

EVALUATION OF THE SDG PHILANTHROPY PLATFORM A STRATEGIC BRIEF

Prepared by Jane Reisman, Pat Vinh-Thomas, and Haley Millet
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EXTERNAL VERSION

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INTRODUCTION

“If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together.” – African Proverb, featured on UNDP homepage

“All the things... that make the [SDG Philanthropy] Platform unique also make it difficult to fit within a lot of funding opportunities.” – global philanthropic partner

“There had never been, in 54 years of independence in Kenya, a structured conversation between philanthropy and government – particularly between the Ministry of Education and government.” – country level implementer

The collaborative launch of the SDG Philanthropy Platform (SDGPP) was originated by four visionary social sector leaders: Ed Cain of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Heather Grady (now with Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors/RPA), Marcos Athias Neto of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Brad Smith of the Foundation Center (FC). These leaders were concerned about the absence of engagement by philanthropy in the advancement of the United Nations’ eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that spanned from 2000 to 2015. Cognizant of the opportunity to address this gap as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launching – new global goals designed for fifteen years beginning in 2015 – these founding partners set out to create an initiative that would mobilize the philanthropic sector to work with other development actors and develop critical partnerships aligned with the SDGs thus striving to address.

The initial partnerships began organically and informally at the outset of 2014 and have been formalized to operationalize the Platform. UNDP serves as the lead on country-level work, FC leads data management and capacity-building, and RPA coordinates the different parts. UNDP Istanbul, particularly Karolina Mzyk-Callias, plays an enormous role in day-to-day oversight of all the country Platform Coordinators and organizes global conversations and exchange. RPA, particularly Heather Grady and Kelly Diggins in the San Francisco office, maintain regular contact with the coordinators around progress on the Impact Pathway. FC, particularly Arif Ekram and Lauren Bradford, manage grant information, website work and are credited with the development of the SDG Indicator Wizard.

The Conrad N. Hilton, Ford and The MasterCard Foundations committed initial funding to allow start-up globally and in Kenya, Ghana, Colombia and Indonesia. Collaboration grew to include the Brach Family Charitable Trust, E4Impact Foundation, Oak Foundation, UN Foundation, Global Fund for Women, and Avasant Foundation. Focus countries have also expanded to include the United States, Zambia, India, Brazil and the Middle East/North Africa region, generally linked with specific funding streams. More recently, a funder supporting sectoral work on children has joined to support work in Tanzania and South Africa.

RPA commissioned an evaluation of the SDGPP on behalf of the founding partners, funders and implementers. The evaluation team is led by Jane Reisman, an independent social impact advisor and Founder of ORS Impact, and team members include Pat Vinh-Thomas, Haley Millet, and Alia Sao. This evaluation report is organized by the outcome areas identified in the Impact Pathway adopted in 2016 and the additional area of Communications added in 2017. There is also attention paid to the specific outcomes called out in the Hilton Foundation grant for this effort that describes areas of work for each of the major implementing partners.

METHODS

The evaluation was conducted in June and July 2017. The data sources were semi-structured interviews with 25 stakeholders and extensive document review of meeting notes, commissioned reports, case studies, and email communications. The interviewees are classified as founding partners, global philanthropic partners, country level implementers and others.

Table 1. Distribution of the Evaluation Interviewee Sample

Partner Type	Number of Interviewees
Founding Partners (original visionaries from Hilton, Ford, RPA and UNDP and their designees)	8
Global Philanthropic Partners (additional philanthropic partners based outside of pilot countries and program officers within the founding partner organizations)	8
Country Level Implementers (Platform Coordinators, local philanthropic partners, and network partners)	8
Other	1
Total	25

ANALYTIC APPROACH

The evaluation team coded the data according to the outcomes in the Impact Pathway and held two types of analytical sessions: one with the internal team to assess and synthesize themes in the data and provide inter-coder reliability through a team approach, and a second one with representatives from RPA and the Hilton Foundation to gain strategic input about the findings and actionable recommendations. The data for this evaluation is primarily qualitative and based on legitimate viewpoints from diverse stakeholders through interview comments and documents.

POSITION ON THE PHILANTHROPIC LANDSCAPE

The SDG Philanthropy Platform doesn't fit neatly into traditional philanthropy program areas for two main reasons:

1. Focus on infrastructure that shapes the ecosystem of development work

Coordination and sharing data are two strong components of the Platform.

Too often, philanthropy works in isolation from other philanthropic efforts, missing opportunities to leverage resources, align efforts and work strategically together. Philanthropy also often perceives that it is viewed as an "ATM machine" for governmental agendas. The unique role that philanthropy as a private sector partner can play in coordination with government has not been broadly realized. The SDGPP sees both system level changes as essential for collective action toward SDG goal areas.

Data of all sorts is relevant to the SDG framework, including but not limited to current investments, types of strategies, the dimensions of problems, progress toward targets and impact, and lessons learned along the way that can improve services, resources, practices or policies.

2. Partnership with UN agencies

The grand scale of the UN charter and the organization of its body of work are worlds apart from the specific focus and private sector sensibilities of mission-based philanthropies. With few exceptions, many philanthropic organizations have not forged close working relationships with the UN or aligned their work with the UN's global goals. The SDGPP is based on the premise that the tenacious threats to lives and the planet addressed by the SDGs between 2015 and 2030 cannot be solved by the public sector alone. UNCTAD estimates a 2.5 trillion dollar (USD) annual shortfall and other estimates are even larger (Olazabal & Reisman 2016, pg. 3). Clearly, partnering directly with UN agencies or aligning with the SDGs requires a major change in orientation from past practices by both philanthropy and UN agencies.

The features of the SDGPP look different from the familiar philanthropic landscape. Philanthropy typically arranges its streams of work into programmatic and/or place-based categories and the broad nature of infrastructure development doesn't necessarily square with such a funding structure. Program officers are typically committed to particular issue areas, within or outside of their core work streams, which are associated with specific budgets and grant performance measures that are short-term (less than 3 years). Similarly, the cadence of work in philanthropy is typically time-bound and takes the form of initiatives with clearly defined and attainable metrics and targets. Partnering with UN agencies and in a multi-stakeholder process oriented to the SDGs can be experienced by some participants as a new way of doing business that in some cases may be at odds with internal processes in their organizations.

This is the context in which the SDGPP has been launched and is relevant to the analysis and recommendations that we will present in this report.

Next, we turn to a description of the findings and observations for guiding actions. This work is organized by each outcome area in the Impact Pathway, including the new Communications outcome area. We also present a more in-depth case study of progress in the pilot country of Ghana to offer a more granular look at successes and constraints. The organization of the findings, observations and recommendations is as follows:

- Progress toward Outcomes. Organized by outcome areas, specific accomplishments are specified as well as areas where progress has been less evident.
- Challenges and Points of Tension. The challenges identified by interviewees and in SDGPP documentation are described. The evaluators synthesize the points of tension that relate to these challenges.
- A Closer Look in One Pilot Country: Case Illustration of Ghana. This illustration also exemplifies how the country context affects the implementation of the SDGPP.
- Actionable Recommendations—Specific scenarios were formulated based on data analyzed for this evaluation

Progress towards outcomes

Earlier this year, the Platform underwent a process of articulating a theory of change, facilitated by a professional evaluator, which constructed desired outcomes for their collective work that were broader than any one funder's grant template. These three outcomes featured in the Impact Pathway are as follows: (1) Collaboration around SDGs to reduce duplication, create synergies, and leverage resources among partners; (2) Increased voice of

philanthropy and grantees in the national plans for the SDGs implementation; and (3) Innovation and scaling methods are applied and exchanged among philanthropic and government partners. An additional outcome related to communications—(4) Platform communications give us the ability to educate, empower, connect and activate philanthropy sector actors and SDG drivers in other sectors—rounds out the outcome framework that we utilized in reporting accomplishments, challenges/tensions, and path forward.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

This table distills our assessment of the progress to date. Each sub outcome is summarized here by (1) degree of progress, i.e. whether Platform work demonstrates strong evidence of progress, signs of promise, slight progress, mixed results, or no evidence of progress; and (2) high-level dimensions of progress. Detailed discussion to follow in the narrative below the table.

Outcome Area A: Collaboration around SDGs to reduce duplication, create synergies, and leverage resources among partners.	
Sub outcome: More social finance investing in the SDGs	<p>Degree of Progress: Signs of Promise Pilot countries with economic readiness for financing show the most progress towards this objective.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Progress has been made towards preconditions for SDG social financing – The Kenya Platform has engaged impact investing networks – Philanthropy is aware of CSR initiatives that could be leveraged towards their agendas – There is rising momentum for a transition from SDG funding to SDG financing. This is largely dependent on country context and economic readiness for financing
Sub outcome: More grants aligned to the SDGs	<p>Degree of Progress: Signs of Promise Platform contributions are strongest at the country and local level; global philanthropic alignment of grants around the SDGs through the Platform is in early stages.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some philanthropy has increased standards for impact by aligning with SDG indicators – Some philanthropy has increased focus on the impact of work within the larger development context – Alignment of philanthropies around SDG 4 has led to implementation of coordinated solutions at the community level in Kenya – Additional networks and platforms have been launched to address other SDGs, using SDGPP as a base – Globally, philanthropies are beginning to align around the SDGs as criteria for online transparency best practices
Sub outcome: Network approaches in and between countries	<p>Degree of Progress: Strong Evidence of Progress Networking for purposes of learning, consultation, and knowledge sharing is strong across Platform stakeholders. There were fewer examples of networking that resulted in tangible collaborative relationships or projects between philanthropies.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Philanthropic networks, associations, and other backbone institutions participate in the Platform – Philanthropy has gained a seat at the table and access to governments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Country level platforms are consulted by non-resident or newer foundations on how to orient themselves in-country – Country level platforms and local philanthropies conduct learning visits to exchange lessons learned around data – SDGPP has catalyzed collaboration amongst development actors around unifying goals – There is an appetite for more cross-country learning
Sub outcome: Reduced unintended duplication of SDG efforts in focus countries	Degree of Progress: No evidence
Outcome Area B: Increased voice of philanthropy and grantees in the national plans for the SDGs implementation.	
Sub outcome: Partners understand SDG landscape	<p>Degree of Progress: Strong Evidence of Progress Partners understand the SDG landscape and are aware of potential collaborators both within and between their silos of work.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partners across the spectrum are more aware and educated on the SDGs – Philanthropies situate their work within the SDG framework – Philanthropies are beginning to align around the SDGs as criteria for best practices in online transparency – Philanthropies have increased understanding of their silo of work and opportunities for collaboration through workshops and mapping exercises – Philanthropies also have increased understanding outside of their silo of work and how their SDG focus connects to other SDGs – There is an appetite for increased understanding and collaboration across SDGs
Sub outcome: Partners understand the value added by Platform	<p>Degree of Progress: Strong Evidence of Progress Nearly all partners asserted the value add of the Platform's purpose and intent, but many funding and global philanthropic partners questioned the implementation strategy.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partners appreciated the value add of the Platform's purpose and intent – SDGPP Key Value Ads include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Created space for philanthropy to engage with the SDGs ○ Provides a comprehensive framework to align philanthropy through a connection to something bigger than themselves ○ Gives philanthropy a seat at the table with governments ○ Enables governments to recognize philanthropy as a development actor ○ Builds philanthropic infrastructure at country and global levels ○ Includes nontraditional partners to philanthropy, such as the private sector and UN ○ Connects the Global North to SDG framework
Sub outcome: Improved data capacity of partners	<p>Degree of Progress: Mixed Results Progress in building data capacity varies based on the stage of the platform as well as in-country data infrastructure and culture.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Kenya has demonstrated strongly improved data capacity – Ghana has taken steps towards trust and relationship building as a prerequisite to data sharing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No data capacity building workshops in Zambia and Indonesia to date – Non-platform countries such as Uganda and Tanzania have benefitted from data capacity building workshops
Sub outcome: Evidence-based policy making using philanthropic data and approaches	<p>Degree of Progress: Signs of Promise The Platform has achieved the preconditions for this outcome by facilitating partnership between philanthropy and government, as well as producing research and recommendations to inform policymaking.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Philanthropy is present in government agency discussions – SDGPP has created models for stakeholder inclusion in policy development – SDGPP has produced research and recommendations to inform policymaking
Outcome Area C: Innovation and scaling methods are applied and exchanged among philanthropic and government partners.	
Sub outcome: Prototypes of solutions for SDG programming and processes	<p>Degree of Progress: Strong evidence of progress The Platform has developed prototypes to scale solutions for SDG programming and processes that can be used with or without the platform</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDGPP has codified the Platform process to reduce cost, time, and complexity of future platform work – SDGPP has produced replicable models for learning SDG programming and processes including data capacity workshops, Stanford Innovation Lab design workshops, Collaborative pathways workshops, and other convenings – SDGPP has produced useful tools for SDG programming such as Indicator Wizard and pilot country reports
Sub outcome: Pathways are developed to scale solutions	<p>Degree of Progress: Signs of Promise Scaling of solutions through partnership with government shows the most promise. Scaling of solutions through partnership with the private sector is in early stages.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDGPP demonstrated potential for scaling solutions – Additional networks and platforms have been launched to address other SDGs, using SDGPP as a base – Philanthropies have a seat at the table with governments, who can scale solutions – SDGPP and partners have increased engagement with private sector, especially in Kenya – There is desire for increased engagement with private sector as a conduit to scale
Outcome Area D: Platform communications give us the ability to educate, empower, connect and activate philanthropy sector actors and SDG drivers in other sectors.	
Sub outcome: Strong brand alignment	<p>Degree of Progress: Signs of Promise While there is some confusion among partners about how to brand various facets of the work, the SDGPP brand proves to be legitimizing and validating.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDGPP serves a validating and legitimizing purpose for US and international partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Governments recognize Platform brand and invite to participate in forums – The UN has invited philanthropy to participate in global events – The SDGPP has been featured at networking partner events – SDGfunders.org is a communications vehicle with relevant and practical content – SDGPP has produced useful tools such as Indicator Wizard and pilot country reports
Sub outcome: Increase engagement and desired outcomes	<p>Degree of Progress: Slight Progress The Platform has made some progress towards building trust between partners (local and global) that is necessary for increased engagement.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trust is a precursor to increased engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kenya is cited as the furthest along ○ There is a need for trust and relationship-building activities – There is increased awareness and interest in the platform as indicated by increased web activity in the past three months
Sub outcome: A stronger campaign-style approach that leverages foundations existing involvement, enthusiasm and momentum	<p>Degree of Progress: No Evidence</p>
Sub outcome: Data-driven iteration based on understanding how users use our site and how our content allows us to continually improve performance	<p>Degree of Progress: Slight Progress (little evidence) There is little evidence around this sub outcome, but the Platform has made some pivots based on recommendations.</p> <p>Dimensions of Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDGfunders.org mobile app was developed in response to communications audits

OUTCOME A: COLLABORATION

The SDG Philanthropy Platform aims to facilitate **collaboration around SDGs to reduce duplication, create synergies, and leverage resources among partners.** This involves achievement of sub outcomes such as **more social financing in the SDGs, more grants aligned to the SDGs, creating network approaches in and between countries, and reduced duplication of SDG efforts across various sectors. In this section, we will dive into each sub outcome individually.** The Platform shows strong evidence of progress towards networking approaches in and between countries, especially for purposes of learning and knowledge sharing. Signs are promising in the areas of social financing of the SDGs in pilot countries with economic readiness for investment and financing, and in grant alignment around the SDGs, namely at the country level. There is a lack of evidence to evaluate whether the Platform reduced duplication of SDG efforts across sectors.

NETWORK APPROACHES IN AND BETWEEN COUNTRIES

Collaboration has been most successful in building network approaches in and between countries especially for purposes of learning, consultation, and knowledge sharing. Interview evidence from those directly involved in networking activities leaned predominately in a positive direction.

“In all three [workshops for Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia Platforms], we said to partners (government, philanthropy, nonprofit, business) let’s come together to have a workshop focused on this topic . . . How would we take a more systems level view and design sustainable solutions that will put us on the path to achieving the SDGs. Our reports back from all three workshops is that they were very rewarding for those who participated. I’m sure it will spur new kinds of collaborations.” – founding partner

Gaining a seat at the table with governments comprised perhaps the most compelling factor identified by interviewees in that it provides a voice and insight into philanthropy that hadn’t previously been palpable. Interviewees also spoke about networking across countries. For example, pilot countries visited Columbia to learn about AFE’s platform for managing data that maps philanthropic work to the SDGs. One funder described the SDG alignment as “electrification”—meaning that the Platform connected different geographies in a network so that resources could flow along these connections from one area to another. Particular individuals with strong connections and relationships to influential people and organizations function as important facilitators.

MORE GRANTS ALIGNED TO SDGS

There is strong evidence that alignment is beginning to take shape. While Platform contributions to alignment around the SDGs are strongest at the country and local level, global philanthropic alignment of grants around the SDGs through the Platform is in early stages. Interviewees highlighted several examples of alignment activities as concrete evidence of progress in this area, including adopting the SDGs as the organizing framework for planning and communicating, for monitoring and evaluation, and for best practices in transparency. Through this connection to the SDGs, one organization specifically expressed that it sees itself as part of a larger effort involving a multitude of actors for a collective impact. This view constitutes a departure from past thinking, which tended to promote silos by isolating strategies independently from others.

MORE SOCIAL FINANCE INVESTING IN SDGS

Pilot countries with economic readiness for investment and financing show the most progress towards social finance investing in the SDGs. The mapping exercises, coordination among foundations, and collaboration between foundations and governments constitute the fundamental building blocks of these preconditions. The Platform has served as an elevator of the work of exemplary local philanthropies who adopt sustainable business models that move from “SDG funding” to “SDG financing”. However, the extent of progress in Social Financing is affected by the enabling environment, development level of each country, and availability of social finance and enterprise actors.

REDUCED DUPLICATION OF SDG EFFORTS ACROSS VARIOUS SECTORS

This sub-outcome area did not emerge as a discussion topic in the data sources available to us.

OUTCOME B: INCREASED VOICE OF PHILANTHROPY

The Philanthropy Platform seeks to **increase the voice of philanthropy and grantees in the national plans for the SDGs implementation**. Sub outcomes of this work include **that partners understand the SDG landscape, partners understand the value added by the Platform**, there is **improved data capacity of partners is improved**, and **evidence-based policy making using philanthropic data and approaches**. There was strong evidence that partners

understand the SDG landscape and are aware of potential collaborators both within and across their silos of work, and that partners understand the value add of the Platform's purpose and intent. Results were mixed in data capacity building across partners, which varied based on the stage of the platform as well as in-country data infrastructure and culture. Lastly, signs are promising for evidence-based policymaking as the Platform has achieved preconditions for this sub-outcome through building relationships with government and by producing research and recommendations to inform policymaking.

PARTNERS UNDERSTAND THE SDG LANDSCAPE

Across the board, interviewees shared significant progress in understanding the SDG landscape. Generally speaking, the Platform effectively exposed foundations to a bird's eye view of the SDGs, and interviewees remarked on how foundations increasingly situate their work within the umbrella framework of the SDGs. This was largely due to focused work on systems thinking, mapping, and landscaping orchestrated by the Platform. Increased understanding can be seen across a variety of actors including the founding partners, philanthropic networks, global philanthropic partners, and local philanthropic partners.

At the country level, workshops and mapping exercises connected stakeholders to each other across SDGs—creating collaborative possibilities, opportunities to learn about other actors working on a given SDG, face-to-face interaction with other stakeholders, as well as an overview of SDG funding sources. The Platform also expanded partners' understanding of the intersectional-nature of the SDG landscape beyond their particular silo of work. Several interviewees from funders and local NGOs reported not only making connections with others within their respective topical areas, but also expressed an appetite for learning from stakeholders of other fields. In all these ways, the Platform has made significant progress in helping philanthropy to understand the landscape of the SDGs.

PARTNERS UNDERSTAND THE VALUE ADDED BY THE PLATFORM

A large majority of interviewees understood and appreciated the value added by the Platform. In principle, they supported the notion that the Platform creates space for philanthropy to engage with the SDGs, and that the SDGs provide a comprehensive framework to align philanthropy through connecting their work to something larger than themselves. Interviewees also agreed that the Platform not only affords philanthropy a seat at the table, but also enables governments to recognize philanthropy as a development actor.

The positioning of the Platform within the UN Resident Coordinators office is a factor of this success. Country Level Implementers, including Platform Coordinators, commented that the Resident Coordinator's office allowed the Platform to work across many silos, and collaborate with a variety of UN agencies. The Platform has also benefitted from UNDP's connections to government.

Overall, the broad significance of the Platform is two-fold: it reflects a unique effort to build philanthropic infrastructure and sets up the possibility for the Platform to function as a catalyst for how development stakeholders can work together more effectively. Additionally, the Platform offers an avenue for stakeholders focused on the global north to connect to the SDGs, disrupting the perception that the purview of the SDGs precludes philanthropic work in the global north.

IMPROVED DATA CAPACITY

Data capacity was hypothesized to be an important part of the Platform, and progress in this area was mixed largely due to stage of the platform and country context. One pilot country, Columbia, was already advanced in this respect. Kenya benefited from a data capacity workshop, and data workshops are planned for two other pilot countries—Ghana and Zambia. Funding has not yet been raised for every focus country as the costs of FC global staff and maintenance of the SDGfunders.org website was the priority for funding garnered to date. Improving data capacity hinges upon an appreciation of and desire for data collection. The Platforms in the pilot countries fall into various places with respect to this.

The Foundation Center leveraged its resources by employing its relationships with non-pilot countries (i.e., Uganda, Tanzania) in data capacity-building to expand the geographic reach of the Platform’s landscaping efforts as well as help reach critical mass in the scope of funders aligned to the Platform, bolstering the readiness factor for the Platform’s application.

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING USING PHILANTHROPIC DATA AND APPROACHES

Adoption of policy has a long runway, but there is considerable evidence that steps are being taken toward evidence-based policymaking. Platform partners highlight the presence of philanthropy in government agency discussions as an important precursor to policy influence and a positive step towards advancing collaborative pathways facilitated by UNDP. Models for stakeholder inclusion in policy development as well as articulation of policy recommendations, such as the Ghana Platform’s participatory model and the Kenya Platform’s policy recommendations, are also positive steps toward evidence-based policy making over the past few years (UNDP 2017B).

OUTCOME C: INNOVATION AND SCALING

The SDG Philanthropy Platform aims to see that **innovation and scaling methods are applied and exchanged among philanthropic and government partners**. This involves the **creation of prototypes of solutions for SDG programming and processing**, and the **development of pathways to scale solutions**. There is strong evidence of progress towards creation of prototypes that are usable both within and outside of the Platform. Signs are promising for developing pathways to scale solutions, especially through partnership with government.

PROTOTYPES OF SOLUTIONS FOR SDG PROGRAMMING AND PROCESSES

The platform made strides in creating prototypes of solutions for SDG programming and processing in several concrete ways. First, the pilot country work thus far codified the Platform process. The tools, methodologies, relationships, and systems that evolved from pilot work made it easier, less costly, and less time-consuming to replicate the Platform in future pilot countries. For instance, the Colombia Platform brought together fourteen foundations, the national government, and UNDP around SDG 16 for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

The Platform also produced replicable and innovative models for learning about SDG programming and processes. The Foundation Center data capacity workshops built trust, skills, and infrastructure needed for data collection, management, and usage within the country philanthropic ecosystem. Secondly, the Stanford Innovation Lab design workshops created a process for developing country-level Impact Pathways that the Platform can adapt to future

pilots. Lastly, a wide variety of Country Level Implementers cited two of the Platform’s tools- the Indicator Wizard and pilot country reports- as serving instrumentally in their own SDG-related work.

PATHWAYS ARE DEVELOPED TO SCALE SOLUTIONS

While progress for this sub-outcome is in early days, the Platform thus far demonstrated high potential for creating pathways to scale solutions. The most concrete achievements to date include two instances of the Platform acting as a launch pad for additional, related platforms, in Kenya and in Ghana. Both instances demonstrate demand, proof of concept, and opportunities for the Platform to provide services that can scale solutions to SDG goals beyond the pilot focus.

The Platform has also made inroads to scaling through collaboration with government. As one funder put it, *“Access to government is our biggest avenue to scale.”* Each pilot country has achieved a seat at the table with governments:

- The Kenya Platform collaborated on the creation of the Public Benefits Organization bill which was highly contentious and took two years to negotiate;
- The Ghana Platform advised the National Development Planning Committee (NDPC) on strategic planning, data collection, and localization of the SDGs to the Ghanaian context;
- The Zambia Platform sat on the Human Development, Developmental Inequality, and Poverty technical working groups, which support the government in creation of the 2017-2021 National Development Plan;
- The Columbia Platform and AFE helped develop strategic plans for the SDGs at national and regional levels (Callias, Grady, & Grosheva 2017);
- The Indonesia Platform has integrated with three local bodies in the Presidential Decree on the National SDGs Coordination Team (UNDP 2017A)

OUTCOME D: COMMUNICATIONS

The Platform aims to see that its **communications give us the ability to educate, empower, connect and activate philanthropy sector actors and SDG drivers in other sectors.** This involves **strong brand alignment; increased engagement and desired outcomes; a stronger campaign-style approach that leverages foundations existing involvement, enthusiasm, and momentum; and data-driven iteration based on understanding how users use our site and how our content allows us to continually improve performance.** Signs are promising for strong brand alignment, as the SDGPP brand is identified as validating and legitimizing. There is slight progress towards increased engagement and desired outcomes, but in some countries, preconditions for this sub outcome are well underway. While there is little evidence around data-driven iterations, the Platform has made some pivots based on recommendations. There was not sufficient evidence to evaluate progress towards a stronger, campaign-style approach.

STRONG BRAND ALIGNMENT

The evidence about brand alignment for the SDG Philanthropy Platform is promising. Nearly all funding partners, implementers and other partners identified the brand with similar terms, including alignment, coordination, data sharing, policy influence, a “seat at the table” and learning. Program officers, implementers, and other partners recognized the original website—SDGFunders.org—as a communications vehicle with relevant and practical

content. Numerous resources were specifically identified as particularly helpful including the Dahlberg Research Report on Investing in Sustainable Development Goals, various country level reports on SDGPP work, and the Indicator Wizard. Government actors also acted in a way that indicated brand alignment as evidenced by multiple invitations for the SDGPP to participate in policy forums. Additionally, the SDGPP has been prominently featured at networking partner events, validating an external view of the SDGPP as an effort for philanthropy to work with each other and with governments to advance the global SDGs.

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

Evidence of engagement and outcomes is in earlier stages of development. Universally, interviewees raised the concept of “trust” as a precursor to coordinated activities among philanthropic organizations. Interviewees spoke about various “trust building” activities. Most interviewees hold up Kenya as being furthest along of the pilot countries.

Philanthropic organizations took a step towards engagement through increasing awareness and interest in the SDGs, as registered by website activity. Website traffic steadily grew and reached its highest level yet in the past season (i.e. Spring 2017), and the Indicator Wizard experienced increased use. Users of the website hailed broadly from 135 language settings and 95 countries (Dayton LaShell, 2016).

A STRONGER CAMPAIGN-STYLE APPROACH THAT LEVERAGES FOUNDATIONS’ EXISTING INVOLVEMENT, ENTHUSIASM AND MOMENTUM

In early 2017, the founding partners formally decided to employ a campaign-style approach and agreed to integrate this into the communications outcome. The evaluation does not have any data related to this outcome.

DATA-DRIVEN ITERATION BASED ON UNDERSTANDING HOW USERS USE OUR SITE AND HOW OUR CONTENT ALLOWS US TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Some evidence exists for data-driven iterations of the website. For example, the recently developed mobile app was a clear response to the communication audit’s observation that the readability of the website was problematic for mobile devices (Wu, 2017).

A NOTE ON EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATIONS OUTCOMES

The current Communications impact pathway does not correspond to the Communications Measurement framework. This mismatch, combined with the late adoption of both frameworks, resulted in a lack of relevant evidence with which to evaluate Communications. Moving forward, the communications strategy being developed should be oriented around the outcomes of *either* the Communications impact pathway *or* the Communications Measurement framework.

THE QUESTION OF ADDITIONALITY

Overall, substantial movement along the Impact Pathway is evident in this assessment of progress-both at the global and country levels. Perhaps a central question that we pursued in the interviews is most telling here: What was the additionality of the SDGPP that would not have happened anyway? In particular, one founding partner

queried: Did the SDGPP enhance coordination of existing entities and efforts or did it create fundamentally new conditions for philanthropic contribution to the SDGs through building new capacities and networks?

This query about additionality can be addressed in two ways. First, many of the actors involved in the SDGPP were already operating at both global and national levels. As such “building blocks” are already in place that could be arranged in a more coordinated way to support stronger impact. As one interviewee noted: “[the SDGPP has worked] as a social catalytic agent: that accelerated things that could have happened.” This viewpoint supports the statement that SDGPP amplified the potential of the actors who contributed to and participated in SDGPP efforts by coordinating efforts of these actors. A second way to address this question is to posit that new conditions materialized through capacity building and by shaping the enabling environment. This position might be best reflected by the presence of a seat at the table for philanthropy in Kenya - which hadn’t occurred in over 54 years of independence.

These contrasting ways of viewing additionality have implications for the path forward- particularly the dedication of resources and intentional focus on enhancing coordination verses creating new conditions. These directional choices may be better determined considering the challenges that the SDGPP encountered in its efforts to date and how these have been reflected in points of tension. These tensions are described in the next section.

CHALLENGES AND POINTS OF TENSION

This section describes challenges that the SDGPP experienced and analyzes why these challenges were points of tension. The section is divided into three types of issues: strategic, programmatic, and operational. The strategic level challenges pertain to high-level issues related to the Platform model, governance and management. Programmatic issues relate to the closer-to-the-ground vantage point that makes up the model’s components, including communications, data capacity building, partnerships with government and network development. Operational issues are primarily tactical in nature and pertain to specific activities.

STRATEGIC LEVEL

Strategic issues that were lifted as challenges questioned the assumptions of the model itself and the initial hypotheses about the work.

THE REACH OF PHILANTHROPY

The Reach of Philanthropy was mentioned by multiple interviewees as a confusing aspect of the model. For instance, the concept of philanthropy is not universally understood or relatable. Although there is a standardized way to define philanthropy in the U.S., this is not universal in other parts of the globe. As the SDGPP considers expanding into new countries, the issue of how philanthropy is recognized and viewed will continue to be problematic.

Partners differ in their viewpoints about philanthropy as well. One end of the spectrum positions philanthropy broadly with a “big tent” approach. One program officer advocated for stronger engagement with banks to promote their socially responsible investment as a means for resourcing the SDGs through the Philanthropy Platform. Other partners saw corporate and philanthropy sectors as closely enough aligned to include both in a more broad-based platform approach to achieving progress toward the SDGs. A more bounded view advocated for separation of the business sector and social finance organizations like foundations and impact investors to ensure sufficient attention is paid to philanthropy’s role in the SDGs.

SOCIAL FINANCING FOR IMPLEMENTING SDGPP STRATEGIES

Another challenge is the growth of **social financing** for implementing SDGPP strategies. The ability to cultivate social finance opportunities to advance the SDGs is an important assumption of the model that merits a specific outcome statement in the impact pathway. One program officer was particularly skeptical about the practicality of growth in social finance given the current model of certain pilot countries where social investing is nascent. It is the goal of the Platform to increase awareness among corporations and leverage CSR dollars towards the SDGs, but this is in early stages and requires key partners.

A related tension is a viewpoint expressed by a foundation program officer who questioned whether the key role of the UN in the Platform work is conducive to generating these kinds of financial mechanisms because historically the UN did not play in that arena.

FUNDING THE MODEL

Funding of the model itself has been particularly challenging. A predominant view of this challenge attributes the difficulty in attracting new funding partners to scarcity of “infrastructure” or “ecosystem” channels of funding in philanthropy that relates to boundary spanning work such as governance, enabling environment, partnership development and cross-sector work to achieve impact. Rather, when these infrastructure activities are supported by philanthropy they tend to happen within a particular program area. One founding partner described the effort to mobilize resources as the “hardest thing” and attributed the problem to its crossing over program boundaries.

Additionally, most current funding is annual or two-year time frames which creates a constant mindset of vulnerability and hesitance of long-range commitments for work that is inherently long-term in nature. A further tension related to the funding model is the degree to which it corresponds with capital flows in developing countries. Several interviewees thought the model would be missing the boat if it left out crowdsourcing, remittances, and other small forms of philanthropy that are a strong part of the philanthropic sources of capital in developing countries.

FRAMING THE MODEL

Framing the SDGPP model and determining whether it serves as an overarching frame for philanthropic activity related to SDGs or a parallel initiative to a multiplicity of efforts is another strategic level challenge. The extent to which the SDGPP is the overarching collaborative frame for advancing Philanthropy’s role in the achievement of sustainable goals is a reoccurring theme. While not wanting to be the only engagement platform for the sector, each of the Platform partners want to remain an authoritative source for SDG-related work involving philanthropies, which requires keeping abreast of related efforts and encouraging them to collaborate rather than proliferate and duplicate. Partners in a platform need to balance their commitments to their organizations with their commitments to their collaboration partners.

A particularly challenging issue that has popped up in the early stages of collaboration relates to funding. Core funders for the SDGPP participate in related work on SDG areas in other countries or even the pilot countries in other sector areas.

GOVERNANCE

Many critical questions were raised about the difficulty in governing and managing a funding partnership with **foundations with varying sizes and degrees of contribution** to the development of the SDGPP. From a communications standpoint: who is the target audience for mobilizing and engaging? From a governance standpoint: do all foundations, regardless of size and level of contribution, have a say in collaborative decision-making? There is an understood financial contribution 'floor' for decision-making above which no one but the three initial foundations have risen. From a benefit and perceived value standpoint, do larger foundations and smaller foundations have the same motivations for involvement?

TRUST

Trusting relationships among foundation partners is essential for implementation of the model. This is not a given in the current context and philanthropic partners must see the benefit of sharing with each other as greater than the benefits of competition or isolation. Trust building requires patience. It is not crisply aligned with deliverables and timetables and it does not manifest itself as changes to life or to the planet. Whether the philanthropic community is flexible enough in how they do business to embrace this long-term approach to problem-solving is the central question to raise as the SDGPP continues to engage support from existing and new partners.

ADAPTABILITY OF PROTOTYPES

Prototype development is an assumption about the model that will allow it to scale cost effectively. However, this assumption has been challenged in the early years of this effort by the recognition that prototypes must still be **adaptable to a variety of contexts** to be successfully implemented. A point of tension arises in the consideration of how learnings from one context can accelerate progress in another context. Balancing the standardized approach and the context-informed approach is artful and a more expensive model than a plug-and-play prototype.

DUPLICATION OF EFFORTS

Duplication of efforts is a perception held by some partners. Some interviewees expressed doubt about the value proposition of the Platform in the context of existing platforms. Given established networks and processes for connecting stakeholders, these interviewees struggled to see how the Platform would further their work, and instead viewed the Platform as a duplication of extant and discrete work. A few expressed frustration over the perception that aligning with the Platform brings additional burdens that may feel artificial for NGOs and funders.

PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL

The design of the **communications body of work** has been particularly challenging for the Platform.

WEBSITE

The SDGPP website has been a flash point for this effort. The communications audit was particularly critical and stated numerous negative conclusions about the data such as unclear demographic targeting and timeliness of

content. Perhaps the largest difference of opinion about the website related to (1) proprietary architecture and methodologies and (2) purpose of the website.

The challenge of proprietary architecture and methodologies is best characterized as the ability to work on joint projects while recognizing that some of the work is part of a larger set of business and may include proprietary processes or products. The purpose of the website caused a comparable level of tension among the implementing partners. While two of the partners saw community engagement as a central part of the website, the other partner thought that this was too large a lift and outsized relative to the available and anticipated resources.

Differences in viewpoints among implementing partners led to the recent decision to develop a second website, SDGphilanthropy.org. Most interviewees viewed the dual web site solution as less than optimal.

SDGPP BRANDING

Several dimensions of branding were identified as challenges that brought on points of tension. One dimension is the use of SDG branding outside of the Philanthropy Platform. It was not consistently easy for partners to draw the line between what part of their work is connected with the Philanthropy Platform and what part is independent. A second tension point relates to the ownership of the SDG brand. While the majority of interviewees accurately characterized the core messages of the brand, they were less clear about its ownership. This issue relates to the question of whether the Platform is disproportionately oriented toward the Hilton Foundation since it is the largest funder, which Hilton acknowledged by attempting to bring in other large funders (unsuccessful thus far).

A third dimension is the compatibility of association between philanthropy and the UN. One group of interviewees holds a view that the United Nations is a critical partner to foundations investing in social progress efforts in developing countries, while the other posits that mindsets and practices of philanthropy and of the UN are so different that an association with the UN would be difficult to sell to foundation boards. A fourth branding issue is the perceived minimal degree to which small and medium-sized philanthropies are featured in communications and seen as part of the platform brand.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL

STAFFING

An operational challenge that arose in multiple interviews is **staffing** for the Platform Coordinator role. There is a range of qualifications associated with this position and the effectiveness of the Coordinator is enhanced by sector knowledge, country knowledge and social capital. As one founding partner summed up this challenge: *“We need to provide mentoring and advising given the high expectations we have of these individual Coordinators. We need to ask them, ‘what do you need to be successful in your role?’”*

COLLECTIVE ACTION AND FUNDER AGENDAS

Another operational challenge was noted by funders and Platform Coordinators about striking the balance between **collective action and funder agendas**. The Collaborative Pathways Workshops convene local philanthropic, government, and UN actors to create an agenda for collective action. This agenda is usually centered on the partners’ area of passion and traction. However, when a major funder is involved in a collective action

process, partners may feel pressure to center their agenda on the funder’s programmatic interests rather than their true collective action focus. In Zambia, for instance, some interviewees reported a tension that now exists between partners on the ground and funders because local priorities were not paid enough attention during Collaborative Pathways Workshop.

RIGHT-SIZING RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING ASPECTS OF SDGPP

Data capacity building, Platform Coordinator roles, and communications were areas around which viewpoints varied on the right-sizing of resources and estimation of true costs. Data collection and data sharing require high levels of resources and multi-year commitments from all stakeholders to create conditions in-country that facilitate stronger data systems. Initial steps around data involve funding for data capacity workshops that were well resourced, but were specific to training workshops and do not encompass systemic factors that are also involved in data system development. There were also varying perceptions about the appropriate cost of adequately staffing Platform Coordinator roles and resourcing for communications.

CASE ILLUSTRATION: THE GHANA PLATFORM

The Platform work in Ghana acts as a case that presents opportunities for funding partners and others far from the ground to learn about the work at a detailed level. The Platform has placed philanthropy at the table with government, an important strategic success. Results were more mixed in data and capacity building, for which the external environment is not conducive as far as infrastructure, technology, and data culture. The Platform’s attempts to bring the national environment up to speed with the Platform’s data agenda have resulted in limited relevancy to other sectors and geographies and thus weaker contributions to global platform work. Movement forward requires a nuanced focusing at the strategic level of the purpose and role of the Platform in the broad Ghanaian development context.

SETTING THE STAGE

During evaluation interviews, a variety of partners expressed mixed perceptions about the “readiness” of Ghana to engage as a Platform pilot country, as well as the value-add of a WASH-focused Platform there. The Ghana Platform focuses on SDG 6 aimed at Clean Water and Sanitation for All, according to the grant agreement, which holds the second largest proportion of philanthropic funding of all SDGs at nearly \$100 million USD. This is second only to philanthropic funding towards SDG 8 aimed at Decent Work and Economic Growth at over \$150 million USD. The philanthropic WASH sector in Ghana has been active for decades and includes many philanthropic backbone organizations such as The Hilton Foundation, Sanitation and Water for All (under UNICEF), and CONIWAS (Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation).

CLEAR SUCCESS

A SEAT AT THE TABLE WITH GOVERNMENT

The Ghana platform has made definite contributions by acting as a conduit between philanthropy and government. The Ghana National Development Planning Committee (NDPC) has called on the Platform to advise on their strategic plan, resulting in government recognition of philanthropy as a distinct development actor and

providing clarity around philanthropy's definition, role, and contribution to the SDGs. This has led to a broader recognition of Philanthropy's value by several government ministries, including the Ministries of Finance, Water, Health, and Education. This relationship is well positioned to catalyze scaling of solutions for SDG achievement, as UNDP works closely with the Ghanaian ministry of finance on social financing of the SDGs.

EXPANDING PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP

The Platform has succeeded in connecting philanthropy with new partners beyond government as well. One philanthropic partner shared that while most of their organization's work was previously done with government and traditional development partners, the Platform has brought other philanthropies into the organization's domain of cooperation for potential leverage. Another philanthropic partner shared that plugging philanthropies into the SDG indicators in particular has brought the sector together to communicate and improve their work.

MIXED RESULTS

DATA CAPACITY

In addition to calling on the Platform to advise on the national strategic plan, the NDPC also called upon the Platform to advise around data. This includes localizing SDG indicators to the Ghanaian context in a way that is relevant to philanthropy, and adding to a holistic perspective on local data as an actor distinct from government and multilateral work. While it's clear that the Platform has progress to make in mobilizing and coordinating data collection amongst philanthropies, multiple partners made it clear that challenges around Platform data work stem from undercurrents in the external environment.

WEAKER PROGRESS

CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

Platform solutions for data challenges in Ghana are centered on data capacity building, preceded by relationship building. One Country Level Implementer emphasized, *"Data sharing is totally built around trust. Trust and relationship building is a challenge that takes time"*. The Foundation Center is bringing its capacity building workshops to the Ghana platform this October, and platform partners aim to contribute to building data capacity *beyond* just the philanthropic sector by including national partners.

The Ghana Platform sees its role in advocating for an enabling environment for philanthropy as a sector unique from NGOs and charities. The new 2017 administration in Ghana states in their manifesto that they will work to create an enabling environment for philanthropy. The Platform recently commissioned the Enabling Environment Study to explore what that environment looks like in Ghana; this study has potential to inform government policy moving forward (UNDP 2017B). This indicates the Platform's aspirations to build capacity and an enabling environment at the country level for contributions to the SDGs made by philanthropies and other development actors as well.

CONNECTING COUNTRY AND GLOBAL PLATFORM WORK

Challenges at the country level in Ghana, especially around data capacity, detract from contributions to broader global level Platform work. For instance, there is an appetite in Ghana for working across SDG areas that the Platform currently does not support. Despite this interest, only a couple cross-goal meetings have been held. Expansion beyond WASH to include other philanthropic goals is one way that the Platform can increase relevance to philanthropy both within Ghana and in the broader region. Yet there must be a commitment from funders to resource the time required for implementation.

FOCUS MOVING FORWARD

One local philanthropic partner questioned whether it is the Platform's responsibility to work beyond the philanthropic sector, and in doing so, highlighted a tension that must be addressed to move forward. This partner asserted that the overall positioning of the Platform should be as a coordinator of philanthropy, not of "everybody" in development work – a role that falls under the responsibility of the national and local government. Specifically, in Ghana, the implementation of SDG 6 for Water and Sanitation falls ultimately on the NDPC, the Ministry of Water, and district level governments. While the Platform can support government in making connections between philanthropy and other actors, it cannot absorb the overall coordinating role.

This tension illuminates how, in working to address external environmental issues around data in a variety of ways, the bandwidth of the Platform has been overstretched and has weaker contributions to global level work. At the same time, improvement in philanthropic data capacity – a cornerstone of the Platform – is hemmed in by environmental limitations in data culture and infrastructure. Upcoming data capacity workshops in autumn of this year could prove to be a keystone solution for operational challenges that catalyze concrete contributions of the Platform to government and philanthropic work in the Ghanaian WASH sector. At the strategic level, the Platform in Ghana must decide how to position itself and define its role within the national development landscape. Finally, funding and implementing partners must develop deeper understanding of the Ghanaian national context to calibrate expectations and provide support to the Platform moving forward.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PATH FORWARD

The evaluation evidence shared in this brief illuminates that the SDGPP has had both significant accomplishments as well as weighty challenges. These mixed findings point out the necessity for critical consideration of avenues that will best serve the path forward. We suggest three questions that help in constructing the path forward:

- Do the benefits outweigh the challenges?
- What are plausible scenarios for addressing the challenges?
- How can each of these scenarios advance the overall purpose of the SDGPP?

DO THE BENEFITS OUTWEIGH THE CHALLENGES?

Developing an ecosystem approach for aligning the work of philanthropy in the global goals framework and activities is a massive undertaking. It requires boundary spanning between the distinctly different private sector organizational structures and processes on one hand, and governments and multinational organizations processes on the other hand. This approach requires coordination and collaboration among philanthropic organizations that

typically work independently, and requires partnership activities and collaborative leadership from implementing organizations with varying missions and accountability frameworks.

Yet, despite these daunting circumstances, the SDGPP has managed to consistently accomplish a major feat. Notably, in giving philanthropy a “seat at the table” with government bodies, as well as organizing and participating in events inside the UN with governments. The challenges and points of tension section of this report enumerated several areas of concern that provide focus for improvements in the model going forward. Nevertheless, significant benefits that have come about in the early years of this initiative are substantial enough to conclude that the benefits outweigh the challenges. Asked differently: Did something important happen that is not likely to have happened without the presence of the SDGPP. We conclude the answer is yes, and that is why it is worth considering the next two framing questions.

WHAT ARE PLAUSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES? HOW CAN EACH OF THESE SCENARIOS ADVANCE THE OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE SDGPP?

In responding to these questions, we begin by positing that the range and depth of challenges have impeded progress. Three potential scenarios are offered and assessed considering how each would affect the purpose of the SDGPP.

We also suggest two fundamental shifts in the near term. The first shift is about repairing the relationship among the three organizations that have led the implementation: Foundation Center, RPA and UNDP. This repair entails skilled facilitation to understand the structural and process issues that have caused serious tension and offer constructive solutions to clarify what is solvable and what might be inherently conflictual. The second shift is to more systematically build out a communications strategy. Rather than viewing communications as a program element exemplified by a website, we recommend that it is treated as a key strategic component. The long-range success of SDGPP requires strategic communications that are resourced, staffed and clearly understood by all close partners.

Next, we turn to three broad-stroke scenarios intended to be straw horses to necessitate detailed planning. They represent three distinct methods of moving forward in a way that builds on existing successes and minimizes challenging circumstances.

SCENARIO ONE. WIND DOWN SDGPP IN CURRENT FORM AND REDESIGN AS DECENTRALIZED INITIATIVES OR PROJECTS

This scenario entails a winding down of SDGPP and identifies fundable options that continue to advance the work. The advancement of philanthropic alignment and engagement with the SDGs could be led by various funders with co-funding options responsible for component parts of work. It would be better conceived as projects or initiatives that are finite, bounded and contain clear accountabilities for work. Going forward, organizing philanthropy’s engagement with SDGs in a way that mimics the organization of philanthropy would remove huge barriers to entrance. This lesson will carry forward in each of the scenarios presented.

Specific components of the work include:

1. Nurturing an enabling environment for SDG-related work in pilot countries. UNDP would be the plausible lead for implementing this work and could build upon what has been successful in carrying out

the Platform work- such as situating the effort in the ONE UN framework and using participatory methods like the Collaborative Pathway.

2. Building data capacity in developing countries. In countries where there is a well-articulated network focused on a particular sector or geography, the data capacity may be a technical task. In cases where there is less precedent for a networked approach to working together on an issue or geography, network and community development principles would need to be activated to build trust, connectedness, commitment to a collective purpose, and so on. FC could be a likely lead for much of this work since it includes both technical and network development aspects. In-country data resources are also likely leads. The network and community development piece would need to be addressed as well-through organizations perceived as neutral backbones.
3. Communication about the SDGs is a key component that serves both an educational and engagement purpose. The report indicated that the strategy level was not originally built into the design and this needs to be addressed at a strategic level and connected with engagement strategies. Specific communication elements are the website itself and content, including tools. Engagement strategies, while less developed to date, could increase the number and depth of philanthropic engagement with the SDGs. The lead organization would develop and implement a strategic communications strategy while partner organizations provide expertise in the development of the strategic communications.
4. Multi-stakeholder campaigns for promoting promising strategies in specific sectors is a way to align with the SDGs and is a familiar and often-successful strategy for philanthropy. These campaigns would be targeted and interrelated with the needs identified in collaboration with philanthropy-affiliated government agencies. Lead or co-lead organizations for this work must have a combination of deep country context knowledge, communications, advocacy, coalition-building, and proven leadership.
5. Strategy development and project management is particularly important for a multi-faceted approach to work. This role would be the connective tissue across these various components to potentially serve various functions: 1) developing the strategies, financing options, and cultivating funding for the various components; 2) managing processes for selecting leads, developing accountabilities and managing the accountability framework; 3) convening advisory work groups; 4) planning and overseeing a communications strategy and 5) proactively identifying development of ongoing components. RPA – as a founding partner—is the likely lead for this.

This scenario suggests incremental change, rather than transformational change, and has the possibility of achieving meaningful goals while building a base of support for SDG-aligned work that can evolve over time. Essentially, this scenario further deconstructs and decentralizes work, creates clear contractual scopes for each component of the work rather than for the overall Platform, and has more defined fundraising “asks.”

The Question of Additionality

This scenario has the potential of being either or both coordination of existing building blocks and creation of new conditions.

SCENARIO TWO. REDESIGN THE PLATFORM USING A TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM METAPHOR

The ambitious effort of SDGPP implementation set out a bold agenda at that rolled out with the expectation that the momentum of the SDGs would fuel its growth. However, the market stress test yielded a different result.

The term platform allows a new way of positioning the work that suggests a foundational infrastructure set up for a variety of innovative applications to be developed. In this sense, it is likened to an operating system with various versions and iterations. What if the SDGPP behaved more like a platform and identified and built the architecture for the overall efforts and provided open access for engaging with the Platform with applications designed for specific purposes? The investment of funders in this work would be limited to developing and maintaining the Platform and organizing communications.

This approach would hone in on the key features that create a successful supportive environment, structures and processes for foundations to engage with the SDG framework. Prominent among the features would be a seat at the government table in a defined set of countries that could grow over time, and a formal way to interact with the philanthropic representative. Coalition-building and networking based on sector-specific issues would be another defining issue of the Platform and those philanthropies that develop applications would connect or lead these efforts.

Scalability in this scenario would be organic. Investment in an intermediary organization to ensure high-quality development and implementation of universal platform features, interact with application developers (philanthropies with projects or initiatives that are sector or geography specific) and oversee reliable implementation of the Platform would require co-investment by anchor funders who hold onto a larger goal of ecosystem development with an eye toward individual applications.

The Question of Additionality

This scenario would build new conditions that innovate on the strong foundation of the platform

SCENARIO 3. LIMIT THE SDGPP TO A COALITION OF A FINITE GROUP OF FUNDERS WITH SHARED AND OVERLAPPING DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Recognizing the challenges of launching, building, and scaling a model that has a long-term horizon, coupled with short-term funding and an ambitious fundraising agenda is a mismatch. Similarly, the incentive of funders to co-invest in a large-scale effort typically involves seeing a direct benefit to an existing program of work tied to their strategy framework and programmatic focus. If, in fact, the motivation of co-investors can be incentivized by the opportunity to direct the work of the SDGPP to geographies and sectors that are of primary interest, and if their work plans are transparently communicated in the planning process for selecting SDGPP streams of work, then it's possible that the funding model for SDGPP could be better aligned with its ambitious design.

In reality, there is a problematic perception that the body of work of one funding partner has disproportionately shaped the work carried out in SDGPP. What if a scenario was constructed where the preferences of funders in partnership with a wide range of multi-stakeholder participants – particularly beneficiaries and their trusted leaders – did in fact guide the work to achieve clear goals that both advance the SDGs and are consistent with foundations' priorities around ecosystem platform work? The accountability framework would entail consistent tracking of progress, learning in real time, and outcome-focused adaptive practices.

Work would be far more straightforward and easily communicated if governance were led by a coalition with outside leadership and if management were led by a consulting group managing the implementing partner organization. Branding, too, would be straightforward because message development and implementation approaches would be directly attributable to a finite group of coalition members and constituents. The existing

partners in the work would be logical implementing organizations with the consideration of additional partnership leads in the focal geographies.

The Question of Additionality

This scenario has the potential to be either or both coordination of existing building blocks and creation of new conditions.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation of the first three years of the SDG Philanthropy Platform reinforces the African proverb: If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together. The visionary founders of this initiative set out an ambitious agenda that is keeping with the deep work of advancing global goals. Both are big. Neither are easy or straightforward.

The progress steps described in this report indicate that changes are happening both in-country and globally. Philanthropy's unprecedented seat at the table in every pilot country exemplifies the magnitude of change that has happened and that positions even greater strides to happen.

Not surprisingly, the initiative has encountered challenges—some of which may be readily addressed through adjustments in scale, sector, incentives, or funding arrangement. Structural issues and trust among critical partnerships are deeper challenges and may require more sweeping changes in management, design, or governance of the initiative —such as those proposed in the three scenarios.

Two incremental steps seem very important regardless of the direction that the initiative takes next:

- 1) Rebuilding trust among the three implementing partners and finding a workable arrangement for the path forward. Given the level of the fracture, skilled facilitation is highly recommended and would allow the partners to sort out what is workable and what is structurally or otherwise limited.
- 2) Repositioning communications to a strategic effort rather than a program or tactic is also a critical incremental step on the path. The current positioning of communications as vehicles, such as the website and monthly newsletter, doesn't address the overall strategic questions about purpose or audiences, nor the methods and outcomes that are right-sized for each of these.

In sum, fifteen-year global goals do not happen overnight and actors in development all have a part to play. Similarly, the model for a coordinated initiative or effort that creates space for philanthropy to leverage its contribution to these global goals requires thoughtful consideration and learning about how to proceed most effectively. We hope that this evaluation has shed some light and provided some focus for guiding actions in the next phase of work.

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For more information please contact:

Heather Grady, hgrady@rockpa.org

Jane Reisman, jane@jreisman.com