinking or knee-jerk fiscal austerity that exacerbates inequality, increases suffering and could put the SDGs farther out of reach. These unprecedented times demand unprecedented action.” He went on to say “This action includes a transformative SDG stimulus package, generated through the collective and concerted efforts of all stakeholders,” he added.

The press release citing the WESP forecasts a gloomy economic outlook for both developed and developing economies and weaker job recovery and rising poverty. The combination of austerity policies resulting in cut backs of social services and rising inflation is squeezing incomes in developed countries and more so in the developing world especially the growing number of seriously indebted Low Income Developed and Least Developed Countries.

According to the IMF<sup>2</sup>, for the 36 countries receiving debt relief, debt service paid declined by about 1.5 percentage points of GDP between 2001 and 2015. But more recently, with the increase in public debt in low-income countries, debt payment has increased again. UNCTAD further explains that the developing country external debt means that more countries face debt distress.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/01/confluence-of-multiple-crises-unleashes-one-of-the-lowest-global-economic-outputs-in-recent-decades-according-to-un-flagship-report/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2023/Debt-relief-under-the-heavily-indebted-poor-countries-initiative-HIPC>

<sup>3</sup> [https://sdgpulse.unctad.org/debt-sustainability/#Ref\\_4RIZG668](https://sdgpulse.unctad.org/debt-sustainability/#Ref_4RIZG668)

External debt stocks of developing countries grew by 8 per cent to US\$11.1 trillion in 2021, with worsening risk profiles. Further aggravating factors of the indebted DCs and LDCs are the stagnating ODA rates, heavily fluctuating foreign currency markets, decreasing FDI. Combined with increasing inflation in the developed countries and austerity policies are reducing demand in the developed countries and consequently reduce the possibilities for the poor and indebted countries to increase their exports.

The world is facing very risky situations in the near future. The Press Release of the UN Secretary General António Guterres on DATE closed with a call for urgent action stating:

*Strategic public investments in education, health, digital infrastructure, new technologies and climate change mitigation and adaptation can offer large social returns, accelerate productivity growth, and strengthen resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks. Additional SDG financing needs in developing countries vary by source, but are estimated to amount to a few trillion dollars per year. Stronger international commitment is urgently needed to expand access to emergency financial assistance; to restructure and reduce debt burdens across developing countries; and scale up SDG financing.*

2. Innovative financing or resource mobilization and reducing of debt burden for SDG implementation are two key avenues to regain the momentum of this global sustainability agenda and commitment to all with a life of dignity. UN agencies seeking involvement of POs for SDG implementation and for general participation in the UN system.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda through its 17 development goals requires adequate finances, technical knowledge, robust institutional infrastructure and political will to bring this broad and very much needed endeavor to a successful end by the year 2030.

However, even before Russia started the war in the Ukraine, it became apparent that the SDG process was behind schedule in several domains and that more efforts are needed by governments and all other actors like businesses and civil society to accelerate the SDG transformation process. This need is now even more so true in light of the war in the Ukraine and its implications on development countries especially in regard to food security, worsening of poverty and ever expanding inequality in all societies.

To review and discuss ways to strengthen partnerships with philanthropic organizations to accelerate SDG implementation, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) at the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) together with the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP) organized a special side event in July 2019 during the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) held under the auspices of ECOSOC (UN Economic and Social Commission). The two UN agencies prepared and conducted the side event in collaboration with several major PO Organizations namely the SDG Philanthropy Platform, the European Foundation Center, Synergos<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> Synergos is a global organization that builds trust and collaboration to solve complex problems.  
<https://www.synergos.org/>

the United Nations Foundation under the auspices of ECOSOC.<sup>5</sup> More of such collaborative activities were planned between the UN Agencies and POs but the onslaught of the COVID-19 Pandemic stopped further collaboration and put continued active engagement into an unknown future.

UNDP started already in 2016 with a partnership project to deepen collaboration between the United Nations (UN), the philanthropic sector and governments. It first produced a study titled “Converging Interests: Philanthropy-government collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” (2016) stating that contributions from philanthropy can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs because the sector has much to contribute in terms of providing funding, technical expertise and innovation but that effective collaboration and engagement from philanthropy requires an enabling environment with incentives for foundations to invest more fully in the SDG framework.<sup>6</sup>

On a more concrete consideration, UNDP’s has suggested that Philanthropic Organisations should go beyond only financing SDG projects but rather be also more involved and offers a roadmap which enables representative of the philanthropic sector participate along with other stakeholders, in national multistakeholder bodies (or “councils”) for SDG implementation the intention being to find ways to integrate POs in the SDG process by shifting from single issue solutions to integrated solutions, in order to bring about a systemic change by scaling up at the national and subnational levels.

Taking it a further step, UNDP is now partnering with WINGS, an association of Organisations including Rockefeller Foundation, Evergreens Foundation, Fondation de France, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation also consulting companies such as Dalberg and government entities like the French Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs and the European Union<sup>7</sup> to help POs entry points for philanthropic contributions to the SDGs.

The cooperation between UNDP and WINGS resulted in the creation of the SDG Philanthropy Platform (SDGPP 2.0) which revitalizes efforts to catalyze and unlock philanthropy’s potential through multi-stakeholder partnerships supporting all forms of philanthropy, social innovations, and financial tools.<sup>8</sup>

Some major Foundations have also communicated their commitments to support the SDGs. For instance, the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisers formally launched its engagement in the SDG process with their publication “Philanthropy and the SDGs- getting started” (2019)<sup>9</sup> and subsequently “Philanthropy and the SDGs: Practical Tools for Alignment” (2022)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Philanthropy and the SDGs, Partnerships for Transformation: Philanthropy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a Special Event at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC (draft), 24 April 2019.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://wingsweb.org/en/about-board-members>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sdgphilanthropy.org/home>

<sup>9</sup> <https://cof.org/content/philanthropy-and-sdgs-getting-started>

<sup>10</sup> <https://cof.org/content/philanthropy-and-sdgs-practical-tools-alignment>

POPOOne of the multilateral agreements on sustainable development is the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which was concluded in the same year as the 2030 Agenda in 2015. Point 42 of the AAAA agreement directly addresses the Pos. It states:

*“We welcome the rapid growth of philanthropic giving and the significant financial and non-financial contribution philanthropists have made towards achieving our common goals. We recognize philanthropic donors’ flexibility and capacity for innovation and taking risks, and their ability to leverage additional funds through multi-stakeholder partnerships. We encourage others to join those who already contribute. We welcome efforts to increase cooperation between philanthropic actors, Governments and other development stakeholders. We call for increased transparency and accountability in philanthropy. We encourage philanthropic donors to give due consideration to local circumstances and align with national policies and priorities. We also encourage philanthropic donors to consider managing their endowments through impact investment, which considers both profit and non-financial impacts in its investment criteria.” (AAAA, Clause 42, page 21, Italic added).*

The advice given to POs in Clause 42 of the AAAA in regard to their participation in the SDGs process is very helpful and explicit. The AAAA agreement is an excellent example of how POs could best coordinate and integrated their much appreciated investment in the SDGs in different parts of the world.

In view of the bleak picture of the world due to concurrent multiple crises, philanthropic organisations are asked to intensify their participation in the SDGs implementation through strengthening the SDG Ecosystem by the G20 last year <sup>11</sup> Philanthropic Organisations are directly requested to provide support in favour of the poor and debt ridden developing and least developed countries. It’s a crucial moment and great opportunity for the POs to become more openly a partner in helping the world overcome the multiple crises.

### **3. POs seeking an advocacy role in the United Nations and UN Agencies**

Philanthropic organizations are playing an increasingly prominent role in supporting the international sustainable development agenda since the founding of UN Foundation in 1998.<sup>12</sup> Many are early embracers who have started aligning their planning and grant strategies to the SDGs. According to the Foundation Center, the total foundation SDG Funding worldwide in 2016 has reached over USD \$112 billion<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.g20-insights.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/TF9\\_Intensifying-philanthropic-participation-in-SDGs-through-strengthening-the-ecosystem.pdf](https://www.g20-insights.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/TF9_Intensifying-philanthropic-participation-in-SDGs-through-strengthening-the-ecosystem.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://unfoundation.org/who-we-are/our-mission/>

<sup>13</sup> Source: <http://sdgfunders.org/sdgs/>

POs could for instance contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in many ways<sup>14</sup>. As advocates, they could support awareness raising through the integration of SDGs into their programming efforts and through thought leadership of collective platforms; as impact drivers, they can catalyze change and generate impact through big bets, collective action, cross-SDG partnerships; and as innovators, they exhibit a great willingness to test new ideas, adopt innovative approaches, forge new coalitions<sup>15</sup>, <sup>16</sup> and help de-risk investments. There is a significant potential to further scale up philanthropic engagement in SDG implementation once proven efficient and effective.

Involvement of POs in SDG implementation would be very timely and beneficial, especially for indebted developing countries. But in view of the complex nature of the 17 SDGs, POs need to develop knowledge and skills which address the system nature of UN led interventions. This is very different to organizing a punctual, vertical project as is still most of the time the case with today's POs whose approach is often unipolar, PO driven and characterized by private and confidential forms of interactions. Particular attention needs to be given to the acquisition for diplomatic skills in order to be effective in an operating environment with uncertain initial conditions where multiple forces (external and internal) often vying for influence in a porous decision making process. Leadership in this context is not hierarchical rather dynamic and evolving.

Following challenges of participating in SDG implementation in a multi-stakeholder and multi-party context of the UN system needs to be taken into account by POs before they venture into SDG implementation and related partnership activities.

### **3.1.Capacity building by POs for SDG implementation: policy trade-off and policy synergies**

Capacity building for SDG implementation offered by POs requires the acquisition by POs of an understanding how the SDGs and related targets are structured. The SDGs are conceptualized as being interdependent and indivisible goals which span three dimensions of development namely sustainable environment, economy and society. All goals and targets interact with other goals and targets in either synergistic multi-sector manner or as trade-offs meaning that investing in Goal X could generate negative benefits in another goal.

Two examples relating to hunger or food security (SDG 2), Health (SDG 3) Water (SDG 6) Industry (SDG 9) and Life on Land (SDG 15) are used to illustrate this point of synergy and trade-offs in the interdependence of goals. If a country faces food insecurity and their people are poor and hungry, the respective government might be advised to use extensively fertilizers and pesticide to increase food production in order to feed its people. This is a noble undertaking but at the same time comes at a price.

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<sup>14</sup> Acknowledged by Member States in paragraphs 41 and 45 of the 2030 Agenda, as well as paragraph 42 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

<sup>15</sup> Source: <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2016/11/02/the-three-circles-of-philanthropy-taking-a-tiered-approach-to-achieving-the-sdgs>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/site/netfwd/Philanthropy\\_Letter\\_winter2017.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/site/netfwd/Philanthropy_Letter_winter2017.pdf)

An intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides increases pollution of agricultural fields and water system leading to a longer term health and environment problem. Such a policy decision would generate benefits at the cost of causing problems that were not intentioned and lead to secondary consequences requiring attention and corrective policy decisions. This is an example of a policy trade-off. You achieve one goal at the expense of another goal

For both of these production processes, water has to be used as well as chemicals. Factories might simply decide to release the untreated effluent consisting of contaminated water (SDG 6) and chemicals into the nearby river and causing water pollution, health problems and extinction of fish. A synergistic policy mix would be by the government to clarify to the companies that they have to purify their effluent before flushing it into the nearby water system. A mix of regulatory prohibitions and financial support would entice the infant manufacturing facilities to purify the water used making the purified water recyclable (SDG 12) and thereby decreasing water pollution and ill health half local population while contributing to the conservation of water resources. This would be a synergistic policy decision.

POs willing and interested to provide assistance in these fields, such as textile or paper making in developing countries should be mindful of the potential policy trade-offs and policy synergies before investing in new machinery and appropriate production facilities. This requires an interdisciplinary and longer term project planning and system thinking.

The Analysis and visual representation of trade-offs and synergistic polices is illustrated by figure 1 below first presented in the Global Sustainability Development Report (2019) which offers a very useful overview of the possible interactions between the 17 SDG goals.





Figure 1: Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019, p.6<sup>17</sup>

POs decision in which of the 17 goals to invest in developing county X and on which of the 169 targets to concentrate their efforts on needs to be analyzed in regard to possible trade-off or synergistic impact their investment might have on other goals and targets. This is not a merely academic exercise but is in fact of high political importance. Should for instance a PO's capacity building projects could result in strong trade-offs, the PO needs then to talk to the diverse interest and stakeholder groups and seek for amicable solution that are acceptable to the key stakeholder. Such common ground will better ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the investment.

### 3.2. Capacity building by POs for SDG implementation: vertical Layers of multi-stakeholder SDG implementation

A good number of POs plan to finance and manage capacity building projects in the field of education in Developing Countries (DCs) within the context of SDG 4 (Education) need to take into account that education in countries- developed or developing- are embedded in several layers of legal and institutional rules which cannot be disregarded even if the PO is a very well-endowed foundation.

<sup>17</sup> [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf), page 6

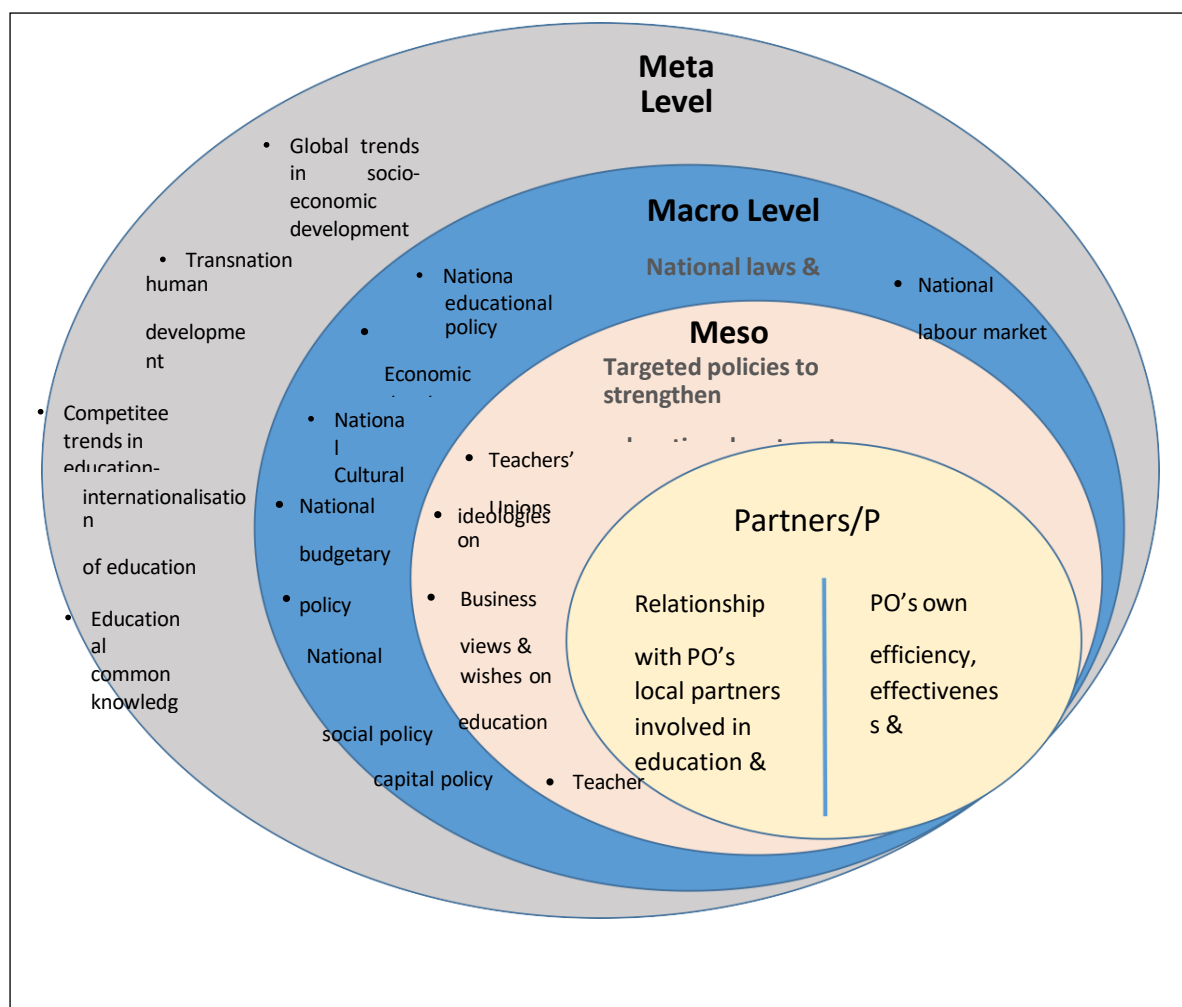


Education is inherently also cultural and political (teachers union, private schools associations, parent associations and the receiving partner countries' ministries including the ministry of education, ministry of foreign affairs (e.g. regarding bilateral treaties involving home and host institutions) and ministry of trade (educational treaties at regional, and global level).

POs often want to contribute to the development challenges of the DCs and hence the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, the agreement cited above gives clear indications as to what is expected of POs active in development support particularly in regard to transparency, accountability and cooperation with governments and other development stakeholders. In view of the prevailing Organisational culture of confidentiality, POs involved in development would benefit from transforming their Organisational culture towards a more transparent and participatory Organisational culture. Making their respective investment projects and Programme impactful could be a step toward the right direction.

After all, private investment in the education sector is about producing "public goods" in a beneficial manner. One of the unintended consequences of increasing foreign investment in the education sector could be further exasperating the miss match between human development and labour market demands due to delinking of the school to work linages. From quantitative point of view, the number of graduates at tertiary level might exceeding the absorption capacity of high educational institutions and disrupt the preparatory process of employment and future career especially for the graduates from the local tertiary institutions many of which often suffer from poor quality of teaching and inadequate learning resources. From a qualitative point of view, lack of local embeddedness, the school funded and managed by foreign POs could also contribute to the labour market misfit in terms of skill acquisition and local employer demands.

Financing or directly providing education in developing countries can be of limited impact if the beneficiary country does not have an educational sector that is prepared for foreign investment and foreign actors in their educational domain. On the other hand, POs making investments in education in DCs need to assess what kind of role they want to play and what kind of activity they want to select when providing educational services in developing countries where youth unemployment and informal economy remain as challenges for social



development. Figure 2: multilayer embeddedness of PO educational projects in DCs <sup>18</sup>

Where access to the educational sector is possible, POs should nevertheless know the local regulations and derive an implementation strategy to ensure successful participation in a foreign country's educational sector. One of the key instruments for safeguarding the success of such an investment abroad is monitoring at multiple layers as explained in previous sections. The other option is to actively engage with stakeholders in the community in order to contribute to the personal development including citizenship literacy and to strengthen the transition from learning to work and

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.csend.org/images/articles/files/20190309->

WP\_15\_Financing%20Education%20in%20Developing%20Countries%20final.pdf

to sustainable livelihoods.

### **3.3. Capacity building by POs for SDG implementation: need to build alliances with other POs, NGOs and CSOs not only with Governments and Private Sector Companies**

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs was a very ambitious and inclusive undertaking. The negotiation process from 2013 to 2015 involved the member governments and non-state actors such as enterprises and civil society actors from all parts of the world who engaged in parallel negotiations within the Open Working Group (OWG) process (Saner & Yiu, 2013).

The final agreement signed in 2015 consists of 17 goals, 169 targets and 248 indicators.<sup>19</sup> To monitor the progress, the SDG community of actors agreed to meet every year till 2030 for countries to share with the other countries and constituencies how far they have been able to implement the SDGs in their country and to hear from them their experiences in overcoming some of the barriers and challenges. Comparable meetings about the SDGs are held at regional level first, then they culminate in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) which is held every July in New York.

The HLPF adopts inter-governmentally negotiated political declarations and meets every four years at the level of heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly and every year under the auspices of ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) with a 3-day ministerial segment. During the HLPF meeting, the general public has access to observe while the ECOSOC accredited NGOs are inside the room participating with their own statements and engaging in consultations with government representatives and other accredited NGOs.

Alliance building is part of influencing in the UN context and is based on convergence of interests and sources of power (reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert, resources) and the ability to find common ground and solutions through constructive negotiations of multi-party kind.

The negotiations between state and non-state actors are complex, challenging and very important for the future orientation of the SDGs. The figure 3 below gives an overview of the key thematic proprieties that were negotiated amongst the actors. The overview context of the 2030 Agenda, as conceptualized by the author, consisted of Economic, Social, Environmental and Governance themes. Some of the key actors are depicted and place in the four quadrants according to their main concerns and negotiation positions which influenced the outcome of the 2030 Agenda. Two of the prominent actors of the 2030 Agenda are well known representatives of the private sector and of civil society namely the World business Centre for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and IBON.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://hlpf.un.org/objectives>

WBCSD was incorporated as a not-for-profit foundation in 1971 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. WBCSD supports sustainable development. It has over 200 international companies as members.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, IBON International is a service institution which represents civil society organisations from all parts of the world. It is linked to the IBON Foundation based in the Philippines.<sup>21</sup> Other well-known organisations depicted on figure are environmental or social NGOs (WWF, Social Watch) and others represent business e.g. the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

Some of the non-state actor organisations that participate in the 2030 Agenda negotiations were foundation or philanthropic organization. The participation of these non-state actors was punctual and specific that is related to the two-year negotiations. Otherwise, they do not have a permanent representation in the HLPF process.

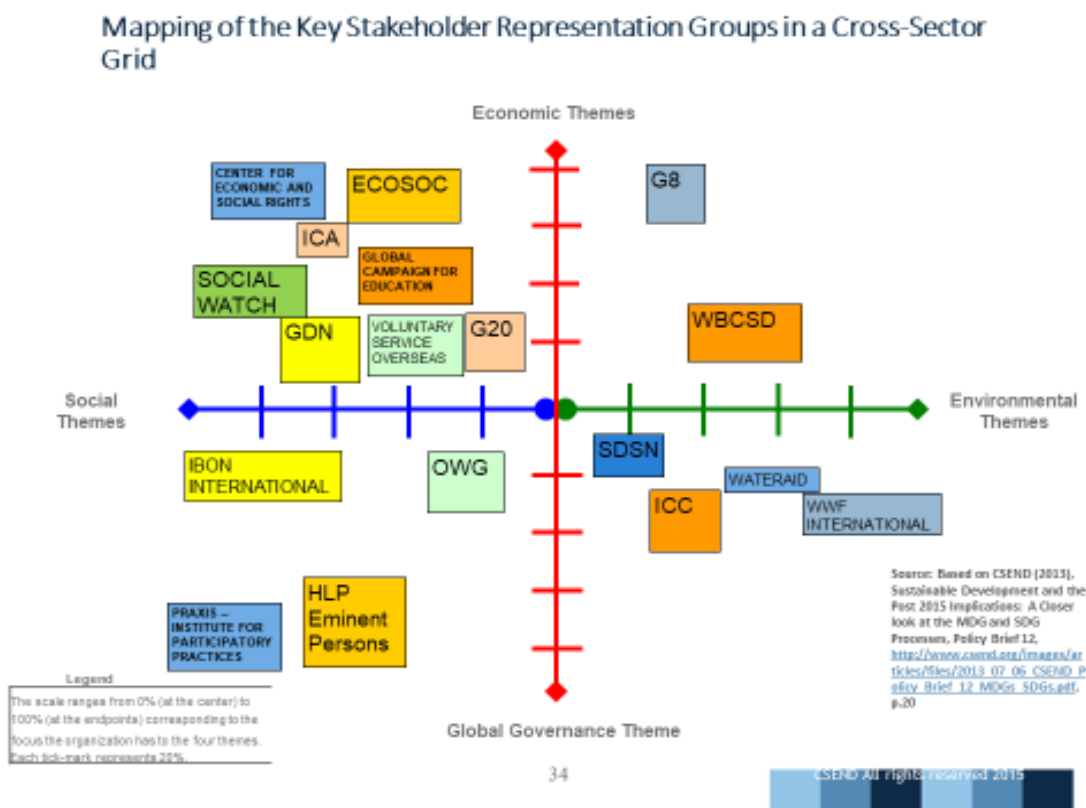


Figure 3: Mapping of the negotiation positions of key non-state actors or alliances leading to the 2015 Declaration (Source: Saner & Yiu, 2015)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/organizations/world-business-council-for-sustainable-development-wbcsd>

<sup>21</sup> <https://iboninternational.org/>

A different situation is the structural and permanent representation of non-state actors<sup>22</sup>. They are called Major Group (MG) or Stake Holder Group (SG). The nine MGs are the Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers.

The twelve Stakeholder Groups are Persons with Disabilities, Volunteers, Education and Academia, Group on Ageing, Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, Financing for Development, Sendai Group, Together 2030, LGBTI, Africa Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, ECE Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, and Communities discriminated on Work and Descent

These MG and SG groups have official status and are self-organized for instance with a secretariat and three co-chairs or some other agreed structural representation. The MGs and SGs meet normally once a month, have two coordinators and build alliance within their community but are also active outside the HLPF context.

POs can engage with any one of them externally but within the UN and HLPF, organisations need to have ECOSOC accreditation to access contacts and discussions.

#### **4. POs becoming structurally involved in the UN- some hurdles and resistance**

The T20-G20 published a brief in 2022 titled “Intensifying collaboration between Philanthropic Organisation and the SDGs through the strengthening the Global Cooperation of SDG Financing”<sup>23</sup>. The Brief suggests that an effective regulatory environment should be created involving relevant stakeholders and enabling philanthropic capital to have long-term strategic investment towards SDGs achievement.

As mentioned above, there have been re-newed attempts by UNDP to bring POs closer in touch with the UN and the UN-Agencies. Collaboration between the UN and its Agencies with POs is already possible on a punctual basis, e.g. in regard to specific time limited projects.

Should POs want to become a more permanent member of the HLPF process, another option could be that a new Stakeholder Group would be created which would give POs an official statue and recognition similar to the already existing Major Groups and Stakeholder Groups. To create such a new Stakeholder Group, POs interested in such an institutional role would have to consult the rules which provide the basis for such an application drafted at the end of 2020 by the HLPF Coordinators titled “Major Groups and Other Stakeholders:

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<sup>22</sup> <https://hlpf.un.org/home>

<sup>23</sup>[https://www.global-solutions-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TF9\\_Intensifying-philanthropic-participation-in-SDGs-through-strengthening-the-ecosystem.pdf](https://www.global-solutions-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TF9_Intensifying-philanthropic-participation-in-SDGs-through-strengthening-the-ecosystem.pdf)

Coordination Mechanism (MGOS-CM) Terms of Reference” and approved by consensus on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020. An application for a new SG can last a whole year. The other MGs and SGs provide their comments and the two coordinators verify whether the new SG has the necessary organisational and institutional capability. In general, a new SG is presided by a representative of the new PO entity with supported by two other PO entities.

The challenge will be to create a broad coalition of POs who are eager to become part of the HLPF. Three PO organization should be sufficient and the group would have to write a concept paper, nominate a chair team and select one of the three to be the designated head of the new SG.

There are however a couple of issues that need to be address and solutions found for the following queries:

There are however a few key issues that need to be address and solutions found for the following queries:

1. What kind of POs would be the core membership of the new HLPF Stakeholder Group “Philanthropy”?
2. Which PO orientation should dominate? POs active in humanitarian aid; SDG advise, academic abilities, social policy (poverty reduction, gender etc.) and if providing policy advice, what kind of advice would be welcomed and what kind of practice in the field expected to qualify as member of such a new SG-Philanthropy + SDGs?
3. Would the following criteria be applicable in regard to acceptance/rejection of SG-PP-SDG membership:
  - a) In case an applicant POs is affiliated with a religious movement, does it have a clear mission statement which confirms that its mission and operational objectives are not in contradiction with basic human rights (both UN HR conventions) and respect of the UN rules and charters of operations?
  - b) In case the applicant PO is funded by a government, does it fall into the category of a “GONGO” (Government-organized non-governmental organization), if so, how the applicant PO does proves its autonomy from government domination.
  - c) The consortium would also be advised to clarify whether POs accused of Philanthrocapitalism would be welcomed as members of the new SG or rejected and on what grounds (Brin, 2014). Example could be whose rejection of non-state actor organizations who are linked to the tobacco industry.
  - d) If linked to political parties such as the many German Foundations who are linked to political parties, how to guarantee autonomy of such POs ant prevent such POs from being extension of political pressures?
  - e) It was also be important to avoid inclusion of POs to the SG who have a dual purpose that is they support social and environmental causes but do not

- use their benevolent activities as a form of SDG washing or worse as an opportunity for marketing of products of the POs commercial mother company.
- f) From a basic management and organisational point of view, it would be also necessary to show evidence that the PO members of such a new PO-SG member can show evidence of regular practice of monitoring and evaluation of its activities.<sup>24</sup>
  4. In view of the inherent competitiveness of POs, it would be useful if the future PO Stakeholder Group would agree on a rotation of its three chair persons and PO organisations to give POs from different countries and continents the possibility to lead for a limited amount of time, e.g. three years.
  5. Should a working group of POs decide that they want to follow the example of the ICC which has permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly, and request a similar high level position, then the application process would inevitably lead to major political discussions that would go beyond the rules of SG membership cited above?

In light of the tensions between supporters and opponents of Philanthropic Organisations in general and in particular in regard to the mixed attitudes concerning POs becoming members of the United Nations HLPF, it would be useful for the PO community as well as for the CSO community at large to draft a code of conduct fitting the responsibilities POs should comply with when becoming member of a PO Stakeholder Group.

For instance, one could imagine a hybrid code of conduct including the main guidance drafted by Sprecher, Egger & von Schnurbein (2021) **available** in “Swiss Foundation Code: the Principles and Recommendations for the Establishment and Management of Grant-making Foundations” and the partnership principles elaborated by Oxfam in 2012 based on its long-term development, humanitarian response and disaster prevention and campaigns and advocacy.

## 5. Conclusion

A growing number of P.O.s expressed interest in contributing to the SDGs and the international and multi-stakeholder efforts to find solutions to the multiple crisis and long term issues pertaining to sustainability such as pandemics, war, food insecurity, poverty and climate change and a general sense of insecurity.

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<sup>24</sup> Past research on POs ability and practice of M+E show a great variety of practice see: <https://www.csend.org/images/articles/files/20130623-Health%20M%20E%20Report%20v9%20FINAL.pdf>



The United Nations and its Agencies have decision making processes best characterized as multi-lateral and multi-actor processes which are very different decisions making processes compared with the traditional forms of engagements of POs who tend to engage more vertically and more PO driven.

POs interested in being part of the UN SDG process must be able to understand and be equipped with capacities that allow them to effectively participate in the horizontal and multi-level nature of UN processes and in addition, such capacities imply sufficient level of mastery on the use of diplomatic competencies such as alliance building, framing of issues, policy negotiations, agenda and standard setting and apply multi-party negotiations skills.

The authors reviewed current PO engagements with the 2030 Agenda and the international Organisations (UNGA, UNDESA, and UNDP). The methods include analysis of relevant secondary literature and personal interviews with experts involved with the PO-SDG-UN nexus.

POs are increasingly taking part in the SDG and UN processes and creating intermediary actors or organisations and platforms for greater scale and impact.

Future research and capacity building are required to support POs who want to venture into the complex environment of international relations and diplomacy. They need to acquire respective skills and knowledge and possibly rethink their business model and operational modalities.

POs keen on joining the international community to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs are advised to visit the sources given in this article and to subsequently assess their strengths and weakness in regard to Advocacy, Diplomacy and Capacity Building in the domain of the SDGs in Developing and Least Developed countries.

Traditional POs steeped in top down vertical projects and interested in working within the UN and the SDG context should assess whether they can fulfill the requirements listed above and if not – opt for training and reorganization of practice – or opt to not join such a new PO Stakeholder Group. The article closes with recommendations how POs could qualify for a new Stakeholder Group position.

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## **Short Biographical Note of Raymond Saner and Lichia Yiu**

The authors draw on 26 years of experience as founders and managers of a not-for-profit NGRDO (Non-Governmental Research & Development Organization) called CSEND (Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development) based in Geneva, Switzerland with representatives in New York and Vienna. CSEND is accredited by ECOSOC with consultative status. The mission of CSEND is to serve as a Centre of knowledge and innovation in socio-economic research and development. Its objective is to facilitate the advancement and practical application of socio-economic theory to support sustainable development and social change.

Much of its research and development work focuses on strengthening sustainable development and aid effectiveness at regional and global levels. An important part of its related advocacy work consists of creating alliances with other NGOs as well as with International Organizations, conducting research with

other NGOs and academic partner organizations and in organizing public events at United Nations in favor of sustainable development objectives such as living wage and decent work, trade and development support of Least Developed Countries, transition towards green economy and safeguarding of international humanitarian law and human rights.