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# A TIME FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

*How Multistakeholder Partnerships Can  
Accelerate the UN Sustainable Development Goals*



Pioneering Green Partnerships,  
Investing in Impact



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	<b>Foreword by Ban Ki-moon</b>
3	<b>Foreword by Andrew Steer</b>
5	<b>Executive Summary</b>
15	<b>Chapter 1. Introduction and Background</b>
21	<b>Chapter 2. What Is Transformation in the Partnership Context?</b>
22	Three Characteristics of Transformation
26	Partnership Continuum of Transformation
31	<b>Chapter 3. Partnership Stakeholders: Contributions and Cautions</b>
32	Stakeholder Contributions to Transformative Partnerships
49	<b>Chapter 4. Success Factors for Transformative Partnerships</b>
50	Evaluating Transformation Potential
53	Topline Results
54	Review of Top Four Success Factors
64	Special Section: Six Guidelines for Great MELR
74	Special Section: Forecast the Future: SDG Partnerships for the Fourth Industrial Revolution
81	<b>Concluding Comments: Looking to 2030</b>
84	<b>Appendices</b>
84	Appendix A. Stakeholder Research Methodology
86	Appendix B. Partnership Success Factors Review
98	Appendix C. Survey Methodology and Instrument
111	Appendix D. Transformation Potential Evaluation Methodology
119	Appendix E. Partnerships Referenced throughout Report
120	<b>Abbreviations</b>
120	<b>Glossary</b>
122	<b>Endnotes</b>
122	<b>References</b>



# FOREWORD BY BAN KI-MOON

On September 25, 2015, I had the distinct privilege to announce that all Member States of the United Nations had agreed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) therein. These SDGs are a global call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure the well-being of humanity. The nations of the world committed to achieve these goals by 2030.

I believed then, and even more now, that these goals can only be met through multilateral and multisectoral collaboration. This is why SDG 17, which calls for sustainable development through partnerships, is one of the most important of them all.

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how interconnected we are through travel, trade, and communication. To end this pandemic, we need global cooperation and partnerships to treat the sick, develop the vaccine, and rebuild communities and economies damaged by this deadly virus. Like the pandemic, we know climate change threatens lives and livelihoods as warming temperatures lead to more frequent and severe storms, floods, wildfires, and droughts. The governments, businesses, and civil society organizations of the world must work together with great urgency to address these issues and all SDGs, such as ending poverty and hunger, expanding education and health care for all, increasing gender equality, and supporting sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Global Green Growth Institute is proud to collaborate with the World Resources Institute on this report, appropriately titled “A Time for Transformative Partnerships.” It details how partnerships can accelerate progress on the SDGs by better aligning the visions and designs to the main characteristics of transformative change, and it identifies the key success factors that are common among partnerships with transformation potential.

I encourage you to study this report and use this knowledge to embrace partnerships to achieve the SDGs. We need bold, decisive, and transformative action to ensure a sustainable future for all.

**Ban Ki-moon**



President and Chair of the Global Green Growth Institute  
Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations





# FOREWORD BY ANDREW STEER

We live in a world ripe for transformation. In the midst of this global pandemic and the growing climate change crisis, it is imperative that we address these emergencies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of longer-term systems change.

Incremental change is insufficient. Going it alone is inadequate. We need big, bold, and innovative action to tackle our greatest challenges while improving equity and social inclusion in all parts of the world. We need revolutions in green energy, food, transportation, manufacturing, and the built environment to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and ensure a sustainable future for people and the planet.

Attaining these goals requires transformative action that fundamentally shifts global systems, and multistakeholder partnerships can help usher in this critical change. Partnerships are effective when they are clear in their ambitions, are carefully designed to ensure that each member of the partnership contributes an essential element, and when they have a clear and accountable theory of change.

At WRI, partnerships are part of our DNA. We are proud to host P4G (Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030), a platform that funds and supports innovative multistakeholder partnerships working across five SDGs in low-income countries.

This report dives deeply into how these partnerships can—and, indeed, do—make progress where less collaborative efforts might fail. A survey of 41 multistakeholder partnerships that work on the SDGs found four success factors that offer a high potential for transformation: joint agreement on vision and goals; clear articulation

of what policies and relationships need to change; the ability to leverage existing power structures to advocate for change; and strong mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting.

Thank you to the members and sponsors of the P4G community, the Global Green Growth Institute, and the World Economic Forum for their contributions to this report. Thank you as well to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark for supporting this research. Our hope is that by reading this report, partnership practitioners from all sectors will be more equipped to achieve transformative change and contribute to a more just and sustainable world.



**Andrew Steer**  
President and CEO  
World Resources Institute







# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are now almost a year into the “Decade of Action”—the time left for the world to meet the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following on the 2019 Political Declaration of the SDG Summit, which stated that “rapid change is possible ... if we embrace transformation and accelerate implementation,” we are seeing opportunities for governments, businesses, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to come together and collectively transform global economic systems. This report focuses on multistakeholder partnerships with such transformation ambitions and examines how partnerships can maximize their effectiveness in accelerating progress on the SDGs.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Partnerships can accelerate SDG action by better aligning their vision and design to the three main characteristics of transformation. Transformation is *systemic*, which represents significant changes to a system such as food, energy, or water; *long-term and sustained*; and *disrupts the status quo*.
- Partnerships pursuing transformation can work along a continuum to change external policies and practices and/or launch commercial products or services that address the SDGs. Understanding these two pathways can help partnerships set a deliberate path forward as they pursue their transformative ambitions.
- Transformative partnerships leverage the contributions of governments, business, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Understanding the drivers of each stakeholder is important for building successful partnerships.
- Out of 14 commonly agreed-upon partnering success factors from the partnership literature, an evaluation of 41 SDG-focused partnerships found that those evaluated to have high transformation potential were especially intentional at four success factors as compared to those with low transformation potential. They are: articulating a clear understanding of the system of interest; agreeing on joint transformation vision, goals, and activities; establishing a strong performance tracking system that integrates system thinking; and leveraging external stakeholders.

## A Time for Transformation

As a global community of nations and some 8 billion people, we share in the desire to achieve the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—goals that call for no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, reduced inequality, and climate action, among others. The last of the 17 goals is sustainable development through partnerships, the topic of this report.

Since the SDGs were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, there have been literally thousands of multistakeholder partnerships created among governments, businesses, civil society, and other organizations. The work of some of these partnerships and other initiatives has helped contribute to progress on many of the SDGs. For example, sub-Saharan Africa, the world's poorest region, continues to make great strides in poverty reduction. The global population without access to electricity has declined by over 30 percent in the last decade, and maternal and child mortality has dropped dramatically.

Yet, great challenges remain to meeting all the goals. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic, a global recession, and the climate change crisis are a triple threat that can reverse progress made on reducing poverty and hunger and other important goals.

At this critical time, this report provides a valuable road map to help governments, businesses, and civil society organizations (CSOs) assess their role in multistakeholder partnerships and how these partnerships can contribute to transformative change and progress on the SDGs. Although there may always be needs for new partnerships, the real opportunity is how to improve the effectiveness of existing and new partnerships, as they address SDGs, address the urgency for climate action, and ensure greater equity and justice in our world.



## About This Report

This report, authored by World Resources Institute (WRI), details how partnerships with transformative ambitions can maximize their effectiveness toward driving SDG action. The findings and recommendations presented in this report reflect nearly two years of research; interviews with 41 multistakeholder partnerships and over three dozen government experts, business sustainability leaders, and civil society leaders; as well as contributions from Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G), hosted by WRI, the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

This report, funded by the government of Denmark, offers extensive research findings coupled with practical guidance and recommendations for partnership practitioners, governments, businesses, and CSOs working on the SDGs. The report differs from past partnership research in its focus on transformation. This report starts with the premise that partnerships can accelerate transformative SDG action, and much of the content presented here studies partnership formation and effectiveness. Throughout this report, we present dozens of mission-driven partnerships—both those surveyed and beyond—working on issues such as improving health outcomes, reducing global poverty and hunger, and advancing clean energy and water. We adapt the United Nations definition of multistakeholder partnership and define a multistakeholder partnership as a voluntary collaboration between two or more stakeholders whereby stakeholders are committed through a formal agreement to share resources, accountability, risks, leadership, and benefits to meet a specific SDG-related objective (UN 2015).

In this report, we do not explicitly discuss the transformation impacts of partnerships since most are early in their partnership journey, nor do we set out to highlight failed partnerships. We do, however, discuss partnerships' progress toward transformation goals, discuss partnership challenges, and provide recommendations for improving partnership resilience.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

**Partnerships can accelerate SDG action by better aligning their vision and design to the three main characteristics of transformation:**

- **Transformation is systemic.** It helps to first break down the meaning of a system, which is broadly a construct comprising elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose (Meadows 2008). The sustainability of a system is influenced by underlying problems kept in place by certain conditions or barriers like inefficient policies, practices, or power dynamics. Partnerships operate within a system (e.g., energy, water, or food) and operate to address a complex issue underlying the system. Transformation occurs when changes or shifts to system conditions have altered the interrelationships and interdependencies of the system to set it on a sustainable development pathway.

- **Transformation is long-term and sustained.** Transitions are not immediate. Given its complexities, transformation takes time and patience. Transformative changes must also be lasting if true transformation is to have occurred.
- **Transformation disrupts the status quo.** Inherent to transformation is a new way of doing things, such as a different approach that improves upon an existing state, an innovative technology that brings about unexpected change, or a shift in ideology that represents a new framing for action.

### BOX ES-1 | A Transformative Partnership

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, founded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the World Bank, brings together private-sector vaccine manufacturers, local governments, and civil society actors to provide equitable access to vaccines in emerging countries. By pooling vaccine demand, Gavi disrupted the status quo by removing commercial risks that typically prevent vaccine manufacturers from serving low-income countries. The partnership takes a systemic approach, addressing issues throughout the vaccine life cycle that contribute to low vaccination rates. Gavi works with countries to strengthen local health care systems, engage local communities, and address mental models affecting vaccine access. The partnership's market-shaping activities are intended to be long term. Nearly all countries that have transitioned out of Gavi support continue to purchase vaccines at the same price negotiated by the partnership.

Source: Gavi 2020.

Partnerships with transformative ambitions can work toward changing external policies and practices and/or launching commercial products or services that address the SDGs. We propose a continuum on which partnerships with transformation potential exist. While we recognize that it is challenging—or perhaps even impossible—to develop the perfect framework to capture every transformative partnership out there, our hope is that this continuum, based on our research and observations, can help partnerships mark where they are on their transformation journeys and think about potential pathways of transformation as they mature. The continuum broadly features two types of partnerships:

- **Enabling Partnerships.** These partnerships strive to shift policies and practices to move actors more quickly to a sustainable development pathway. To do so, they may form roundtables or voluntary commitments to set sustainability standards; they may focus on sharing knowledge or advice; or they may look to create market conditions such that commercial investments are feasible in the future. These partnerships fall toward the left of the continuum illustrated in Figure ES-1.
- **Market-Driven Partnerships.** These partnerships use the power of market signals and forces to drive sustainable change by launching a commercially viable product or service. Although these partnerships are often motivated by matters beyond making profit (e.g., strengthening relationships with other stakeholders, helping a local community, etc.), these partnerships ultimately strive to develop a model that launches a commercial new

Figure ES-1 | Transformative Partnership Continuum



Source: WRI Authors.



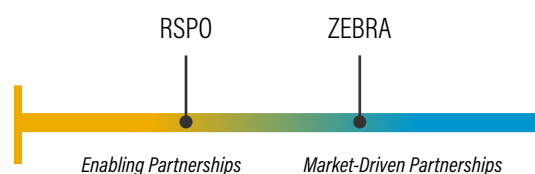
product or service and are often reliant on innovative policies or concessions or innovative combinations of both. These partnerships fall toward the right of Figure ES-1.

Partnerships can move along the continuum, or they might remain static. In Box ES-2, we describe two partnerships and where they fall along this continuum.

**It is critical for stakeholders to understand why others want to partner with them. This can help to facilitate a smooth relationship among partners, and also ensure that partners are properly sourced.** With a clear understanding of what each stakeholder brings to the table, partnership practitioners will be able to better align on a united vision—a critical success factor for transformative partnerships. Figure ES-2 identifies the typical contributions of the stakeholders—governments, businesses, and CSOs—in multistakeholder partnerships. These contributions reflect findings from a detailed review of published academic literature, as well as dozens of conversations with government policy and climate experts and sustainability and partnership leaders in businesses and CSOs. Although the lists may not be all-inclusive, they do provide a helpful starter framing for partnership practitioners looking to better understand one another.

## BOX ES-2 | Partnerships on the Continuum

The Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) aims to transform the palm oil market by convening business, government, and civil society stakeholders to set industry standards and create an enabling policy environment for sustainable palm oil production. The partnership now has over 4,000 members across the palm oil supply chain that have committed to produce, source, and use palm oil that complies with RSPO social and environmental criteria. The Zero Emission Rapid Bus-deployment Accelerator (ZEBRA) is working to transform public transportation in Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil by transitioning public bus systems from diesel to electric. ZEBRA started by engaging government actors to address the public policy barriers preventing this transition. As the partnership has progressed toward its end goal of launching a commercial electric bus service, it has engaged private-sector electric bus suppliers, developers, and operators.



Source: RSPO 2020; P4G 2020d.



Figure ES-2 | Stakeholder Contributions in Transformative Partnerships



*Sources:* Albani and Henderson 2014; Brouwer et al. 2016; Collison et al. 2014; Enright et al. 2018; G20 2015; GCPSE and UNDP n.d.; GGGI 2019; Gomme and Perks 2018; Hofstetter 2019; Horan 2019; Jenkins et al. 2017; Kamphof and Melissen 2017; KPMG International 2016; Melo 2018; Ménascé 2016; Menden et al. 2019; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Podder and Singh 2018; PWC 2017; Poret 2014; Seitanidi 2015; Stibbe and Prescott 2017; Stibbe et al. 2018; UN DESA 2019; UNGC 2013; UNGC, WMB and WRI 2018; Urmetzer et al. 2017; USCIB 2015; Van der Vleuten 2019; WBCSD 2016; WBCSD 2020.

**Out of 14 commonly reported partnership success factors, we identified 4 where partnerships with high transformation potential were especially intentional about their implementation, compared to low transformation-potential partnerships.**

We identified the 14 partnership success factors through a detailed review of dozens of published academic and organizational reports on multistakeholder partnerships. Interested as to which of these 14 success factors may better help partnerships achieve their transformation

vision, we surveyed 41 partnerships from the P4G partnership ecosystem, to understand the extent to which they embodied these success factors. We established an evaluation method (that is fully explained in the report) for assessing these partnerships' transformation potential to see how those with high transformation potential compared to those with low transformation potential in terms of embodying each success factor. Partnerships with high transformation potential were found to be especially intentional about implementing these four success factors:



1. **Clear articulation of the system of interest.** Partnerships with high transformation potential are better able to develop a strong understanding of the system they want to influence and in which they operate, as well as the conditions, such as policies or relationships, that must be shifted to move the needle on the problem. Partnerships with high transformation potential that could articulate their system of interest rated themselves as doing this to a great or very great extent (93 percent) compared to those with low transformation potential (60 percent).
2. **Jointly agreed-upon transformation vision and near-term goals.** Partnerships with higher transformation potential tend to excel at establishing a joint transformation vision and near-term goals that are well aligned with the transformation characteristics, a strong systems understanding, and the SDGs. We found that 71 percent of high transformation potential partnerships scored themselves as excelling at establishing a shared vision and goals, compared to only 27 percent of partnerships with low transformation potential.

### BOX ES-3 | IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™

The IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™ (WLB Series) aims to transform the global financial system by mobilizing capital for women's empowerment through innovative financial instruments. The partnership recognized the importance of developing a holistic understanding of its system from the start and focused on a specific subset of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This enabled the partnership to create clear boundaries of its activities while ensuring it added value to each market. Initially, WLB Series focused on three South Asian countries. It has since expanded to additional countries and targets specific sectors such as clean energy and sustainable agriculture. The WLB Series successfully closed a US\$8.5 and \$12 million issuance, demonstrating the scalability, replicability, and overall power of investing in women's empowerment.

Source: IIX 2017; IIX 2020.

### BOX ES-4 | Africa GreenCo

Africa GreenCo aims to increase private-sector investment in clean energy in sub-Saharan Africa by acting as a creditworthy intermediary to reduce risk and create a more dynamic power market in the region. The partnership has aligned stakeholders across the power systems, from developers and investors to national governments, to define and align on a partnership vision and goals. Through an iterative and participatory process, Africa GreenCo developed a master vision and goals document that captures the partnership strategy. Updating this document regularly enables partnership stakeholders to stay focused and aligned even as market conditions change.<sup>a</sup>

Note: <sup>a</sup> Oxby, Cathy. 2020. Interview with WRI authors and Cathy Oxby, Chief Commercial Officer, Africa GreenCo, Surrey, UK. March 3, 2020.

Source: Africa GreenCo 2020.

3. **Strong monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting (MELR) mechanisms with systems thinking.** Partnerships with high transformation potential tend to have a robust performance tracking system in place that incorporates systems thinking into MELR. Systems thinking involves adopting practices to help the partnerships understand their influence on system conditions and their contribution to transformation. Not surprisingly, more partnerships with high transformation potential (64 percent) believe that they have strong to very strong MELR systems in place, compared to 47 percent of partnerships with lower transformation potential that hold this opinion.

#### BOX ES-5 | Courtauld Commitment 2025

Courtauld Commitment 2025 is a multistakeholder partnership that has been recognized for its MELR process and success in measurably reducing food loss and waste in the United Kingdom by 20 percent since 2015. Convening stakeholder Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) provides member companies with clear data collection and reporting protocols and has two dedicated analysts who focus on data cleaning, validating, and aggregating reporting data. An external auditor or peer reviewer then verifies progress against the partnership's targets.<sup>a</sup>

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> Swannell, Richard. 2020. Interview with WRI authors and Richard Swannell, Director, WRAP, Oxford, UK. March 5, 2020.

*Source:* WRAP 2020.

4. **Capacity to engage stakeholders external to the partnership.** Partnerships with high transformation potential are effective at tackling existing power structures and revising them by engaging champions (both internally and externally) and frontline communities to advocate for change. Partnerships with high transformation potential believe they have embodied this success factor to a great or very great extent (64 percent), compared to partnerships with low transformation potential (47 percent).

#### BOX ES-6 | Energise Africa

Energise Africa, an impact investing platform by Ethex and Lendahand, has cultivated support from stakeholder networks, investors, and other CSOs to provide affordable finance to solar businesses in sub-Saharan Africa and currently serves nearly half a million people. The partnership has cultivated relationships with grassroots CSOs, collaborating on events and enabling Energise Africa to connect with new investor groups. Creating new opportunities for a first point of contact with investors is critical for building trust among new investors and establishing a sustainable investment pipeline. Once people have invested with Energise Africa, the partnership's repeat investment rate is above 90 percent.<sup>a</sup>

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> Mountain, Rachel. 2020. Interview with WRI Authors and Rachel Mountain, Head of Marketing and Communication, Energise Africa, Oxford, UK. March 4, 2020.

*Source:* Energise Africa 2020.



## How to Use This Report

The findings and recommendations in this report offer practical and valuable guidance for governments, businesses, and CSOs. We note a few ways to apply this knowledge:

- Study the chapter on transformation to understand how to integrate these concepts better into existing or new partnerships' visions and goals working toward the SDGs.
- Review the chapter on contributions of government, business, and civil society stakeholders to leverage these to better understand one another and to effectively pursue transformative partnerships.
- Explore the seven criteria used to evaluate the transformation potential of a partnership.
- Examine the chapter and appendix on 14 well-established partnership success factors—particularly the four identified as most important for partnerships with transformative ambitions—to maximize operational effectiveness. (We also have provided a section with six guidelines for creating great MELR systems.)
- Learn more about the dozens of partnerships mentioned in this report to see how their work can inform existing and new partnerships with goals to accelerate the SDGs.









## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Multistakeholder partnerships – that is, voluntary collaborations whereby stakeholders are committed through a formal agreement to share resources, accountability, risks, leadership, and benefits – are seen as a vital ingredient for success in reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite the growing number of partnerships that have emerged, truly transformative partnerships are difficult to find. This report offers extensive research findings coupled with practical guidance and recommendations for partnership practitioners to help them establish and accelerate a transformative SDG vision.



## Multistakeholder Partnerships and the Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, the governments of the world adopted the landmark United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and then, just three months later, signed the Paris Climate Agreement. These historic and unprecedented agreements set ambitious goals for achieving no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, reduced inequality, and climate action. Among the SDGs, the last goal, SDG 17, is sustainable development through partnerships, the topic of this report.

We adapt the United Nations definition of multistakeholder partnership and define multistakeholder partnerships as a voluntary collaboration between two or more stakeholders, whereby stakeholders are committed through a formal agreement to share resources, accountability, risks, leadership, and benefits to meet a specific SDG-related objective (UN 2015).

There are literally thousands of multistakeholder partnerships created among governments, businesses, civil society, and other organizations focused on the SDGs. While the work of some of these partnerships and other initiatives have helped contribute to progress on many of the SDGs, great challenges remain, especially as the world faces the triple threat of a global pandemic, economic recession, and growing climate threat. We don't necessarily need more partnerships, we need more of existing and future partnerships to accelerate their progress on addressing systemic issues like poverty, hunger, social and racial equity, and climate change.

Partnerships can mobilize resources, increase collaboration, and create new solutions to the world's greatest challenges. There is great hope for partnerships as well as a growing sentiment that transformation is required to drive real sustainability action. These transformative partnerships, however, are difficult to find (Torres-Rahman et al. 2018; Stibbe et al. 2018; BCSD 2017), and those that do exist have yet to fully deliver on their transformation goals (Stibbe et al. 2018;

Peterson et al. n.d.; Stern 2017; KS et al. 2016; Dahiya and Okitasari 2018). And so, in this report we focus on partnerships with transformative ambition, and study the characteristics of these partnerships to understand the progress they are making toward their transformation goals for sustainable development. It is our hope that, over time, more partnerships will move from ones with transformative ambitions to ones with transformative success in helping the world achieve the SDGs and the commitments made under the Paris Agreement.

### Report Objectives and Target Audience

This report aims to contribute to the emerging research on transformative multistakeholder partnerships. Currently, three of the major knowledge gaps in partnerships research are a lack of understanding around the concept of transformation and its integration into a partnership's vision and objectives (Clarke and Crane 2018; Hargreaves 2010; Kania et al. 2018; Maassen and Galvin 2019), how best to leverage the motivations and strengths of each partner in a partnership (Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Dalberg 2020; Stibbe and Prescott 2020), and proper implementation of commonly reported partnering success factors (Dalberg 2020; BCSD 2017; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). We seek to address these knowledge gaps by asking the question, "How can partnerships with transformative ambitions maximize their effectiveness toward driving SDG action?"

Collaboration is widely acknowledged as critical to meeting the bold and interconnected goals outlined in the SDGs, and SDG 17 tells us that we need partnerships to implement the others (Bos et al. 2016; KPMG International 2016; Stibbe and Prescott et al. 2020). As such, this report starts with the premise that partnerships are a desired way to accelerate transformative SDG action. We do not set out to prove whether or not partnerships are a desired way to pursue change, nor do we highlight failed partnerships, as assessing both are entirely different research questions. We also do

not explicitly discuss the transformation impacts of partnerships since most are early in their partnership journey without end impacts to share just yet. We do, however, discuss partnerships' progress toward transformation goals and hope to report on longer-term impacts in future editions of this publication, once partnerships have had more time to mature. Although we don't explicitly seek out failed partnerships, we discuss partnership challenges and provide recommendations for improving partnership resilience.

Our offerings are distinct because we weave together existing partnership and transformation research and empirically examine partnerships with transformative ambitions. We draw from a litany of academic and gray literature on transformation and systems change theory, multistakeholder partnership success factors and challenges, and systems change evaluation as well as dozens of conversations with partnership experts and practitioners from government, academia, business, CSOs, and of course, partnerships themselves. We analyze a unique cohort of partnerships from the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) ecosystem—partnerships funded by P4G in 2018 and 2019 and also shortlisted partnerships to P4G's State-of-the-Art (SOTA) Partnership Awards program—to better understand how partnerships with transformation potential maximize their effectiveness toward SDG action. (See Box 1 and Appendix C for more detail on these P4G partnerships.)

Partnerships, of course, are not always the panacea to solve all sustainable development challenges and can present high transaction costs. A vital step in setting up a partnership is the determination of whether or not partnering is the right approach. If the outcome of the partnership will be greater than what would have happened individually through the actions of any given stakeholder or a different partnering arrangement, and if transaction costs are manageable with a projected and worthwhile return on investment, then stakeholders should proceed.



We hope this report will be helpful to the stakeholders often seen in partnership: governments, businesses, and CSOs. These stakeholders may come together in a variety of combinations, and this report’s findings are relevant to all, especially those that strive for transformative SDG action.

## Report Organization

The report is organized in three subsequent chapters, each of which addresses the aforementioned knowledge gaps:

- **Chapter 2. Transformation.** In this chapter, we discuss three key characteristics of transformation. Partnerships can use these characteristics as guiding lights for their transformation goals. We also present different partnership pathways to transformation.
- **Chapter 3. Stakeholders.** Multistakeholder partnerships can require a high level of coordination, so having a clear understanding of stakeholder contributions is essential to reducing transaction costs and defining clear roles and responsibilities. By exploring each partnership practitioner—governments, businesses and CSOs—we help stakeholders understand each other just a bit better.

### BOX 1 | Report Notes and Caveats

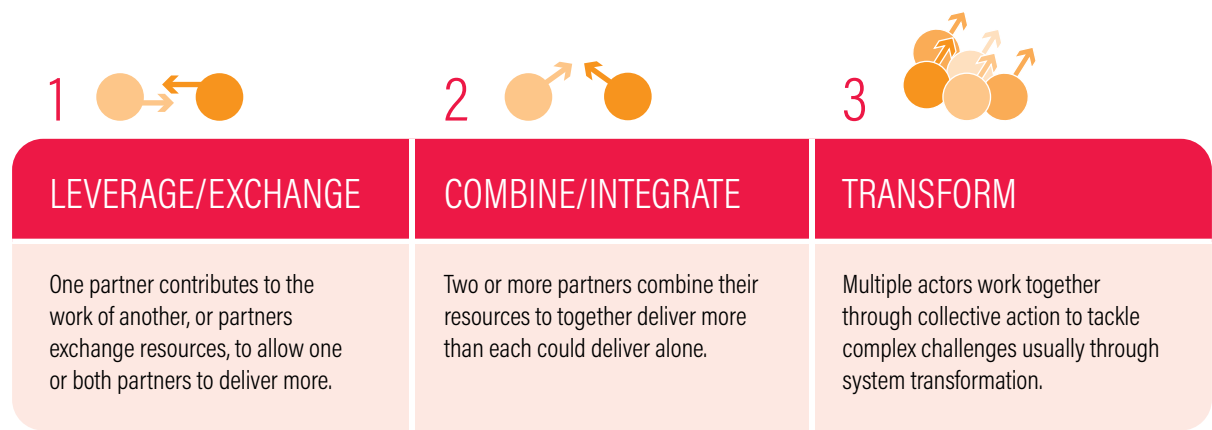
#### Partnerships of Interest

This report is focused on multistakeholder partnerships that have a vision to accelerate progress on the SDGs. We adapt the United Nations definition of multistakeholder partnership and define a multistakeholder partnership as a voluntary collaboration between two or more stakeholders, whereby stakeholders are committed through a formal agreement to share resources, accountability, risks, leadership, and benefits to meet a specific SDG-related objective (UN 2015).

There are many types of partnerships that differ in composition and aim. One useful framing provided by The Partnership Initiative (Stibbe et al. 2018) describes three broad categories

(Figure B1-1). At the left end of the spectrum, we see straightforward relationships that support a common goal and address a specific, easy-to-define problem—for example, two parties coming together for a simple financial transaction, or a business working with a manufacturer in its supply chain to produce a product. At the right end of the spectrum, we see more dynamic arrangements involving multiple stakeholders working across sectors, often on complex challenges in larger-scale systems (Stibbe et al. 2018). These multistakeholder transformative partnerships are ambitious and desire to transform systems from working on an unsustainable pathway to a sustainable pathway aligned with the SDGs.

Figure B1-1 | Types of Partnerships



Source: Stibbe et al. 2018.



## BOX 1 | Report Notes and Caveats (cont.)

We are interested in these transformative partnerships that include stakeholders from government, business, and CSOs (e.g., nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations and academia). We view these three major stakeholder types as especially critical for transformation and accelerating the SDGs. Government, for its vital role in providing public services and establishing policies, regulations, and laws; business for its ability to innovate and leverage finance as well as its influence in supply chains; and CSOs for their focus on equity, human rights, and access to communities and people (Stibbe and Prescott 2020). Chapter 2 provides further information on transformation objectives and pathways that these partnerships may seek, as well as examples of transformation-seeking partnerships.

### Primary Research—P4G Partnerships

Although this report is targeted toward all transformation-focused multistakeholder partnerships, the primary research that underlies Chapter 4's findings on success factors was drawn based on a survey and evaluation of partnerships from the partnership accelerator, P4G, which works to accelerate commercially focused partnerships in five SDG areas—the circular economy, cities, energy, food, and water—through funding, technical assistance, networking support, and knowledge sharing. With WRI as an organizing partner for P4G, our report research team had unique access to P4G partnerships, allowing us to test current findings on success factors with a group of partnerships specifically seeking transformation to drive the SDGs. However, we note that despite P4G's commercial focus, findings from this chapter are applicable to non-commercially focused multistakeholder partnerships because our study of success factors is drawn from a broader, all-inclusive review of partnership best practices.

### Other Partnership Stakeholders

We recognize that transformative partnerships are not limited to government, business, and CSOs and that other stakeholder types may play a critical role. These include, for example, foundations, donors, investors, communities, and citizen groups (Stibbe and Prescott 2020). These stakeholders are discussed briefly in Chapter 4 as a part of a partnership's supportive network of external stakeholders, but it is important to note that they can also be important core partners. Sustainable finance practices like green bonds, for instance, have matured over the years, and providers of finance—capital providers, financiers, philanthropies—are finding recognition in a category of their own.

Community and citizen groups are also most often indirectly represented by CSOs in partnerships, although there are some instances when citizens are expressly noted as a key partnership stakeholder, such as with the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA), which considers indigenous people and communities to be formal partners. Both are critical partners in TFA's mission to reduce commodity-driven deforestation globally, whether they are the smallholder farmers felling trees or bystanders negatively affected by systemic deforestation.

### Glossary

This report references many terms—e.g., *transformation*, *transformative change*, *system*, *multistakeholder partnership*—that are further defined in the glossary. (See Glossary.)

- **Chapter 4. Transformation Success Factors.** Here we present a unique analysis of partnership success factors, drawing from the insights of 41 partnerships in the P4G ecosystem that are pursuing transformation on sustainable development. Using a new method to evaluate how well partnerships are meeting their transformation goals, we highlight four success factors in which partnerships with high transformation potential were especially intentional in terms of implementation compared to those with lower transformation potential. We offer accompanying guidance for partnerships to set themselves up for

success (while also reflecting on challenges that partnerships may face) and detail the stories of some notable partnerships in their journeys to achieve the SDGs.

Ultimately, our hope is that this report will emphasize the importance of transformation as the new sustainable development model of the 21st century, inspire individual stakeholders to rethink current activities and shift partnering models as appropriate, and help existing partnerships expand their strategic purview with transformation at the center, whether they already intend to drive transformative actions or not.





## CHAPTER 2

# WHAT IS TRANSFORMATION IN THE PARTNERSHIP CONTEXT?

*Transformation* has certainly been a buzz word as of late, but what does it actually mean in a partnership context? This chapter explores the three characteristics of transformation and presents a transformative partnership continuum, both of which can help partnerships frame their transformation journeys and set an impact-oriented pathway forward.



The idea of transformation is very alluring. At first blush, transformation suggests a dramatic shift, the unveiling of something new or different from a prior form. In some ways, transformation has become the rallying cry in this Decade of Action. It is a warning, a plea, a necessity.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Global Assessment, for instance, notes that “the world needs transformative change if life on Earth is to be safeguarded and people are to continue to receive the services and benefits that nature provides” (UNEP and CBD 2019). This sentiment is echoed by numerous other sustainable development–focused publications, including the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, which cautions that “much more needs to happen—and quickly—to bring about the transformative changes that are required” (UN 2019), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that, in order to put the world on a 1.5°C climate trajectory, the world will need “fundamental societal and systems transitions and transformations” (IPCC 2018).

What is transformation? Definitions abound across fields of study and sectors (Clarke and Crane 2018; Maassen and Galvin 2019; Mersmann et al. 2014; ICAT 2019; GeSI and Accenture, 2016; UN 2019; TWI2050 2018; WBCSD 2020), and we recognize that interpretations of transformation are diverse and often discussed, especially as of late. However, research on transformative partnerships is still limited, making it easier to offer an early viewpoint. And so, through an assessment of recent research and reports, three key commonalities of transformation emerge:

- Transformation is systemic.
- Transformation is long-term and sustained.
- Transformation disrupts the status quo.

## Three Characteristics of Transformation

### 1. Transformation Is Systemic.

Earlier, we presented the many complexities of a system. Transformation means that changes have percolated through any given system, altering the interrelationships and interdependencies of its parts to influence new paradigms (Denoncourt 2017; IBRD 2016; Puri 2018). For example, to shift the food system to a more sustainable model, there need to be changes in food production itself, but also in the surrounding ecosystem—that which is related to technology, policies, infrastructure, education, and more. Each of these changes involves different actors at different levels and geographies. Change must permeate through all these layers, adjusting the three layers of aforementioned systems conditions in a way such that society ultimately values and views food in a manner fundamentally different than before. And while one partnership or actor is never solely responsible for driving the entire transformation, it can make contributions to influence a movement. These complexities add an element of unpredictability to transformation; actions at one level can have disproportionate impacts elsewhere (Olsen et al. 2018; Larson 2018).

We will see the immense importance of systems understanding in Chapter 4, which provides guidance to partnerships on how they can better think about transformation by adjusting or building their performance tracking system to include “systems thinking.”

### 2. Transformation Is Long-Term and Sustained.

Transformation cannot be rushed. Many actors across different roles, levels, and geographies work over time to create positive systemic change (Olsen et al. 2018; Westphal and Thwaites 2016; IBRD 2016). The rate at which transformation takes place also varies. Acceptance of novel technologies, business models, products, or practices can move slowly at first, then leap forward as windows of

## BOX 2 | Transformation Concepts and Characteristics

### Transformation vs. Systems Change: A Clarification

*Transformation* and *systems change* are frequently referenced terms associated with the sweeping transitions required for 2030 action. The first term is often used by the sustainable development community, whereas the second is seen more often in the academic literature. These terms are often conflated. Transformative change is frequently referenced as being systemic (ICAT 2019; Gass 2011; Cummings and Worley 2014), and systemic change is referenced as being transformative (Kania 2018; Clarke and Crane 2018). Some recent publications even make reference to the SDG change required as “systems transformation,” further combining the two terms (WBCSD 2020; GeSI and Accenture 2016). Given the circular relationship between the two terms, this report considers them the same. Overall, *transformation* is similar to “*systems change*” in that both refer to an action that happens to a construct, the system, and fulfill the same three characteristics identified in this report.

### What Is a System?

Broadly speaking, systems comprise elements and interconnections, with a function or purpose (Meadows 2008). Elements can include an array of diverse actors, institutions, and geographies operating across multiple levels and scales that, together, often form a whole greater than the sum of the parts (Holland 1998). Interconnections are the relationships and power dynamics among elements that ultimately define the characteristics of the system or the pathways by which the function or the purpose of the system is achieved.

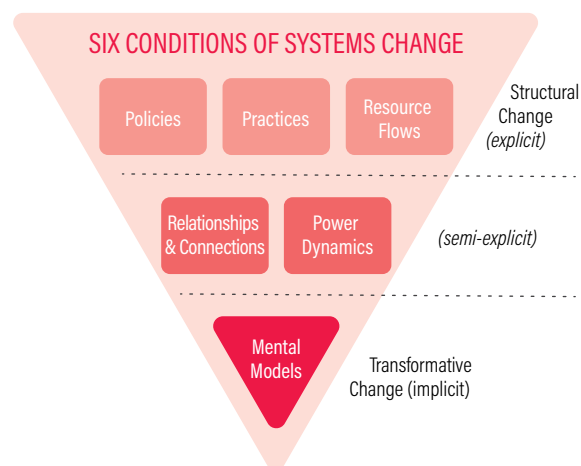
Take, for example, the global food system, which aims to feed the world’s 8 billion people. Elements are the actors and institutions operating across multiple scales and levels, such as farmers growing crops; agricultural conglomerates buying, processing, and distributing food products; research labs developing new seed varieties; governments setting agricultural trade policies; consumers purchasing the food; and animals farmed for consumption. Interconnections include the relationships among these various elements, such as the markets and value chains that make connecting consumers with farmers possible (WBCSD 2020).

A system is also full of complexities. Systems may overlap, nest, and network (Von Bertalanffy 1955; Barabasi 2002). For example, pig farming and soy farming can be independent practices with their own dynamics and markets, although soy is also produced for pig feed, in which case soy farming may also be nested within the animal farming subsystem. Or, consider also that food systems are intricately connected with water systems.

The characteristics and strength of a system’s elements and interconnections determine how well a system is aligned with a sustainable development pathway. For example, although the food system keeps billions of people on our planet nourished, market and governance failures have resulted in severe issues of malnutrition and/or issues of food loss and waste in many parts of the world.

A helpful transformation framework is offered by Kania et al. (2018), which discusses three conditions of a system (explicit, semi-explicit, and implicit) that need to be changed for transformation to occur (Figure B2-1). Explicit conditions—that is, tangible changes in policies, practices, and resources flows—are the easiest to shift. Semi-explicit conditions—the interconnections like relationships between actors and institutions or power dynamics among elements—are more difficult to shift. Implicit conditions—mental models or cultural mind-sets—are the most difficult to change. Shifting all three leads to true transformation within a system.

Figure B2-1 | Three Levels of Systems Change



Source: Adapted from Kania et al. 2018.

It is important to note that systems can exist at multiple scales (Hargreaves 2010). That is, a food system could refer to a specific country’s system or to a specific commodity. A local food system would also influence a regional and global food system. Given the complexities, it is important for partnerships to establish boundaries in their system of focus.



opportunity emerge or when the adoption of a new approach reaches a tipping point. Some events—such as a rapid change in public opinion, a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, or the overturning of a regime—can create conditions to accelerate this change. Alternatively, there could be moments of lagging even after a point of acceleration. Regardless, true transformational change needs to last if it is to effectively deliver on the goals of this Decade of Action and set the world on a more sustainable pathway.

Understanding this characteristic for partnerships, it will be important for partnerships to identify important windows of opportunity, closed doors, and a potential timeline for how their activities will fit into a larger systems transformation. Chapter 4 and Appendix B explore the importance of this in relation to vision setting.

### **3. Transformation Disrupts the Status Quo.**

Transformation starts with the introduction of something novel into an existing system. This could be represented by a different approach that improves on the existing state, an innovative

technology that brings about unexpected change, or a shift in ideology or culture that represents a new framing for action (Puri 2018).

Inevitably, introducing a new way of doing things will result in winners and losers (Dentoni et al. 2018). As such, transformation can encounter resistance, particularly from those who have benefited from the existing system, stand to lose from changes, or perceive that they will be left behind. These tensions are to be expected and must be addressed in order to equitably implement sustainable development transformations in line with the SDGs. Identifying how transformative action will affect different populations, particularly vulnerable groups, and mitigating potential conflict early on is essential.

Disruption of the status quo is evident in greater detail throughout this report. In Chapter 3, for instance, we will discuss the new technologies and innovations that businesses bring forth in partnerships, as well as signals to spur innovation and scale up action brought about by governments. In Chapter 4, we further discuss the role of 21st-century technologies as an enabler of partnerships.



### BOX 3 | Transformation Characteristics in Action

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, founded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the World Bank, brings together private-sector vaccine manufacturers, local governments, and CSOs to provide equitable access to vaccines in low-income countries. The partnership focuses on the entire vaccination life cycle to address the root causes of low vaccination rates in developing countries. This involves upstream strategies, such as shaping vaccine markets by pooling vaccine demand and securing long-term funding, and downstream strategies, such as addressing health infrastructure weaknesses and social factors that negatively affect immunization access. The partnership is widely acknowledged as innovative and highly effective (Treichel et al. 2017; Stern et al. 2015). Founded in 2000, the partnership has helped to vaccinate almost half the world's children, preventing over 13 million deaths to date through routine immunization programs (Gavi 2020). Three of its programmatic elements in particular illustrate the characteristics of transformation in a partnership context.

#### Systemic

Core to Gavi's theory of change is the idea that effective and sustainable immunization programs require functioning local health systems. Gavi works to understand and address system failures across health care delivery systems by partnering with national governments to invest in health care worker training, logistics, data collection and management, and health leadership. These activities contributed to a 7 percent increase in the number of Gavi-supported countries meeting the partnership's integrated health service delivery metric between 2015 and 2018—meaning that antenatal care and neonatal tetanus, pentavalent, and measles vaccine rates are all within 10 percentage points of each other and above 70 percent (Gavi 2020). Gavi also addresses social factors and mental models affecting vaccination access by helping countries identify gender-related immunization barriers and implementing strategies to mitigate them. For instance, because the burden of children's health care often falls on women, Gavi works to involve men in caretaking activities so that both men and women are equally responsible for ensuring children's access to vaccinations.

#### Long-term and sustained

Gavi's long-term goal is for countries to fully support their own vaccination programs. Countries finance an increasing proportion of their vaccine costs based on national income and enter a

five-year transition out of Gavi financial support once they reach an eligibility threshold. Since 2016, all transitioned countries have continued to buy vaccines at the same price previously available through Gavi. Countries also benefit from the partnership's focus on strengthening health care systems. Sri Lanka, for instance, was one of the first countries to transition out of Gavi support. It has maintained a vaccination level of 99 percent and is now working to expand its vaccination schedule (Berkeley 2019). Market-shaping activities also have lasting effects. The cost of fully immunizing a child with all 11 WHO-recommended childhood vaccines is now at \$28 in Gavi-supported countries, compared to about \$1,100 in the United States. Additionally, nearly all countries that have transitioned out of Gavi support continue to purchase vaccines at the same price negotiated by the partnership. To date, 15 countries have transitioned out of Gavi support, and an additional 4 are on track to do so by the end of 2020.

#### Disrupts the status quo

Gavi aims to remove commercial risks that prevent vaccine manufacturers from serving low-income countries. It does this by pooling country vaccine demand, giving the partnership strong negotiating power, building competition, and driving down overall vaccine costs. Through its Advance Market Commitment (AMC) scheme, for instance, Gavi secures donor purchasing agreements and establishes predictable demand, incentivizing pharmaceutical companies to supply affordable vaccines to developing countries, thereby accelerating the development of novel vaccines. Under usual market conditions, it takes 10 to 15 years for a vaccine introduced in a high-income country to be available in a low-income country. In a pilot with pneumococcal vaccines in 2009, AMC enabled new formulations of the vaccine to be available to low-income countries within a year of being introduced in high-income countries. More recently, Gavi committed to purchasing doses of an Ebola vaccine before one was approved, incentivizing manufacturers to invest in development despite the low purchasing power of countries most likely to be affected. This reduced the vaccine development timeline from five or six years to just two (Gavi 2020).

## Transformative Partnership Continuum

We have observed that partnerships with transformative ambitions broadly achieve their transformation goals through policy and practices (enabling partnerships) and/or the launch of a commercial product or service (market-driven partnerships). We have developed a continuum (Figure 1) to capture a typology of partnerships in accordance with these intermediate goals. The partnerships found on this continuum are the more complex partnerships that this report is interested in (and also highlighted earlier in Figure B-1)—that is, partnerships comprising multiple stakeholders working together through collective action to tackle complex challenges through systems transformation. Partnerships that wouldn't fit on this continuum are ones with more straightforward and direct goals without an eye for systemic changes, such traditional development partnerships that focus on a singular, time-bound project, or infrastructure-focused public-private partnerships.

Although we recognize that it is challenging, or perhaps even impossible, to develop the perfect framework to capture every transformative partnership out there, our hope is that this continuum, based on our research and observations, is a starter to help partnerships understand the potential pathways of transformation that they can follow as they mature in their partnership journeys.

### Enabling Partnerships

Enabling partnerships largely work through the power of convening stakeholders within an industry, supply chain, sector, or issue area to exchange knowledge and set standards of practice

or commitments to move actors more quickly to a sustainable development pathway. There are a few types of enabling partnerships:

- Those focused on sharing knowledge—collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information—to support activities that advance a more sustainable world.
- Those focused on convening stakeholders to set standards or create new practices that foster more sustainable practices. Often in the form of roundtables and voluntary commitments, these partnerships encourage good governance around the SDGs and help engage businesses in SDG action by reducing risks of being the first mover in a sector.
- Those that create market conditions to transform a system such that commercial approaches or investments are feasible in the future. These partnerships themselves may not have a business model, however.

### Market-Driven Partnerships

Market-driven partnerships use the power of market signals and forces to drive sustainable change by launching a commercially viable product or service. Although these partnerships can be motivated by drivers that go beyond making short-term profits, (e.g., strengthening relationships with other stakeholders, helping a local community, etc.), these partnerships ultimately strive to develop a model that launches a commercial new product or service and are often reliant on innovative policies or concessions or innovative combinations of both.

Figure 1 | Transformative Partnership Continuum



Source: WRI Authors.



By executing against a successful business model, these partnerships can then work to scale up their solutions to achieve transformative impacts.

#### Partnership Movement along the Continuum

A partnership's place on this continuum can be fluid, meaning that it might start off at one place, but end up at another. For instance, a partnership with the goal of launching a commercial product or service may start out as an enabling partnership in order to shape the policy or market conditions needed to operate successfully. A partnership can also remain firmly in place. For instance, a roundtable or voluntary commitment-based partnership may just want to develop the practices and standards to encourage a sustainability, without aim to become commercially viable itself or shape a specific policy. Most partnerships balance some elements of both enabling and market-driven activities.

#### Placing Partnerships along the Continuum

**Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy:** The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE, Figure 2), hosted by WRI, connects public- and private-sector leaders with cutting-edge knowledge on the circular economy and catalyzes new initiatives to pilot and scale best practices that drive the transition toward a circular economy. PACE then captures

and translates lessons from these projects into replicable frameworks and approaches. Although new projects and partnerships stem from PACE, the primary goal of the partnership is knowledge sharing, with the long-term aim of transitioning all actors across multiple sectors, including plastics, textiles, and agriculture, to circular practices (WRI 2020).

Figure 2 | Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy



Source: WRI Authors.

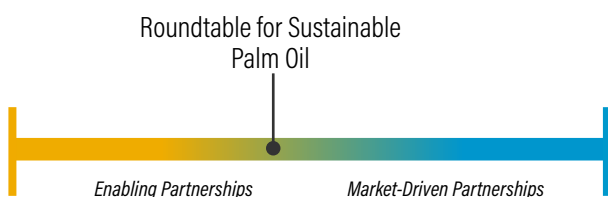
**The Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil:** The Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO, Figure 3) is a coalition of members across the palm oil supply chain, including businesses, governments, and CSOs. RSPO seeks to transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the new status quo. RSPO operates on principles of





commitment, collaboration, and accountability. Among other activities, RSPO works to achieve its transformation objective by creating a supportive policy environment through government engagement, getting businesses (e.g., palm oil producers, processors, traders, manufacturers, retailers, and investors) to align on standards and commitments across the supply chain, and getting CSO support to help develop standards and monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure accountability. RSPO also works to match supply and demand to shore up the long-term security of supply.

Figure 3 | **Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil**

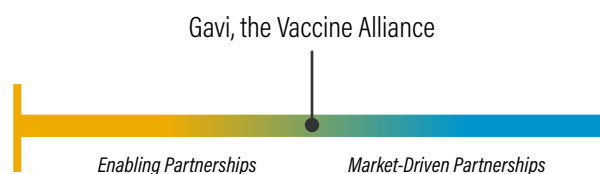


Source: WRI Authors.

**Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance:** Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Figure 4), seeks to transform the vaccine market to increase access to vaccines in emerging economies. Although the partnership's ultimate goal is to transition Gavi countries out of Gavi

support, the partnership itself is not seeking to become commercially viable. Instead, it focuses on market-shaping activities, including bundling demand among countries and working closely with governments and local CSOs to strengthen health care delivery systems.

Figure 4 | **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**



Source: WRI Authors.

### **Zero Emission Rapid Bus-Deployment Accelerator:**

The Zero Emission Rapid Bus-Deployment Accelerator (ZEBRA, Figure 5) aims to transform public transportation systems in Mexico City, Medellín, and São Paulo by transitioning public bus systems from diesel to electric buses. The partnership, led by the International Council on Clean Transportation and C40 Cities, started by working with local governments to address underlying policy barriers to electric bus implementation. In Medellín, for instance, these efforts resulted in the city committing to shift to



zero-emission bus purchases by 2030. As these efforts have progressed, ZEBRA has become more involved in the commercial aspects of the partnership, working with developers, electric bus suppliers, and operators that meet local needs and are financially sustainable over time.

Figure 5 | Zero Emission Rapid Bus-Deployment Accelerator



Source: WRI Authors.

**Africa GreenCo:** Africa GreenCo (Figure 6), a partnership among African governments, the private sector, and international financial institutions, aims to address Africa's energy deficiencies by taking a regional approach to improve the bankability of renewable energy projects. By establishing a creditworthy intermediary offtaker and power service provider, Africa GreenCo will reduce the investment risk and cost of renewable energy projects, attracting

private-sector investment, and shifting investment focus from single project development to the regional energy sector as a whole. Africa GreenCo leverages the interconnected nature of the regional electricity grid and demonstrates the benefits of regional trade. The economic and development benefits of this model incentivize public and private stakeholders to coordinate in creating an enabling environment for the partnership. Once operational, Africa GreenCo will allow governments to earn dividends from equity ownership, reduce the need for energy-sector subsidies, and support country governments in attaining their Nationally Determined Contributions and SDG targets. Private investors benefit from reduced risk and shorter development lead times through offtaker arrangements, and utilities reduce their operational costs while increasing installed capacity.

Figure 6 | Africa GreenCo



Source: WRI Authors.







## CHAPTER 3

# PARTNERSHIP STAKEHOLDERS: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CAUTIONS

While establishing clear roles and responsibilities is critical in a well-functioning partnership, stakeholders – governments, businesses and CSOs – don't always fully understand the offerings others can bring to the partnership. This chapter explores stakeholders' contributions to partnerships with transformation ambitions, such that they can leverage each other's core capacities to support a successful partnership.





## Stakeholder Contributions to Transformative Partnerships

Forming a partnership is not easy. It involves finding the right partners, making commitments, signing legal documents, and allocating time and resources to ensure a fruitful collaboration. Bringing together stakeholders from governments, businesses, and CSOs with ambitious goals for SDG transformation raises the stakes even higher.

This chapter provides a look at the key contributions of each stakeholder to help partnerships identify how best to leverage each other's skill sets and define partnership roles and responsibilities. Stakeholders must agree on how to reach their partnership goals and who has oversight on the different elements required to get there. (We will discuss again, too, this importance of partnership roles and responsibilities in the success factors presented in Chapter 4 and Appendix B.) Knowing why one stakeholder wants to work with another can help to facilitate a smooth relationship between partners, and also ensure that partners are properly sourced (Dalberg 2020; Stibbe and Prescott 2020). Our hope is that with a clear understanding of what each stakeholder brings to the table, partnership practitioners will be able to better align on a united vision, which is a critical success factor for transformative partnerships.

## Research Methods

Our research on the contributions of governments, businesses, and CSOs is informed by a combination of literature reviews, insight from government policy and climate experts at GGGI, and interviews with 30 sustainability and partnership leaders in businesses and CSOs, drawn from WRI's extensive international network. Each contribution is further illustrated with an example (found in the chapter's boxes). More details on the methodology and the organizations interviewed are available in Appendix A.

## Chapter Flow

In this chapter, we present the three main partnership stakeholders—governments, business and CSOs—and discuss their contributions to partnerships (Figure 7). The discussion here is not intended to be all-inclusive, as it reflects the findings from our research and interviews. We also look at how the stakeholder contributions tie back to the three aforementioned transformation characteristics noted in Chapter 2—systemic, long-term and sustained, and disruptive of the status quo—and provide a few words of caution to consider before entering into a multistakeholder partnership.

Figure 7 | Stakeholder Contributions in Transformative Partnerships



*Sources:* Albani and Henderson 2014; Brouwer et al. 2016; Collison et al. 2014; Enright et al. 2018; G20 2015; GCPSE and UNDP n.d.; GGGI 2019; Gomme and Perks 2018; Hofstetter 2019; Horan 2019; Jenkins et al. 2017; Kamphof and Melissen 2017; KPMG International 2016; Melo 2018; Ménascé 2016; Menden et al. 2019; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Podder and Singh 2018; PWC 2017; Poret 2014; Seitanidi 2015; Stibbe and Prescott 2017; Stibbe et al. 2018; UN DESA 2019; UNGC 2013; UNGC, WMB and WRI 2018; Urmetzer et al. 2017; USCIB 2015; Van der Vleuten 2019; WBCSD 2016; WBCSD 2020.

#### Government Contributions to Transformative Partnerships

Governments are faced with increasingly complex and interlinked development challenges, many of which can only be overcome by delivering transformative solutions (GRI et al. 2015). Government participation is key to creating an enabling environment for partnerships, coordinating resources, unlocking new funding sources, driving market demand and reducing investment risks through the provision of incentives. In turn, partnerships also benefit governments by helping them break out of bureaucratic stagnation and develop new systems and services to deliver solutions to citizens. Also, as a note, the discussion here has relevance to all governments, regardless of level (local, municipal, federal).

#### ■ Strong Enabling Environment:

Governments can facilitate a strong enabling environment by creating the right policy or regulatory environment for change, thereby setting the conditions for other stakeholders to act (Collison et al. 2014). This can have positive run-on effects for society and simultaneously support government priorities and economic growth. Businesses, for example, can align their business models and future strategies according to the signals that governments send (PWC, 2017; World Bank 2020). Governments can also maximize positive ambition loops within their own administrations or foreign governments. Ambition loops are positive feedback loops that enable stakeholders to fast-track action on the SDGs and create impacts that surpass what any party could



do alone (UNGC, WMB and WRI 2018; PWC 2017). National governments may establish a regulatory and institutional environment that influences positive action among its local, state, and regional counterparts, or vice versa. Given that governments can be very politically motivated, knowing that other sectors and governments desire a sustainable development pathway can give governments more political leverage to act. Governments may also inspire and motivate other governments to work in partnerships for sustainable development. Equally, when creating partnerships, governments might legitimize the participation of other actors, allowing them to participate in topics where they have little expertise but can contribute to create value.

- **Platform Initiation:** Governments can initiate platforms to build relationships among industry stakeholders, helping them find productive partnering opportunities that are aligned with the government's priorities for sustainable development (Stibbe et al. 2018). Such platforms create a podium for collaborating in areas where multistakeholder participation is considered most crucial and is a way in which governments can set ambitions on sustainability. These platforms also allow governments to pool resources that can help scale the most effective cross-sector partnerships (Dahiya and Okitasari 2018).

#### BOX 4 | City Support Programme

In 2011, South Africa established its City Support Programme (CSP), a long-term policy framework to help cities overcome apartheid planning and the spatial inequality hindering urban development and to strengthen collaboration across sectors and spheres of government for inclusive economic growth (National Treasury 2015a). As one of CSP's beneficiaries and partners, Johannesburg reinforced this national-level plan with its Strategic Development Framework, prioritizing affordable housing and public transportation services and implementing the Corridors of Freedom project, which helped the city overcome apartheid planning schemes (Pieterse and Owens 2018). By aligning goals and working together across different levels of the government, projects like the Corridors of Freedom can lead to transformational changes to a city's social and economic landscape. In 2015, CSP strengthened its Built Environment Performance Plan, (BEPP) a grant framework to encourage implementation of urban development projects in integration zones with a focus on informal settlements and marginalized areas (National Treasury 2015b). The updated BEPP incentivizes other cities to follow the integrated approach demonstrated by the Corridors of Freedom project.



Source: WRI Authors.

#### BOX 5 | Alianza por la Sostenibilidad

The Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation platform, Alianza por la Sostenibilidad (AxS), creates a space where companies can discuss, promote, and collaborate on projects that support the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (OECD 2018b; GOB 2020). This exchange can accelerate the speed at which companies pursue sustainability actions with transformation potential. Walmart, for instance, is leading a pilot project as a part of the AxS to cut electricity and refrigeration energy use in three stores in Mexico. The retail giant is sharing its strategy and results with other actors in its supply chain so that it can help to replicate the intervention in other parts of the country (GOB 2018).



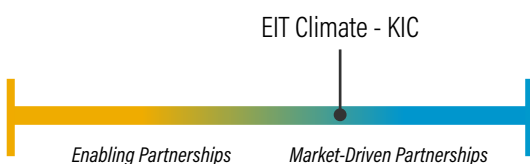
Source: WRI Authors.

- **Signals That Spur Innovation and Scale Up Action:** Governments can deploy capital investments to trigger significant and sustained change (Hofstetter 2019), which, of course, is one of the aforementioned characteristics of transformation. Such strategic investments can accelerate the adoption of sustainable technological solutions that create positive social impact while nudging the behavior of other investors. Investments can take many forms, such as risk mitigation and insurance products, subsidy and rebate schemes, and funds that pool both government and business resources to enhance access to finance for sustainable businesses models (G20 2015; Hofstetter 2019). Moreover, once innovation is present, the government plays a key role in scaling-up its implementation.

- **Support for Innovation:** Governments are sometimes the masterminds behind the development of new technologies, products, or business models, and even if not, they can help drive innovation in other sectors to meet societal needs. Innovative ideas can help disrupt the status quo and drive transformation. Governments have a bird's-eye view of different groups' interests, norms, and expectations. Using this information, they can create innovation incentives such as grants, awards, or other recognition, to help the private sector and CSOs set innovation priorities where they are most needed (Urmetzer et al. 2017). Governments may want to advance new ideas or technologies, especially to address the SDGs, to drive innovation (GCPSE and UNDP n.d.; UN DESA 2019).

### BOX 6 | EIT Climate-KIC

Convened by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union, EIT Climate-KIC is a knowledge and innovation community that identifies and scales transformative products and services that will accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy. The partnership does this by investing in capacity building and providing seed funding to the most promising climate-positive business. Supported by public and private funding, including an annual grant from the European Union, the program incentivizes entrepreneurs to channel innovation toward four focus areas: urban transitions, sustainable land use, sustainable production systems, and financial mechanisms to mobilize capital toward climate action. EIT Climate-KIC programs have supported over 1,000 start-ups and attracted over \$500 million in investment (Climate-KIC 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.

### BOX 7 | Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum

Comprising 25 country governments, the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum (CSLFF) aims to catalyze the development and deployment of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology by fostering innovation efforts within government, industry, and academia (CSLF 2020). Member governments, including those of Australia, China, India, Korea, Russia, United Arab Emirates, and South Africa, work to support CCS directly through program development and indirectly by working to create an enabling legal, financial, and regulatory environment for CCS innovation. To date, CSLF has supported over 30 CCS projects (Hultman et al. 2016).



Source: WRI Authors.



- **Just Transition:** The process of transformative change often results in winners and losers. To make transitions just and reduce opposition, governments can use policy instruments to either compensate losers or help them better participate in the transition and come out on the winning end (Horan 2019). Having a government as part of a partnership provides greater leverage for mitigating the losses that may come as a result of the transformative change the partnership seeks (IRENA 2020). When facilitating a just transition, governments are simultaneously changing policies, practices, and resource flows (explicit conditions), shifting relationships and connections (semi-explicit conditions), and encouraging a different mental model and way of doing things—touching on all the characteristics necessary to drive systemic change.

- **Unlocked Access to Finance:** Governments can unlock financial sources or add additional resources specifically for achieving the SDGs that require global cooperation. The global agenda for development supports governments, particularly those of developing nations, in accessing different financing mechanisms, such as concessional loans for development assistance, non-concessional international finance from multilateral development banks, and grants from international funds through bilateral commitments between governments. Seeking initial funding from governments can help partnerships build and validate their value propositions as they build support from donors or investors (Enright et al. 2018). Operationally speaking, funding helps to extend the life of a partnership and its activities, aiding the long-term and sustained nature of transformation. Additionally, governments can spark or redirect private-sector investment in non-mainstream sectors like energy efficiency by providing the adequate incentives.

## BOX 8 | Powering Past Coal Alliance

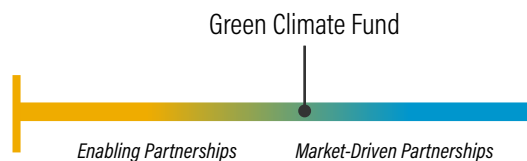
Launched by the UK and Canadian governments in 2017, the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA) convenes national governments, the private sector, and civil society actors that include academia and labor organizations to identify challenges and outline practical strategies for a clean and just energy transition. Recognizing that social resistance can be a significant barrier to governments transitioning from coal, PPCA established a just transition task force. The task force, co-chaired by the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Welsh Government, aims to share lessons learned, develop best practices, and establish a public policy road map for governments to implement just transition strategies (PPCA 2020). The task force aims to release its first report in December 2020.



Source: WRI Authors.

## BOX 9 | Green Climate Fund

Developing countries can access funds from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) via its accredited entities. The GCF depends on funding from wealthier governments—top contributors over the years include the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, France, and Germany, with pledges totaling \$10.3 billion in 2014, and \$ 9.87 billion in its 2019 replenishment, GCF-1. This commitment of public investment is meant to attract and stimulate financiers who may otherwise be wary of sustainable development projects in less stable economies. The GCF relies on its partnership network of national governments, development banks, national banks, CSOs, and other financial institutions to oversee and implement GCF-funded projects (GCF 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.

## Look Out for Considerations of Government Contributions

Governments are often hierarchical, bureaucratic, and risk-averse, making them notoriously challenging stakeholders to work with (Kamphof and Melissen 2017; Melo 2018). This structural lack of flexibility can be at odds with the dynamic structural changes required to meet the SDGs (Allas et al. 2018). The layered structure of governments—vertically and horizontally—can prevent collaboration across government ministries (OECD 2017), obstruct the alignment of common objectives under a specific time frame as some government agencies might have competing goals, and ultimately prevent systemic change. In addition to government structure, partnerships can encounter a culture of corruption or private interests within governments that disincentivize SDG action (USCIB 2015; Brouwer et al. 2016). For instance, a state-

owned fossil fuel industry may make it impossible for a partnership focused on implementing a clean-energy transition to gain government support. Unsupportive policies or misalignment between local and national regulations can also impede partnership action. Additionally, changes in political leadership or political priorities can negatively affect partnerships. They may be operating under a particular timeline or with certain assumptions, only to have those thoughts derailed with unexpected shifts (GGGI 2019). Even governments that offer support through proper regulations and policies may lack the resources needed to build the infrastructure required for partnership success (GGGI 2018b; Beisheim and Simon 2016).

### BOX 10 | When to Partner with Government

Other stakeholders should partner with governments when they

- are pursuing exciting but unfamiliar ideas and want to march in step with other bodies of influence;
- need new policies to be implemented or old ones to be changed in order to pursue particular ideas;
- seek support to implement new ideas, especially those that deviate from the norm;
- are stuck with the status quo and need a boost to spur change;
- want to help and need the extra confidence to move forward;
- aim to learn from and collaborate with like-minded actors;

- would have stronger impact by aligning with the higher authorities;
- need connections to funding;
- are stuck without additional investment in an area critical to a partnership;
- want to unlock a new market to support a new and potentially transformative idea;
- can reach more communities with better infrastructure or governmental support;
- are working on an idea with far-reaching consequence and need high-level support; or
- need to accelerate innovation with proper pacing.

Source: WRI Authors





## Business Contributions to Transformative Partnerships

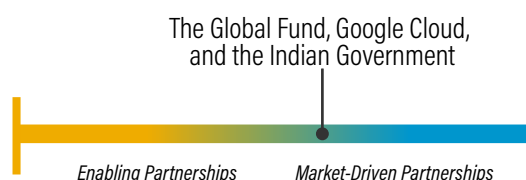
The contributions of business in partnership can help set up partnerships for true transformation. Many business interviewees noted that transformation is key to finding a competitive edge and staying relevant. As global urgency around sustainability grows, more and more companies are incorporating goals aligned with the SDGs and Paris Agreement into their long-term strategies (Gupta et al. 2019; Gomme and Perks 2018; Business and Sustainable Development Commission 2017). When it comes to aligning their activities with sustainable development, some companies interviewed noted that they would be more willing to be patient and take a longer-term approach reflective of one of the key characteristics of transformation, long-term and sustained. Businesses can offer partnerships resources (e.g., avenues for implementation) and efficiency (e.g., operational speed and focus) that are necessary to make a partnership's mission reality. For businesses, partnerships provide avenues to new markets to more effectively contribute to social and environmental change.

- **Technology and Innovation:** The businesses and CSOs that we interviewed both noted that businesses have the technical expertise to develop new solutions to tackle sustainability challenges and the capacity to make it happen. This sense of discovery and technical know-how may give partnerships

a spark of momentum in times of inertia (WBCSD 2020). Similar to governments' role promoting innovation, businesses driving innovation can also help to disrupt the status quo and drive transformation.

### BOX 11 | The Global Fund, Google Cloud, and the Indian Government

In 2019, Google Cloud partnered with The Global Fund and India's Central TB Division to design a system to rapidly identify missing cases of tuberculosis. The partnership leverages Google Cloud's expertise in artificial intelligence, data analysis, and visualization to help track previously unidentified cases of TB and search for outbreak clusters throughout India. By developing a system that continuously searches for areas with a high-disease burden, Google Cloud provides information needed to deploy timely treatment, an essential step in reducing TB transmission (The Global Fund 2020).



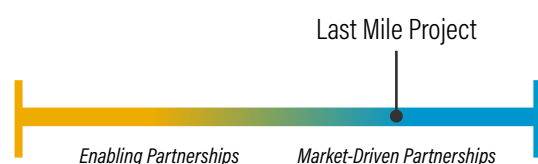
Source: WRI Authors.

- **Business acumen and expertise:** Interviewees also mentioned that businesses can move faster than other stakeholders. They possess an efficiency and sense of urgency that helps them with problem solving and getting unstuck. Businesses often have operationalized processes and capabilities with systems in place that support these characteristics, and with this sophistication comes the ability to effectively manage projects and stay focused. Businesses also can quickly adapt their approaches when needed (UNGC 2013). Such business assets can even help governments accelerate implementation of sustainability-influenced policies by helping governments avoid bureaucratic processes that might typically hold them down.

Some interviewees also noted that companies are smart about taking a message and spreading a story, amplifying its reach to broad audiences. This can help a partnership rapidly gain attention, whether it be to expand its project mandate, attract new stakeholders, source new funding, or offer a replicable model to others looking to tackle similar problems. Partnerships can grow their influence with the benefit of sophisticated communications (KPMG International 2016).

### BOX 12 | Last Mile Project

Through the Last Mile Project, Coca-Cola shares its extensive supply chain, logistics knowledge, and marketing capabilities to help rural communities in Africa gain better access to medicines. African governments lean on Coca-Cola's business expertise to streamline medicine deliveries, improve stock management, and measure performance on the availability of life-saving medicines. The project, in conjunction with partners that include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Global Fund, and The Yale Global Health Leadership Initiative, has developed a unique approach built on the foundation of Coca-Cola's business success in Africa, donor leadership and collaboration, and the insight and experience of strong local talent and public health experience. (Project Last Mile 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.

- **Vision and Scaling:** Businesses that value transformation are set up to be forward-looking, hyperaware of industry trends and shifts. Their ambition—and perhaps even impatience, as noted by some interviewees—drives them to dream big, and if they fall short, pivot quickly. As it pertains to sustainability, businesses interviewed mentioned a desire

to nurture a better world, whether motivated by an inherent value system that prioritizes the environment, the shifting value system of others in the ecosystem, benefits to business profits, or a combination of all. Even companies primarily incentivized by business interests—such as those with business models that are built on decarbonization, or motivated to secure a license to operate—can't ignore the growing movement around them that demands greater environmental accountability (Podder and Singh 2018). And a focus on the future of the earth is tied to thinking ahead on business strategy and setting a vision that steers a company. Businesses also have built-in scale. They can see the potential of transforming ideas into commercially viable solutions and can quickly take action to expand their activities – both in a geographic and conceptual sense (KPMG International 2016). This overall sense of vision and scale can help partnerships drive systemic changes, one of the aforementioned characteristics of transformation.

### BOX 13 | Latin American Water Funds Partnership

FEMSA, the largest Coca-Cola bottler in the world, joined The Nature Conservancy and others in the Latin American Water Funds Partnership in 2011. Initially a payment-for-ecosystem-services conservation tool, FEMSA helped to expand the strategic lens and mandate for the partnership, shifting its focus to water security and developing a systemized process that helped to improve the long-term water prospects of the region through the development of water funds. As of September 2019, the partnership has developed 24 water funds in Latin America (with 15 more in the pipeline), conserved almost 252,000 hectares, and involved almost 37,500 families (FEMSA 2019).



Source: WRI Authors.



- **Investment in Local Communities:** Some companies interviewed reported that one benefit of partnering is that they can enter new markets by piloting their operations in new geographies. With the globalization of today's markets, it is rare for businesses with transformative interests to operate in a geographic silo since they often have operations, investments, and end users in other countries. The positive side of this involvement is that communities can receive more resources and investment than they might otherwise (UNGC 2013; Menden et al. 2019). Working at different levels across different geographies, businesses also encourage the systemic nature of transformation, altering the interrelationships and interdependencies among parties to influence new paradigms.

are more willing to absorb the risk associated with testing a new approach, or they have the organizational capabilities to overcome challenges that governments and CSOs get tangled in. Or, more often than not, businesses' sheer power and size are enough to influence a change, especially if industry moves together—something that the businesses we interviewed noted as an attractive reason for partnering. If businesses can help to shift entire sectors toward a sustainable mind-set, their business and financial returns will be even greater (Gomme and Perks 2018). Once businesses have galvanized an industry, they have started to shift mental models—the hardest systems condition to change and one that sets them on a path for the long-term, sustained change found in transformation.

#### BOX 14 | Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

Local agribusinesses and farmer organizations in Africa partner with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to create agricultural solutions that improve income and food security for smallholder farmers. These local partners enable AGRA to coordinate with other initiatives in the region and engage directly with farmers and small businesses to create localized solutions for more efficient and profitable farming techniques (AGRA 2020).

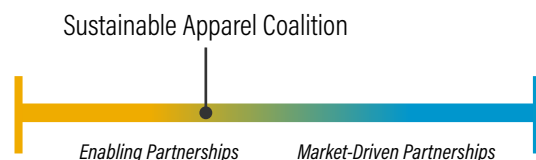


Source: WRI Authors.

- **Ability to Move Markets:** Businesses have the ability to transform systems for a multitude of reasons: Perhaps they have the technological prowess to unlock solutions that can overcome sustainability challenges, they

#### BOX 15 | Sustainable Apparel Coalition

The Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) includes companies at all levels of the value chain that collectively have the power to shift \$500 billion of the apparel industry to sustainable practices. The coalition originated from an unlikely collaboration between Walmart and Patagonia in 2009, both of whom called for the development of an index to measure the environmental effects of their products. The Higg Index was developed shortly thereafter, and the partnership has grown to include companies at every level of the supply chain—from manufacturers to retailers—that use the Higg Index to track the sustainability performance of their products and share best practices. Governments and CSOs like WRI have also joined the coalition to provide crucial research, recommendations for best practices, and an external perspective on SAC's activities. SAC now includes 10,000 retailers and manufacturers that are actively using the Higg Index worldwide (SAC 2020).

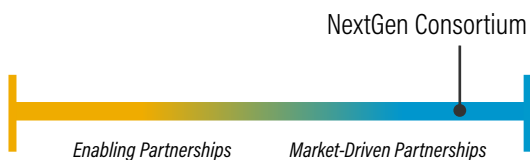


Source: WRI Authors.

- **Brand Credibility:** Businesses that have cultivated a positive reputation—either through strong sustainability practices or a record of community stewardship and high-quality products or respected leadership—can lend a partnership legitimacy and gravitas that it might not otherwise have (Stibbe and Prescott 2017). Some business interviewees with well-recognized global brands in particular noted the benefits of being associated with a large, reputable company, known for its dedication to sustainability. This affiliation can help the long-term and sustained nature of transformation.

### BOX 16 | NextGen Consortium

The NextGen Consortium grew from the “unprecedented pre-competitive collaboration” between two of the largest food and beverage retailers, Starbucks and McDonald’s (NextGen Consortium 2020). This partnership brings together private companies, trade organizations, CSOs, and municipalities to work to reduce single-use plastics and develop fully recoverable to-go cups. As a founding member, Starbucks brought its reputation as an influential, well-respected company to the partnership. (In 2019, *Fortune* ranked Starbucks as the fifth most admired company in the world [*Fortune* 2019]). Following Starbucks, McDonald’s became the second founding partner, accelerating the momentum and draw of the partnership (Sustainable Brands 2018). Months after launching the NextGen Cup Challenge, which solicited innovative ideas in reusable cup design and technology, the partnership had received more than 1,000 inquiries from individuals and companies (Global Coffee Report 2018).



Source: WRI Authors.





## Look Out for Considerations of Business Characteristics

To stay competitive, businesses need to strike the right balance between pursuing innovative approaches and minimizing risk. In practice, this can mean that even though businesses are well positioned to drive new solutions to the SDGs, social and environmental issues are often overshadowed by more lucrative lines of business. Depending on a business's capacity and desire to push the envelope, this focus on minimizing risk and maximizing return can make businesses cautious or demanding partnership stakeholders, only pursuing partnerships that are profitable or have clear, measurable results. Although the companies we spoke with noted that adopting sustainable practices is the right thing to do both morally and strategically for long-term success,

other businesses may be driven to engage in SDG partnerships by their desire to improve their public reputation or increase their social license to operate (UNGC 2013; WBCD 2016). SDG initiatives are often not considered part of companies' core business, and partnerships may be siloed as part of a corporate social responsibility or sustainability team, limiting the resources that these initiatives can access (PWC 2015; OECD 2018a). Finally, although the right company can help elevate a partnership's profile and increase its legitimacy (and was noted as such by some businesses we spoke with), association with a business that has a poor track record on environmental and social issues can in some cases be detrimental to partnership credibility.

### BOX 17 | When to Partner with Business

Other stakeholders should partner with business when they

- seek a modern solution to an (old) problem or tackle sustainability in a new way;
- know they could benefit from a technological solution but lack the technical skills;
- want to be bold and creative;
- are tangled up in coordination challenges and bogged down by bureaucracy;
- struggle with responsiveness and accountability;
- need greater rigor and/or internal capacity around resource management, maximizing investments, and problem solving;
- have a desire to scale beyond their borders;
- need to reach a constituent but don't know how;
- are apprehensive about taking risks;
- know they need to dream big but don't fully understand the system;
- see the potential but don't know how to get there;
- have success in one geographical area and need to take it farther while properly adapting to other geographical contexts;
- have connections to people on the ground but lack resources to help them fully;
- have a message to promote among local communities and seek a creative way to reach them;
- are apprehensive about risk associated with testing a new approach;
- need help getting more parties on board with an issue; or
- have identified a system failure that needs a market solution.

Source: WRI Authors

## Civil Society Contributions to Transformative Partnerships

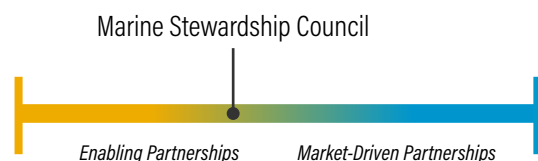
There has been a growing desire to better recognize the expertise of communities and civil society (Dalberg 2020). In our conversations with CSOs and also desk research on CSOs, we see that CSOs can provide credibility and link partnerships to support networks and subject-matter expertise. They also can serve a crucial coordination role within partnerships, helping manage stakeholder communication and partnership governance. CSO interviewees noted that they appreciate the opportunity to build mission alignment with other stakeholders in partnership, helping to drive forth sustainable development solutions.

- **Credibility:** Similar to how CSOs can benefit from the positive reputation of companies, the CSOs that we interviewed mentioned that they also offer the same credibility in return. Companies in particular may need permission from different stakeholder groups, such as governments, communities, and consumers, in order to do business in different geographies (Poret 2019).

- **Knowledge and Expertise:** CSOs interviewed for this report said that they tend to be well aware of the interconnectedness of sustainability issues and are often well equipped to engage in activities like policy advocacy, which may help to shape and influence the broader business environment. Thanks to their intimate knowledge of a topic and their proximity to important stakeholder groups, CSOs can also flag issues that businesses otherwise might have failed to identify (Ménascé 2016). Building a solid foundation based on CSO expertise can help

### BOX 18 | Marine Stewardship Council

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) together with business partner Unilever set up the Marine Stewardship Council to enable consumers to choose seafood products from well-managed fisheries. WWF's involvement gave Unilever the credibility that it truly cared about providing its consumers with more sustainable seafood, while the backing of a large consumer goods company helped WWF expand its reach with both consumers and suppliers (MSC 2017).



Source: WRI Authors.

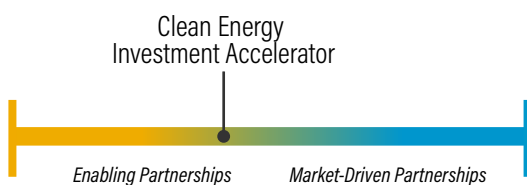


a partnership be long-term and sustained, one of the characteristics of transformation noted in Chapter 2. CSOs can also be a bridge between stakeholders, facilitating the flow of information and other offerings among different entities and providing a vehicle for effectively accessing and engaging with those groups (Poret 2019). This can prove extremely valuable to companies looking for a channel to make their voice heard with local governments and to parties who want to directly contribute to a valuable cause, such as disaster relief, or to identify and train marginalized groups, such as entrepreneurial women's networks (Albani and Henderson 2014).

- **Community and Business Access:** Through the trust that a CSO inspires, it can gain deep access to and develop close ties with certain communities of citizens, consumers, or entrepreneurs (Menden et al. 2019). CSOs can play an integral role in representing the interests of vulnerable groups without decision-making power (Jenkins et al. 2017). CSOs can also serve as an entry point to access new markets for companies exploring inclusive business opportunities, whether through the CSOs' networks, local knowledge, and on-the-ground infrastructure such as regional offices or by acting as a trusted mediator between business needs and potential supplier offerings or customer needs (Menden et al. 2019; ODI and FDC 2003). In this way, CSOs can help others gain a commercial understanding of the local marketplace which is a risk mitigator when considering new market entry, which can ultimately help support the long-term and sustained nature of transformation.

### BOX 19 | Clean Energy Investment Accelerator

Jointly led by WRI, Allotrope Partners, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the Clean Energy Investment Accelerator (CEIA) mobilizes clean energy investment across commercial and industrial sectors to help companies meet their clean energy targets. Through its work with the Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance (REBA) and other networks, WRI helps CEIA bring corporate buyers together to aggregate clean energy demand and lower the price of renewables. In Vietnam, for instance, CEIA leveraged WRI's REBA network to form a working group of corporate buyers, developers, and government officials to identify market barriers, recommend solutions, and test innovative clean-energy procurement models (CEIA 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.

### BOX 20 | Sustainable Food Partnership

Arla Foods, a leading Danish dairy producer, entered into a partnership with DanChurchAid, Novozymes, and others to establish the Sustainable Food Partnership, which targets populations in and near refugee camps. The partnership helps Arla to expand its operations in Africa, which has a large and untapped dairy market. As a result of this, it is now introducing a food product targeted at malnourished families in Ethiopia (P4G 2020b).



Source: WRI Authors.



- **Externally Vetted Tools:** Affiliating with a trusted partnership can relieve partner stakeholders from the need to build their own partnership tools. Many CSOs translate their deep knowledge into company guidance, as well as methodologies, frameworks, and tools for companies to adopt (Seitanidi 2015; Poret 2019). This guidance can often involve new approaches that disrupt the status quo. By using CSO-endorsed methodologies and playbooks, as well as engaging with CSO-managed networks that have third-party credibility, both businesses and local governments believe that they can more readily put their confidence in these products and services (Ménascé 2016).

- **Trust and Confidence:** CSOs that we interviewed also noted that they bring together like-minded organizations in collaborative networks aimed at learning, exchanging best practices, or accelerating business models. As a result of the implicit or explicit screening process that the CSO applies before it starts engaging with a specific community or granting prospective participants membership status in a network, network members benefit from the CSO's due diligence, saving them valuable time and effort and ensuring that they interact with like-minded peers. Trust and confidence go a long way in driving the longevity of transformation when CSOs can nurture strong relationships among partners.

### BOX 21 | We Mean Business

The CSO We Mean Business (WMB) convenes leading companies to commit to bold climate action through various WMB initiatives. One of its primary activities is to strategically engage with businesses that have joined the partnership, and provide them with WMB-endorsed guidance, tools, and clear playbooks to follow in their journeys to zero-carbon transition (WMB 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.

### BOX 22 | Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance

The Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance is a knowledge-sharing and collaboration network that brings together highly ambitious cities from North America and Europe, plus Rio de Janeiro, each with a goal to reduce their city's carbon emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050. Prospective member cities were subject to rigorous selection criteria: they had to formally adopt a community-wide carbon neutrality goal across all main sectors (electricity, thermal, transportation, waste) as well as implement a plan, set a dedicated budget and staff to manage it, and commit to active participation in the alliance. The high entry bar ensures prospective members that their time spent engaging with the network will see them exchange and collaborate with the most ambitious of their peers (CNCA 2020).

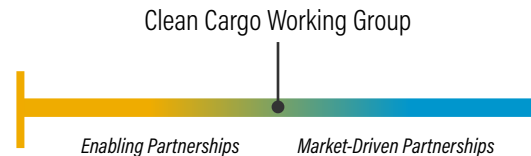


Source: WRI Authors.

- **Coordination and Streamlining:** Some businesses mentioned that they see CSOs as an independent partner, unburdened by corporate competitiveness or political ideologies. Many business or investor-oriented networks and platforms are organized through CSOs, which provide a pre-competitive environment to exchange and collaborate and can also help untangle the complexities associated with the many layers and actors within a system. A multistakeholder, multi-CSO platform is easier to engage with instead of disparate CSO parties, each with its own messaging and offerings (C&E Advisory 2018). Networks or platforms can promote information sharing (such as knowledge products, plans, and strategies) and support a shared understanding among target audiences of strategic priorities for the topic at hand. CSOs can help to disseminate scientific analyses from academia to better reach their intended audience, thereby ensuring greater percolation of relevant and trusted data (Seitanidi 2015) and can also use data to encourage transparency.

### BOX 23 | Clean Cargo Working Group

The Clean Cargo Working Group (CCWG), convened by BSR, aims to reduce the environmental impact of shipping by bringing together cargo carriers, freight forwarders, and companies, including Amazon, Nike, BMW, and Volvo. The partnership helps level the playing field among brands that may otherwise be competitors as members work together to agree on an industry standard. Now accounting for over 80 percent of global container cargo, CCWG members follow a proprietary benchmarking methodology to track the carbon performance of their ocean freight carriers (Clean Cargo 2020).



Source: WRI Authors.



## Look Out for Considerations of CSO Characteristics

Many CSOs are chronically underfunded and under-resourced, making it challenging for them to devote the necessary time and operational resources to the partnerships in which they participate (Podder and Singh 2018; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). This is particularly tricky when CSOs are often looked to as conveners and connectors, a weakness magnified when CSOs participate in multiple partnerships without a framework for decision-making and prioritization. Stakeholders enter into partnerships with varying levels of power, depending on their size, wealth, and political capital (Brouwer et al. 2016). These power imbalances most often disadvantage CSOs, whose interests can be easily overshadowed by business and government agendas (Pattberg and Widerberg

2016). In market-driven partnerships in particular, CSOs may feel overshadowed by business and may find it difficult to shift to a business-oriented approach while keeping their own interests relevant (Van der Vleuten 2019). Power asymmetry can also lead to the exclusion of smaller CSOs with valuable local knowledge (Hazelwood 2015), in favor of larger organizations that bring greater name recognition and reputational benefits. Prior to partnering with a CSO, it may be useful to consider its fund-raising capabilities and track record with other partnerships (Menden et al. 2019). CSOs may also be driven by donor mandates, weighed down with their own reporting burdens that incentivize quantitative metrics and partnership participation over actual impact (Peterson et al. n.d.).

### BOX 24 | When to Partner with CSOs

Other stakeholders should partner with CSOs when they

- have a shared ambition but need a unifier;
- are entering unfamiliar or risky territory and want to manage their reputation;
- are passionate about the issue but don't have the proper background or knowledge;
- want to start off on the right foot with local communities and include them in the process;
- are experiencing communication barriers with other partners;
- need to get in touch with the government but don't have the right contacts;
- want to contribute directly in crises;
- want to work on issues of equity;
- need a mediator to achieve transformation goals;
- want to reach a population that is unfamiliar;
- don't have the time or resources to develop new products;
- need consistency to manage or measure the work of a partnership;
- want to use a product that others will have confidence in;
- want quick access to other stakeholders but don't already hold the relationships;
- lack time and resources to investigate the best partners; or
- want to exchange best practices with other like-minded stakeholders.

Source: WRI Authors







## CHAPTER 4

# SUCCESS FACTORS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership success factors related to operations and relationship management are well understood, yet partnerships still face challenges in implementing them and understanding them through a transformation lens. This chapter identifies 14 success factors and takes a deep dive into the top four that may have a greater bearing on reaching transformation objectives, based on a unique analysis of 41 partnerships from the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals (P4G) community.

In this chapter, we focus on partnership success factors that can help partnerships improve their effectiveness, both in terms of their operational efficiency and their ability to reach their transformation objectives.

Our research indicates that there are 14 commonly reported success factors (Table 1) that we have drawn from recent academic and expert reports covering multistakeholder partnership best practices, complexity and transformation theory, and systems change evaluation (see Appendix B). Adoption of these success factors may not guarantee transformation but can be viewed as an indicator of how well a partnership may operate. Although many of these success factors may seem self-evident and well-documented, partnerships surveyed for this report have stated that they still face challenges in actually implementing them and are eager to get advice from experts and partnerships that are farther along their partnership journey.

With this in mind, we focus this chapter on the top four success factors (highlighted in Table 1) out of the set of 14 that were identified based on a survey and analysis of 41 partnerships drawn from the partnership accelerator **P4G**, hosted by WRI, in which partnerships that were evaluated by the research team as having high transformation potential excelled, compared to those with low transformation potential.

In this chapter, we share the stories and advice from our surveyed partnerships and present a series of tangible and implementable recommendations. Recommendations are further highlighted through best-in-class partnership case studies, which showcase some of the partnerships with high transformation potential. And while the focus of this chapter is on the top 4 success factors, we recognize the importance also of highlighting the remaining 10 success factors. Appendix B provides descriptions of these, along with implementable recommendations and partnership examples. We also provide an overview of our survey approach and evaluation methodology for assessing a partnership's transformation potential below and full details in Appendices C and D.

Partnering is inherently complex, especially when working with multiple partners, across multiple geographies and in dynamic systems. Although there is no one right way to partner, our research indicates that the guidance in this chapter can help partnerships to maximize their effectiveness at meeting their transformation objectives and adopting the transformation characteristics identified in Chapter 2 into their vision. And with clarity around stakeholder contributions as noted in Chapter 3, partnerships are better equipped to pursue these success factors. Partners may agree that these success factors are important, but just as important is agreement on how to approach each success factor and the role and responsibility of each partner.

## Evaluating Transformation Potential

This chapter presents findings on success factors based on research conducted on a unique cohort of 41 multistakeholder partnerships from around the world. Participating partnerships include P4G's first two cohorts of funded partnerships, as well as a short list of partnerships that had applied for the P4G SOTA awards, which recognize mature, best-in-class partnerships. All partnerships have been pre-identified by the P4G team as having transformation objectives related to five SDG areas—food and agriculture, water, energy, cities, and circular economy—and in line with the requirements of P4G partnerships. These partnerships also include at least one stakeholder to represent government, business, and a CSO.

The participating partnerships were surveyed using the survey instrument provided in Appendix C to understand the extent to which they exhibited the 14 aforementioned success factors identified through a literature review. Partnerships scored themselves on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “not at all”; 2 = “to a small extent”, 3 = “to a moderate extent”, 4 = “to a great extent”, and 5 = to “a very great extent”).

Because our interest was to understand the relative importance of success factors through the lens of transformation, our research team also evaluated these partnerships to assess transformation potential, defined as their success to date in achieving their intermediate and transformation



Table 1 | Summary of Multistakeholder Partnership Success Factors

SUCCESS FACTORS	
Joint transformation vision and systems understanding	<b>1. Clear articulation of the system of interest</b> <b>2. Jointly agreed-upon transformation vision and near-term goals</b> 3. Bold and creative approach and activities 4. Confirmation that partnering is the right approach and that partners selected are the best possible option
Participatory performance tracking with systems thinking	<b>5. Strong monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting (MELR) mechanisms with systems thinking</b> 6. Culture of trust, inclusivity, and information sharing
Strong leadership and operational capacity	7. Strong management and coordination structure 8. Robust governance mechanisms 9. Stakeholder commitment to agreed-upon resources 10. Funding security
Supporting network of actors	<b>11. Capacity to engage stakeholders external to the partnership</b> 12. Supportive environment enabled by government 13. Strong champions at multiple levels 14. Ability to navigate the local context in which the partnership operates

*Note:* Success factors listed in bold represent the four success factors we highlight in more detail in this chapter. Appendix B provides full definitions of the complete set of 14 success factors.

*Sources:* Ayala-Orozco et al. 2018; BCSD 2017; Beisheim and Simon 2016; Bos et al. 2016; Brouwer et al. 2016; Chakrabari et al. 2018; Collison et al. 2014; Dahiya and Okitasari 2018; Enright et al. 2018; GGGI 2018a, 2018b; Hazelwood 2015; Jenkins et al. 2017; KPMG International 2016; Kramer and Pfizer 2016; Kuruvilla et al. 2018; Latham 2014; Moreddu 2016; Neely et al. 2017; Nelson et al. 2015; Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Peterson et al. n.d.; Pinz et al. 2018; Preskill et al. 2015; Stern 2017; Stibbe and Prescott 2017; Stibbe et al. 2019; Treichel et al. 2017.

objectives and/or the likelihood that the partnership would achieve its transformation objective. Our evaluation approach is based on Maassen et al. (2019), and it is important to note that in terms of transformation potential, partnerships were scored against their own transformation or systems change goals and the strength of their strategic plans (e.g., if they highlighted a connection between the partnership's action(s) and their transformation vision). At this stage, we are not able to definitively state whether each partnership's transformation objective is ultimately the right one needed to achieve the SDGs.

Partnerships were scored on a scale of 0–5 against seven evaluation criteria, using the scoring matrix outlined in Appendix D. The seven criteria included partnership level of innovation, strength of the

strategic plan, strength of and progress against intermediate goals and transformation objectives, scalability, financial sustainability, and resilience to internal and external challenges. These criteria were developed through a review of academic literature (see Appendix B) and award programs for transformational partnerships and initiatives (see Appendix D) and are well-linked to the 14 success factors as demonstrated in the conceptual model in Figure 8.

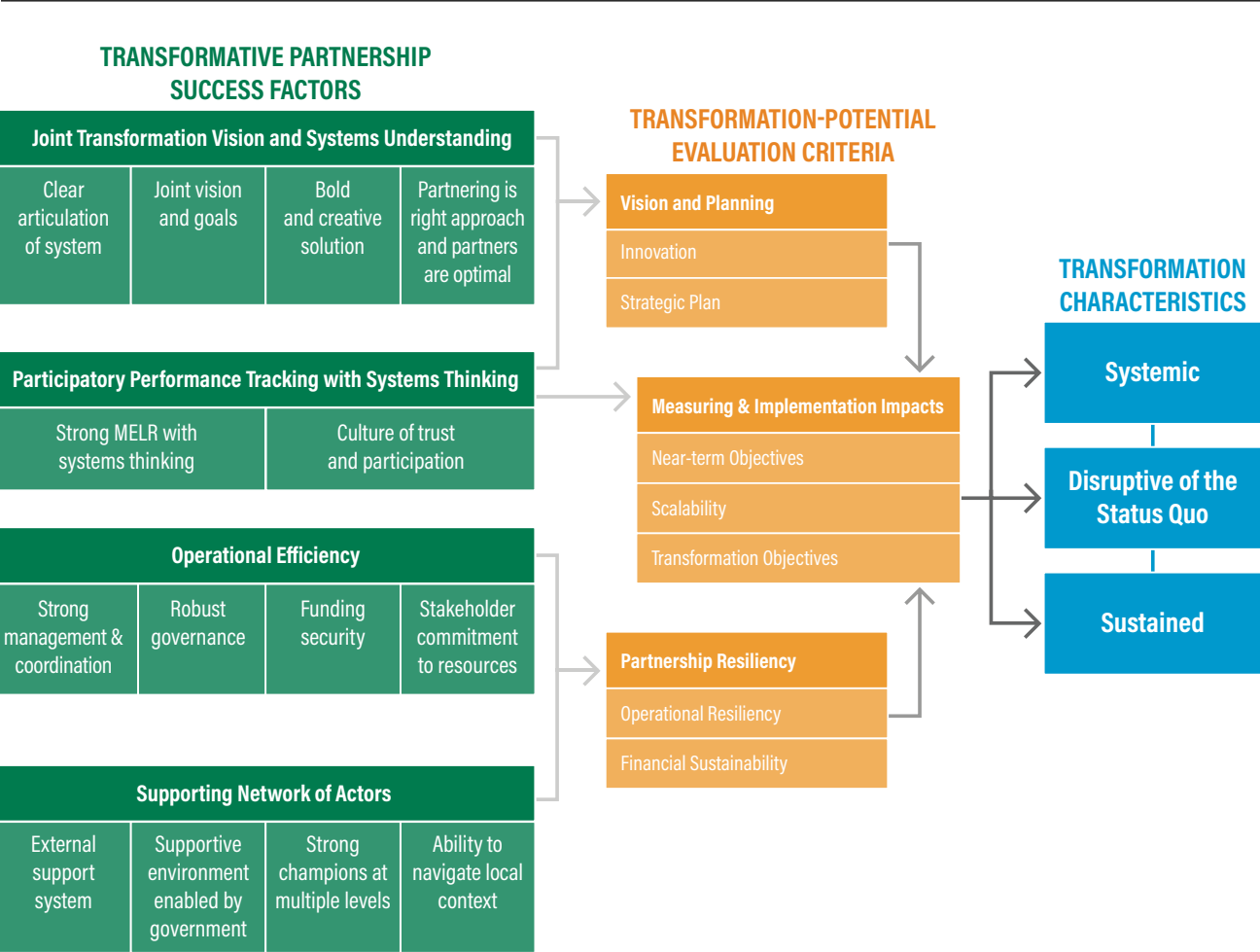
Partnerships were scored based on a thorough review of each partnership's application to P4G, any provided reporting materials on their progress and challenges, as well as any other available and relevant documentation, such as publicly available videos, publications, and media references. Partnerships were then grouped as having either a high, medium, or low transformation potential,

based on their average score across the seven criteria. Appendix D provides further information on the evaluation approach, including more details on the evaluation team, how we addressed identified biases, and additional details on scoring.

On average, P4G partnerships within our sample felt like they were embodying all 14 success factors at least to a moderate extent (>3). This signals that P4G partnerships agree with the literature on the importance of adopting these success factors for partnerships. When we divided partnerships into their high, medium, and low

potential groupings, we also saw that for 12 out of 14 success factors, high transformation-potential partnerships, on average, scored themselves higher than medium-potential partnerships and low-potential partnerships.<sup>1</sup> Medium- and low-potential partnerships scored themselves relatively the same across all success factors. We chose to highlight the four success factors where the scoring discrepancy was highest between high- and low-potential partnerships. Figure 9 shows the variability in how partnerships scored themselves on the top four success factors, compared to the remaining success factors relative to their transformation-potential scores.

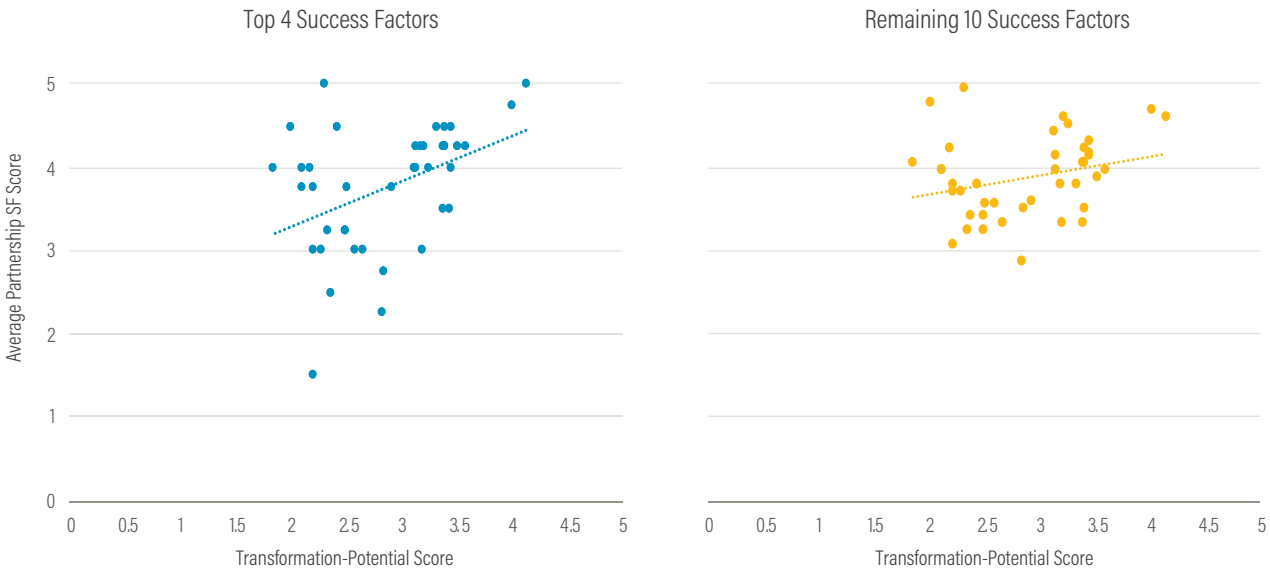
**Figure 8 | Conceptual Model of Relationship among Success Factors, Transformation-Potential Evaluation Criteria, and Transformation Characteristics**



*Note:* Arrows are indicative of the main connections among success factors, evaluation criteria, and transformation characteristics, although it should be noted that success factors are not mutually exclusive and are interconnected.

*Source:* WRI Authors.

Figure 9 | Success Factor Score by Transformation-Potential Score Comparison



Source: WRI Authors

We believe there is great potential for application of our scoring methodology in the future, as partnership practitioners look to understand their progress toward transformation. Additionally, these scoring criteria and success factors could easily be adopted into a partnership’s own performance tracking system to gauge their transformation potential and ability to implement these factors. This is discussed more in depth in the text that follows.

Topline Results

Overall, the 14 success factors can be used as indicators of a partnership’s effectiveness and can be used to help assess a partnership’s transformation potential. Partnerships can use the evaluation methodology identified in Appendix D and the success factors to help put themselves on the right track.

However, it is important to note that these success factors need not all be implemented at once. Choosing which to implement first likely depends on the specific context of each partnership. The analysis for this report found that partnerships with high transformation potential are particularly

intentional in four of these success factors: developing a clear articulation of the system of interest, which helps determine a jointly agreed-upon transformation vision and intermediate goals. These partnerships also are able to strategically leverage external stakeholders, as compared to other partnerships, and have strong monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting mechanisms that incorporate systems thinking in areas that allow them to not only track whether they are achieving their targets within the system context but also to be adaptive and resilient in the face of dynamic system changes.

Together, these top four success factors are reflective of the previously identified transformation characteristics: systemic, long-term and sustained, and disruptive of the status quo. For a partnership to understand its contribution or potential contribution to systems change or a transformation, it must first understand the complexities of the system of interest and its place in that system, as well as external stakeholders that are key influence targets or potential partnership champions. Partnerships must also be able to track how their activities lead to outputs, how those



outputs lead to outcomes, and how those outcomes lead to impacts. All of this requires a strong MELR system that integrates systems thinking.

Given these findings, partnerships may find it useful to begin with these success factors and follow the guidance that follows, based on leading literature and the P4G community.

## Review of Top Four Success Factors

### Clear Articulation of the System of Interest

Description:

One of the main characteristics of transformation is its systemic nature: Change must percolate through the elements and interconnections of a system to move it toward a more sustainable paradigm, as discussed in Chapter 2. Clear articulation of a system of interest means that a partnership has a clear conceptual understanding of where it is placed in the system to ensure that its activities are unique and additive (Dalberg 2020; Enclude 2019; Stibbe and Prescott 2020). A partnership that has successfully embraced this trait will be able to define the system of interest's boundaries; its overall function or purpose; the key elements, actors, and interconnections of relevance; the underlying problem of interest that is keeping the system from moving toward a more sustainable development pathway; the system conditions that are holding the problem in place; and historic and current initiatives that have tried to address the problem.

It is important to remember that systems are dynamic, and so partnerships should aim to understand their contribution to transformation of those systems. This requires establishing a baseline understanding of the system and then tracking changes over time. For more details on understanding how to track changes over time and a partnership's influence or contribution, see Success Factor 4. Additionally, it is important that a systems understanding be developed in a participatory manner with relevant stakeholders.

A systems understanding is critical because it guides partnerships in adopting many of the other success factors, such as

- designing innovative, bold, and creative solutions that are additive and reflective of the three transformation characteristics (systemic, long-term and sustained, and disruptive of the status quo);
- identifying the right stakeholders to engage both as partners as external stakeholders;
- aligning partners on a transformation vision;
- adapting and responding to the external changes such as changes in political administrations or natural disasters; and
- evaluating whether or not the partnership is actually contributing to a system's transformation.

Recommendations and Partnership Insights:

Although it may seem daunting to fully understand the complexities of any given partnership's system, especially when multiple stakeholders and geographies are involved, those who can wrap their heads around it say they experience greater success and efficiency as it adds clarity to what each stakeholder aims to achieve. While most partnerships scored themselves at 3 or above on this success factor (82 percent), partnerships with high transformation potential more often rated themselves as doing this to a great or very great extent (93 percent), compared to those with lower transformation potential (60 percent). To understand the system in which a partnership operates, partnerships can take the following actions:

- **Define system boundaries.** To make the exercise of articulating the system of interest more manageable, partnerships need to start small and focus on a specific subsystem or geography (Latham 2014; Hargreaves 2010; Stibbe and Prescott 2020). For example, rather than trying to tackle the entire global food system, a partnership may narrow its focus by looking at the food system for a particular country or a particular segment of the food supply chain. Partnerships should be careful to consider the trade-offs in setting boundaries. Setting boundaries too broadly can make

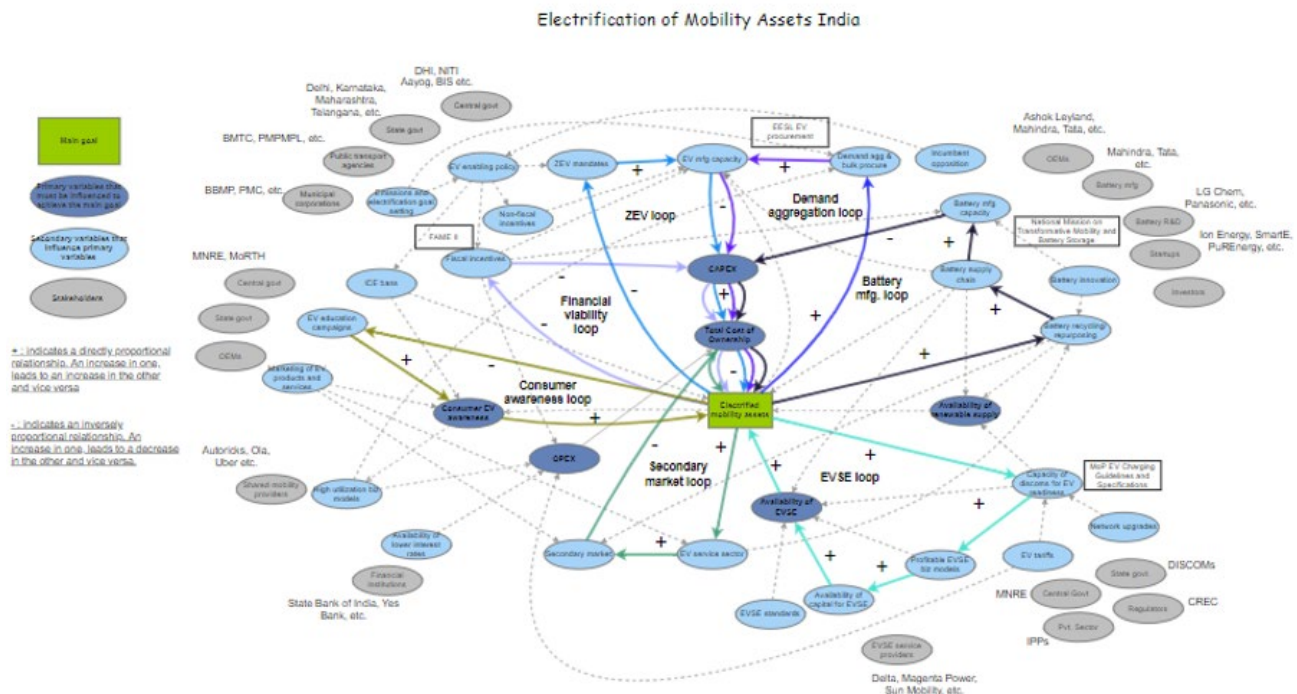
establishing a partnership's vision and activities too unwieldy; while setting boundaries too narrowly can mean that the partnership is missing important information on system interactions (e.g., between countries or between two different systems) that may impede a partnership's progress. It may be beneficial to initially choose the smallest possible system that can be sustainably transformed and meet the partnership's objectives and then scale as necessary (Stibbe and Prescott 2020). This reduces the amount of research that is needed. The process of defining system boundaries should be participatory and inclusive—that is, partnerships should think about defining the system's boundaries in coordination with key stakeholders, which include those who have an interest in or are affected by the issue, as well as those who have influence over the issue (Hargreaves 2010). Using a participatory and inclusive process can help ensure that the systems boundaries are scaled appropriately.

- **Break it down.** Although developing an understanding of the system requires up-front research, it needn't be overwhelming. Research can be spread out over time and across partners and other external stakeholders to reduce the research burden. In fact, given the dynamic nature of systems, developing a systems understanding should be viewed as a continuous exercise that aligns with a partnership's resources. Reflecting on how system conditions are shifting over time is important for allowing partnerships to adjust course as needed, as well as understanding key windows of opportunity (or closing doors that should be avoided) (Preskill and Gopal 2014). Partnerships should also think about spreading the workload by leveraging each stakeholder's unique knowledge and network. Stakeholders likely already know about some parts of the system and may have a research team that can help facilitate developing a common partnership-systems understanding. Partnerships that have excelled at this have emphasized the importance of creating a strong culture of trust for promoting knowledge and data sharing, with one partnership stating, "Our [stakeholders] help educate each other on

the issue. When someone has questions, our collaborative and open-source culture compels them to reach out to others who have struggled with similar issues in the past and seek answers collaboratively. If there are collective questions or issues we do not have the answers to, we create a working group to collectively address the issue and learn together."<sup>2</sup>

- **Use systems mapping tools.** Several systems mapping tools and methods are available to help build a systems understanding, and most of these tools and methods promote participatory exercises to develop conceptual diagrams or models of the feedback loops between system elements and interrelations including actors, resources, concepts, and data. Using a participatory approach to systems mapping can help ensure that the equity of policy, process, and impacts of the partnership's activities is kept front and center. Some systems mapping methods (e.g., actor maps and social network maps) focus on exploring actor roles and relationships. Causal loop diagrams are conceptual diagrams of relationships and feedback loops. Issue mapping is a method used to lay out the political, social, or economic issues that underlie a system. Multiple online tools have also been developed, several of which combine mapping methods. Insight Maker, for example, is a free tool that combines causal loop diagrams with systems dynamics and agent-based modeling. Kumu is a tool that can map actors, social networks, and community assets and can create causal loop diagrams. Systems mapping outputs can vary in their complexity, ranging from a simple conceptual diagram to complex webs. As an example, the Rocky Mountain Institute recently worked with WRI, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the ClimateWorks Foundation to develop a **joint map** to better understand variables that influence the ability to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles in India. The map helped facilitate conversations on how best to develop solutions to address these barriers.

Figure 10 | Electrification of Mobility Assets in India Systems Map Using Insight Maker



Source: <https://insightmaker.com/insight/200888/India-Electric-Mobility>.

Each method or tool has its own focus, strengths, weaknesses, and degree of technicality, so key considerations for partnerships include answering the following questions: What are the partnership's learning priorities and what methods and tools are best suited? How might the partnership combine different methods and tools? Does the method or tool require an expert to facilitate? How participatory does the partnership want its mapping approach to be? It is important to note that many of these tools are also adaptable to a partnership's resources. In some cases, partnerships have developed their own unique mapping approaches. The best-in-class example of the IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series describes such a partnership:

#### Best-in-Class Example

The **IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™** (WLB Series) partnership aims to transform the global financial system by mobilizing capital for women's empowerment through innovative financial instruments (Figure 11). The \$150 million WLB Series securities are the world's first impact investing and gender lens investing securities listed on a stock exchange. They pool together high-impact, women-focused enterprises to create a multi-country, multistakeholder portfolio that is sold to private-sector investors and listed on a stock exchange. The instruments will unlock large-scale private capital to support 3 million underserved women in transitioning from subsistence to sustainable livelihoods. The WLB Series defines



women's empowerment as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development, including resources and opportunities to participate in the labor force. The partnership recognized that a core issue underlying women's empowerment is gender-based exclusion from finance and that this exclusion denies the world the economic and social benefits that gender parity could bring across all 17 of the SDGs. Currently, IIX is scaling the proven WLB Series and working to advance COVID-resilient and gender-empowered green economic growth in Indonesia and Africa. Prior to that, IIX successfully closed an \$8.5 and \$12 million issuance, demonstrating the scalability, replicability, and overall power of investing in women's empowerment.

Figure 11 | Placing IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™ on the Continuum



Source: WRI Authors.

The WLB Series brings together 12+ leading impact investing firms, law firms and banks, government, and civil society stakeholders. The partnership is led by IIX, a pioneer in impact investing.

IIX initially established system boundaries by focusing on underserved women in the Asia-Pacific region. While constructing the issuances of the WLB Series, IIX assesses each country individually and all the countries holistically to ensure the creation of a well-diversified portfolio that adequately balances risk, return, and impact. Establishing system boundaries has helped IIX to keep its activities manageable in light of the extreme complexities of the global finance system,

while also ensuring that the WLB Series is creating additionality in each market. One of the innovative features of the WLB Series is that each new issuance of the bond has built on the success of the previous issuances by expanding to include more countries and new sectors. For example, the WLB1 initially focused on three Southeast Asian countries. The WLB2 then expanded to include more countries like Sri Lanka and Indonesia, as well as new sectors such as clean energy and sustainable agriculture. The WLB3 will continue to expand to support COVID-resilient, inclusive green growth in Indonesia, Kenya, and South Africa.

IIX's understanding of the financial system and how to change it draws from its practitioner experience across the value chain of sustainable investing and over a decade of expertise bridging the gap between the supply and demand side of capital. The WLB Series has been very strategic about breaking down the workload to reduce up-front research time by engaging a range of resources and partners. For example, IIX used its network in each target country to connect with and gather intelligence from knowledge experts on government regulations of securities, law and foreign investments into the country, legal and regulatory frameworks associated with lending to local enterprises, and investor interests. By engaging strategic experts within each country, the partnership could more quickly act to build a pipeline of investor interest. IIX also conducted a thorough review of publicly available market intelligence from reliable data sources, both internationally and locally within each region. Finally, the IIX team was also able to build from past experiences with structuring the WLB Series and unlocking capital in target regions through its Impact Partners Platform, the world's largest crowdfunding platform for impact investing. IIX used data insights from the Impact Partners Platform to review country preferences of more than 1,200 accredited investors. Additionally, IIX drew on experiences investing in countries from the WLB1 and WLB2 portfolio, including Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, and Vietnam. Having invested in these countries previously, the team was aware



of the capital markets' regulatory barriers, the availability of pipeline entities, and the interest of investors in these countries.

IIX has found that in terms of mapping the system, a key gap is mapping the beneficiaries and understanding their point of view on the problems they face and the effects they get from impact investing. To address this, IIX developed IIX Values, a tool that uses mobile technology to collect impact data from women beneficiaries in a scalable, cost-efficient manner to verify effects on the ground and to ensure that investors get access to transparent, timely impact reports. This ensures that women, as the end beneficiaries, are given a voice and a value and are taken into account across the investment process.

## **Jointly Agreed-Upon Transformation Vision and Near-Term Goals**

### **Description:**

Because transformation-seeking partnerships are working on complex issues in complex systems, partnerships can benefit greatly from jointly agreeing on a transformation vision and near-term goals to keep partnership stakeholders aligned and on track.

A clear transformation vision should serve as a strategic guide for the partnership and should build from the understanding of the system as explained in the previous success factor. The vision should specify the challenge at hand and the ultimate partnership transformation objective or vision. Near-term goals encompass the objectives that the partnership aims to accomplish in the next one to five years; whereas intermediate actions outline next steps that the partnership plans to take. Both near-term goals and intermediate actions should



link back to the partnership’s transformation vision—that is, they should address the conditions that the partnership will aim to shift to address the challenge at hand. Aligning on a clear vision statement enables partnerships to later establish the scope of partnership activities, set phased goals and targets, and establish achievable timelines through, for example, a theory of change or business plan (Stern 2017; KPMG International 2016). Additionally, establishing a strong vision statement helps guide day-to-day behavior and helps each stakeholder see how its specific interests are being met by the partnership and understand the value that it adds to partnership activities (Enclude 2019; Bos et al. 2016). Establishing a strong vision statement also enables partnerships to balance different stakeholder priorities when setting intermediate goals, which keeps partners focused on and committed to a collective goal (Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Kuruvilla et al. 2018; Stern 2015; Enright et al. 2018).

#### Recommendations and Partnership Insights:

Most partnerships (85 percent) believe that their stakeholders have been successful in aligning on a transformation vision and goals to a great or very great extent. However, 71 percent of high transformation-potential partnerships scored themselves as embodying this to a very great extent, compared to only 27 percent of partnerships with low transformation potential.

Naturally, partnerships find the process of defining a transformation vision easier when they strategically work with stakeholders that have similar values and missions to that of the partnership. With this foundation in common, they have greater ease co-developing plans, such as theories of change, work plans, business plans and/or reporting frameworks, that keep them true to their original missions. For most partnerships, however, vision and goal-setting are rarely straightforward processes. Partnerships can pursue the following strategies:

- **Articulate the partnership vision and the steps to get there.** Although a partnership’s vision may encompass the less tangible elements of its objectives, such as reducing food waste or loss or improving access to

water sources by shifting system conditions, mental models, and setting near-term goals grounds the partnership to deliver measurable outputs. To start, stakeholders should agree on exactly what transformation success looks like. Perhaps this means launching a new product or service that achieves market saturation, like a renewable energy technology. A successful partnership may also be one that becomes unnecessary once it achieves its end goal, like changing a key policy or activating a new market. Once an end goal is established, setting near-term goals is essential to fulfill the end goal and defining intermediate actions, key milestones, or next steps helps keep partnerships on track. These objectives should be measurable and enable stakeholders to establish a timeline linking partnership activities with the partnership’s broader theory of change and systems change goals (Stern 2015). This should be a dynamic and iterative process involving all stakeholders (Collison et al. 2014; Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Stibbe and Prescott 2020).

- **Maintain a master vision, goals, and activities document.** Partnerships find it helpful to keep one vision or strategy document. This can be used both to keep current stakeholders aligned and to engage new partners or investors. One partnership emphasized that having this document was a particularly useful way to keep its activities on track in its early stages when exact next steps were unclear. Overall, these plans should be living documents that are updated periodically to reflect changes in understanding of the system of interest and amended as partnerships inevitably course-correct to lessons learned over time. Several partnerships, for instance, host a yearly team strategy workshop to do things like “take stock of progress against [its] vision and reassess goals and priorities,”<sup>3</sup> with one partnership specifically noting that it has built an annual review process into its governance structure. A vision document may take many forms, such as a theory of change or strategic plan or business plan or something simpler that can later feed into a more complex strategy document.



- **Prioritize a participatory approach with open conversations.** If done well, partnerships can harmonize the desires of multiple stakeholders in a way that maximizes their strengths. One partnership with high transformation potential notes that “the solutions we commonly developed are bound by existing resource constraints, but with a clear goal, it is clear how each partner’s expertise adds up to the common goal.”<sup>4</sup> More frequently, however, it is challenging to reconcile different viewpoints and agree on which goals and targets to prioritize, even if everyone agrees on the broader issue (Ayala-Orozco et al. 2018). High potential partnerships are particularly skilled at incorporating feedback from internal and external stakeholders into their partnership strategies, using different, and at times conflicting, perspectives to sharpen their long-term plans. These partnerships also prioritize open discussions through workshops, in-person meetings, or calls that invite every stakeholder’s perspective. It is worth taking the time to do this early on. When all partners feel like they are being heard and can collectively iterate on the partnership’s purpose, there is greater chance that the team will understand each member’s priorities and find alignment on a shared approach. This is especially useful as a strategy to help navigate the power dynamics at play within a partnership and an opportunity to identify and minimize any potential negative impacts of a partnership’s approach. Intentional participatory discussions up front help ensure that partnership stakeholders—particularly those representing the local community, unrepresented groups, or smaller organizations—have an equal voice in setting the ambitions of the partnership (Dalberg 2020). Additionally, prioritizing open conversations can also help potential partners assess the benefits and risks of joining the partnership before fully committing their time and resources (Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Collison et al. 2014).

#### Best-in-Class Example

**Africa GreenCo** (Figure 12), a partnership aiming to increase private-sector investment in renewable energy projects in Africa, has developed a joint transformation vision and worked with internal and external stakeholders to establish partnership near-term goals. Africa GreenCo operates on a portfolio basis, purchasing power from multiple independent power projects and then selling that power to multiple purchasers through power supply agreements and also trading on the regional electricity markets. By acting as a creditworthy intermediary, the partnership reduces investment risk and promotes a more dynamic power market.

Figure 12 | **Placing Africa GreenCo on the Continuum**



Source: WRI Authors.

From the start of the partnership, Africa GreenCo has maintained a master vision and goals document that keeps stakeholders focused on the partnership’s end goal while breaking it down into more manageable near-term goals and actions. This document has also been a helpful tool to articulate the partnership’s mission to new stakeholders and potential investors. Africa GreenCo has prioritized building a strong base of energy-sector support, and the evolution of this document reflects the value of the partnership’s rigorous feedback process.

The partnership’s first step was a **feasibility study** to understand the validity of the partnership concept. The study involved research on the technical energy capacity in countries of interest, exploration of alternate approaches to unlocking power

investment in sub-Saharan Africa, consideration of legal and financial structuring options, and modeling of cost and profit margins. The study also weighed costs and benefits of different partnership structures by looking at other organizations, including African Risk Capacity, a natural disaster insurance organization that relies on funding from member states, and the Africa Finance Corporation, an infrastructure-focused multilateral financial institution. Throughout this process, the partnership connected with and consulted key energy-sector actors, including project developers, lenders, government stakeholders, and contacts at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Understanding gained from this study informed fundamental decisions around the partnership's approach and structure. For instance, the founders originally thought the partnership would be treaty-based but determined that this setup would make it challenging to bring in new investors and achieve commercial viability in the long run.

The feasibility study was a significant time investment and took around nine months to complete. Throughout this process, the Africa GreenCo core team networked relentlessly, leveraging existing contacts and building new relationships with key actors across the African power ecosystem, including government stakeholders, national utilities, energy regulators, and investors. This enabled the partnership to facilitate open conversations among a range of stakeholders, using the feasibility study as a basis for these discussions. The partnership held a three-day workshop, bringing together diverse sector actors to provide feedback on the Africa GreenCo concept. Additionally, this workshop enabled the partnership to build early support across the system.

Africa GreenCo built on lessons learned from the feasibility study to develop a business plan that articulated the partnership vision and steps to achieve it. Specifically, the business plan outlined a step-by-step approach, clarified legal elements, broke down the partnership budget, and detailed technical components. In June 2017, the partnership

held an investor roundtable with developers, lenders, development finance institutions, and government representatives from Africa GreenCo's pilot country. Feedback from this session became the basis for the current investment memorandum, which was issued to a small group of investors to detail the investment opportunity.

Bringing diverse network actors together has been an essential component of this process. Accounting for different perspectives has enabled Africa GreenCo to strengthen its plan, and the master document has been a valuable conversation starter as the partnership has expanded its network. Keeping this document updated has also kept the current partnership team aligned on Africa GreenCo's vision and goals, even as unexpected challenges have emerged.

## **Strong MELR Mechanisms with Systems Thinking**

### **Description:**

Success factors 1 and 2 allow a partnership to understand the system of interest so it can set its overall transformation vision and near-term goals and ensure that its objectives are unique and additive to addressing a problem of interest. Strong MELR mechanisms (often referred to as performance-tracking systems) allows a partnership to understand whether it is achieving its near-term goals, how it is contributing to transformation or achieving its transformation vision, and how effectively it is operating.

Most entities, whether a corporation, government agency, or CSO, use performance tracking to understand if they are accomplishing their goals, as well as report on and learn from their successes and failures. But coming together in partnership requires establishing a unique performance-tracking system and a high level of coordination among partners. Focusing on large systems transformation also requires moving beyond more traditional short-term-oriented performance tracking to integrating systems thinking into the design of MELR elements. We define these elements as follows:



- **Monitoring:** the process of systematically and regularly collecting information and data to track a partnership's progress on its activities.
- **Evaluation:** the process of analyzing information and data to answer whether a partnership is meeting its objectives. Evaluation is about "sense-making, reality-checking, assumption testing, and answering questions" (FSG and Collective Impact Forum 2020).
- **Learning:** the ability to take evaluation results and integrate them into a partnership's approach at regular intervals to improve its effectiveness at meeting its objectives, to plan ahead, and to take risks.
- **Reporting:** efforts to summarize evaluation findings and lessons learned with different audiences. Reporting can come in many forms, including annual reports, quarterly updates, PowerPoint presentations, and webinars.
- **Systems thinking:** the ability to see how a partnership is influencing system conditions, how system conditions interact and influence each other, and ultimately, how the partnership is influencing system conditions and contributing to addressing the problem of interest (adapted from Preskill and Cook 2020).

Below, we refer to the combination of these elements as an MELR system. Having a strong MELR system that integrates systems thinking means that the partnership integrates its baseline understanding of the system into its MELR approach, tracks changes to the system over time and even expands it as the partnership scales, and works to understand the partnership's influence or contribution to changes in the system.

Having a strong MELR approach with systems thinking is vital not only for tracking transformation impacts and improving a partnership's adaptability and resilience to dynamic system conditions, but also for achieving



several other success factors. The ability to state a partnership's progress and what it has learned with confidence is especially important for building partnership credibility and trust and attracting partnership champions and investors.

#### Recommendations and Partnership Insights:

Interestingly, while 75 percent of partnerships in our survey pool report having an MELR system in place, less than half could demonstrate having clear systems thinking. That is, they do not believe that they can adequately track their contribution to transformation or their impact, and/or this was not adequately demonstrated in their partnership targets, metrics, or reporting during the research team's evaluation of their transformation potential. For example, many partnerships use metrics that tend toward predetermined performance indicators like "number of beneficiaries" or "amount of investment" that are often short-term-oriented and do not reveal much about the partnership's role in driving long-term systemic change. Not surprisingly, partnerships with high transformation potential believe that they have embodied this success factor to a great or very great extent—64 percent, compared to only 47 percent of partnerships with low transformation potential.

Partnerships listed several challenges related to MELR. First, many believe that they do not have the time to set up a sufficiently robust performance-tracking system because they have to prioritize mobilization and implementation activities. Second, partnerships are struggling to understand ambiguous concepts around transformation and systems change and believe that they lack the technical MELR expertise to set up appropriate mechanisms (Hargreaves 2010; Larson 2018). And no wonder. The literature on complexity and systems theory is extensive, confusing, and spread across multiple fields. Additionally, there is not a generally accepted approach for partnerships to track their impacts, and there are very few examples of evaluation to learn from (Latham 2014; Maassen et al. 2019). Third, partnerships often

receive funding from more than one funder and are beholden to funder reporting requirements. If these requirements do not promote transformation-savvy practices, then it can be time- and resource-intensive to add another layer of MELR. Finally, it can be difficult to merge divergent points of view on what a joint MELR approach should look like among stakeholders.

Despite these challenges, one thing we hope that partnerships will take away from this section is that having a strong MELR system in place that incorporates systems thinking is doable and necessary, whether or not it is a well-resourced partnership. Several partnerships who had not set up MELR mechanisms up front expressed regret at not prioritizing this. One partnership has even stated, "Partnerships that are successful have MELR at their absolute core. Partnerships get a bad name in part because people aren't doing a good job in this area."<sup>5</sup>

Partnerships in our sample pool provided several recommendations. Interestingly, these points aligned very well with guidance from leading systems-change evaluation experts. It is important to note that there is no standardized MELR framework or one-size-fits-all approach that will work for all partnerships. Instead, evaluation experts have focused on providing principles or guidelines for partnerships and other networks and initiatives to track their transformation impact. Given the challenges listed above associated with setting up a robust MELR approach with systems thinking, as well as the importance of having strong MELR to understand partnership impacts, we present more detailed guidance on how to do this in the following special section. These guidelines can be adopted when creating an MELR system or to help make an existing MELR system integrate better systems thinking.

## Special Section: Six Guidelines for Great MELR

In this special section, we synthesize and elaborate on six MELR guidelines that are relevant for transformation-seeking multistakeholder partnerships. We also present three case studies of partnerships that have successfully incorporated these six guidelines in their MELR practices.

### Guideline 1:

Designate roles for MELR to ensure accountability

Having staff with designated MELR responsibilities helps ensure ownership of tasks and that information is passed on in a systematic way. A partnership may choose to house MELR tasks internally or with a third party (or a hybrid approach) and can match the strength of the MELR system to its partnership resources. Either way, this requires that some funding be set aside for MELR. For many of the partnerships in our survey pool, MELR is handled by one full-time or part-time staff member with expertise in data collection and evaluation. Some partnerships employ a third-party auditor to help ensure credibility of findings and build trust with stakeholders. A key role for this staff member should be to establish a knowledge management system that can be accessed regularly to support learning (Latham 2014).

### Guideline 2:

Develop a strategic plan that aligns with the partnership's shared vision, targets, and systems understanding

We define a strategic plan as a conceptual mapping of how a partnership's specific activities, near-term goals, and transformation vision will shift system conditions and result in transformative outcomes. This can be the same as or different from the vision statement as specified in success factor 2, but a strategic plan should move beyond just identifying the activities and goals to outlining underlying

assumptions about the system that make a partnership's vision realistic and grounded in realities of the complex system in which it operates.

Theories of change (TOC) are becoming more commonplace as strategic plans for social change initiatives but may still be a new concept for some partnerships. TOCs move beyond simple results frameworks to provide hypothesized causal connections among interventions (inputs), outputs, outcomes, and impacts. There is a risk that a theory of change may still be too linear with cause-and-effect thinking (Preskill and Gopal 2014), but experts advise that TOCs should be thought of as navigational tools instead of strict planning tools. Components of a strong TOC include the following elements (based on van Tulder and Keen 2018):

- An articulation of the system (see page 54 on how to articulate a systems understanding) and the conditions that are holding the problem in place
- A shared vision for the partnership, including its activities, near-term goals, and transformation vision
- An identification of the possible pathways among a partnership's activities, near and intermediate goals, and transformation vision
- Detailed assumptions the partnership is making about the system to identify pathways
- A risk assessment of potential changes or challenges that the partnership could face and methods for addressing those changes and challenges

Importantly, because systems are dynamic, TOCs need to be revisited on a regular basis, alongside the vision statement, through a partnership's MELR system.

### Guideline 3:

Develop a set of evaluation questions to define the partnership's data collection and evaluation approach

When setting up an MELR system, partners should ask one another, “What do we want to learn about?” A good starting point is to think about partnership dynamics or operating efficiency (How well is our partnership functioning?) as well as impacts (Are we achieving our near-term and intermediate objectives? Are we contributing to shifting any system conditions?) (Larson 2018). Evaluations should serve to answer questions that will increase a partnership's ability to take risks, learn from its success and failures, and ultimately achieve impacts.

Partnerships can begin by agreeing on a set of questions that they would like to answer over time and then identifying measures like indicators of success for each question and data collection methods by which they will answer them. The questions could be answered at regular intervals to see how far the partnership has progressed on each factor over time.

### Guideline 4

Use a mixed-methods design for evaluation

A mixed-methods approach to transformation evaluation means using a combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence. This is helpful because understanding a partnership's transformative impact requires understanding both the quality of change, especially related to relationships, as well as the quantity of changes in depth and scale (Cabojo 2019).

### Guideline 5

Focus on contribution, rather than attribution

Understanding a partnership's specific contribution to transformation or shifting a system condition can be extremely difficult as there may be many other influences on the system. For the Courtauld

Commitment 2025, for example, understanding its attribution would entail understanding how packaging and food waste in the United Kingdom would have been reduced without the influence of the partnership. This type of exercise can be complex and expensive. Partners should ask themselves how this information would benefit the partnership and if understanding its contribution to addressing a problem would provide enough information to achieve its objectives.

Some partnerships may have resources for this; most don't. Either way, it is valuable to think about evaluation through the lens of contribution: How did a partnership contribute to a particular outcome? Several tools are available to help partnerships, including [contribution analysis](#) and, more simply, stakeholder interviews (Cabojo 2019). For example, if a partnership wanted to understand whether it influenced a specific government agency, it could interview staff from that agency through structured interviews.

### Guideline 6

Design MELR to be adaptive, flexible, and iterative

By nature, systems are dynamic and difficult to predict, which makes it a good idea to conduct periodic refreshes of an MELR system (Preskill and Gopal 2014). This can mean rethinking partnership targets; activities; the vision statement; data collection activities; and evaluation, learning, and reporting design. For example, a shift in political regime may mean that a government agency that supported a partnership may no longer do so, and as a result, the partnership will need to reorient and find a new government champion or implement different activities to reach its objectives. Subsequently, the partnership's MELR system may need to change by, for example, collecting new data or using different data collection methods or creating a new reporting deliverable better suited to a new partner.



Table SS-1 | MELR Guidelines in Practice

	NEXTWAVE PLASTICS	TRANSFORM	COURTAULD COMMITMENT 2025
MELR Ownership	Internal	External	Hybrid
About	<p><b>NextWave Plastics</b> (NWP) is a collaborative consortium of 10 multinational technology and consumer brands that are integrating recovered ocean-bound plastic (OBP) (plastic recovered from within 50 kilometers of a coastline that would not otherwise be collected in a managed waste stream) into their products and packaging with the goal of rapidly decreasing the volume of plastic litter entering the ocean by developing the first global network of OBP supply chains (Figure SS-1). The partnership is convened by a CSO, Lonely Whale, and was originally founded by Dell Technologies.</p>	<p><b>TRANSFORM</b> is a five-year program between Unilever, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and Ernst &amp; Young (EY) that supports innovative social enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia through grant funding and bespoke business support (Figure SS-1). TRANSFORM aims to enable these enterprises to develop scalable market-based solutions to improve the health, environment, livelihoods, and well-being of the lowest-income households.</p>	<p><b>The Courtauld Commitment 2025</b> is a 10-year voluntary agreement that brings together organizations across the United Kingdom's food system to cut the carbon, water, and waste associated with food and drink by at least a fifth by 2025 (Figure SS-1). The partnership is funded by the UK government and businesses. It is coordinated and implemented by Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). This is the fourth voluntary agreement in the Courtauld Commitment series, which has progressed from tackling food and beverage packaging, to food waste, to secondary and tertiary packaging and supply chain waste.</p>
Guideline 1: Designated MELR roles	<p>MELR activities are largely handled by a single staff member from the convening partner, Lonely Whale. This staff member also serves as the director and convener of the partnership. MELR activities are overseen by a senior Lonely Whale staff member.</p> <p>The MELR lead has established a centralized knowledge-management system where self-reported ocean-bound plastic diversion numbers from each company are recorded and aggregated for reporting the consortium's progress toward its collective goal. Accountability to the core impact goal is enforced through public reporting in an annual report.</p>	<p>TRANSFORM employs an external MELR expert, Altai Consulting, but considers it to be a core part of the program. Altai set up the program's theory of change and the overall MELR structure and evaluates and reports on the program's progress at regular intervals. Altai also houses the MELR system, although core partners can access it through regular check-ins and a joint SharePoint site. Altai shares findings and recommendations for improvements through monthly reporting, quarterly program meetings, micro-assessments on topics of interest for the program, and in annual reporting. Altai also works directly with the social enterprises, providing them with technical support and training in identifying beneficiaries and setting up and tracking against key performance indicators and impacts.</p>	<p>Courtauld has a hybrid MELR system. Partnership executive management led development of targets, metrics, and the systems change goal. Courtauld leverages the member companies to collect and report annually on data for required metrics, and WRAP provides them with data collection and reporting protocols. WRAP has two dedicated part-time analysts focused on data cleaning, validation, aggregation, evaluation, and reporting. To build credibility, WRAP used the services of an external auditor or peer reviewer to verify progress against the partnership's targets.</p>

Table SS-1 | MELR Guidelines in Practice (Cont.)

	NEXTWAVE PLASTICS	TRANSFORM	COURTAULD COMMITMENT 2025
MELR Ownership	Internal	External	Hybrid
Guideline 2: Strategic Plan	<p>Development of the strategic plan began by conducting research on the issue of OBP. This included a review of the leading scientific industry and CSO reports and networking with leading OBP-related initiatives like the UN Environment's Clean Seas Initiative and scientific experts such as the University of Georgia's New Materials Institute. Working with the founding member companies, NWP agreed to an initiative charter. The charter established the shared vision of building the first global network of OBP supply chains, defined the core principles for how members engage with each other, specified how member companies would meet their individual targets, how collective action would work to build an OBP supply chain, and how the partnership's ambitions aligned with the SDGs. The charter informed NWP's clear target of diverting 25,000 metric tons of plastic by the end of 2025.</p>	<p>When establishing the program, Unilever and DFID conducted an assessment of what type of social enterprises they should be supporting and what their overall systems change objective and underlying goal should be. Together with Altai Consulting, TRANSFORM mapped a theory of change that demonstrated how strategically supporting social enterprises could reach a designated program target of enabling 100 million people to access products and services that improve their health, livelihoods, environment, or well-being by 2025, and how that target would lead to the ultimate systems change objective of reducing poverty by scaling market-based solutions.</p>	<p>Since Courtauld began in 2005, the partnership has taken an iterative and adaptive management approach to developing its understanding of the UK food and beverage supply chain and its strategic plan. With each commitment in the series, the partnership established clear and simple targets grounded in research, but with a vision toward the next commitment. For example, Courtauld 1 had two package-reduction targets, but the partnership also started researching the food waste issue and developing targets for Courtauld 2. This allowed the partnership to build credibility, to improve its systems understanding over time (rather than investing too many resources up front), and to create champions within member companies and the external supporting environment. Likewise, based on the partnership's success, Courtauld has strengthened its systems change vision over time to focus on changing the underlying principles and mind-sets of the UK food and beverage system toward zero food waste and minimum packaging that also helps minimize food waste in the supply chain and the home.</p>
Guideline 3: Evaluation Questions	<p>NWP's evaluation questions are directly related to key performance indicators defined by the member companies. Given the diversity of member approaches to OBP diversion, NWP focused on the following evaluation questions: (1) What progress was made toward the 25,000 ton OBP reduction target? (2) How many countries is OBP being collected from? (3) How many new products integrate OBP material? (4) What challenges, lessons learned, and solutions did members experience?</p>	<p>Although each social enterprise is different, TRANSFORM's evaluation questions focus on how well each enterprise is doing at meeting its own objectives, and the collective effect on agreed-on program metrics across all 45+ enterprise projects supported to date. This includes measuring uptake by others and publicly available lessons learned, which is seen as a key contributor to systems change. Additionally, Altai Consulting provides strategic support to review how well the program and engagement with enterprises is functioning to recommend areas of improvement.</p>	<p>Courtauld's evaluation questions focus on partnership progress toward quantitative goals. The partnership also asks questions regarding its efficiency and dynamics, as well as systems change impacts (how it is changing underlying principles of operations among the signatory businesses). Regular discussions occur between WRAP and signatory businesses to look at progress and how the commitment can assist businesses in making more rapid and cost-effective changes.</p>

Table SS-1 | MELR Guidelines in Practice (Cont.)

	NEXTWAVE PLASTICS	TRANSFORM	COURTAULD COMMITMENT 2025
MELR Ownership	Internal	External	Hybrid
Guideline 4: Mixed-Methods Design	NWP leverages member companies to collect quantitative data on the amount of OBP recovered through their supply chains. To assess challenges, lessons learned, and solutions, NWP interviewed member companies through in-person and virtual meetings held regularly throughout the year. NWP also had an external review conducted by the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Qualitative data collection was key for understanding how partners viewed the effectiveness of the partnership and opportunities for adaptive improvement of the initiative.	Each social enterprise tracks its own set of key performance indicators, predefined in collaboration with Altai Consulting, and Altai aggregates this information to assess progress against TRANSFORM's targets and systems change objectives. TRANSFORM uses a mix of qualitative insights and quantitative indicators to track progress against systems change. Examples of quantitative indicators include the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries, the number of publicly available learning opportunities, and the number of business models that transition toward scale. Examples of qualitative insights include uptake of TRANSFORM models by others; whether the businesses have transitioned between blueprint, validate, prepare or scale; and insights on how the enterprises are partnering with each other and Unilever and EY's local teams to drive scale and deepen impact.	Progress toward food waste and packaging reduction are done through quantitative metrics. The partnership tracks its contribution to systems change by tracking its influence on food waste, greenhouse gases, and water reduction. WRAP's public-private partnership on plastic (UK Plastic Pact) also tracks change on plastic reduction and recycling targets. Going forward, WRAP will be tracking the progress of Plastic Pact's food waste reduction voluntary agreements in other countries. WRAP tracks quantitative and qualitative information on its presence in new geographies; the uptake of WRAP, Plastic Pact, and Courtauld protocols; and use of the voluntary agreement approach.



Table SS-1 | MELR Guidelines in Practice (Cont.)

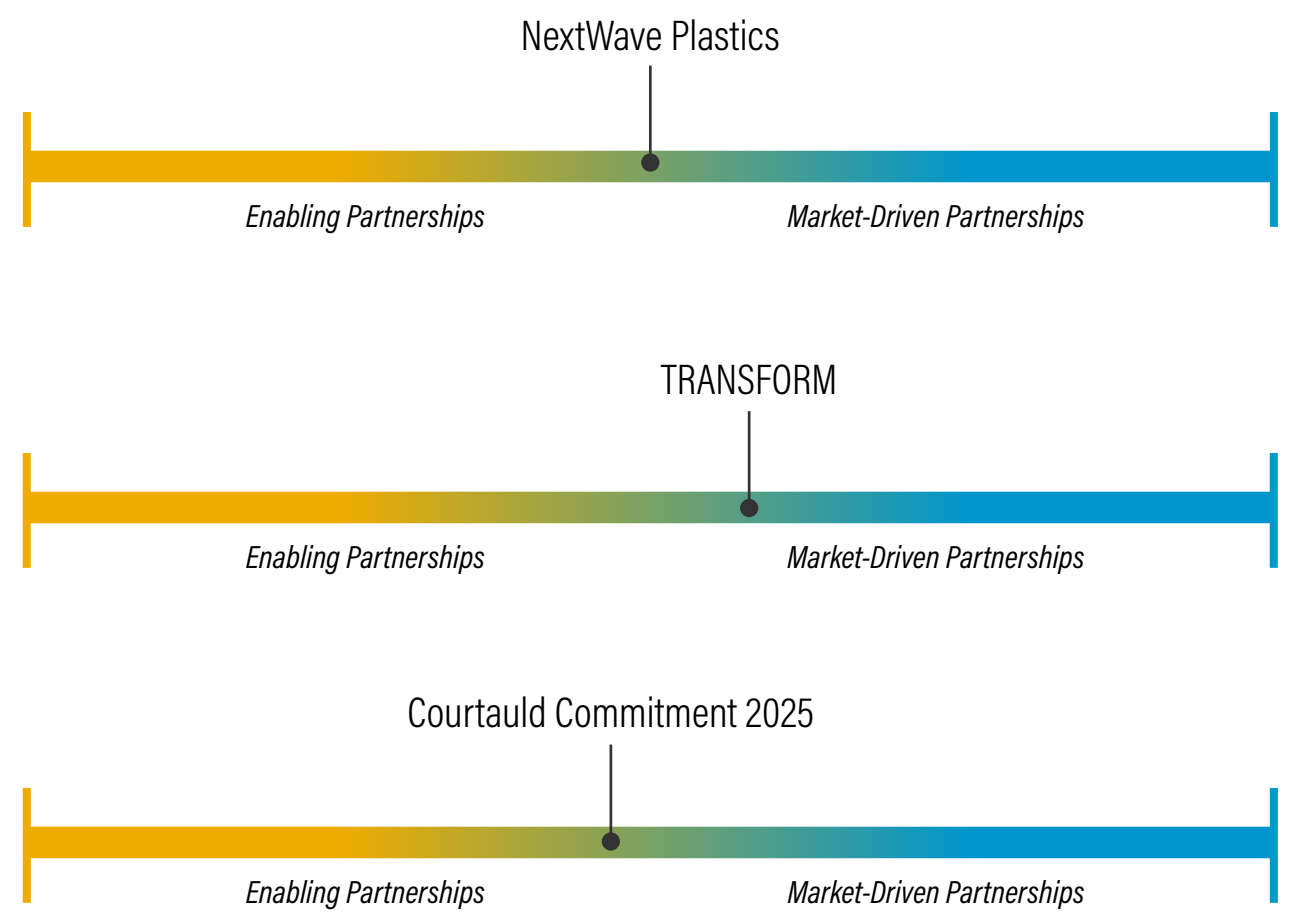
	NEXTWAVE PLASTICS	TRANSFORM	COURTAULD COMMITMENT 2025
MELR Ownership	Internal	External	Hybrid
Guideline 5: Focus on Contribution	<p>NWP has a strong focus on additionality across OBP supply chain development. Member companies prioritize new supply that expands existing OBP collection efforts or establishes collection in areas where it currently does not exist. This also includes engaging supply-chain partners in OBP recycling that would not otherwise work with this material and collaborating with CSOs and other partners to increase their effectiveness reducing OBP as well. NWP is breaking down barriers—in the market and within its companies—to prove its success working with unconventional materials and creating a world where OBPs carry a commercial value.</p>	<p>TRANSFORM aims to identify the number of people affected by the program and does this by capturing data on each project's impact. In addition to project impact, TRANSFORM is keen to understand the impact of TRANSFORM beyond the term of the project with the enterprises, acknowledging that TRANSFORM hopes to be a catalyst for future scale. TRANSFORM does this by estimating the ratio of TRANSFORM's funding and support for the social enterprises against other contributors. Beyond project attribution reviews, TRANSFORM also assesses how many people the enterprise reports affect and the funding the enterprise reports receiving and then allocates beneficiaries proportionally. TRANSFORM also uses qualitative insights and reflections to demonstrate its contribution and influence, such as tracking how lessons learned are taken up and shared by others (e.g., through blogs, webinars, or websites), and tracking how models tested through TRANSFORM are taken up by others.</p>	<p>Courtauld has attempted to measure both attribution and contribution toward its systems-change goal. The partnership developed a household survey from the outset to start measuring food waste as there were no existing estimates. Courtauld hired an expert to estimate its specific impact on reducing food waste, which was useful, especially for funders, but this was expensive. Courtauld has learned that what is most important is being able to show that its approach is influential and that the evidence shows that the system is changing.</p>

Table SS-1 | MELR Guidelines in Practice (Cont.)

	NEXTWAVE PLASTICS	TRANSFORM	COURTAULD COMMITMENT 2025
MELR Ownership	Internal	External	Hybrid
Guideline 6: Be Adaptive, Flexible, and Iterative	NWP's learning and reporting strategy is key to improving the partnership's ability to be adaptive and flexible. The strategy includes regular in-person member meetings (2–3 times per year) and monthly check-ins with Lonely Whale,) external review (e.g., by university graduate students), and an annual report. Member companies use exchanges to connect on challenges and learn from each other to speed progress. Lonely Whale organizes development of an annual plan, which, in addition to reporting on progress, is highly focused on adaptive management. The plan acknowledges key challenges and lessons learned each year to inform and refresh a strategy that revisits how to realize its charter commitments and explores how members can expand deeper into the OBP product supply chain.	The core partners convene regularly through monthly meetings to review the performance of the program and discuss findings on organizational alignment, enterprise projects, and Altai Consulting's activity. Each quarter, the management team (comprising Unilever, DFID, and EY representatives) reflects on MELR and what can be done to ensure that the program meets its objectives in the most effective way. Each year, a thorough review of the program, the TOC, and the reporting framework is undertaken; and key lessons learned and recommendations are identified. Altai also conducts micro-assessments or rapid research assignments on topics of interest for the program and integrates findings into its recommendations for the program. TRANSFORM also has developed strong communication and learning lines from the social enterprises to the core partners and the social entrepreneurship community within TRANSFORM. Each project has a designated project lead within Unilever and delivers reports on lessons learned at key project milestones. Project leads are convened in a monthly learning group to share their experiences and challenges. TRANSFORM also facilitates events for enterprises so that they can directly share what they have learned. Each enterprise is encouraged to post this information publicly, and TRANSFORM also creates learning assets, blogs, and articles that it publishes through its website to encourage uptake by others. All lessons learned are regularly captured by Altai Consulting and the program team.	As the Courtauld series of commitments has advanced, the partnership's MELR system has had to grow to accommodate new targets around packaging, water, greenhouse gases, and food waste. Additionally, as research gaps have been identified, they have been filled with targeted research. This has allowed the partnership to evolve and change priorities over time, based on sound evidence. For example, there was little evidence on the scale of food waste in different subsectors of the supply chain. Research was conducted with these subsectors and led by business signatories. This showed the scale of the opportunities for change and identified solutions to the waste problem. The signatories on the agreement could then select the approach that suited their business most effectively. Partners reflect on lessons learned from their activities at least annually.

Source: Partnership quotes provided as part of *A Time for Transformation* Report survey, conducted December 2019. For information on the survey instrument and methodology used, see Appendix C.

Figure SS-1 | Placing Nextwave Plastics, Transform, and Courtauld Commitment 2025 on the Continuum



Source: WRI Authors.



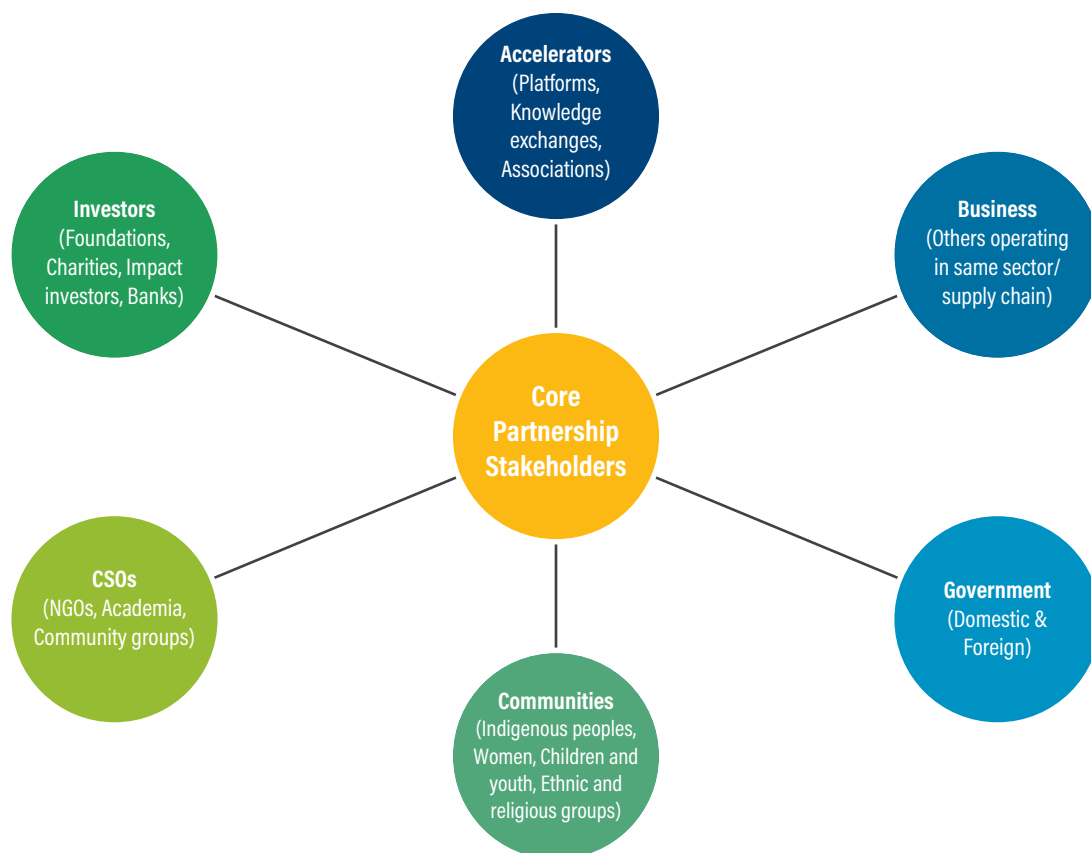
## Capacity to Engage Stakeholders External to the Partnership

### Description:

To be most effective, transformative partnerships must actively engage with the network of actors relevant to their system of interest external to core partners, signatories, and other internal partnership stakeholders. Figure 13 and Box 25 provide a broad overview of a typical partnership's external universe, based on the authors' understanding. Cultivating support from these external actors enables partnerships to engage new champions, access external resources and expertise, and better navigate the local context. This cultivation also adds a neutral perspective to the partnership strategy. Engagement with this external network can take many forms, depending on

partnership activities. Partnerships may find it most valuable to build on an existing network, such as an industry association or national platform, that can broker new and useful relationships and facilitate knowledge sharing between peers (Treichel et al. 2017). For all partnerships, connecting with relevant local actors is essential, especially vulnerable and underserved communities that would be affected positively or negatively by the project. Engaging with these local networks, formal or not, can help inform partnership implementation to ensure that it is equitable and tailored to the local context (Dalberg 2020).

Figure 13 | Multistakeholder Partnerships' External Actor Map



Source: WRI Authors.

## BOX 25 | External Stakeholders Overview

Multistakeholder partnerships are frequently working across multiple countries or one of several components of a supply chain, meaning it is vitally important to understand who is included in the system of interest and who should be identified as a partnership champion, relevant decision-maker, beneficiary, or affected group. There are several types of external stakeholders that partnerships can seek to identify and leverage to accelerate the progress of their partnership:

- **Accelerators:** Partnership accelerators serve to provide funding, technical knowledge exchange, or connections to useful networks to accelerate the progress and success of multistakeholder partnerships. Accelerators can operate as knowledge-exchange platforms, industry associations, national platforms, or nongovernmental organizations. P4G is an example of an accelerator.
- **Communities:** Foundational to a partnership is understanding the intended community beneficiaries of the partnership as well as those community members who may be negatively affected. It is especially important to have representation according to gender, ethnic group, race, age, income, and other groups or vulnerable communities that are relevant for each implementation area. These groups are often underrepresented in economic decisions, but their participation or buy-in to a partnership's activities may ultimately determine its success. Engaging beneficiary groups in monitoring, reporting, and learning

activities will be especially important for data collection and truly understanding a partnership's contribution to transformation.

- **Other Governments, CSOs, and Businesses:** Governments, CSOs, and businesses can be explicit partners, but it is also important to understand their potential softer role as partnership champions. Mapping local actors can help partnerships identify regional or sector gaps and position efforts as complementary, rather than duplicative (Dalberg 2020). Dynamics among these groups will vary depending on context. For example, gaining private-sector support as a first step may be essential in some instances, whereas first aligning with government may be a better approach in others. Understanding when and how to engage these external stakeholders is critical to partnership implementation. Building a formal or informal network of support with these local actors can also help advance partnerships by helping them navigate a complex regulatory environment, work better with local communities, or broker relationships with potential funders or new partners.
- **Investors:** Achieving long-term funding sustainability is a key issue that many partnerships are facing, making investors a critical external actor to engage. Investors include, for example, funders, foundations, and private investors.

## Special Section: Forecast the Future: SDG Partnerships for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Our modern era of technology is witnessing the fusion of the physical, biological, and digital worlds through technologies like the Internet of Things, 3D printing, machine learning, blockchain, and precision agriculture. Often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), technology is a critical enabler for external stakeholders looking to accelerate SDG action. Technologies of the 4IR are increasingly being used by partnerships in all sorts of ways to accelerate their progress, such as reaching more communities, working smarter and faster, unlocking new solutions to known problems, and more. Given the relevance of advanced technologies in the 21st century, here we present a special section on 4IR technologies.

### Technology as the Enabler: How Partnerships Are Using Technology in Practice

Partnerships with transformative SDG ambitions look to 4IR technologies as a boost: Seventy percent of the 169 indicators underlying the SDGs can be fast tracked by 4IR technologies (Herweijer et al. 2020). Technologies like machine learning, artificial intelligence, and blockchain are being used by partnerships in all sorts of ways: to reach more communities, work smarter and faster, unlock new solutions to known problems, and more. Big challenges, previously daunting and unwieldy, are now more accessible.

In the absence of quality ocean data, effective ocean management, for example, has always been tricky since only 5 percent of the ocean has been fully explored. Through the [Friends for Ocean Action](#) partnership, however, business, international organizations, and CSOs are working together to build out a comprehensive, open-source digital platform that can inform decisions on ocean resources (Friends of Ocean Action 2020). This partnership uses data to support decision-making, fast tracking solutions for a healthy ocean. Through its Liberating Ocean Data project stream, the platform will be built based on new technologies,

data processing, sensors, and satellites. Unique to this partnership are the technology companies and ocean conservationists, who historically don't have many shared commonalities, that are now collaborating to unlock solutions. Together, they are building shared values, agreeing on the objectives, and applying a method that respects both the agile, pioneering tech world and the rigors of academic and explorative work of ocean CSOs and academia.

In the energy sector, several fascinating partnerships are emerging in support of expanded energy access in Africa, many of which are using 4IR technologies in innovative ways. Africa GreenCo, mentioned elsewhere in this report, is currently looking to create sophisticated algorithms to automate lending to African solar energy companies, a concept new to the space. Energise Africa, a partnership that works as a crowdfunding platform to deploy off-grid solar systems in Africa, is also looking to incorporate blockchain technologies for transaction tracking and accounting. We discuss Energise Africa further in the special sections that close out this chapter.

There are also partnerships that work to accelerate the confluence of 4IR technologies used by others to attain the SDGs, such as the newly formed initiative, [2030Vision](#). Founded by the WEF, Arm Holdings, and the United Nations Development Programme, 2030Vision is convening leaders across all sectors to share cutting-edge research on the role of technology in accelerating the SDGs, as well as the market opportunities unlocked by 4IR technologies. The initiative will also encourage the formation of new partnerships with specific industry ecosystems to lead on critical issues. Already, 2030Vision has identified 300 technological applications to accelerate the SDGs and is currently working with leading technology experts and governments across the world to build leadership principles that support the use of these technologies for the global public good.



## Considerations of Advanced Technologies

Serving the global public good is a critical aspect underlining 4IR technologies. Although the SDGs provide a powerful aspiration for a sustainable world, transitions are often accompanied with trade-offs. And while advanced technologies hold great promise for transformative SDG outcomes, any associated socioeconomic and governance challenges cannot be overlooked. 4IR technologies may be challenging, for instance, for governments to regulate in a fair and equitable manner. As such, the true costs and benefits of these technologies and how they affect frontline communities may not be known until after the fact.

For example, the outputs of artificial intelligence can have bias, exacerbating issues of social justice and societal exclusion (Johnson 2019, Crawford et al. 2019, West et al. 2019). This possible bias urges us to consider questions of ethics, values, and inclusion in both the development of new technologies and their deployment for societal good. Access to advanced technologies is not always equitable: Thirty-three percent of the

world's population does not have access to a mobile phone, 41 percent does not use the Internet, and 51 percent is not active on social media, which has an important data-gathering function (We Are Social 2020). This considerable global technology gap prevents a significant proportion of the world's population from partaking and, likely, even benefiting from new technologies. Partnerships like Friends for Ocean Action, Africa GreenCo, Energise Africa, and 2030Vision, however, that use these technologies can extend the accessibility of these solutions. With their longer-term timeline that comes with a focus on transformation, these partnerships and others with transformative ambitions can drive toward the sustainable solutions needed to tackle the SDGs. Each stakeholder's contributions is integral: Companies' high level of innovation and technology, coupled with governments' regulatory oversight and support, coupled with CSOs' equity and social justice focus, may help ensure that new technologies are adopted with consideration of their externalities and frontline communities.





### Recommendations and Partnership Insights

Partnerships rely on support from a wide range of actors, from trade associations and academia to CSOs and the private sector. These organizations add value by connecting partnerships to technical resources, external expertise, partnership champions, and new funders. As may be expected, partnerships with high transformation potential believe that they have embodied this success factor to a great extent, compared to low transformation potential partnerships (64 percent compared to 47 percent). To effectively build a support network, partnerships can take the following actions:

- **Map relevant initiatives and actors.** High potential partnerships know their strengths and weaknesses and when they need to reach outside of their immediate partnership network for additional subject matter expertise, technical assistance, or implementation support. They also understand how their partnership fits into the broader system. Partnerships find that establishing a local support network is particularly useful. One partnership emphasizes this, saying it “benefits from local partners in the region who are part of the civil society or who are based in government,” another identifies community partners as key to “keeping the partnership aligned with other local efforts.” Partnerships can start by mapping relevant initiatives in the region or sector they are working in. This exercise can help partnerships engage the right

groups, identify regional or sectoral gaps, and position efforts as complementary rather than duplicative (Dalberg 2020). This can be part of a systems mapping effort identified in the success factor, “clear articulation of the system of interest,” and partnerships could use methods like actor mapping or social network mapping.

- **Leverage existing partner networks.** High-profile or well-networked stakeholders have a lot to offer. They build partnership credibility, increase partnership name recognition, and open doors to resources and contacts that would not otherwise be accessible. One partnership, for instance, notes that one key stakeholder enables it to “access technical and political support systems essential to partnership operations.”<sup>6</sup> Another partnership relies on a stakeholder’s strong connections to sector specialists. Partnerships view the reputational and network benefits that these stakeholders bring as invaluable but warn that these relationships must sometimes be carefully navigated. For example, well-connected partners tend to be large and support multiple initiatives contemporaneously, in some cases making it difficult for partnerships to fully capitalize on network resources. One partnership explains that while two well-connected organizations are core partners, “with competing priorities and





[regulatory] hurdles, accessing and utilizing networks has been a challenge.”<sup>7</sup> To better access these resources, partnerships find that communicating partnership progress regularly and finding a champion within the organization are particularly helpful strategies.

- **Prioritize networking.** External support often comes down to individuals, rather than organizations. Partnerships with high transformation potential cultivate this by “actively participating and networking with local, regional, and national organizations,”<sup>8</sup> demonstrating proof of concept, and prioritizing “continuous engagement with new supporters” at every opportunity. These partnerships also seek out and join more formal networks, such as P4G, that can support partnership development and facilitate useful partnership contacts. Partnerships emphasize that building these support networks takes time, trust, and persistence but agree that efforts are worth it in the long run. As one partnership explains, “[F]inding solutions to complex problems requires co-operation, not competition.”<sup>9</sup>

#### Best-in-Class Example

**Energise Africa**, a partnership between impact investing platforms Ethex and Lendahand, uses crowdfunding to provide affordable finance to solar

businesses operating in sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 14). These businesses then sell small solar systems to households on a pay-as-you-go basis. Individual investments are structured as fixed-term bonds and conditionally guaranteed for first-time investors on the platform. Since its inception, projects funded through Energise Africa investments have enabled 452,000 people across Africa to replace kerosene with solar electricity. Energise Africa has done an exemplary job establishing its external support network from the top down and bottom up, leveraging stakeholder networks and building support from grassroots CSOs. This network has been critical for raising awareness of the partnership, building partnership credibility, and attracting new investors.

Figure 14 | **Placing Energise Africa on the Continuum**



Source: WRI Authors.



Energise Africa investments are innovative in their approach. Without a track record, the partnership initially found it more difficult to build its investor base at the rate initially anticipated. To map relevant initiatives and actors, Energise Africa conducted research to better understand why investors were hesitant and to identify possible solutions. Ethex research revealed that UK investors are interested in impact investing, but do not know all of their investment options and perceive impact investment as inaccessible and high risk. Investors also thought that sustainable development investments lacked transparency and were skeptical of their actual impacts. Energise Africa addressed these barriers by experimenting with several approaches to attract new investors, including different advertisement strategies, various investment matching approaches, the first-time investor guarantee, and vouchers for first-time investors. Each of these approaches had different levels of success in attracting new investors, and the exact findings are detailed in Energy 4 Impact's recently released "Energise Africa—Investment and Impact Report" (Energy 4 Impact 2020). The research shows that the promise of match funding led to an increase in investment and that the first-

time investor guarantee focused on increasing the participation of smaller investors and also boosted investment, especially around the £100 level, the level of the guarantee.

In the four months after the launch of the first-time investor guarantee in July 2019, there was a 65 percent increase in first-time investors compared to the previous four months before, with an 80 percent increase in investments of \$125.

In 2019, the partnership employed an external consultant to conduct additional research on investor demographics and behavior and analyzed what kind of communication channels were most effective in acquiring new investors. The results showed that traditional communication channels like advertising (TV, London Underground, radio), public relations, and events were much more effective than digital channels in persuading people to invest. In addition, Energise Africa supporters (UK Aid, Virgin Unite, P4G, and Good Energies Foundation), media articles, and Trustpilot reviews were critical in building trust with potential investors and giving them the confidence to go ahead and invest. Furthermore, digital and



social media channels, although not important in acquiring new investors, were very important in building out the Energise Africa community and encouraging repeat investment.

In response to this data and insight, Energise Africa focused on building an external support network that enables the partnership to reach new groups of investors. One way the partnership had done this is by leveraging its partner networks. To start, Ethex provided access to a community of over 15,000 individual impact investors. This enabled partnership to market Energise Africa to a large group of potential investors as soon as it launched. Stakeholders UK Aid and Virgin Unite also brought large and diverse network resources. UK Aid's support and engagement allowed Energise Africa to promote the platform at a number of UK government events, such as a 2018 ministerial trade mission to Africa, through a UK Aid research report released at the 2019 UN General Assembly meeting, at the 2020 UK Africa Investment Summit, and through several UK aid-related news stories. This has been very important in building the partnership's credibility, building brand awareness, and enabling Energise Africa to

acquire a broad demographic of new investors. A February 2020 [press release](#), for example, explains the partnership's strategy, framing Energise Africa as integral to the UK Year of Climate Action in advance of COP 26. Virgin Unite, which is focused more on the entrepreneurial aspects of Energise Africa investments, also regularly promotes the partnership through social media and [blog posts](#), enabling the partnership to reach investors who may not otherwise consider investing in sustainable development.

Energise Africa has prioritized networking, working with grassroots CSOs on events to connect with potential investors and promote the partnership. The partnership has collaborated with several organizations, including Friends of the Earth, Ashden, Power for All, Global Citizen, and the UK Sustainable Investment Forum's Good Money Week (an annual event). Creating opportunities for this first investor touchpoint is invaluable and a critical component of building a sustainable investment pipeline. Once people have invested initially, the partnership's repeat investment rate is above 90 percent.









# CONCLUDING COMMENTS: LOOKING TO 2030

We have just under a decade remaining to meet the SDGs. Transformation-seeking multistakeholder partnerships and those thinking about forming such partnerships can benefit from up-to-date knowledge to help them understand when and where partnerships are needed and how to tap into critical moments of opportunity. While this report aimed to set the stage by presenting the rich and multidisciplinary literature and knowledge available to address common knowledge gaps, more investigation is needed into the role of finance, external stakeholders, and technology, and the impacts of partnerships.



## A Call to Action

Multistakeholder partnerships among governments, businesses, and CSOs are increasingly thought of as an essential element to drive transformative change and accelerate progress on achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change. Despite the growing number of transformation-focused partnerships that have emerged to address the SDGs, most are still early in their partnership journeys where there is little empirical analysis of actual impacts. Additionally, these partnerships are operating in complex and dynamic systems where the research landscape is constantly evolving across multiple fields of study and investigative angles. Yet we have just under a decade remaining to meet the SDGs. Partnerships and those thinking about engaging in partnerships need support and resources.

This report aimed to synthesize the rich and multidisciplinary literature and knowledge available to address knowledge gaps around transformative partnerships. These knowledge gaps include lack of a common framing and clear definitions for transformation and systems change as it pertains to partnerships, lack of clear information on when partnering is the right approach and how to maximize the motivations and offerings each

sector has to offer, and lack of empirical evidence of partnership success factors and how they should be implemented.

Chapter 2 described three key characteristics of transformation identified in the literature to help clarify partnerships' understanding of transformation, how it relates to the concepts of *systems* and *systems change*, and a typology of transformative partnerships. A greater understanding of all these factors can help partnerships think about and be more deliberate in how they plan for their transformation journeys. Chapter 3 provided readers with detailed information on offerings of each major sector in partnership and a better understanding of why these sectors seek to partner. This is useful because we heard that partners don't always fully understand each other, and we know from our research that partnership roles and responsibilities are an essential ingredient to the success of partnerships. Chapter 4 identified 14 common success factors related to partnership operations and relationship management and took a deep dive into four that may have a greater bearing on reaching transformation objectives, based on an



analysis of 41 partnerships in the P4G ecosystem, most of which are still in operation. Using guidance from leading literature and high transformation-potential partnerships from the P4G community, partnerships can learn how to better embody these 14 success factors to improve their effectiveness. We also provided guidelines to help partnerships better track their contribution to systems transformation, with the hope that this will help improve the empirical evidence base needed to help researchers better understand partnerships. Integrating systems thinking concepts into performance tracking is integral for transformation-seeking partnerships. Chapter 4 also took a glance at the 4IR, providing evidence of how partnerships are harnessing the power of new technologies to advance change.

## Looking Forward

With the stage set, we must continue to learn from partnerships on their transformation journeys to better understand when and where partnerships are needed and how to tap into critical moments of opportunity.

More investigation is also needed to further explore the role of advanced technologies, as well as the role of finance and frontline communities as partnership stakeholders. We must also learn how external networks can better support partnerships. Recommendations and insights from this report have largely been focused on what partnerships can do to maximize their effectiveness. But what can others—the national platforms, the partnership accelerators, the investors and grantees, and national governments—do in practice to better enable transformation? Additionally, more investigation is needed into partnership impacts related to the SDGs, to better understand when partnerships are most needed, and which types are best suited in different contexts.

Future WRI research will continue to target and explore the information gaps like those identified as most critical by partnerships and track lessons learned from the P4G and wider partnership community.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Stakeholder Research Methodology

To understand stakeholder motivations for partnering, their contributions, and interest in transformation, we conducted stakeholder-specific literature reviews, consultations, and interviews. All are described in this appendix.

#### Literature reviews

##### Government

The government literature review was performed using Google Scholar and University E-libraries. The search was limited to articles published between 2016 and 2020. The search was divided into two stages. The first stage was focused on the barriers and the benefits of developing partnerships among government, the private sector, and CSOs; as well as the characteristics of a transformative partnership from the government perspective. The second stage was focused on successful case examples.

The main search terms for the first stage were government transformations for development, government partnerships to achieve SDGs, barriers for SDG partnerships, examples of sector and government partnerships, innovative government partnerships, cross-sectoral collaboration for SDGs, and unlocking investment through partnerships. Articles from development institutions and consultancy companies were prioritized. The main research points included in the government report were validated and discussed with GGGI experts.

The second phase of research was performed using project database and Google search. GGGI case examples on government and private-sector partnerships were selected based on the project impact achieved and certain project characteristics compatible with the scope of the report. Interviews with project managers and country representatives from GGGI were held to gather project details and feedback on the barriers for developing partnerships between the government and the private sector.

All other examples were retrieved mostly from development partners' project databases such as the UN and the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

##### Business

Information on businesses as partnership stakeholders was sourced through two literature reviews. The first examined the business case for business participation in the SDGs more broadly, looking at how and why companies engage in sustainable development initiatives. The second more specifically addressed businesses as partnership stakeholders, focusing on business motivation to partner and business contributions to partnerships.

For both lines of inquiry, literature was sourced through searches on Ebsco Discovery Scholar, Google, and Google Scholar. Literature was restricted to work published between 2015 and 2020. Search terms for the first literature review included business, business case, business participation, SDG or Sustainable Development Goal, and sustainable development. Search terms for the second literature search included business, public-private partnership, multistakeholder partnership, SDG or Sustainable Development Goal, participation, stakeholder, offering, and contributor.

##### CSO

The CSO literature search was conducted using Google and performed after the research team settled on a search strategy for the government and business sections. As such, it was limited to one search, which included terms like CSO partnerships, NGO partnership, multistakeholder partnerships, public-private partnerships, CSO/NGO partnerships offerings, CSO/NGO partnership motivations, CSO/NGO coalitions, CSO/NGO collaboration, multistakeholder collaboration, CSO/NGO partnership barriers, CSO/NGO partnership challenges, and CSO/NGO partnership success factors.

#### Interviews

We also supplemented our literature reviews with expert knowledge, as we noticed that available literature on stakeholder contributions to partnerships was limited and did not typically address partnerships interested in transformation. For the government expertise, report co-author GGGI consulted in-house government experts to review and validate research and case studies presented in the government stakeholder section. Experts consulted include GGGI's country representative for Thailand, country representative for Mexico, country representative for Hungary, head of Green Cities Teams, head of the Climate Action and Inclusive Development Unit, and expert within its Investment and Policy Solutions Division.

For businesses and CSOs, we conducted a few dozen interviews with leaders in both sectors. These leaders had deep experience with sustainability and/or partnerships and were sourced from WRI's extensive international network as well as WRI's Corporate Consultative Group. In sum, we spoke to a total of 30 parties. See Box A1 for a complete list of organizations interviewed.

After completing all interviews, we extracted key themes around each stakeholders' contributions to partnerships and reasons why they were interested in partnering. These are presented in Chapter 3. We supported each theme with an example, often drawing from the in-house expertise of WRI and GGGI, which have both been engaged in or are aware of myriad partnerships across all sectors. To fill in the details of the cases, additional literature searches were conducted, and these are cited as appropriate throughout Chapter 3.

## BOX A1 | Organizations Interviewed

**Businesses:** Canadian Solar, Citigroup Inc., Colgate-Palmolive, Danfoss, Grundfos, FEMSA, The LEGO Group, Mars, Incorporated, State of Green, SUMe, Suzano Papel e Celulose, Temasek

**CSOs:** BSR, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, CDP, Circle Economy, Clean Cooking Alliance, Climate Policy Initiative, Enterprise Partners, Institute for Sustainable Communities, Mission 2020, Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance (REBA), Rocky Mountain Institute, UN Global Compact (UNGC), We Mean Business (WMB), World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), World Resources Institute (WRI), World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Source: WRI Authors.

## Interview Discussion Guide

The following document is the discussion guide that we used for businesses and CSOs. The interview questions are at the end of the guide.

### State-of-the-Art Report Discussion Guide

#### Background

##### Report Review

- This informal, off-the-record discussion is in support of the WRI State-of-the-Art Report, which explores how multistakeholder partnerships with transformation potential maximize their effectiveness toward driving SDG action.
  - For the purposes of the report, we are interested in partnerships that comprise at least one commercial and one non-commercial partner and are aiming for scalability, looking for commercial viability, and aiming to overcome market barriers.
  - For the purposes of the report, we consider the following four characteristics of transformation: systemic, nonlinear, deviates from the status quo, and long-term or sustained.

##### Report Rationale

- The global sustainable development community has developed a heightened interest in transformative action, especially as it pertains to the SDGs.
- Part of the hope in fulfilling the SDGs hinges on the effectiveness of transformative multistakeholder partnerships in their quest to accelerate SDG action.
- While we cannot yet speak to impacts because this type of transformative partnership is relatively new—for the last five or six years—there is great interest in how they are progressing. This is our report focus.

#### Discussion purpose and other notes

- We are interested in discussing three topics today to understand businesses' or CSOs' offerings to partnerships, businesses' or CSOs' shortcomings, and businesses' or CSOs' motivations for partnering.
- This is an informal, off-the-record conversation.
  - We can share a draft of the section so you are comfortable with what is being shared, if you would like.
  - We would be happy to thank you in our contributor's section, if you would like.
  - Please speak from your broader business or CSO experience—that is, any reflections or examples need not be related to your current organization (although if they are, that is perfectly fine).
  - Your insights will be aggregated into themes, drawn from all of our team's calls with business or CSO leaders like you.

#### Discussion questions

We are most interested in the first four questions. If time permits, we can discuss the last one. For each query, we would appreciate any examples in support. The examples can be kept confidential if you would prefer, or conversely, we are also happy to share any as examples in the report.

1. Why are businesses or CSOs interested in transformation? What does transformation mean to your organization?
2. When businesses or CSOs think about transformation, does it change how they approach partnering?
3. What do businesses or CSOs offer in partnerships, especially those aiming to drive transformative change? Said another way, what are the assets of businesses in a partnership?
  - For example, if we were interviewing a different stakeholder—for example, governments—governments might say that they offer an enabling environment and the ability to set policy or send signals in support of various initiatives. Or they may say that they provide infrastructure investments that are necessary backbones to sustainable development.
4. What do businesses or CSOs lack when it comes to advancing transformative partnerships? Thought of another way, why are businesses interested in partnerships?
  - For example, governments might say that they have coordination challenges and slow capacity to change, both of which are typical characteristics of a bureaucracy.
5. What are businesses' or CSOs' motivations for partnering?
  - For example, governments might say that they are fulfilling their mandate to grow economies and increase societal well-being, and partnerships can help them be more effective at doing so.

# Appendix B. Partnership Success Factors Review

Partnership success factors have been well-researched, and there is general consensus around which characteristics are most important (Brouwer et al. 2016; Jenkins et al. 2017; BCSD 2017; Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Stibbe et al. 2018). These factors range from establishing a partnership vision and strategy to setting up partnership governance to partnership culture. However, even if partnerships know that certain factors are important, it can be hard to know where to start.

Table B1 summarizes 14 success factors mentioned frequently in existing research and provides concrete examples and recommendations based on what is working for partnerships in our research pool, according to answers provided through two workshops and our partnership survey. (See Appendix C for survey methodology.) Success factors were identified based on a literature review, including publications from two workstreams: literature sourced from P4G partners and other relevant organizations and a systematic literature search using Ebsco

Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Joint Transformation Vision and Systems Understanding	
1. Clear articulation of the system of interest*	One of the main characteristics of transformation is its systemic nature. Change must percolate through a system's elements and interconnections to move it toward a more sustainable paradigm. Clear articulation of a system of interest means that a partnership is able to identify a system's boundaries of interest and its overall function or purpose, understand the key elements and interconnections of relevance, identify an underlying problem that is keeping the system from moving toward a more sustainable development pathway, identify the system conditions that are holding the problem in place, and understand historic and current efforts to address the problem. Clearly articulating the system enables a partnership to identify its place in the system to make sure its activities are unique and additive. In addition, it is important to remember that systems are dynamic, and partnerships should aim to understand their contribution to transformation of that system. This requires establishing a baseline understanding of the system and then tracking changes over time, focusing especially on how system conditions holding the problem of interest in place are changing.



Discovery Scholar, Google, and Google Scholar. The literature search was restricted to works published between 2015 and 2019 by CSOs, governments, businesses, and academia. Search terms included multistakeholder partnerships, multi-actor partnership, multistakeholder collaboration, multistakeholder initiative, public-private partnership, SDG or Sustainable Development Goals, success factor, enabling factor, lessons learned, best practice, challenge, barriers, transformation potential, and systems change evaluation.

Analysis of top enabling partnership conditions synthesized information from both workstreams by identifying high-relevance articles, which were selected based on their discussion of transformative partnerships targeting the SDGs, their analysis of multiple partnerships, and their specific relevance to the overall P4G and State-of-the-Art Partnership Awards research universe.

RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>Establish system boundaries.</b> Start small to make your system of interest more manageable (Latham 2014; Hargreaves 2010). Start by looking at the most relevant geography or sector related to your partnership's activities. As your partnership expands, add system components. Make this process participatory and inclusive. Define the system's boundaries in coordination with key stakeholders, which include those who have an interest in or are affected by the issue as well as those who have influence over the issue (Hargreaves 2010).</p> <p><b>Break it down.</b> You don't need to understand the whole system all at once. System understanding can be built over time and in line with your partnership's resources. Systems are dynamic, and this process should be too. Reflecting on how system conditions change over time enables you to identify new windows of opportunity and adjust course as needed (Preskill and Gopal 2014).</p> <p><b>Use systems mapping tools.</b> Don't re-invent the wheel. There are several well-vetted tools available to help you build a systems understanding or conduct <b>systems mapping</b>. These include (but are not limited to) <b>social network analysis, actor mapping, timeline mapping, and appreciative inquiry</b>. Many of these tools are adaptable to your partnership's resources.</p>	<p>The <b>IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™</b>, a partnership that aims to transform the global financial system by mobilizing capital for women's empowerment through an innovative financial instrument, recognized the importance of developing a holistic system understanding from the start. It restricted its scope initially, focusing on a specific subset of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This helped to keep its activities manageable in light of the extreme complexities of the global financial system. The partnership also broke down and distributed the workload by using its network in each target country to gather intelligence from experts on microfinance, securities, law and foreign investments into the country, legal and regulatory frameworks associated with lending to local enterprises, and investor interests. IIX found that overall, the global financial system is lacking in concrete tools that systematically integrate the voices of underserved women and the Global South. To address this, IIX developed "IIX Values" to use mobile technology to collect impact data from end beneficiaries in a scalable, cost-efficient manner and verify impact on the ground to ensure that investors get access to transparent, timely impact reports. This ensures that the end beneficiaries, who are women, are given a voice and a value and are taken into account across the investment process.</p>

Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential (Cont.)

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Joint Transformation Vision and Systems Understanding	
2. Jointly agreed-upon transformation vision and near-term goals*	A clear vision of transformation serves as a strategic guide for stakeholders, specifying the challenge at hand, the ultimate partnership transformation vision or end goal, and the near-term goals that need to be attained to reach the transformation vision. Aligning on a common purpose then enables partnerships to establish the scope of partnership activities, set phased targets, and establish achievable timelines (Stern et al. 2015; KPMG International 2016). Additionally, aligning on a shared vision helps guide day-to-day behavior and allows each stakeholder to see how its specific interests are being met and understand the value it adds to partnership activities.
3. Bold and creative approach and activities	Transformative partnerships are always on the lookout for innovative approaches that are different from the norm. This makes them stand apart. They lean into the path untraveled and are not afraid to challenge assumptions, engage new stakeholders, take risks, and experiment (Brouwer et al. 2016).
4. Confirmation that partnering is the right approach and that partners selected are the best possible option	Partnerships can be incredibly rewarding, but stakeholders need to ensure they are not partnering for the sake of partnering. Sometimes lighter-touch options like single-organization approaches, may be more effective, saving parties time, and producing faster results (Bos et al. 2016; Stern et al. 2015). If a partnership is deemed to be the best approach, however, core members should invite others based on what they can offer, to build a well-rounded collaboration (Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Stibbe et al. 2018; Collison et al. 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>Articulate the partnership vision and the steps to get there.</b> Define what success looks like for your partnership and set a timeline. Establish goals and concrete actions that link to your partnership's transformation vision and theory of change.</p> <p><b>Maintain a master vision, goals, and activities document.</b> Keep a current document that clearly outlines your partnership's vision and strategy. This should be a living document. Get feedback from internal and external stakeholders often and update it as your partnership evolves.</p> <p><b>Prioritize a participatory approach with open conversations.</b> Consult with other stakeholders and sector actors frequently. To the extent possible, bring actors together to discuss the partnership face-to-face. Don't be afraid of iteration and debate. Embracing different viewpoints can illuminate new ways of solving a problem and strengthen your partnership's approach. (Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Collison et al. 2014).</p>	<p><b>Africa GreenCo</b> keeps stakeholders aligned using a master document that clearly articulates the partnership's vision and goals. This document has evolved with the partnership, transitioning from a feasibility study to a business plan to an investment memorandum. Throughout this process, Africa GreenCo held workshops and roundtables to gather feedback from sector actors, using these opportunities to build system-wide support and fine-tune its strategy. This document is a valuable tool. It keeps the current team aligned on the overall mission while breaking partnership activities down into manageable steps. It also helps open conversations by quickly getting potential investors or new stakeholders up to speed.</p>
<p><b>Set audacious goals.</b> Don't let concerns about resource constraints or feasibility limit your partnership's ambition from the start.</p> <p><b>Think outside the box.</b> Repeatedly working within the same network of stakeholders on an issue is unlikely to produce a novel solution. Think more broadly about who influences or is affected by the problem at hand, talk to nontraditional actors, and engage diverse perspectives (Bos et al. 2016).</p> <p><b>Experiment.</b> Build innovation and risk-taking into partnership culture; don't be afraid to try something that fails. Work with your more risk-averse partners to understand their risk exposure and come up with mitigation strategies.</p>	<p><b>ME SOLshare</b>, in collaboration with CDRC-RDA, is using its pioneering solar peer-to-peer microgrids to provide last-mile energy access in Bangladesh. Peer-to-peer microgrids monetize excess solar energy with mobile money in real time, empowering rural communities to earn direct income from solar energy. The partnership is working to install microgrids that provide EV charging, billable Wi-Fi, and other facilities. The increase in energy access will help enable women's entrepreneurship in agriculture and build awareness and community engagement around energy rights. The partnership aims to provide renewable energy access to 100,000 beneficiaries over the next five years.</p>
<p><b>Start with a wide net.</b> When initiating a partnership, convene diverse actors who bring different perspectives on the problem at hand. While they may or may not represent the final partners of the partnership, their insights can help determine whether a partnership is necessary to tackle the problem of interest. Insights gained through this process can also help guide additional exploration, such as scans of similar initiatives or interviews with potential beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>Be strategic.</b> Don't rush into partnership agreements. Take your time to identify and engage stakeholders with complementary strengths and common interests (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). In addition to stakeholder resources and capabilities, consider less tangible qualities like enthusiasm, reputation, and network (Oorthuizen et al. 2018)</p> <p><b>Be up front about motivations and value add.</b> Organizations will come into partnerships with their own interests, expectations, priorities, and offerings. Stakeholders that start with similar missions and values may find it easier to align on a partnership strategy. Communicating organizational interests early helps identify risks and mitigate conflict among partners down the road (Bos et al. 2016).</p>	<p>Prior to its launch, the <b>Global Distributors Collective (GDC)</b> conducted an 18-month study to inform partnership strategy and build support. GDC aims to make life-changing products like water filters and solar lights affordable and available to all by supporting last-mile distributors. Its scoping study involved interviews with over 100 sector experts, last-mile distributors, and potential partners, enabling GDC to gain insight into challenges that last-mile distributors face and support currently available mechanisms. Findings informed the partnership's problem framing, value proposition, and proposed solutions. This scoping process paved the way for a smooth partnership launch by enabling GDC to build support from last-mile distributors—meaning it had a membership of over 100 within the first three months—and key ecosystem actors, including GOGLA, SE4ALL, the Clean Cooking Alliance, and more.</p>



Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential (Cont.)

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
<b>Participatory Performance Tracking with Systems Thinking</b>	
<b>5. Strong MELR mechanisms with systems thinking*</b>	Strong MELR mechanisms with systems thinking are essential, not just for understanding a partnership's contribution to change or impact, but also for allowing partnerships' to more actively adjust course in response to change. Strong MELR also supports partnerships in achieving several other success factors, especially those related to network building as this becomes easier when partnerships can share their progress and demonstrate their business case. (Cabaj 2019; Hargreaves et al. 2010; Larson 2018; Latham 2014; Preskill and Cook 2020; Preskill and Gopal 2014; van Tulder and Keen 2018).
<b>6. Culture of trust, inclusivity, and information sharing</b>	With stakeholders coming into partnerships with different backgrounds and experiences, partnerships must encourage information sharing and inclusivity as a foundation for working together (Collison et al. 2014). Partners should look to establish a shared language around the problem—e.g., by developing a set of operating principles, the partnership can address and develop common ways of working, such as scheduling regular meetings or creating a shared document library. These processes make it easier for stakeholders to share information and build rapport with each other. (Bos et al. 2016; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016).
<b>Strong Leadership and Operational Capacity</b>	
<b>7. Strong management and coordination structure</b>	A partnership's management structure should encompass administrative functions like staffing, budgeting, and maintaining shared systems (i.e., MERL data collection, contact database, etc.). Partnerships should designate an individual, team, or stakeholder to manage these partnership operations (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). Key aspects of this role include setting up a formal stakeholder communication system and coordinating roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. Establishing a strong operational backbone facilitates transparency and trust among partners, improves partnership efficiency, and ensures that administrative tasks are completed (Peterson et al. n.d.; Collison et al. 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>MELR Guidelines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have designated roles for MELR to ensure accountability.</li> <li>2. Develop a strategic plan that aligns with your shared vision, targets, and systems understanding.</li> <li>3. Develop a set of evaluation questions to define your data collection and evaluation approach.</li> <li>4. Use a mixed methods design for evaluation.</li> <li>5. Focus on contribution rather than on attribution.</li> <li>6. Design MELR to be adaptive, flexible, and iterative.</li> </ol> <p><i>Don't let this process intimidate you. See Special MERL Section in Chapter 4 for guidance on setting up an MELR system that works for your partnership.</i></p>	<p>The <b>Courtauld Commitment 2025</b> is a great example of a hybrid MERL system. Courtauld 2025 is a voluntary agreement bringing together organizations across the UK food system to cut food and drink waste. The partnership's executive management team leads the development of targets, metrics, and the systems-change goals. Courtauld leverages member companies to collect and report annually on data for required metrics, and WRAP, the convening partner, provides companies with data collection and reporting protocols. WRAP has two dedicated part-time analysts focused on data cleaning, validation, aggregation, evaluation, and reporting. To build credibility, WRAP hired an external auditor to verify progress against the partnership's targets.</p>
<p><b>Communicate, communicate, communicate.</b> Talk frequently with other stakeholders and create opportunities for formal and informal communication. Meet in person whenever possible, host video conferences, start a WhatsApp group. Get to know each other!</p> <p><b>Transparency counts.</b> Be open about your own progress, ideas, and lessons learned. Ensure that all stakeholders have the same information about the overall state of the partnership, and give everyone the opportunity to be involved in major decisions.</p> <p><b>Create space for collaboration.</b> Appoint a neutral and trusted stakeholder to facilitate information sharing among organizations.</p>	<p><b>2020 Circular Fashion System Commitment</b> (2020 Commitment), a partnership aiming to mobilize fashion industry actors to take bold action on sustainability, has created a trusting culture among commitment signatories by prioritizing inclusivity and establishing a structured information-sharing system. From its founding, 2020 Commitment encouraged brands and retailers from all sizes, backgrounds, or levels of knowledge to start working on circularity and to join 2020 Commitment. The partnership has established several channels of communication to ensure that all members have access to the same information, including a guiding toolbox of 2020 Commitment action points, regular webinars, and a monthly newsletter to keep signatories up to date with deadlines, partnership developments and upcoming policies in the field of fashion and circularity. The partnership has also set up ways for signatories to connect with each other more informally through yearly in-person networking events and a shared signatory database.</p>
<p><b>Find your most organized stakeholder.</b> Management structures don't need to be complicated, but it's important to clarify who will facilitate these partnership functions. Depending on the size and structure of your partnership, it may make sense to appoint an individual to this role. Alternatively, your partnership may be able to leverage a partner's existing administrative structure and resources.</p> <p><b>Assign clear roles and responsibilities.</b> Work with other stakeholders to allocate partnership responsibilities. Play to each other's strengths: Consider resources, unique skillsets, and market positions. Make sure everyone is clear on expectations.</p> <p><b>Track communication.</b> Create a structured contact database instead of relying on one-off communication. Doing this at the start of a partnership can help keep track of relationships as the partnership grows.</p> <p><b>Say it 10 times in 10 ways.</b> Get your channels of communication right and present information in multiple ways to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Try out creative ways of communicating with other stakeholders to figure out what works best for your partnership. Visuals, webinars, and regular newsletters are a few suggestions. Keep partners up to date on overall partnership progress, funding status, and major decisions.</p>	<p>The <b>UK Plastics Pact</b>, a coalition focused on creating a circular economy for plastic, established formal channels for member companies to communicate their individual progress and for the core partnership team to convey information clearly and consistently to pact members. One way the partnership does this is by assigning clear roles and responsibilities. Each pact member appoints a business account manager who regularly communicates with the core team. To communicate partnership progress and updates to members, the UK Plastics Pact uses multiple platforms, including regular e-mail, newsletters, and webinars detailing work across the partnership's network.</p>

Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential (Cont.)

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Strong Leadership and Operational Capacity	
8. Robust governance mechanism	An internal governance structure, such as a steering committee or board of directors, can provide oversight, determine partnership strategy, and mitigate risk. Choosing the right members of this group is critical as they need to effectively manage power dynamics among stakeholders, balance conflicting viewpoints, and make difficult decisions about the partnership, all while maintaining stakeholder buy-in (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Beisheim and Simon 2016; Oorthuizen et al. 2018).
9. Stakeholders' commitment to agreed-upon resources	Stakeholders come into partnerships with many strengths and oftentimes competing priorities as well. Even if stakeholders have the time, capacity, and monetary resources within their organizations, these resources may not always be directed to the partnership. Stakeholder roles thus must be designed in a way that makes it easy and desirable for them to actively participate in and allocate resources to partnership activities (Kuruvilla et al. 2018; Oorthuizen et al. 2018).



RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>Select leadership carefully.</b> Stack your steering committee or board of directors with well-respected, trustworthy individuals. This group should also be inclusive, reflecting partnership diversity and including traditionally underrepresented groups. For instance, if your partnership involves implementing a program locally, its governance structure should involve local stakeholders (Beisheim and Simon 2016; Dahiya and Okitasari 2018).</p> <p><b>Match governance structure to capacity and need.</b> This doesn't have to be resource-intensive. Structure governance to match your partnership's resources and needs. You may find that a small core team of founders is most effective at the start of your partnership, or you may be able to build off a partner organization's existing governance mechanism.</p> <p><b>Stay agile.</b> A governance process that is rigid or has too many bureaucratic layers can become counterproductive, preventing your partnership from being reactive or pivoting when necessary.</p> <p><b>Iterate.</b> While it's great to have set clearly defined roles for your governance process, don't be afraid to adjust predefined responsibilities as your partnership grows.</p>	<p>The <b>Global Plastic Action Partnership</b> (GPAP), hosted by WEF, aims to accelerate action to address plastic pollution at the global and national levels. GPAP's strong governance mechanism comprises three layers, each fulfilling a different purpose and drawing from a diverse group of decision-makers across the public, private, and civil society sectors. The clear division of roles and the strong engagement of members enable the platform to remain agile and committed to serving its mission. The partnership's governing council is focused on representation and includes CEOs, ministers, and heads of organizations that can play a decisive role in driving forward plastic pollution action and related environmental initiatives. The steering board is focused on strategy and alignment. It includes GPAP's founding partners and a balance of government, industry, and international organizations and CSOs. These representatives are selected by their respective organizations to represent their governing council. Finally, the advisory committee, which consists of GPAP's content and knowledge partners, provides expert advice on GPAP's publications and initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Enthusiasm matters!</b> Select partners strategically. Start with those who are excited about the partnership and are eager to collaborate. These partners need to have the capacity and resources needed to contribute to the partnership in the first place, but equally important is their drive to contribute to the partnership's mission.</p> <p><b>Communicate progress.</b> Talking frequently to each other helps clarify the business case for the partnership and keeps everyone engaged.</p> <p><b>Find your champions.</b> Don't risk having a partner who can't pull its weight. Make sure each stakeholder has internal champions in leadership who care about your partnership's success and can help direct resources toward your partnership.</p> <p><b>Make clear asks.</b> Clarify stakeholder commitments. An MOU or other agreement can help formalize expectations and keep partners accountable (Oorthuizen et al. 2018). Partnerships are dynamic, and no one agreement structure will fit everyone. Leave room for stakeholders to be more or less strongly engaged at different stages of the partnership (Kuruville et al. 2018).</p>	<p><b>TRANSFORM</b> a partnership providing financial and business support to social enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa, maintains stakeholder commitment by keeping senior leadership with stakeholder organizations engaged. After struggling to keep stakeholder leadership committed to the partnership, TRANSFORM updated its membership and mandate to include more senior members of each stakeholder organization in the decision-making process. The partnership also regularly communicates impact stories and results to demonstrate the business value of the partnership and keep stakeholders committed.</p>

Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential (Cont.)

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
<b>Strong Leadership and Operational Capacity</b>	
<b>10. Funding security</b>	<p>It's no surprise that funding is a determinant of partnership success. Sustainable, long-term, and flexible funding enables partnerships to better plan ahead, hire need resources, and experiment with new approaches. But finding this is no easy task. Funding is often offered in short cycles, comes with a significant reporting burden, and may be restricted to one project or program (Stibbe and Prescott 2017).</p> <p>To better enable transformative partnerships, funders, like partnerships, need to embrace the fact that transformative change is a dynamic and long-term process. Funders should view unrestricted funding support as a necessity rather than a luxury, provide partnerships the autonomy to make budgetary and strategic decisions, and minimize heavy reporting requirements where possible (Brouwer et al. 2016).</p>
<b>Supporting Network of Actors</b>	
<b>11. Capacity to engage stakeholders external to the partnership*</b>	<p>Partnerships maximize their potential when they are able to build on existing networks, such as industry associations, national platforms, or informal local networks, and when they identify key local actors to engage. These resources serve multiple purposes: They connect partnerships with key supporters within the ecosystem, enable partnerships to coordinate with and learn from other initiatives, and allow partnerships to access needed resources or expertise. Networks can also accelerate partnership formation by bringing together complementary resources and establishing a foundation of personal trust and shared knowledge (Treichel et al. 2017).</p>
<b>12. Supportive environment enabled by government</b>	<p>Governments enable partnerships through strong rule of law and fair regulations (USCIB 2015). But governments can also more actively facilitate partnerships by limiting the bureaucracy required to work across ministries, aligning budget priorities to the SDGs, and incentivizing private-sector participation in sustainable development initiatives (GGGI 2018a; GGGI 2018b; Moreddu 2016; Neely et al. 2017; Nelson et al. 2015; Stibbe and Prescott 2017).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>Build relationships with long-term funders.</b> Don't underestimate the value of networking and personal relationships. Attend conferences, meet with people in person, and leverage your own network. Funding may come from unlikely sources. Never turn down an opportunity to connect with a possible investor.</p> <p><b>Appoint a funding guru.</b> This internal resource should set aside time to raise funds and write grants. Ideally, this is a person who has worked in development or with foundations in the past. If no one in your partnership has this skillset already, start building this capacity now! Part of this role should be considering the pros and cons of different funding strategies. Diverse funding sources may insulate you from risk but weigh you down with divergent reporting requirements (Stern 2015).</p> <p><b>Show off to your funders.</b> Don't be shy. Demonstrate the great progress you've made by setting thoughtful goals and intermediate actions up front and tracking your progress along them. (See MELR section for more details on how to do this.)</p>	<p>It is rare to find a partnership that is fully secure in its funding and <b>Energise Africa</b> is no exception. However, the partnership stands out because of its nearly self-sustaining funding mechanism and commitment to securing long-term funding. Energise Africa aims to accelerate progress toward universal access to affordable clean electricity by development of a financial asset. The partnership crowdsources investments for solar panel providers in sub-Saharan Africa, who pay interest off the loan, which is then returned to the initial investors. Once fully built out, a model like this can graduate from funder dollars and operate on its own.</p>
<p><b>Map relevant initiatives and actors.</b> Be aware of and engage with other initiatives that align with your mission and activities. Know when you need to reach outside of your immediate partnership network for additional subject-matter expertise, technical assistance, or implementation support.</p> <p><b>Leverage existing partner networks.</b> Use your existing resources. Well-connected stakeholder organizations can open doors to contacts, expertise, and resources that may not otherwise be accessible.</p> <p><b>Prioritize networking.</b> Become a master connector. Invest time in going to events and meeting with people in person. Follow up with contacts and never turn down an opportunity to promote your partnership. Seek out formal networks like national platforms that can aid your partnership's development and connect you with new resources.</p>	<p>Crowdfunding platform <b>Energise Africa</b> found that the most effective way to reach new investors is to connect with them in person. To do this, it leveraged the stakeholder networks of UK Aid and Virgin Unite to build partnership name recognition and credibility. The partnership has also collaborated with CSOs aligned with Energise Africa's mission on events where the partnership can speak with new investors to explain its approach. This first contact with investors is critical. Once people have invested initially, the partnership's reinvestment rate is over 90%.</p>
<p><b>Make government support a precursor to implementation.</b> If you have the flexibility to select which country your partnership operates in, make supportive government conditions a requirement.</p> <p><b>Engage champions.</b> Having advocates throughout the government can help you navigate bureaucracy, secure government support, and mitigate the risk of political leadership or priority changes. Getting government leaders on board is critical, but you also want lower level staff on your team.</p> <p><b>Be proactive.</b> You may not have much control over a country's political or regulatory conditions, but you can better navigate barriers by actively identifying potential challenges. Once you are aware of factors that might negatively affect your activities, like high import tariffs or lack of infrastructure, you can work on strategies to mitigate risk.</p>	<p>Government regulations pose a significant challenge to <b>NextWave Plastics</b>, a coalition aiming to reduce ocean-bound plastics, but the partnership has learned to mitigate risk by planning ahead. Shipping recycled material internationally can be prohibitive to the use of ocean-bound plastic because this resource is often designated as waste and not accepted at ports, even if it's an input material into new products. NextWave Plastic member companies using ocean-bound plastics in their supply chains have learned to allot additional time for material shipments. This measure helps companies minimize supply- disruptions and manage around regulatory barriers.</p>



Table B1 | Partnering Success Factors and Recommendations to Enhance Transformation Potential (Cont.)

SUCCESS FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	
Supporting Network of Actors		
13. Strong champions at multiple levels	Champions at multiple levels—from senior leadership to on-the-ground staff—are essential for a partnership to successfully scale. These individuals can be within or outside of the partnership and are critical for securing the partnership support necessary to drive progress (Brouwer et al. 2016; Collison et al. 2014; Nelson et al. 2015; Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Stern et al. 2015; Stibbe and Prescott 2017).	
14. Ability to navigate the local context in which the partnership operates	Successfully navigating the local environment means that the partnership approach fits the local context and accounts for factors like language, ways of working, and cultural nuances. (Biesheim and Simon 2016; Treichel et al. 2017).	

RECOMMENDATIONS	EXAMPLE
<p><b>Cast a wide net.</b> Creating a network of champions at various levels helps increase your partnership's name recognition, legitimacy, and resilience to external challenges.</p> <p><b>Communicate partnership progress.</b> Designate an individual or team to liaise between the partnership and the stakeholder organization. This structure can help strengthen buy-in from stakeholder organizations.</p>	<p>By securing support from partnership champions at multiple levels <b>Africa GreenCo</b> has been able to advance its agenda despite political leadership changes. By establishing a creditworthy intermediary, the partnership aims to accelerate renewable energy investment and development, starting in Africa. In its pilot country, Zambia, the partnership actively worked with stakeholders throughout the government, with the goal of securing cabinet approval in August 2019. However, following the removal of a top government minister, this timeline was delayed. Due to its strategic engagement of government champions who were able to advocate for the partnership, Africa GreenCo. received cabinet approval in late 2019. This was a critical step to operationalizing the partnership and led to discussions with key private-sector stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Scope out local support early.</b> Engage with a national platform, a strong local stakeholder, or hire local staff that can help guide partnership strategy to ensure that it fits the local context. These supporters can also help drive on-the-ground operations (Okitasari et al. 2018). When possible, make the availability of this support a precursor to partnership engagement in a region.</p> <p><b>Listen.</b> Communities know what they need. Consult local stakeholders and beneficiaries early in the partnership process and incorporate these perspectives into your partnership's problem definition and strategy to ensure that your partnership meets the needs of targeted beneficiaries (Dalberg 2020).</p> <p><b>Build trust with beneficiary groups.</b> Accurately measuring partnership impact and understanding unintended partnership consequences requires ongoing engagement with beneficiary groups and local stakeholders. In particular, establish trust with underrepresented groups like women, indigenous communities and low-income populations. Understanding how your partnership affects these groups is critical to understanding system dynamics and identifying when your approach needs to be adjusted.</p>	<p>Engaging local staff is one of the first steps the <b>Sustainable Sourcing at Scale Partnership</b> takes whenever it enters a new region. The partnership implements verified sourcing areas for commodity crops in India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Vietnam. When scoping a new location, the partnership typically recruits two people: a senior staff member who has extensive experience in the sector and region as well as a more junior consultant. The senior staff member acts as a convener, speaking to international buyers and opening doors to local government departments and businesses. The junior-level staff member understands local ways of working and guides the partnership's implementation strategy to ensure that it is culturally appropriate. For example, the timing of when and how formally to engage different actors varies. In some countries, for instance, pursuing government and then private-sector support makes the most sense. In other contexts the opposite is true. Understanding how different sectors operate is also critical. While sustainability is broadly accepted as a necessity in the palm oil sector, for instance, stakeholders in the spice industry require more engagement effort.<sup>a</sup></p>

*Notes:* \*Success factor identified as highly relevant to partnerships with transformation objectives. See Chapter 4.

<sup>a</sup> Rutten and Guido. 2020. Interview with WRI Authors and Guido Rutten, Senior Manager, Verified Sourcing Areas, IDH Trade, The Hague, Netherlands, March 6, 2020.

*Sources:* Ayala-Orozco et al. 2018; BCSD 2017; Beisheim and Simon 2016; Bos et al. 2016; Brouwer et al. 2016; Caboj 2019; Chakrabari et al. 2018; Collison et al. 2014; Dahiya and Okitasari 2018; Enright et al. 2018; GGGI 2018a, 2018b; Hargreaves 2010; Hazelwood 2015; Jenkins et al. 2017; Kania et al. 2018; Kramer and Pfizer 2016; KPMG International 2016; Kuruvilla et al. 2018; Larson 2018; Latham 2014; Maassen and Galvin 2019; Moreddu 2016; Neely et al. 2017; Nelson et al. 2015; Oorthuizen et al. 2018; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016; Peterson et al. n.d.; Pinz et al. 2018; Preskill and Cook 2020; Preskill and Gopal 2014; Preskill et al. 2015; Stern 2017; Stibbe and Prescott 2017; Stibbe et al. 2018; Treichel et al. 2017; van Tulder and Keen 2018.

## Appendix C. Survey Methodology and Instrument

The findings in this report supporting partnership success factors are largely based on a survey conducted with multistakeholder partnerships between November and December 2019. The objectives of the survey were to gather lessons learned on commonly reported partnership success factors and to determine if any partnership characteristics or success factors may lead to having a higher transformation potential. This necessitated having a methodology in place for scoring a partnership's transformational potential.

### Selection Approach

Our team had unique access to the P4G ecosystem of partnerships. These partnerships had already been prescreened as having transformation potential, and we further screened partnerships to ensure they met our criteria:

1. Must include at least one commercial and one noncommercial partner.

2. Must have a transformation goal and address one or more of the following SDG areas: food and agriculture (SDG 2), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and circular economy (SDG 12).
3. Must not be a partnership platform.

P4G supports three types of partnerships that represent different stages of maturity (see Table C1 for a description): start-up, scale-up, and state-of-the-art. Of the start-up and scale-up partnerships, we selected only those that had been awarded funding. For State-of-the-Art Atward partnerships, we included the winners for each SDG category as well as short-listed finalists.

### Response Rates

Our questionnaire was sent to a total of 69 partnerships, out of which 47 partnerships responded. Out of those 47, only 41 were ultimately eligible for inclusion in our analysis. Table C1 provides an overview of our participant sample and response rates by partnership type.

Table C1 | Overview of Survey Participant Sample

YEAR	PARTNERSHIP TYPE	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL	ELIGIBLE & COMPLETED SURVEY	RESPONSE RATE
2018	Start-Ups	Partnerships that are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 of funding from P4G for a 12–24 month period. Must be entering their implementation period.	11	9	82%
2019			13	9	69%
2018	Scale-Ups	Partnerships that are eligible to receive up to \$1 million in funding from P4G for scale-up activities over a 12–24 month period.	2	2	100%
2019			7	7	100%
2018	State-of-the-Art Awardees	Partnerships that have demonstrated impact for green growth and action on climate change. These partnerships receive P4G recognition but not funding.	5	3	60%
2019			5	4	80%
2018	State-of-the-Art Applicants	Partnerships that applied and were eligible for the P4G State-of-the-Art Award and were short-listed but who did not receive P4G recognition.	10	2	20%
2019			16	5	31%
Total			69	41	67%

Source: WRI Authors.



## Data Collection Strategy

### Survey Format

We used a self-administered web-based survey. We also provided partnerships with a PDF and Word version of the survey and offered to complete the survey via a phone interview, to address instances of poor Internet connectivity. Overall, all but one partnership used the web version. For each partnership, we requested that the survey be completed only once by a designated representative to avoid creating too much additional time burden as these partnerships also have other reporting requirements. We also suggested that these leads collect recommended reporting materials and speak with other partners as they deemed necessary. The survey design included multiple reminders and deadline extensions to accommodate as many respondents as possible.

### Incentive Structure

Participants were provided with an option for their partnership to be featured in this report as a contributor or as a potential case study.

### Questionnaire Development and Testing

The survey was informed by several rounds of feedback from internal experts from WRI, including those from the Sustainable Business Center and the Ross Center Prize for transformative urban initiatives. The survey was also tested with external partnership and systems change evaluation experts from the Geneva Graduate Institute, FSG, TPI, and IDH The Sustainable Trade Initiative. Finally, the survey was piloted in two rounds with the following partnerships: Courtauld Commitment 2025, the Sustainable Food Platform, and Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE).

### 2020 State-of-the-Art Report Survey Instrument

Thank you for participating in the State-of-the-Art Report survey. Through this survey, we aim to understand your partnership's path to accelerating action toward the Sustainable Development Goals. There will be many opportunities in this survey to share your insights, and we encourage you to provide as much detail as possible in the spaces provided. Your reflections on your partnership goals, progress, and characteristics will contribute to a deeper understanding of multistakeholder collaboration, from which we hope partnership practitioners and researchers can learn.

**Recommended approach for filling out the survey:** For each partnership, we request that the survey be completed only once by a designated representative. It may be useful to collect reporting materials and any other documentation that reflects partnership goals, milestones, or progress experienced by your partnership. The survey comprises seven sections. Please see the attached PDF to view the survey in its entirety. We estimate that the survey will take about 60 minutes to complete.

### Instructions for navigating this survey:

1. If you hover your mouse over the **blue underlined text**, definitions and examples of the text will appear.
2. You may complete this survey in more than one sitting by clicking the **Save and Continue Later** button in the top right corner.
3. Please be sure to navigate between survey pages using the "next" and "back" buttons at the bottom of the survey page, **NOT** the "back" arrow in your browser as this will erase unsaved progress.

**Privacy and confidentiality:** Survey responses will be kept confidential and will not be made publicly available or attributable to the respondent or partnership. We will collect identifying information for each partnership so that we can categorize lessons learned on what is working and what is not by different partnership characteristics.

As this is an online survey, your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. We cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the Internet by third parties.

**Taking part is voluntary.** Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip questions that may make you feel uncomfortable with no penalty to you or your partnership.

If you have questions or feedback on this survey, please feel free to contact Erin Gray, economist, World Resources Institute: [erin.gray@wri.org](mailto:erin.gray@wri.org)

# Questionnaire

## Section A: Respondent Information

- 1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Position and organization: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Briefly describe your role and responsibilities in the context of the partnership: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Section B: About the partnership

- 1. Partnership name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. In what year was your partnership established? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Partnership country focus: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Please list the names of all key partners involved in the partnership and their relevant sector:

PARTNER NAME	SECTOR (GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION)

Please list additional key partners and sectors here: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Which statement best applies to your partnership?
  - i. MARKET-DRIVEN: Our partnership is driven by the commercial business case; that is, we aim to deliver commercially viable solutions that contribute to profitable sustainable development.
  - ii. MARKET-GENERATING: Our partnership is not driven by immediate commercial prospects, but we aim to enable commercially viable sustainable solutions in the future by tackling some essential market barrier (e.g., by altering incentives or addressing drivers of unsustainable trends).
  - iii. DEVELOPMENT-FOCUSED: Our partnership is not driven by immediate commercial prospects; rather we focus more squarely on development objectives to which a commercial partner can contribute as part of its corporate sustainability policy.
  - iv. NONE OF THESE APPLY.

### Section C: Partnership Goals and Activities

1. What are your partnership's near-term goals (e.g., your one- to five-year goals related to building a strong foundation for your partnership)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are your partnership's systems change goals (e.g., your 2030 goals related to the SDGs. That is, progress on shifting conditions of the system and removing barriers that are blocking a change to a more sustainable system)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you describe your partnership? Please select more than one if applicable.
  - i. We aim to transform an entire sector, industry, or supply chain.
  - ii. We aim to address a specific problem (e.g., reduce nutrient pollution; improve food security, etc.).
  - iii. We aim to create a pioneering innovation, such as a new technology or improved distribution of products or services or showcase and support innovative approaches in a marketplace.
  - iv. We aim to remove a barrier or barriers that are blocking systems change, such as creating or modifying policies, improving the regulatory environment, or improving networks of actors.
  - v. Other type of collaborative effort (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Section D: Tracking Partnership Progress

1. Does your partnership have a performance-management system to track progress against your goals? [Yes/No/Don't know] If no, skip to Section E.
2. Is your performance-management system managed internally (that is, owned and operated by partnership members), or do you use an external evaluator?
  - i. Internal
  - ii. External
  - iii. Hybrid (internal and external)
3. Do you believe that your partnership is able to track success beyond near-term goals to understand progress against systems change goals? [Y/N/Don't Know]
  - i. If yes, describe how your partnership does this, \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What key metrics (qualitative and/or quantitative) have you set that are the most important in tracking your partnership's success toward achieving your near-term goals and systems change goals?



i. Near-term

NO.	NEAR-TERM GOAL	KEY METRICS FOR TRACKING SUCCESS

ii. Systems change

NO.	SYSTEMS CHANGE	KEY METRICS FOR TRACKING SUCCESS

### Section E: Progress on Systems Change Goals

This section aims to assess your partnership's progress on your near-term and systems change goals.

As a reminder, survey responses have no bearing on P4G funding or State-of-the-Art Award consideration, and answers will not be attributable to your partnership. We recognize that many partnerships are still in the start-up or scale-up phase of maturity and thus may have limited evidence of scaling or impacts to date. We encourage you to select the answer that best reflects your partnership's current stage of development.

**Directions:** Please rate your partnership for each evaluation question on a scale of 0–5, where:

- 0. I do not know or cannot answer
- 1. Not at all
- 2. To a small extent
- 3. To a moderate extent
- 4. To a great extent
- 5. To a very great extent

Please provide any additional information on your ratings as you see fit using the comments box in question E5.

CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTION	RATING SCALE					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
E1. Innovation: To what extent are systems change barriers being addressed in a new way?							
	To what extent has your partnership developed a new concept? The concept could be a new approach or application to an existing idea.	0	1	2	3	4	5
E2. Impact: To what extent has your partnership contributed to a model of change that will advance green growth?							
Strategic Plan	<p>To what extent has your partnership done ALL of the following:</p> <p>Established a clear understanding of the system it is trying to shift (e.g., key stakeholders, important relationships and power dynamics, market barriers, previously attempted solutions to tackle the problem, and underlying causes of the problem)?</p> <p>Established a clear vision for how your partnership will solve the problem(s) and shift system conditions to drive progress on the SDGs?</p> <p>Developed a clear theory of change that articulates how your partnership activities will shift the system and address one or more barriers, including outlining causal assumptions and what other actors also need to do?</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5
Near-Term Goals	<p>To what extent has your partnership been able to build a strong foundation to implement its approach or model of change? This includes, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Securing stakeholder commitments</li><li>• Increasing awareness of and building credibility with stakeholders</li><li>• Pilot or product testing its approach</li><li>• Securing funding</li><li>• Collecting needed data</li></ul>	0	1	2	3	4	5
Systems Change Goals	<p>To what extent has your partnership made progress on shifting the system and removing barriers that are holding the problem in place (i.e., meeting its long-term or SDG goals)? Example shifts may include changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Government, institutional, and organizational rules, regulations, policies, and priorities.</li><li>• Practices and activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and others targeted to improving social progress.</li><li>• Resource flow allocations (e.g., money, people, knowledge, infrastructure)</li><li>• Distribution of decision-making power</li><li>• Quality of relationships between stakeholders</li><li>• Behaviors and daily life or cultural mind-sets</li></ul>	0	1	2	3	4	5
E3. Scaling: To what extent is your partnership scaling up to new areas, or are others advancing due to the partnership's progress?							
Scale Up	To what extent has your partnership scaled up its activities to other networks, markets, or economies?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Scale Out	<p>To what extent have other entities replicated the partnership's approach OR</p> <p>To what extent have other entities been able to create commercially viable business models because your partnership has reduced or removed system barriers?</p>	0	1	2	3	4	5

CRITERION	EVALUATION QUESTION	RATING SCALE					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>E4. Implementation Viability: To what extent is your partnership capable of achieving its future systems change goals?</b>							
Resilience	To what extent is your partnership able to positively respond and adapt to challenges such as new policies, changes in administrations, natural disasters, stakeholder changes, etc.?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Financial sustainability	To what extent has your partnership been able to find a self-sustaining financial model?	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>E5. Comments (Optional)</b>							



## Section F: Partnership Characteristics

This section aims to understand what factors or partnership characteristics have influenced your partnership's success or hampered your progress. Learning about what has worked and what has not worked for other partnerships can help speed the learning journey for both new and existing partnerships, so it may be useful to reflect on what advice you would give to other partnerships based on your experience.

**Directions:** Please consider the below statements and rate how well each applies to your partnership. Rating scale is as follows:

1. Not at all
2. To a small extent
3. To a moderate extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

Where relevant, elaborate on how each characteristic has or has not applied to your partnership in the columns to the right under each heading (see following table). Describe challenges that your partnership has faced related to relevant factors and how you were able to or are working to overcome them. If possible, describe the impact the factor had on achieving your partnership goals (near-term or systems change). Elaborating on all characteristics listed is not necessary. You may find it useful to think about your partnership's top three to four strengths and challenges and answer these questions, keeping those factors in mind. Please see examples below:

CHARACTERISTICS	RATING (1-5)	PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR RATING	DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY CHALLENGES IN THIS AREA? IF SO, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM? WHAT LESSONS CAN YOU SHARE WITH OTHER PARTNERSHIPS FACING A SIMILAR CHALLENGE?
<i>To what extent does your partnership have a culture of trust, communication, and information sharing?</i>	2	<i>We faced a "free rider" problem where some initial partners wanted their names tied to the partnership but did little to contribute. This resulted in increased time spent on coordination and having to remove some partners from the partnership.</i>	<i>Yes. We decided to differentiate between formal partners and informal stakeholders. Formal partners were required to sign a formal MOU while informal stakeholders signed an informal agreement. Both documents specified expectations for each partner or stakeholder, but the degree of their commitment is different. Aligning on expectations helped us overcome the free-rider problem.</i>
<i>To what extent are you secure in your funding?</i>	4	<i>Our partnership received a pot of start-up funding which allowed us to make significant progress.</i>	<p><i>Following our initial funding, we faced a funding cliff, and it took us longer than expected to build a strong foundation in our targeted country, delaying progress on our near-term goals. We began seeking more diversified funding that did not place restrictions on how it could be spent and worked with an accelerator to connect with investors. We also began producing communication materials to showcase our initial successes and the business case to gain investor buy-in.</i></p> <p><i>We have found that a key success factor for our financial sustainability is having a small group of diverse funds. We also now work with funders to ensure that reporting requirements are similar and provide us with the data we need to practice adaptive management.</i></p>

CHARACTERISTIC	RATING (1-5)	
<b>F1. FACTORS EXTERNAL TO OUR PARTNERSHIP</b>		
To what extent does your government provide a supportive environment?		
<b>Description:</b> A supportive government has strong rule of law, fair regulations, and low corruption. It also supports partnerships through its policies (e.g., financial incentives for the private sector, risk mitigation instruments, commitment to the SDGs)		
To what extent are you secure in your funding?		
<b>Description:</b> Funding security means that your partnership has a stable funding source(s), has diversified funding, or is on a good path to financial sustainability. Funding is unrestricted or flexible and/or has a low reporting burden.		
To what extent do you have access to a support system external to your partnership (outside of P4G)?		
<b>Description:</b> A support system is a business alliance, coalition, industry association, or informal network that is useful to your partnership.		
To what extent can you effectively navigate at the local level in which your partnership operates?		
<b>Description:</b> Effectively navigating means that you have the support of a national platform, on-the-ground staff or other support to help you manage through the local context of your partnership.		
<b>F2. FACTORS INTERNAL TO OUR PARTNERSHIP</b>		
<i>STRATEGIC PLANNING</i>		
Before you commenced your partnership, to what extent did you confirm that working in partnership was the best approach and that you had engaged the right stakeholders for the problem at hand?		
<b>Description:</b> Confirmation means that your team thought about the alternatives to a partnership and decided that they were not sufficient to address the market barrier. It also means that you were very purposeful to include the right stakeholders.		
To what extent can your partnership articulate the system in which you operate and are trying to influence?		
<b>Description:</b> Articulation means that each stakeholder can describe the same understanding of the partnership's problem system, encompassing the broader social context, political context, existing actors, and governance architecture. Everyone can also describe the conditions that are holding in place the social problem that your partnership is trying to address.		
To what extent have partnership stakeholders agreed to a shared vision and goals?		
<b>Description:</b> Agreement means that stakeholders have a shared understanding of the problem, and are following the same vision to address it. Stakeholders understand each other's interests or incentives for participating in the partnership.		
To what extent have you established a robust system for tracking progress toward your partnership's objectives?		
<b>Description:</b> Establishing a robust system means that you've set forth a joint tracking system or framework at the beginning of your partnership, and it includes mutually agreed-upon metrics and governance mechanisms. The system is adaptive and iterative and enforces accountability between partners.		

**DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY CHALLENGES IN THIS AREA? IF SO, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM? WHAT LESSONS CAN YOU SHARE WITH OTHER PARTNERSHIPS FACING A SIMILAR CHALLENGE?**



CHARACTERISTIC	RATING (1-5)	
F3. PARTNERSHIP DYNAMICS		
<p>To what extent does your partnership have a culture of trust, communication, and information sharing?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Trust means that you have faith in each other to make the right decisions. Communication means that there is transparency among your stakeholders, which supports problem-solving and enables decision-making. Sometimes this is established by having a positive history of working together.</p>		
<p>To what extent is your partnership agile in your ability to learn, adapt, and respond to changes?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Agility means that your partnership embraces and effectively manages changing circumstances (e.g., new stakeholders, policies, understanding of the social problem). Agile partnerships continuously evaluate and learn from their approach.</p>		
<p>To what extent is your partnership bold and creative?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Bold and creative means that your partnership isn't afraid to take risks and deviate from the status quo.</p>		
F4. PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS		
<p>To what extent is there at least one point person whose role is to coordinate and communicate across the partnership?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> A point person is a designated administrative staff member whose sole function is to coordinate and communicate across project partners.</p>		
<p>To what extent do your stakeholders have the resources, expertise, and commitment to fulfill their agreed-upon roles?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Possessing these elements means that each stakeholder has the operational and financial resources to support the partnership in its goals.</p>		
<p>To what extent does your partnership have strong governance?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> Strong governance means that your partnership is managed by a steering group, secretariat, or broker that provides stability and objectivity, and gives confidence to all partners involved (e.g., through transparency). Additionally, your leadership structure accounts for and manages power dynamics and divergent interests of stakeholder organizations.</p>		
<p>To what extent does your partnership have strong champions at multiple levels?</p> <p><b>Description:</b> A strong champion is someone who feels responsible for driving the partnership forward by making the business case for the partnership and securing necessary support. The champion should be at the senior level but also potentially the operational level to increase stakeholder buy-in and drive day-to-day work.</p>		
PLEASE LIST OTHER ENABLING AND SUCCESS FACTORS HERE THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP		

**DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY CHALLENGES IN THIS AREA? IF SO, HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM? WHAT LESSONS CAN YOU SHARE WITH OTHER PARTNERSHIPS FACING A SIMILAR CHALLENGE?**

## Section G: Concluding Questions and Contact Information

1. What are the top three key lessons you have learned from your partnership experience so far?
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is there anything else you'd like to mention about your partnership that would be useful for others aiming to improve the effectiveness of their partnership or to initiate a partnership aiming to address the SDGs?
3. Did you consult other key partners from your partnership in filling out this survey? [Y/N/I don't know].
4. May we contact you if we have additional questions about your partnership? [Y/N].
5. We may include your comments in our final report, and to provide more context, we may be interested in attributing them. Please indicate if you are comfortable with being identified [Yes/No/Contact Me First].
6. Would you like to be featured in the report as a contributor or as a case study? We would like to thank all partnerships that have contributed to our study by listing their partnership names in a "Contributions" section at the end of the report. [Yes/No].
  - i. Comments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D. Transformation Potential Evaluation Methodology

An objective of our survey and research was to determine if we could provide any insights into which partnership success factors may be more important for transformative partnerships or more difficult to address than other factors. As a result, we needed a way to rate partnerships in terms of their transformation potential—that is, the success to date in achieving its intermediate and transformation objectives and/or the likelihood that the partnership would achieve its transformation objective so that we could differentiate survey responses based on whether a partnership’s potential was high, medium, or low. We focus on transformation potential as opposed to transformation impacts as our partnerships are still largely early in their maturity.

Our transformation potential evaluation methodology is described below. It is adapted based on Maassen and Galvin (2019), and it is important to note that, in terms of transformation potential, partnerships were scored against their own transformation or systems change goals. At this stage, we are not able to definitively state whether each partnership’s transformation objective is ultimately the right one needed to achieve the SDGs.

### Evaluation Challenges

Partnerships, even SOTA partnerships, are still quite new, which makes evaluating their transformation impacts challenging. In addition, the exercise for rating partnerships according to their transformation potential faces multiple challenges:

- **Evaluator selection and bias:** It is common to use multiple evaluators in an exercise like this to avoid bias. However, anyone attempting to score a partnership for transformation potential will likely not have complete knowledge of the partnership nor the entirety of the system in which it is operating. Evaluators may also have their own biases, depending on their relationship to the partnership.
- **Methodological:** There are no generally accepted methodologies for evaluating transformation potential for partnerships.
- **Managing consistency and comparability among partnership types:** Partnerships in our sample differ in terms of their phase of maturity, partnership composition, objectives and SDG-focus,

governance structure, and activities. Additionally, partnerships vary in terms of their reporting requirements and data collection and reporting capacities. Reporting documentation provided by partnerships to P4G is self-reported and not consistent across partnerships in terms of the use of targets and metrics, use of baseline data, etc.

### Transformation Potential Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

We determined that partnerships would be evaluated based on their score against a set of transformation potential criteria. To identify these criteria we conducted a desk review of existing recognition and funding awards programs for transformative and systems change initiatives and partnerships where criteria were developed for selection, as well as a literature review of studies covering systems change or transformation evaluation and indicators of partnership success. (This literature review is the same as that described in Appendix B.) A summary of the recognition and award programs is provided in Table D1.

Based on this review, we identified seven evaluation criteria shown in Table D2 (matrix structure based on Maassen and Galvin 2019). We also developed a scoring system using a rating scale of 0–5, and provided a description of what each rating number means for each criterion to support scoring consistency by evaluators. To address the issue that our survey participant pool includes partnerships at different phases of maturity, we also devised the criteria rating scale to range from no potential for impact to having achieved impact. Partnerships with a longer history of implementation that were successful in achieving near to intermediate goals, such as the non-P4G SOTA partnerships, would be expected to score higher on impacts and overall across the criteria compared to start-up and scale-up partnerships that are only a few months to a couple years into their operations.

Evaluators scored partnerships against each of the seven criteria using the matrix provided in Table D2. Because some criteria had more subcriteria than others (e.g., Impacts has three subcriteria while Vision and Planning only has two), they had a greater weight toward the overall assessment of transformation potential. This was by design. For each partnership, an average score was taken across all evaluators for each criterion, and then a final average was taken across all criteria

Table D1 | Recognition and Award Programs for Transformative Partnerships and Initiatives

AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY	EVALUATION CRITERIA
Harvard’s Roy Award for Environmental Partnerships	Presented every two years to outstanding cross-sector partnerships that enhance environmental quality through novel and creative approaches	Partnership between two or more separate organizations  Partnership must focus on improving quality of the environment	<b>Innovation</b> —Demonstrates a leap in creativity <b>Effectiveness</b> —Achieves tangible results <b>Significance</b> —Successfully addresses a challenging environmental problem <b>Transferability</b> —Shows promise of inspiring successful replication by others

Table D1 | Recognition and Award Programs for Transformative Partnerships and Initiatives (Cont.)

AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY	EVALUATION CRITERIA
WRI <b>Ross Center Prize for Cities</b> (Maassen and Galvin 2019)	Global award of \$250,000 for an outstanding initiative or project focused on transformative urban change, where transformation is defined as “a thorough or dramatic change in form or appearance”	May be a single organization or group of organizations  Initiative may be focused on built projects, changes in legislation, policies, programs, or initiatives  Must demonstrate evidence of transformative change in a city	<b>Triple bottom line</b> —To what extent does the project achieve a positive balance among economic, environmental, and social impacts? <b>Outsized impact</b> —What is the extent of the positive impacts relative to the project’s own size and resources? <b>Problem-solving</b> —To what extent has the project solved a problem that the city was facing? <b>Replication</b> —To what extent has the project demonstrated a replicable approach? <b>Spatial extent of impact</b> —What is the spatial extent of the project’s impact? <b>Duration of impact</b> —To what extent did the positive impacts of the project (as described above) outlast the duration of the project?
P4G <b>Start-Up and Scale-Up Funding Awards</b>	Annual award to partnerships with systems change potential of up to \$100,000 for start-up partnerships and up to \$1 million for scale-up partnerships focused on 5 SDG areas: food and agriculture (SDG 2), clean water (SDG 6), clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and circular economy (SDG 12)	Must be a partnership among civil society, private, and public-sector organizations  Must be working to advance innovative and commercially viable project(s) in at least one of the five SDG sectors  Must target green growth in developing countries, with an emphasis on P4G partner countries	<b>Innovation and growth</b> —Addresses barriers that must be overcome to accelerate commercially viable means of accomplishing the SDGs. <b>Implementation viability</b> —Has the capacity to succeed. <b>Impact potential</b> —Contributes to systems change that will advance overall green economic growth with commercially viable and replicable business models <b>Value add</b> —Brings together innovative constellations of businesses, government, and civil society organizations tackling global challenges through market-driven approaches <b>Relevance</b> —Promotes market-based solutions to one or more of the five SDG sector areas
P4G <b>State-of-the-Art Partnership Award</b>	Presented annually to public-private partnerships that have achieved measurable success toward driving the SDGs	Must be a public-private partnership that addresses one or more of P4G’s five targeted SDGs  Partnership must include a combination of civil society, government, and business organizations	<b>Eligibility</b> —Address one or more of P4G’s five targeted SDGs; partnership includes combination of civil society, government, and business organizations <b>Impact</b> —Partnership has demonstrated measurable and verifiable outcomes <b>Innovation</b> —Partnership has developed innovative solutions to address its target SDG <b>Scalability</b> —Partnership has grown since its launch and has demonstrated the ability to be replicated in other markets <b>Financial sustainability</b> —Partnership has market-based solutions that have or can attract a level of commercial investment and/or support

Sources: Belfer Center 2020; Maassen and Galvin 2019; P4G 2020c; P4G 2020a).

to arrive at a final score between 0 and 5. To finalize each partnership's score, we gathered data on the scoring variance across the evaluators to determine if there were major scoring discrepancies between evaluators. In instances where the variance was greater than 1 point, we held a discussion to assess the evidence considered in the evaluator's decision to determine if scores should be adjusted.

After the final scores were determined, we divided partnerships into terciles: high, medium, and low transformation potential partnerships. Partnerships with an average score equal to or over 3.24 were rated as high potential; partnerships with a score greater than 2.50 and less than 3.24 were rated as medium potential; and partnerships with a score equal to or less than 2.50 were rated as low potential. This scoring distribution aligned nicely with our rating scale, where a score of three for any criteria generally equated with having strong potential and a five is equated with ability to demonstrate success in that area. It is important to note that low potential, for our purposes, can mean that the partnership either has demonstrated low transformation potential or is early in its partnership journey and thus has not been able to demonstrate outputs, outcomes, or impacts.

We note that we tested this evaluation and scoring approach with several reputable non-P4G multistakeholder partnerships and compared their scores to those in our sample pool, including the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the Clean Cooking Alliance, and AGRA. Evaluators agreed with how these partnerships ranked compared to our 41 partnerships.

Table D2 | Transformation Potential Evaluation Matrix

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTION	RATING SCALE	
		0	
Vision and Planning			
Innovation	To what extent has the partnership developed a new concept? The concept could be a new approach or application to an existing idea.	Not able to answer.	
Strategic Plan	<p>To what extent has the partnership done ALL of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Established a clear understanding of the system it is trying to shift (e.g., stakeholders, relationships and power dynamics, market and institutional barriers, attempted solutions to tackle the problem at hand).</li><li>2. Established a clear vision for how the partnership will solve the problem(s) and shift system conditions to drive progress on the SDGs.</li><li>3. Developed a clear strategic plan or theory of change that articulates how the partnership's activities will help to change a system, including causal assumptions and stakeholder roles.</li></ol>	Not able to answer.	
Impacts			
Near-Term Goals	<p>To what extent has the partnership been able to build a strong foundation to implement its approach or model of change? This includes, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Securing stakeholder commitments</li><li>• Increasing awareness of and building credibility with stakeholders</li><li>• Pilot/product testing its approach</li><li>• Securing funding</li><li>• Data collecting, research, and knowledge sharing</li></ul>	Not able to answer.	
Scalability	<p>Since the partnership's initiation, to what extent has the partnership scaled up its activities to capture a greater market share or scale to other networks, markets, or economies?</p> <p>To what extent have other partnerships or businesses or other entities replicated the partnership's approach or created commercially viable business models because the partnership has reduced system barriers?</p>	Not able to answer.	



	1	2	3	4	5
	The concept behind the partnership is traditional or well-known given the geographic context.	The concept behind the partnership is traditional or well-known given the geographic context but has been slightly adapted.	The concept behind the partnership involves a moderate degree of innovation, given the geographic context.	The concept behind the partnership is highly innovative, given the geographic context.	The concept behind the partnership is highly innovative, regardless of the geographic context.
	<p>There is not a clear and shared understanding of the system nor a clear rationale for selection of the problem it will address.</p> <p>There is no evidence of a clear theory of change that displays causal assumptions and systems thinking (does not discuss common conditions of systems change such as: policies, practices, resource flow allocations, distribution of decision-making power, quality of relationships among stakeholders, behaviors and daily life.</p>	<p>The partnership is able to articulate a low-level understanding of the system and rationale for selecting the problem it will address.</p> <p>The theory of change is not well-developed and does not display systems change thinking.</p>	<p>The partnership has undertaken research to understand the system but still has a limited understanding of how its efforts fit into the wider landscape.</p> <p>The theory of change is moderately well-developed.</p>	<p>The partnership has undertaken research to understand the system and has a good idea of how its efforts are unique and add value.</p> <p>The theory of change is well-developed and connected to systems change thinking.</p>	<p>The partnership has undertaken detailed research to understand the system and how its efforts are unique and add value.</p> <p>The partnership has developed a clear theory of change with clear causal assumptions and systems change thinking.</p>
	<p>The partnership lacks clear near-term goals and targets that would set a strong foundation, and near-term goals are not well-linked to its systems change goals.</p> <p>Goals are not thought to be achievable or are unrealistic.</p>	The partnership has established near-term goals and targets, but they are not well-linked to their systems change goals and may not be achievable within their targeted time frame.	<p>The partnership has established near-term goals and targets that are thought to be achievable and are linked to its systems change goals.</p> <p>The partnership is on track to achieve its near-term goals.</p>	The partnership has met its near-term goals, and its near-term goals are well-linked to its systems change goals.	The partnership has excelled at meeting its goals (achieved beyond what was expected), and its goals are well-linked to its systems change goals.
	The partnership has no potential for expansion or replication and lacks a strategy or targets for scaling up or out.	The partnership has some potential for growth and may have set targets for future expansion or replication.	The partnership has strong potential to expand its activities or to be replicated and has set tangible and measurable targets for future expansion but has not yet expanded elsewhere or been replicated to date.	The partnership has expanded its activities to one other network, market, or economy or has captured a good degree of market share, and/or the partnership is a model for others that are working to emulate the approach.	The partnership has expanded its activities to multiple networks, markets, or economies. It may also have captured a significant market share or feature a partnership approach that has been replicated by others.

Table D2 | Transformation Potential Evaluation Matrix (Cont.)

CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTION	RATING SCALE	
		0	
Impacts			
Transformation Objectives	To what extent has the partnership made progress on shifting the system it is trying to change (e.g., meeting its long-term or SDG goals)? Example shifts may include changes to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• policies</li><li>• practices</li><li>• resource flow allocations</li><li>• distribution of decision-making power</li><li>• quality of relationships between stakeholders</li><li>• behaviors and daily life</li></ul>	Not able to answer.	
Resiliency			
Operational Resilience	To what extent is the partnership able to respond to challenges or barriers, such as new policies, changes in administrations, natural disasters, stakeholder changes, etc.?	Not able to answer.	
Financial Sustainability	To what extent has the partnership been able to find a self-sustaining financial model?	Not able to answer.	

Source: WRI Authors.

Evaluator Selection

To address the evaluator bias, we identified two teams of evaluators. Although each team would have inherent bias based on its personal relationship to the partnership, the evaluation design is based on taking an average score for each criteria on across the two teams of evaluators.

- **Research team:** This team includes the three primary researchers behind this report. This team has expertise in economics and social science research methods, as well as monitoring and evaluation best practices. This team is responsible for reviewing in depth the reporting documentation of each partnership, previous scoring reviews of each partnership for earlier P4G selection of start-up and scale-up winners and SOTA award finalists, survey results, and additional web research.

- **P4G team:** This team includes the three primary P4G staff responsible for partnership selection and communication. This team worked with external consultants to define P4G's own criteria for partnership selection, and is familiar with each partnership's progress. As such, they are viewed as being more in touch with the challenges and successes of each partnership at least at a quarterly reporting level. We asked this team to score using a best-judgment approach. As they have previously reviewed all application, reporting, and scoring information, we asked that they judge to the best of their ability and refer back to partnership documentation when they deemed necessary to make a proper judgment call. This was designed as a time-saving measure.

	1	2	3	4	5
	The partnership has little potential for systems change as indicated by its long-term or systems change goals, which are not aligned with the example shifts.	The partnership has some potential for shifting systems conditions but has not yet demonstrated evidence of impact.	The partnership has strong potential for shifting systems conditions but has not yet demonstrated evidence of impact.	The partnership has evidence of shifting systems conditions with evidence of impact.	The partnership has had substantial positive impact on people's lives as a result of changing policies, practices, and/or resource flows.
	The partnership has not identified potential challenges and thus lacks a strategy for overcoming these challenges and/or the partnership has experienced challenges that have resulted in severe setbacks to achieving the partnership's goals or partnership failure.	The partnership has identified some challenges but it has not discussed how it will address these challenges and/or the partnership has experienced challenges that have resulted in moderate setbacks to achieving the partnership's goals.	The partnership has identified potential challenges and has a strategy for addressing these challenges and/or the partnership has experienced some challenges and has had some minor to major setbacks in achieving its goals as a result, indicating only a moderate resiliency level.	The partnership has identified potential challenges and has a strategy for addressing these challenges and the partnership has experienced challenges and has been able to respond and adapt to challenges. The partnership may have faced minor setbacks but it seems to have a good level of resiliency.	The partnership has identified potential challenges and has a strategy for addressing these challenges and the partnership has experienced these challenges and has been able to quickly and collectively respond and adapt to challenges, indicating a high resiliency level.
	The partnership has high funding uncertainty and has low potential for leveraging funding.	The partnership has moderate funding uncertainty and has moderate potential for attracting new funding.	The partnership has some funding uncertainty but has potential to attract new funding.	The partnership has a good degree of financial sustainability with a good degree of investor interest.	The partnership has developed a self-sustaining financial model or has a high degree of investor interest.

We initially considered having the partnership itself be a third category of evaluator and had asked partnerships to rate themselves in the survey according to our seven transformation potential criteria. However, we were not able to provide the full evaluation matrix in the survey, and an assessment of partnerships' scores revealed that partnerships seem to overestimate how well they do against each criterion; so this was ultimately excluded from the scoring.

### Comparison of Transformation Potential Groups

As stated earlier, partnerships were divided into different groupings, based on their transformation potential, to compare their average self-evaluation scores for our 14 success factors. The success factors

that demonstrated the greatest scoring differential between high and low transformation-potential groups would be indicative of where high-performing partnerships are doing better at implementation, compared to low-performing partnerships. Partnerships scored themselves against success factors on a scale of 1–5, based on the extent to which they embodied each success factor (where 1 = not at all and 5 = to a great extent).

We grouped partnerships into terciles representing low, medium, and high transformation potential. The tercile distribution corresponded roughly with the evaluation criteria score scale, which is on a scale of 0–5, where for each criteria, a score above 3 indicates a high perfor-

mance. The top tercile partnerships had an average transformation potential score of 3.24 or greater, medium tercile partnerships had a score between 2.50 and 3.24, and bottom tercile partnerships had a score of 2.50 or below.

Table D3 provides a summary of the average scoring differential between all high (top tercile) transformation-potential partnerships and all low (bottom tercile) transformation-potential partnerships. As

the success factor “bold and creative approach and activities” was considered to overlap significantly with “Jointly agreed-upon overarching vision and goals,” we integrated the two into our final definition of “Jointly agreed-upon overarching vision and goals” in Chapter 4. To determine which success factors should be included in the report, we selected those where the scoring differential was >0.5.

**Table D3 | Average Success Factor Scoring Differential between High and Low Transformation-Potential Partnerships**  
Summary of Partnership Scores by Tercile

SUCCESS FACTOR	HIGH VS. LOW (OR TOP VS. BOTTOM TERCILE GROUPING)	RANKING
<b>1. Clear articulation of the system of interest</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Jointly agreed-upon transformation vision and near-term goals</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Bold and creative approach and activities</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>3</b>
4. Confirmation that partnering is the right approach and that partners selected are the best possible option	-0.09	13
<b>5. Strong monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting mechanism</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>4</b>
6. Culture of trust, inclusivity, and information-sharing	0.12	9
7. Strong management and coordination structure	0.11	10
8. Robust governance mechanisms	0.01	12
9. Stakeholder commitment to agreed-upon resources	0.15	8
10. Funding security	0.36	7
<b>11. Capacity to engage stakeholders external to the partnership</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>1</b>
12. Supportive environment enabled by government	-0.14	14
13. Strong champions at multiple levels	0.43	6
14. Ability to navigate the local context in which the partnership operates	0.08	11

Source: WRI Authors.



## Appendix E. Partnerships Referenced throughout Report

CHAPTER	PARTNERSHIPS REFERENCED
Chapter 1	Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA)
Chapter 2	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE) Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Zero Emission Rapid Bus-deployment Accelerator (ZEBRA) Africa GreenCo
Chapter 3	City Support Programme (CSP) Alianza por la Sostenibilidad (AxS) EIT Climate-KIC Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum (CSLF) Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA) Green Climate Fund (GCF) The Global Fund, Google Cloud, and the Indian Government Last Mile Project Latin-American Water Funds Partnership Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) Sustainable Apparel Coalition NextGen Consortium Marine Stewardship Council Clean Energy Investment Accelerator (CEIA) Sustainable Food Partnership We Mean Business (WMB) Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (CNCA) Clean Cargo Working Group (CCWG)
Chapter 4	IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™ Africa GreenCo NextWave Plastics TRANSFORM Courtauld Commitment 2025 Friends for Ocean Action 2030 Vision Energise Africa
Appendix B	IIX Women's Livelihood Bond Series™ Africa GreenCo ME SOLshare Global Distributors Collective (GDC) Courtauld Commitment 2025 2020 Circular Fashion Commitment UK Plastics Pact Global Plastics Action Partnership (GPAP) TRANSFORM Energise Africa NextWave Plastics Sustainable Sourcing at Scale Partnership

## ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AMC	Advance Market Commitment
AxS	Alianza por la Sostenibilidad
BEPP	Built Environment Performance Plan
CCS	carbon capture and storage
CCWG	Clean Cargo Working Group
CEIA	Clean Energy Investment Accelerator
CNCA	Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance
CSO	civil society organization
CSP	City Support Programme
CSLF	Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDC	Global Distributors Collective
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
GHG	greenhouse gas
GPAP	Global Plastics Action Partnership
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting
MELR	
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
OBP	Ocean-Bound Plastic
P4G	Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals
PACE	Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy
REBA	Renewable Energy Buyers Alliance
RSPO	Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil
SAC	Sustainable Apparel Coalition
SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
SOTA	State of the Art
TFA	Tropical Forest Alliance
TOC	Theory of change
TPI	The Partnering Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WEF	World Economic Forum
WLB Series	Women's Livelihood Bond Series™
WMB	We Mean Business
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
ZEBRA	Zero Emission Rapid Bus-Deployment Accelerator

## GLOSSARY

- **Business:** for-profit organization. Also referenced as the private sector.
- **Civil society organization (CSO):** nonprofit or nongovernmental organization. CSOs can range from small community organizations to large international groups.
- **Contribution analysis:** methodology to assess how a program, partnership, or organization contributes to a particular outcome.
- **Enabling partnership:** partnerships convening stakeholders within an industry, supply chain, sector, or issue area to exchange knowledge, set standards, or influence policy. These partnerships affect transformation by shifting policy or sharing information that shifts an entire sector or group of actors onto a sustainable pathway.
- **Evaluation:** the process of analyzing information and data to answer whether a partnership is meeting its objectives. Evaluation is about “sense-making, reality-checking, assumption testing, and answering questions” (FSG and Collective Impact Forum 2020).
- **External stakeholder:** an individual or organization outside of a given partnership that has interests in or is affected by said partnership.
- **Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR):** the fusion of physical, biological, and digital spheres through technologies such as the Internet of Things, advanced energy storage, 3D printing, precision agriculture, and autonomous vehicles (Schwab 2016).
- **Government:** governing body, agency, or ministry at the national, regional, or state level. Also referenced as the public sector.
- **Intermediate actions:** a partnership's immediate next steps or the activities needed to achieve its near-term goals and, ultimately, its transformation vision.
- **Learning:** the ability to take evaluation results and integrate them into a partnership's approach to improve its effectiveness at meeting its objectives, to plan ahead, and to take risks.
- **Market-driven partnership:** partnerships creating a new product, asset, service, or business model that can overcome market barriers and eventually find commercial viability. These partnerships affect transformation by launching a new product or service that incentivize other actors in a market operate in line with sustainable practices.
- **Monitoring, evaluation, learning, and reporting (MELR):** performance-tracking system used to understand progress on goals and learn from successes and failures. MELR moves beyond short-term performance tracking to integrate systems thinking.

- **Monitoring:** the process of systematically and regularly collecting information and data to track a partnership's progress on its activities.
- **Multistakeholder partnership :** A voluntary collaboration among two or more stakeholders, whereby stakeholders are committed through a formal agreement to share resources, accountability, risks, leadership, and benefits to meet a specific SDG-related objective (UN 2015). These are also often referred to as cross-sectoral partnerships. This report focuses on multistakeholder partnerships with transformation potential. That is, partnerships comprising at least one government and one business and/or CSO that aspire to change the system in which they operate. Also referenced as partnerships, or partnerships with transformative ambitions.
- **Near-term goals:** a partnership's one- to five-year goals related to building a strong foundation to implement its approach. Goals could include securing stakeholder commitments, piloting an approach, securing funding, or collecting data.
- **Reporting:** efforts to summarize evaluation findings and lessons learned with different audiences. Reporting can come in many forms, including annual reports, quarterly updates, PowerPoint presentations, and webinars.
- **Stakeholder:** an organization (business, government, or CSO) that is participating in a partnership.
- **Success factor:** a partnership behavior or structural component, identified in existing literature on multistakeholder partnerships as critical for, but not a guarantee of, partnership success.
- **System mapping:** process of identifying and understanding the components (i.e., actors, institutions, graphics, relationships, power dynamics) of a given system. Tools to do this include social network analysis, actor mapping, timeline mapping, and appreciative inquiry.
- **System:** interconnected elements, including diverse actors, institutions, and geographies, with a function or purpose (Meadows 2008; Holland 1998). Systems can operate across multiple levels and scale and are characterized by the relationships and power dynamics among elements.
- **Systems change:** often used in academic literature to refer to sweeping changes to an existing construct or system. For the purposes of this paper, we consider this the same as transformation.
- **Systems thinking:** the ability to see how a partnership is influencing system conditions, how system conditions interact and influence each other, and ultimately how the partnership is contributing to addressing the problem of interest (adapted from Preskill and Cook 2020).
- **Theory of change:** articulates how a partnership's strategy and actions will lead to its transformation goal. A complete theory of change requires an understanding of the system of interest and the underlying assumptions about how partnership actions will change system conditions.
- **Transformation:** the outcome of transformative change or action, which can be thought of as the transformational impact; a drastic shift in the way a system operates whereby change percolates throughout a system's elements and interrelations. This report characterizes transformation as change that is systemic, nonlinear, disruptive of the status quo, and long-term and sustained.
- **Transformation impacts:** measurable transformation outcome.
- **Transformation maturity spectrum:** a partnership's progress to date on fulfilling its full transformation potential.
- **Transformation potential:** a partnership's predicted ability to effect transformative change based on seven criteria across four categories: innovation, impact, scaling, and implementation viability. See Appendix D for partnership evaluation methodology.
- **Transformation vision:** a partnership's ultimate systems-change goal. This may be the launch of a new product or service, the exchange of key information, or the development of a policy that will shift system conditions.
- **Transformative change:** the process of transformation.
- **Transformative partnership:** multistakeholder partnership that results in transformation. Also referenced as transformative multistakeholder partnership or transformative collaborations.

## ENDNOTES

1. The two exceptions were the extent to which your government provides a supportive environment and the extent to which, before you commenced partnering, you confirmed that partnership was the best approach and had engaged the right stakeholders. For these success factors, low transformation-potential partnerships scored themselves slightly higher on average than high transformation-potential partnerships with a difference of 0.14 and 0.09, respectively.
2. Partnership quote provided as part of A Time for Transformation Report survey, conducted December 2019. For information on the survey instrument and methodology used, see Appendix C.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

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## ABOUT WRI

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization that turns big ideas into action at the nexus of environment, economic opportunity, and human well-being.

### Our Challenge

Natural resources are at the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being. But today, we are depleting Earth's resources at rates that are not sustainable, endangering economies and people's lives. People depend on clean water, fertile land, healthy forests, and a stable climate. Livable cities and clean energy are essential for a sustainable planet. We must address these urgent, global challenges this decade.

### Our Vision

We envision an equitable and prosperous planet driven by the wise management of natural resources. We aspire to create a world where the actions of government, business, and communities combine to eliminate poverty and sustain the natural environment for all people.

## ABOUT P4G

P4G (Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030) is a global platform accelerating market-based partnerships to build sustainable and resilient economies. P4G bridges the gap between development and investment agendas to deliver inclusive, tangible solutions to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. P4G provides an action-oriented global ecosystem of business, government, and civil society organizations to unlock opportunities for partnerships working in five SDG areas: food and agriculture, water, energy, cities, and circular economy.

## ABOUT GGGI

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) is a treaty-based international, intergovernmental organization dedicated to supporting and promoting strong, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging economies. GGGI supports its member governments in achieving the commitments expressed under the Paris Climate Agreement and their Sustainable Development Goal targets. GGGI is leading the implementation of a new development paradigm, focused on a model of economic growth that is both environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive green growth.

## ABOUT WEF

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