

Achieving SDG Results in Development Co-operation – A Comparative Assessment

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Abstract

Navigating the complexity and unpredictability of 21st-century challenges, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a unified blueprint for achieving sustainable and resilient societies. However, as of 2023, most development partners have yet to fully align their development co-operation to SDG results, hindered by political, technical, and organisational challenges. Successful alignment to (and use of) the SDG framework demands commitment from the top, respect and investment in partner-country ownership, and proactive partnerships around specific SDG results. Moreover, utilising the SDG framework for development co-operation offers numerous benefits, such as maximising investment impact and building consensus partnerships. This comparative report recommends a series of strategic actions to accelerate SDG alignment: promoting SDG results achievement, investing in necessary organisational transformation, adapting alignment strategies to country contexts, supporting SDG-mainstreaming efforts, investing in country-led SDG data, and building partnerships around specific SDG outcomes. The pandemic and the poly-crisis that followed could be used as the catalysts for the essential organisational transformation that SDG alignment requires.

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Acronyms and definitions

DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCD	Development Co-operation Directorate (OECD)
DESA	United Nations Department of Social Affairs
EU	European Union
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable of interest, related to the intervention and its results, or to the context in which an intervention takes place
Impact	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects
IT	Information Technologies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
Monitoring	A continuing process that involves the systematic collection or collation of data (on specified indicators or other types of information). Provides the management and other stakeholders of an intervention with indications of the extent of implementation progress, achievement of intended results, occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated funds and other important intervention and context-related information
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODF	Official Development Finance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Outcomes	The short-term and medium-term effects of a development intervention's outputs.
Outputs	The products, capital goods and services that result from an intervention. Outputs may also include changes resulting from the intervention that contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Outputs include changes in knowledge, skills, or abilities produced by the activities
Partner country	Country that is recipient or beneficiary of development co-operation support
Results	The outputs, outcomes or impacts (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of an intervention

RBM	Results-Based Management. <i>Definition:</i> A management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts. This management approach provides the framework, tools and guidance for strategic planning, risk management, performance monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management. It serves four complementary purposes: decision-making, learning, accountability and communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Stakeholder(s)	Agencies, organisations, groups or individuals who have a direct or indirect interest in the intervention or its monitoring and evaluation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSDSN	United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive summary

Sustainable development, with its focus on addressing pressing global challenges like poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation, necessitates a collaborative approach under a shared framework. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a widely-recognised common results framework for governments and development co-operation providers. By aligning all development initiatives with the SDG framework, the international community could achieve the synergies, efficiencies, partnerships and reach needed for transformational impact towards sustainable development. However, the pace of adopting this shared framework has been slow and inconsistent. This comparative study systematically examines the integration and use of the SDG framework by seven governments in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, and 56 development co-operation providers, between 2016 and 2021.

Governments have made (partial) progress in integrating the SDG framework

Our findings suggest that **national governments** have led SDG adoption, building on the resurgence in long-term national development planning since the 2000s, particularly in lower and middle-income countries. Initially focused on aid effectiveness and poverty reduction, these plans have evolved to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a more holistic approach to development. As of 2021, over 165 countries refer to the SDGs in their national development plans, although the degree of integration of the SDG framework varies widely. Detailed analyses of Bangladesh, Peru, Uganda, and Samoa reveal that, despite the commonality in recognising the importance of the SDGs, each country's unique socio-political context and challenges have necessitated tailored approaches to SDG integration.

Development co-operation providers have followed the trail, although unevenly

Up to 2021, over 50 bilateral and multilateral **development co-operation providers** had undertaken actions to integrate the SDGs into their policies and strategies. The 2030 Agenda provided a renewed vision for development co-operation, with varied success. Most providers began SDG alignment at headquarters level, integrating SDG targets and indicators into corporate strategies, sector plans, and their associated results frameworks. By 2021, 46% of major providers had integrated elements of the SDGs into their corporate results frameworks. The integration cascaded to sector frameworks (44%), partner-country strategies (35%), and project-level results frameworks (18%). The use of SDG indicators in corporate frameworks (when it happened) became a catalyst for SDG adoption at country and project levels.

The SDG alignment process involved strategic shifts in vision, efforts to report on SDG contributions, and emphasis on cross-cutting issues. The quality of SDG alignment varied, with UN agencies predominantly adhering to official SDG indicator definitions, while some bilateral providers adjusted indicators to meet their reporting needs. Albeit still very partial, this level of SDG alignment contributes to an increased focus on sustainable development and better synergies across diverse organisational settings.

At the country level, development co-operation providers have found the SDGs a useful narrative and source of legitimacy, but their results frameworks have not extensively adapted to the SDG framework. While the SDGs influence policy dialogues and development programmes, only two-fifths of providers had begun using the SDG framework in country strategies or projects by 2020, and the depth of alignment was often shallow. Three main constraints limited deeper alignment: uneven country leadership in SDG adoption, creating varied incentives; providers' challenges in adapting results-based management systems and the quantitative nature of SDGs not aligning with some providers' focus areas; and the time needed for countries to align their own planning, monitoring, and statistical systems to the SDG framework.

Sector-level frameworks hold significant promise for aligning and effectively measuring the SDGs. These are the starting point for policy dialogue, and where operational and data-driven co-ordination between partners is critical. However, our deep dive at sector level in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Myanmar illustrates how the adoption of SDG indicators in sectors such as education, sanitation, and energy is challenged by inconsistencies, misalignment with old standards, and fragmented approaches. To improve this, stakeholders must standardise measurement practices, invest in sector-wide monitoring systems, and align indicators with official SDG definitions. At sector level, governments, development co-operation providers, and other stakeholders must work collaboratively to create transparent, co-ordinated, and integrated monitoring systems. Additionally, embracing digitalisation and focusing on data disaggregation can further enhance the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at sector level. Synchronising results planning and monitoring approaches can foster a shared commitment to achieving SDG outcomes.

Strategies to overcome the bottlenecks in using the SDG framework effectively

Overall, this comparative study highlights several challenges in integrating the SDGs into the results frameworks of governments and development organisations. Misperceptions about the SDG framework's complexity and responsibility lead to hesitancy in adoption. Sectoral silos persist, inhibiting cross-sector collaboration. Weak co-ordination among stakeholders is prevalent, with internal focus overshadowing a shared SDG agenda. Inherited weaknesses in results-based management, such as resource limitations and weak culture, impede SDG implementation. Data gaps due to a lack of availability and reliability of disaggregated data hinder alignment with the SDG framework. In contrast, while the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted development projects, it also provided opportunities for innovation, adaptive management, and the realisation of SDGs' interconnected nature.

Overcoming the bottlenecks in aligning with the SDGs involves confronting technical and political challenges. Technically, the delays in finalising the SDG indicator framework led to limited uptake and data collection. Politically, geopolitical competition, disruptions due to the pandemic, and mistrust among countries hindered effective policy dialogue and coordination around the SDGs.

This comparative study identified a series of enablers to foster SDG alignment, measurement and impact across the development co-operation system:

- **The integration of the SDG framework into international development co-operation can be facilitated through strategic enablers.** First and foremost is leadership's support for SDG alignment. Governments and development organisations that make the SDGs a core policy priority, clearly define objectives in line with the SDGs, and establish methodologies, structures, financing mechanisms, systems, and monitoring practices that support SDG results are best placed to reap the benefits of SDG alignment.
- **Collaborative approaches are another enabler.** Development organisations often focus on their performance, which can hinder collaboration. However, adopting SDG-aligned strategies prioritising country ownership, transparency, and accountability can foster collaboration.
- **Sound results-based management systems are essential for SDG alignment.** Development partners with well-resourced, robust methodologies and an organisational culture focused on results are better equipped to exploit the SDG framework effectively. This includes applying cross-sector approaches, accounting for synergies and trade-offs, and tailoring SDG-aligned frameworks to country-specific contexts.

In conclusion, successful SDG alignment is built on promoting SDG results from the top, respecting and investing in partner-country ownership, and proactively partnering with other institutions. This requires managing the institutional transformation process politically and organisationally, enabling organisations to support country-led transitions towards sustainable development policies, and building partnerships for collective impact.

1. Joining Efforts for Sustainable Development

1.1. The value of a shared results framework for facing global challenges

Sustainable development is an essential framework for addressing the complex and interconnected global challenges of the 21st century, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, technological disruptions, geopolitical competition, or the rise of authoritarianism (OECD, 2023). At the heart of sustainable development lies the principle of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and to do so in inclusive ways.

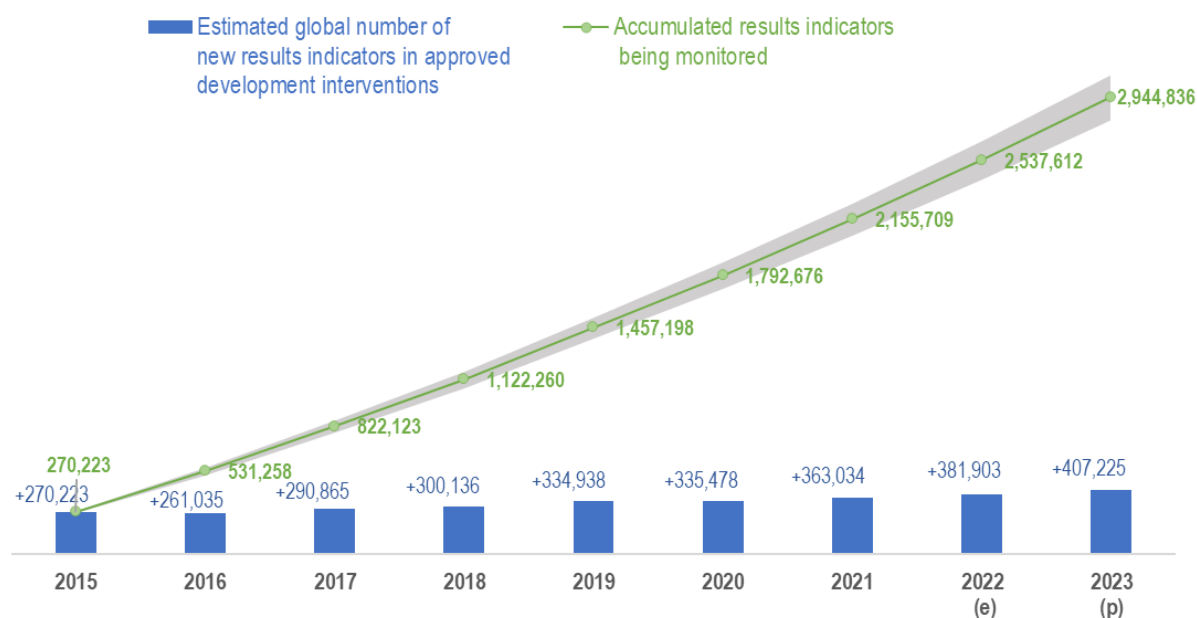
At the same time, the scale and speed of challenges to sustainable development vastly surpass the capabilities of countries and development organisations to individually tackle them. However, the convergence of shared problems creates space for joined-up action (Signé, 2023). In this context, aligning development co-operation under a common results framework is crucial to ensuring a co-ordinated, coherent and inclusive approach that can effectively tackle these threats and facilitate progress towards a more sustainable future (OECD, 2021).

Unfortunately, the journey towards aligning all development efforts and investments of governments and development partners under a common results framework has been slow and uneven. While the estimated number of results indicators used in development co-operation projects has continued to increase (Figure 1.1), this comparative study will show that the limited progress in harmonising planning, monitoring and evaluation practices is contributing to costly inefficiencies, fragmentation of efforts, missed opportunities for transformational partnerships, substantial gaps in development data, and undermining of the collective effectiveness of development finance for sustainable development.

Government officials such as those of Bangladesh, Peru, Uganda, and Samoa have recognised key drivers that motivated SDG alignment during 2016-20. Mobilising development finance emerged as a powerful incentive, as governments sought to attract both domestic and international funding by embracing the sustainable development agenda. Furthermore, the SDGs were perceived as a framework to improve cross-government co-ordination, consolidate policy coherence, and facilitate partnerships with various stakeholders. Additionally, embracing the SDGs and its monitoring framework was seen as a means to enhance international stature while promoting domestic accountability and transparency. However, challenges such as varying political commitment, weak linkages between planning and financing, and capacity constraints hindered progress. Despite these challenges, the countries included in this comparative report have all made strides in integrating SDGs into national plans, improving SDG data collection, and SDG reporting. This positive trend signals opportunities for international development partners to anchor support to a common results-oriented agenda.

Figure 1.1. Managing the deluge of data needs

Estimated number of results indicators used to monitor development co-operation projects approved since 2015



Source: Authors' estimates, based on data from (OECD, 2023) and (OECD/UNDP, 2019).

By adopting a common results framework, development actors can address these trends and work together towards the same development outcomes, creating synergies and amplifying their impact. This alignment promotes efficiency and effectiveness, fosters co-ordination and collaboration, and ensures that marginalised and vulnerable populations are not left behind (UNDP, 2015; UNSDSN, 2016; World Bank, 2016). However, it is important to acknowledge the costs associated with aligning all development practices to a common agenda, such as broad-based political buy-in, reduced autonomy for decision-makers, potential trade-offs between priorities and a need to reorganise institutions and co-ordination arrangements in very fundamental ways (OECD, 2017; Biermann, Hickmann, Sénit, & et al., 2022).

Given the need not only for governments, but also their international development partners to adapt, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) alignment process was expected to be progressive and non-linear. Development actors did just that during the initial five years of implementation, learning from past experiences and from each other, with varying degrees of success.

Ultimately, the benefits of aligning development processes to sustainable development are substantial and can lead to transformative change on a global scale. For that reason, this study takes stock of experiences in joining up efforts and results agendas for a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient world for present and future generations, by using a common results framework for sustainable development, and taking the SDG framework as the reference point for the period of analysis (2016-21).

1.2. The SDGs as a common reference framework for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals provide a results-oriented framework with broad international consensus behind it. Implementing the SDGs requires countries and their international partners to align their strategic plans, policies, financing and systems with the SDG framework, and to revise their ways of working to achieve SDG results (Box 1).

Box 1. The SDG framework in practice

More than a blueprint for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda, together with its SDG framework, was designed to bring transformative changes to development efforts worldwide. This comprehensive framework encompasses 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators, providing a compass that all countries and their development partners can use to trace journeys towards sustainable development.

In addition to marking the direction, the SDG framework was meant to foster three critical shifts in development practice:

1. **Greater focus on evidence, outcomes and impacts:** The SDG framework encourages actors to utilise evidence-based approaches for decision-making, programme design, investment allocations, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices. This built-in emphasis incentivises the use of rigorous data analysis to shape development strategies and interventions, supported by continuous M&E to ensure that activities and outputs lead to SDG results.
2. **Integrated, cross-sector approaches:** The SDGs promote a holistic approach to sustainable development by addressing the interconnectedness of economic, social and environmental dimensions. This approach encourages policymakers and practitioners to consider the interlinkages between sectors and to develop integrated policies and programmes that account for potential synergies and trade-offs. As a result, development interventions become more effective and efficient, contributing to the overall sustainable development of a society.
3. **Common results agenda for enhanced synergy, coherence and co-ordination:** The SDG framework serves as a unifying platform for governments and their domestic and international partners to align their development efforts. By anchoring their initiatives to a shared set of goals, targets and indicators, stakeholders can better co-ordinate their actions, reduce duplicative efforts, and enhance the collective impact of their interventions. This unified approach fosters greater coherence and synergy in development co-operation, ultimately contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

In short, more than just a collection of lofty goals and 232 indicators, the SDG framework was intended to transform public management and delivery practices that governments and their partners rely on in pursuing sustainable development. Or, in other words, its potential benefits required stakeholders not only to shift the focus onto “what” development pathways to pursue, but also on the “how” to get there.

Source: Authors' elaboration and (UNSDSN, 2016).

This comparative study takes stock of the international situation in terms of country alignment with the SDGs. It then compares the experiences of nearly 60 bilateral and multilateral development agencies and ministries in integrating the SDG framework and zooms in on four case studies of Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda, analysing their SDG journeys and how these transformed development co-operation during the 2016-21 period. It also examines the comparative experiences of sector alignment with the SDG framework in three countries (Kenya, Ethiopia and Myanmar), in the education, sanitation and energy sectors.

In doing so, this comparative study seeks to provide an integral look at the extent to which, and ways in which, the SDG framework shaped the orientation and practices of governments and their international development partners during the first half of SDG implementation, the obstacles these actors faced, and the approaches that helped them make progress in SDG alignment.

1.3. Key research questions

The following sections aim to address the following issues:

- **Partner country governments:** How do governments in low- and middle-income countries integrate and use the SDG framework? What has been the level of progress in SDG alignment so far? What are the main drivers and challenges? What are the prospects for further alignment?
- **Development co-operation providers:**
 - How do development co-operation providers integrate the SDG framework at the level of policies, strategies and corporate results frameworks, but also at country level and at sector level?
 - What have been the main enablers, drivers and challenges leading to the diverse levels of use of the SDG framework across the development co-operation system observed today?
 - How could both governments and development co-operation providers work together for greater convergence of efforts around the SDG framework?

1.4. Methodology

This formative study is grounded in close to five years of comparative research, country case studies, reviews, surveys, and technical dialogues to identify the state of alignment to a common results framework such as the SDGs in development practice. Table 1.1 summarises the accumulative evidence that constitutes the foundation of this comparative study.

Table 1.1. Evidence base used in this comparative study

	Focus	Sample	Source
Alignment to the SDGs in development co-operation	Use of the SDG targets and indicators to frame corporate or organisation-wide results frameworks	Review of SDG framework (2018)	(OECD, 2018) (Engberg-Pedersen & Zwart, 2018)
Alignment to the SDGs in national planning	Analysis of the extent to which partner country governments have strengthened national planning and monitoring and have integrated the SDG framework	Monitoring data: 81 partner countries	(OECD/UNDP, 2019)

	Focus	Sample	Source
Use of the SDG framework at sector level	Comparative case study and analysis of how governments and development co-operation providers have used specific SDG indicators in the energy, education and water and sanitation sectors	Case studies: Kenya, Ethiopia, Myanmar	(OECD, 2019)
Use of the SDG framework at country level	Comparative case study and analysis of how governments and development co-operation providers used the SDGs (and the SDG framework in particular) in development practice between 2018 and 2021	Case studies: Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa, Uganda	(Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022)
Use of the SDG framework within development co-operation organisations	Cross-donor comparison of current levels of alignment to the SDG framework across development co-operation systems, at corporate, country, sector/thematic, country and project levels. Analysis of current practices and methodologies for alignment	Comparative mapping: 50 development co-operation providers	(Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, 2021)
Deep dive on best practice and lessons	Selected good practices and lessons in aligning to the SDGs among development co-operation providers	8 case studies	(OECD, 2023)
Cost of alignment to the SDG indicator framework	Analysis of the cost of alignment to the SDG framework, including an individual review at the indicator level	In-depth review of the SDG framework (2023)	(OECD, 2023)

The purpose of this report is to address the research questions posed above, building on the comparative evidence base that the OECD has accumulated since 2018. The report aims to identify the policies, strategies and management practices that helped overcome bottlenecks in SDG adoption and improved the focus and collaboration around sustainable development objectives at country level.

More details on the analytical framework and overall methodological approach can be found in 5. Annex A.

2. SDG integration in national development plans and frameworks

2.1. Strategic planning for sustainable development

The resurgence of long-term development strategies in the 2000s was remarkable. The number of lower- and middle-income countries developing National Development Plans (NDPs) grew from 62 in 2006 to 134 in 2018, covering 80 percent of the global population (Chimhowu et al., 2019). This resurgence was initially prompted by the aid effectiveness agenda and the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers in the early 2000s, which aimed to provide shared development roadmaps that could help promote a greater focus on development outcomes (MDGs), harmonise efforts and co-ordinate development partners.

These trends accelerated during the 2010s, driven by a range of needs that made policy-making more complex and with horizons that surpassed political cycles (Table 2.1). These needs were interrelated and included: managing a globalisation process in acceleration; strategising about how to best leverage foreign investment, international finance, trade and technology to accelerate domestic development; adopting the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, including by strengthening cross-government co-ordination and coherence; and, more recently, growing concerns about climate change (Munro, 2020; OECD, 2018b; UNDP, 2017). Despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, strategic planning has become a persistent tool to inform public management of sustainable development in many countries (EU, 2023; OECD, 2018a).

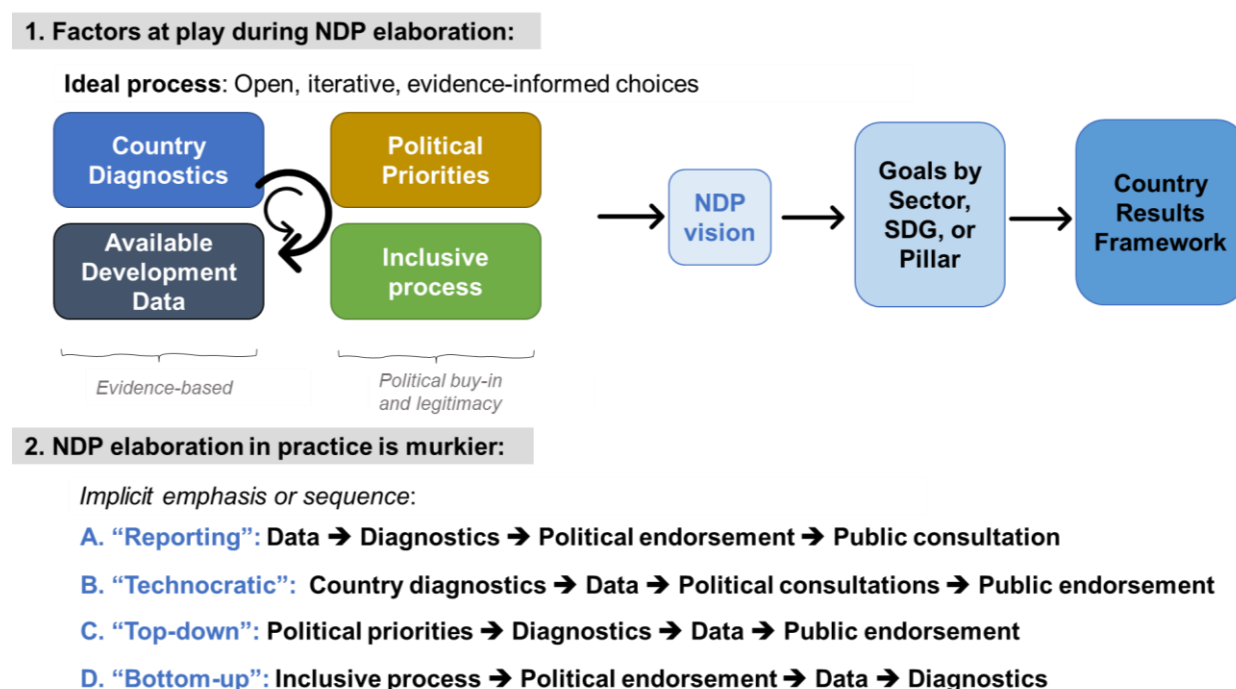
Table 2.1. Return and evolution of national development planning

Period	Phase	Drivers	Common issues
2000s	Resurgence (among low- and middle-income countries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millennium Development Goals. Aid effectiveness. Main focus: Poverty reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too broad, lacking results focus. Top-down, non-inclusive process. Too donor-driven, limited buy-in. Weakly linked to financing.
2010s	Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More comprehensive approach. SDGs; multiple economic, social and environmental aims. Governance, co-ordination and results frameworks in focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous issues persisted. <i>De facto</i> sector silos (vs SDGs). SDG-tagging but limited alignment. Monitoring data needs unmet. Growth remains first implicit priority.
2020s	New generation (also in high-income countries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly focus on building resilience and addressing global challenges to sustainable development, including climate, pandemics or economic shocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and focus of most NDPs generally improved over time. Issues now focused on financing, co-ordination and coherence, implementation & results monitoring.

Source: Author's elaboration, on the basis of (Chimhowu et al., 2019; GPEDC, 2019; Munro, 2020; OECD, 2018b; Okitasari & Katramiz, 2022; UN DESA, 2019; UNDP, 2017).

National development strategies present a balancing act for governments. They should echo and respond to political (and societal) priorities to gather legitimacy, buy-in and sustained attention in the mid-term. They also need to reflect a rigorous understanding of real development issues, risks and options, and trace credible pathways to make development progress. The diagnostic and prioritisation exercise should ultimately provide a roadmap for the country, which can be operationalised in more detail at sector and subnational levels. Coherent results frameworks, and short and frequent feedback loops, would all provide the evidence and data to verify, react and course-correct policies and programmes as needed. In practice, governments face trade-offs in trying to reconcile the policy direction suggested technical advice, that emanating from consultative processes, and their own development agendas, all of which often takes place in a context of imperfect information and data gaps (Figure 2.1) (OECD, 2023).

Figure 2.1. Trade-offs at play during the elaboration of national strategies and results frameworks



Nevertheless, the methods and processes used to develop and monitor these national planning exercises have improved over time – with over half of NDPs (56%) being classified as *high quality* according to international standards (OECD/UNDP, 2019, pp. 37-41). Beyond their technical quality, governments are also increasingly using them as strategic tools, which has led to distinctive patterns of purpose-driven NDP elaboration (see panel 2 in Figure 2.1 above).

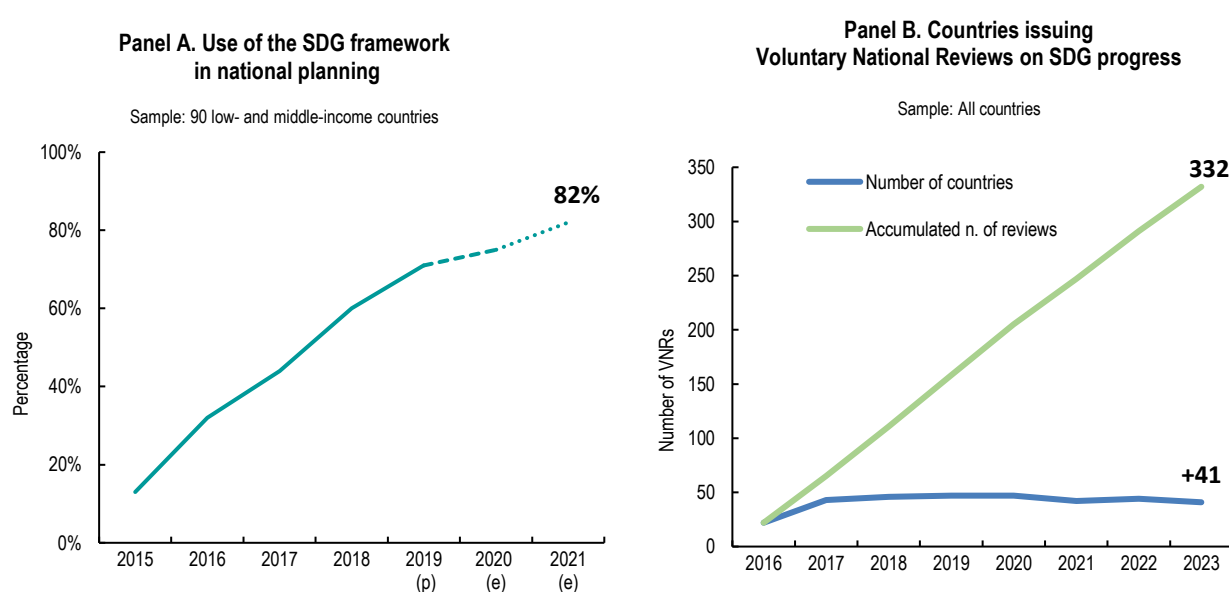
2.2. Aligning national strategies and frameworks to SDG results

Sustainable development is expressed through a variety of global and regional frameworks (SDGs, Paris Agreement, etc). Within those frameworks, the SDG framework was the result of international negotiations culminating in the UN’s adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, a process that led to a truly universal and integrated framework of 17 goals and 169 targets that reflect diverse perspectives.

Global trends

The SDGs have provided a renewed thrust to national strategic planning. By 2021, over 165 countries had integrated the SDGs in some form into their national development plans and strategies, and 150 countries had established national co-ordination mechanisms for SDG implementation. Among low- and middle-income countries, the integration of the SDG framework had surpassed 80% by 2021, and countries are increasingly monitoring and regularly reporting on SDG progress at the domestic level and to UN fora (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Alignment of partner countries to SDG results and national SDG reporting



Source: Authors' calculations based on GPEDC (2019) data, a sample review of new national development plans from 2019-21, and (UN, 2023)

The quality and degree of integration of the SDG framework has varied significantly, with some countries adopting its targets and indicators to a great extent, while others have relied on a more selective or opportunistic approach, or have developed a separate monitoring framework for SDG tracking (GPEDC, 2019). Even so, as national frameworks and statistical systems have geared towards incorporating the 2030 Agenda and its Goals more actively, more recent strategies and frameworks have expanded the degree of inclusion of SDG targets and indicators.

At country level

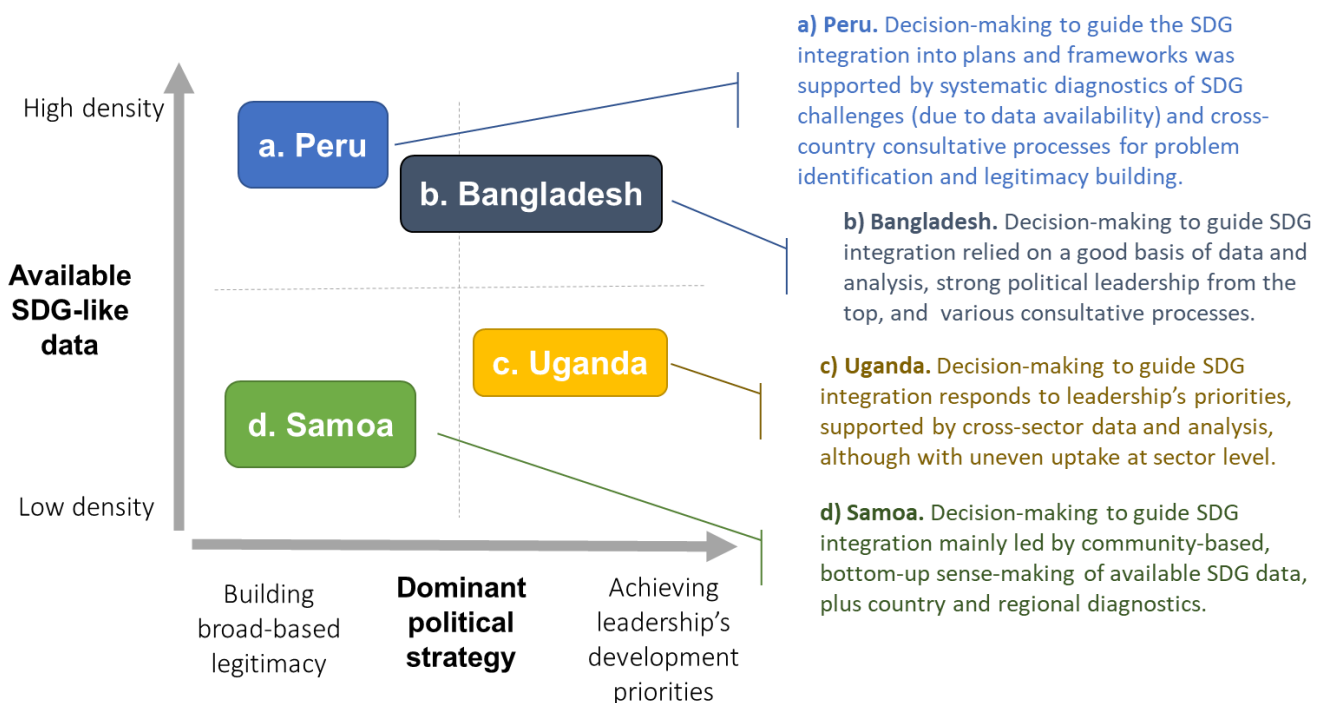
Understanding the motivations, drivers and hurdles faced by governments in aligning their national planning, policies and frameworks to the SDGs requires a comparative look at their individual journeys. Our in-depth case studies of **Bangladesh, Peru, Uganda and Samoa** reveal both convergences and divergences:

- Among the **patterns of convergence** is the recognition of the SDGs as a valuable framework for addressing development challenges and fostering a sense of national consensus. All four countries had set up centre-of-government mechanisms to manage the SDG-alignment process in an integrated manner – with a first milestone set in being able to report on SDG progress to international fora. Authorities had also made progress in aligning their medium-term national strategies to the SDGs,

although the extent of integration varied (from retrospective exercises mapping sector priorities to the 17 Goals, as in Samoa, to the more advanced integration of the SDGs in defining sector priorities and measuring sector results, as in Bangladesh). In doing so, the four countries also followed the iterations described in Figure 2.1, above, with some combination of SDG-focused data-mapping, diagnostics, political prioritisation and public consultations. SDG awareness-raising campaigns and branding had become common before the pandemic, and the SDGs and sustainability language had permeated policy dialogue and public narratives on development in all four countries, as also happened elsewhere (Biermann, Hickmann, Sénit, & et al., 2022). Finally, the four governments shared a common drive to overcome pending gaps in SDG data, and in fully localising the SDG framework across sectors and levels of government – which remained work-in-progress prior to 2021. Subsequent iterations of national development planning have benefitted from these initial experiences and growing levels of available SDG data.

- **Divergences in alignment experiences** arose from the specific challenges that each country faced, such as the availability of SDG-compatible data, budget alignment, and fragmentation of development partner support. Furthermore, the unique socio-political contexts and power-sharing dynamics, comparative income levels and state capabilities, and their own public sector cultures, led to differences in focus, urgency and implementation approach. These differences resulted in distinctive paths of national SDG alignment, visually stylised in Figure 2.3. Furthermore, all four countries had to harmonise their desired development outcomes with available statistical data for monitoring, the new SDG indicator framework, and other global (e.g. the Paris Agreement) and regional (e.g. Africa's Agenda 2063) frameworks important to each of them. As a result, planning authorities had to find a unique balance between SDG alignment and other frameworks, priorities, and data constraints.

Figure 2.3. Comparative strategies in SDG planning across the four country cases



Source: Authors' elaboration, based on the country case studies in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022).

Overall, the four countries demonstrated progress in aligning their national plans, frameworks and government processes with the SDG framework. However, they encountered challenges in maintaining focus on (longer-term) sustainable development objectives and in maximising the use of the SDG framework beyond national plans and SDG reporting. The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath further compounded these challenges, necessitating a review of their medium-term development prospects.

Drivers

Government interviewees across all four countries reported commonalities in what they saw as the driving forces of SDG alignment for the 2016-20 period:

- **Mobilising finance for the Goals** was systematically mentioned in most interviews with government officials. Governments sensed that connecting with the emerging narrative on sustainable development could help mobilise international funders and domestic investors under the basis of a common, credible government agenda. While this motivation was more present amongst countries where official development assistance plays a larger role in overall public financing, officials in all four countries also saw the SDG framework as suitable to attract private investment, or newer forms of global finance. Ministries of Finance tended to lead on this matter.
- **Co-ordination of all actors around government priorities** was also an important motivation, particularly for public officials in centre-of-government institutions. There was a shared view that the SDGs could help strengthen cross-government co-ordination and coherence, and promote better policies and results-focused practices. At the same time, most government officials acknowledged the need to co-ordinate a growing number of domestic and international partners, from NGOs to multilateral organisations, and the SDGs were seen as a consensus agenda to that end. For some, SDG framing was perceived as a way to legitimise policy choices, as the agenda was perceived to be above political contestation. Central ministries, from Planning to Prime Minister's Offices, usually mentioned this motivation as a key driver of SDG adoption.
- Finally, for various reasons, all four countries perceived the need to incorporate, monitor and **report on the SDGs** as a mechanism to improve their international standing and visibility, and as a mechanism to promote domestic accountability, transparency and legitimacy. Ministries of Foreign Affairs tended to lead on delivering on this motivation.

Beyond the underlying political economy that incentivised governments to align to the SDGs in these countries, there were substantive motivations to integrate the SDG framework in their government plans and results frameworks, reflecting the history and current reality of each country. Table 2.2 provides an overview of these motivations.

Table 2.2. Main drivers of SDG adoption at country level

Case study	Key findings
Bangladesh	The country was one of the front-runners on SDG adoption. The government's commitment to the SDG framework was driven by its progressive stance on sustainable development, rapid economic growth, and the need to address pressing development challenges such as poverty reduction and environmental protection. A historical tradition of long-term planning was highly compatible with the adoption of the SDG framework in government policy.
Peru	The government was motivated to align with the SDGs due to its desire for a comprehensive approach to development, the need to address social, economic and environmental challenges, and a recognition of the benefits of evidence-based decision-making. In a context of political polarisation and low trust in public institutions, the SDGs were seen as an agenda which could help reconcile divisions across the nation.
Samoa	The commitment to the SDG framework stemmed from Samoa's vulnerability to climate change and the need for a resilient development approach to address the country's challenges as a small island nation.
Uganda	Uganda's efforts towards aligning with the SDG framework were motivated by its position as a vanguard of SDG adoption, its commitment to achieving the SDGs despite limited resources, and its recognition of the benefits of addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges holistically.

Source: Authors' summary, based on the country case studies in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022).

Main challenges

Despite the thrust to align plans and frameworks to the SDGs, the four countries experienced difficulties in translating these intentions into transformative policymaking and implementation:

- **Country ownership or political commitment** towards the SDGs was variable in all countries except for Bangladesh.
- All countries faced difficulties in **mainstreaming the SDGs** in sector and subnational frameworks.
- In some (Uganda, Samoa), the **linkages between SDG planning and financing** were still weak.
- While partnerships were increasingly framed around the SDGs (or sustainability concerns in general), **SDG-oriented co-ordination mechanisms** and joined-up action across domestic and international partners remained rare, leading to inconsistent support for some SDG targets.
- **Capacity constraints** to manage for results, which preceded the SDGs, remained a challenge in all four public administrations, despite centres-of-government leading efforts to use the SDG results agenda to promote greater coherence and impact of government action across sectors.
- Finally, the expected **mobilisation of financing, technology and knowledge** linked to the SDGs did not achieve the scale and critical mass that international commitments on Financing for Development had envisioned in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015.

Investments in SDG data availability had paid off across all four countries, with an initial capacity to report between 53 and 70 (depending on the country) SDG indicators in 2016-17, growing to the 166-201 range by 2020. However, lacking additional financing for this purpose, national statistical systems struggled to keep up with the pace of data needs, in terms of frequency, timeliness and disaggregation requirements. The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic on regular data-collection processes contributed to deepening the data gaps.

All these findings are generally consistent with other comparable studies. For example, a systematic analysis of Voluntary National Reviews on SDG progress submitted to the UN revealed that countries experience capacity gaps in monitoring and reporting (71%), institutional capacities to co-ordinate government and international partners around the SDGs (70%), SDG financing capacity (56%), policy and legislative environment (42%), leadership and human resources (33%), and information and technology (17%) (UN DESA, 2019). Other studies have found that integration of the SDGs into national development plans, while useful for translating technical approaches to sustainable development into communicable

results for domestic audiences, have generally not changed states' prevailing development paradigms in fundamental ways (Okitasari & Katramiz, 2022).

Prospects

Despite the varying contexts and inherent challenges, the four countries all demonstrated progress in integrating the SDGs into their national agendas, enhancing data collection, and maintaining regular reporting on SDG progress. As these countries revised their mid-term strategies and frameworks in response to the multiple, successive crises that began in 2020, there was evidence of a growing emphasis on sustainable development in their governmental actions.

The widespread hegemony of sustainable development language and the growing focus across diverse country contexts provides an ongoing window of opportunity for international development partners. By anchoring their support to a common results agenda in each country, partners can more effectively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. These collaborative efforts hold the potential to drive meaningful progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, despite the challenges faced in various national settings.

The next section explores the related experiences of development partners.

3. SDG integration in development co-operation

3.1. Pathways of alignment to the 2030 Agenda

This section discusses how bilateral and multilateral development partners reacted to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated SDG framework. It first explores how this affected development co-operation policies and corporate results frameworks and the ramifications for programming and results monitoring at partner country and sector levels. It presents the results from a comparative analysis of the experiences of close to 60 development co-operation providers, at headquarter-level and in ten partner countries, between 2018 and 2021 (see 5. Annex C for a full list of providers included in the comparative analysis). This section identifies the main strategies, drivers, obstacles and opportunities that emerged in aligning their portfolios to SDG results at headquarters level and across seven diverse country contexts¹.

SDG adoption strategies

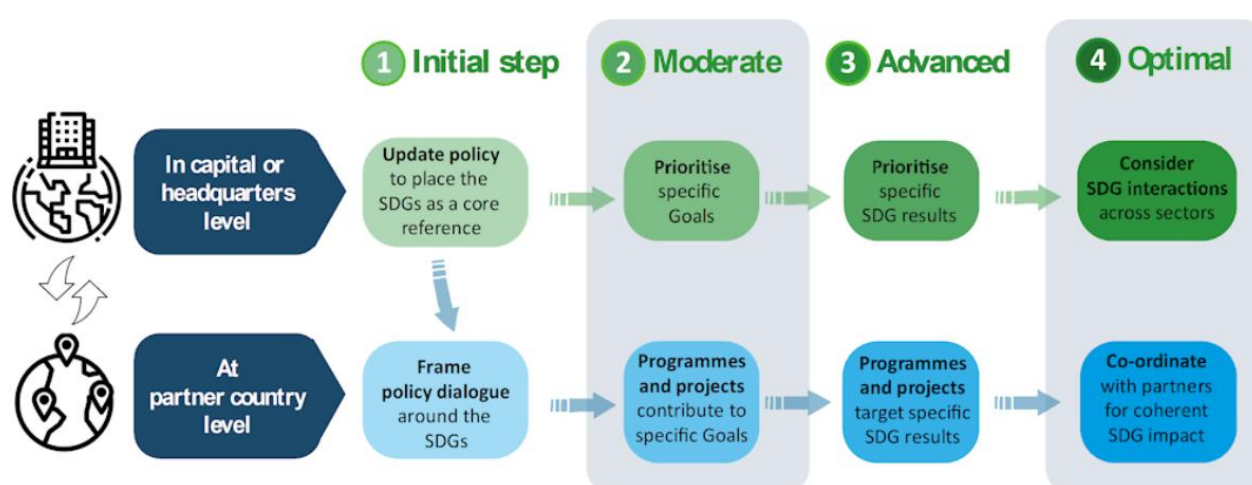
The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provided a new vision, language and *raison d'être* for development co-operation (OECD, 2019). As such, most bilateral and multilateral development organisations made concerted efforts to integrate these global goals into their policies and strategies. Typical documents updated to reflect this alignment included development co-operation strategies, sector-specific policies and results frameworks. These development ministries and organisations also proceeded to refresh their strategic plans and organisational policies to ensure coherence with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The expectation was to cascade the SDG framework down across their systems to the point of delivery at the same time as their partner countries would align their own domestic strategies and frameworks to the SDGs (although that proved slow and challenging, see previous chapter).

SDG alignment typically started at headquarters level. Using process-tracing techniques and comparing processes, our comparative analysis of 57 bilateral and multilateral providers revealed that the majority initiated the SDG alignment process at headquarters level (Figure 3.1). In most cases, SDG alignment was a purposeful move led from the top, followed by a review of policy and strategic frameworks to place the 2030 Agenda at the core (particularly during the 2016-19 period). Regional agreements (e.g. the 2017 “European Consensus on Development”) helped accelerate the incorporation of the SDG narrative among subgroups of development partners (EU, 2021).

¹ This chapter builds on a baseline study of 56 development co-operation providers, and seven country case studies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, Peru, Samoa and Uganda. Additional diagnostics and country dialogues were conducted in Sierra Leone, Malawi, Saint Lucia and Tanzania during 2022-23, which validated the findings discussed in this chapter. For further details, please consult these case studies in the references section.

The move to focus and report on the SDGs has been notable. DAC Peer Reviews carried out since 2016 have recognised significant progress made by bilateral donors in integrating the SDGs into their development co-operation strategies (OECD, 2023). This kind of transformation has involved a strategic shift in their vision and a renewed narrative for development co-operation, followed by efforts to report on SDG contributions and results, as well as an emphasis on some cross-cutting issues such as climate and gender equality. Regular assessments of multilateral development organisations for the period similarly highlighted their commitment to (and difficulties in) mainstreaming the SDGs into their programming, fostering partnerships for sustainable development, and adapting monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress on the SDGs (MOPAN, 2021).

Figure 3.1. How development partners align to SDG results

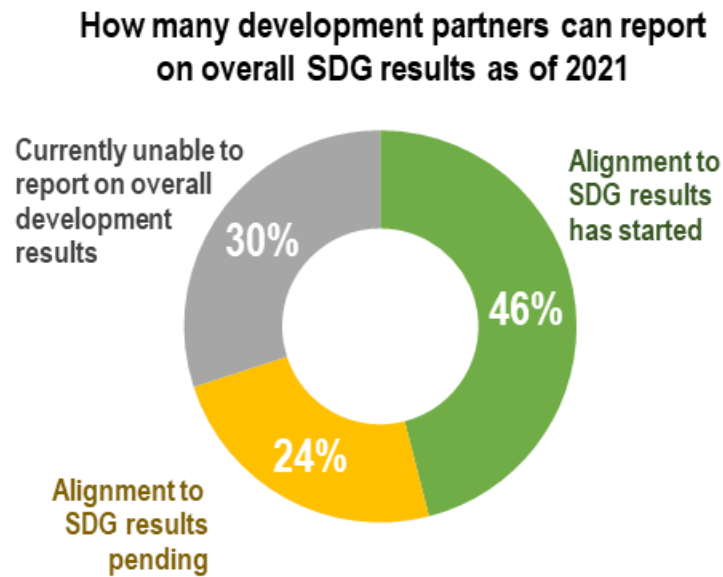


3.2. Aligning development co-operation frameworks to the SDGs

Corporate strategies and frameworks are a powerful driver of SDG alignment

Corporate strategies and frameworks provide an internal mandate and incentives to align to SDG results at all levels. As of 2021, near half of all development co-operation providers had (at least, partially) integrated elements of the SDG framework (Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, A baseline survey of the guiding principles on managing for sustainable development results, 2021). Figure 3.2 shows that 46% of 57 major providers had included SDG targets and indicators in their corporate results frameworks. SDG adoption at headquarters level has been progressively cascading down to sector frameworks (44%), partner-country strategies (35%), and project-level results frameworks (18%) (OECD, 2021). UN agencies, as custodians of many SDG indicators, stand out as outliers and early adopters of SDG indicators, with widespread use across 80% to 90% of their results frameworks by 2020.

Figure 3.2. SDG alignment in corporate results frameworks



Note: Sample includes 57 bilateral and multilateral providers, representing 97% of all official development financing reported to the OECD.
Source: (OECD, 2021).

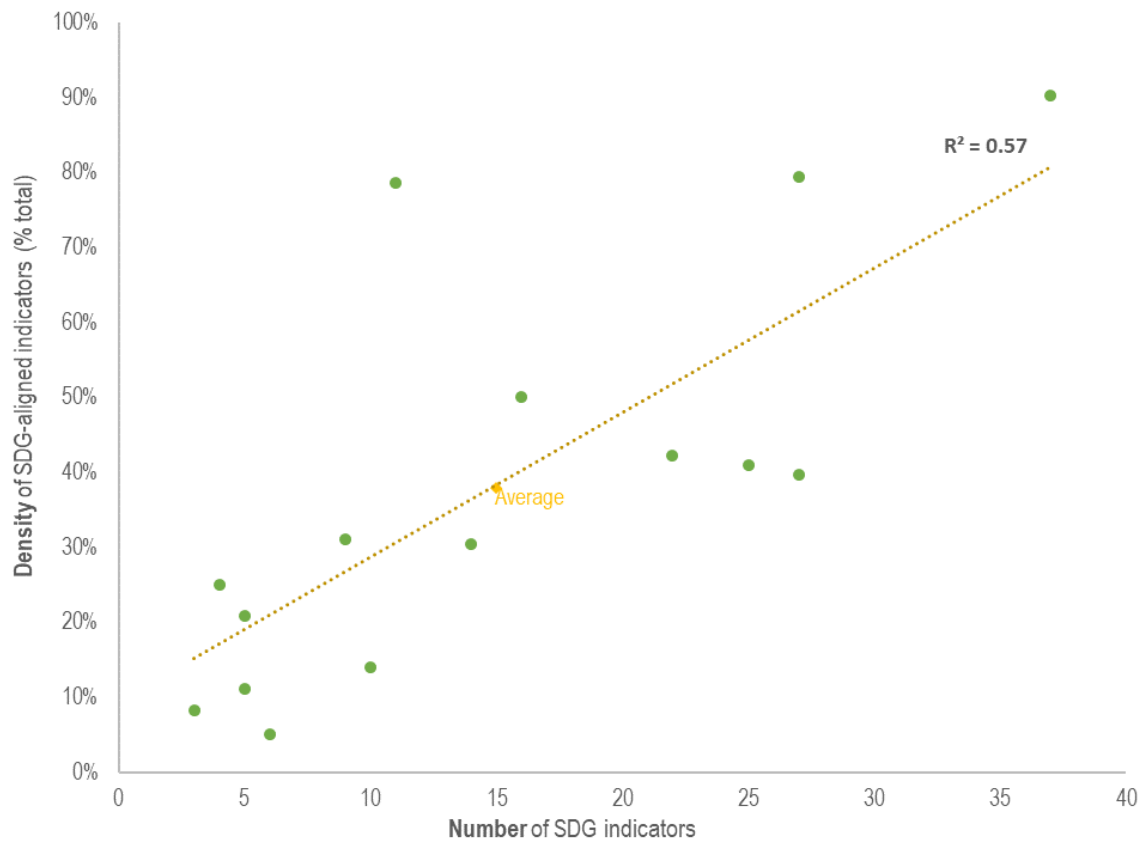
A high degree of use of the SDG framework in corporate results reporting is a strategic choice.

While the SDG framework contains numerous indicators that are well-established measures of sector performance and precede the SDGs, alignment to the SDG framework at headquarter level tends to be purpose-driven. A closer look at the corporate results frameworks of 17 bilateral and multilateral providers shows a correspondence between the scope and density of SDG indicators. This suggests that providers that choose to align with the SDG framework do so as much as possible, while, for the group that do not actively pursue using the SDG framework, use of SDG indicators is more limited and anecdotal (Figure 3.3, panel 1).

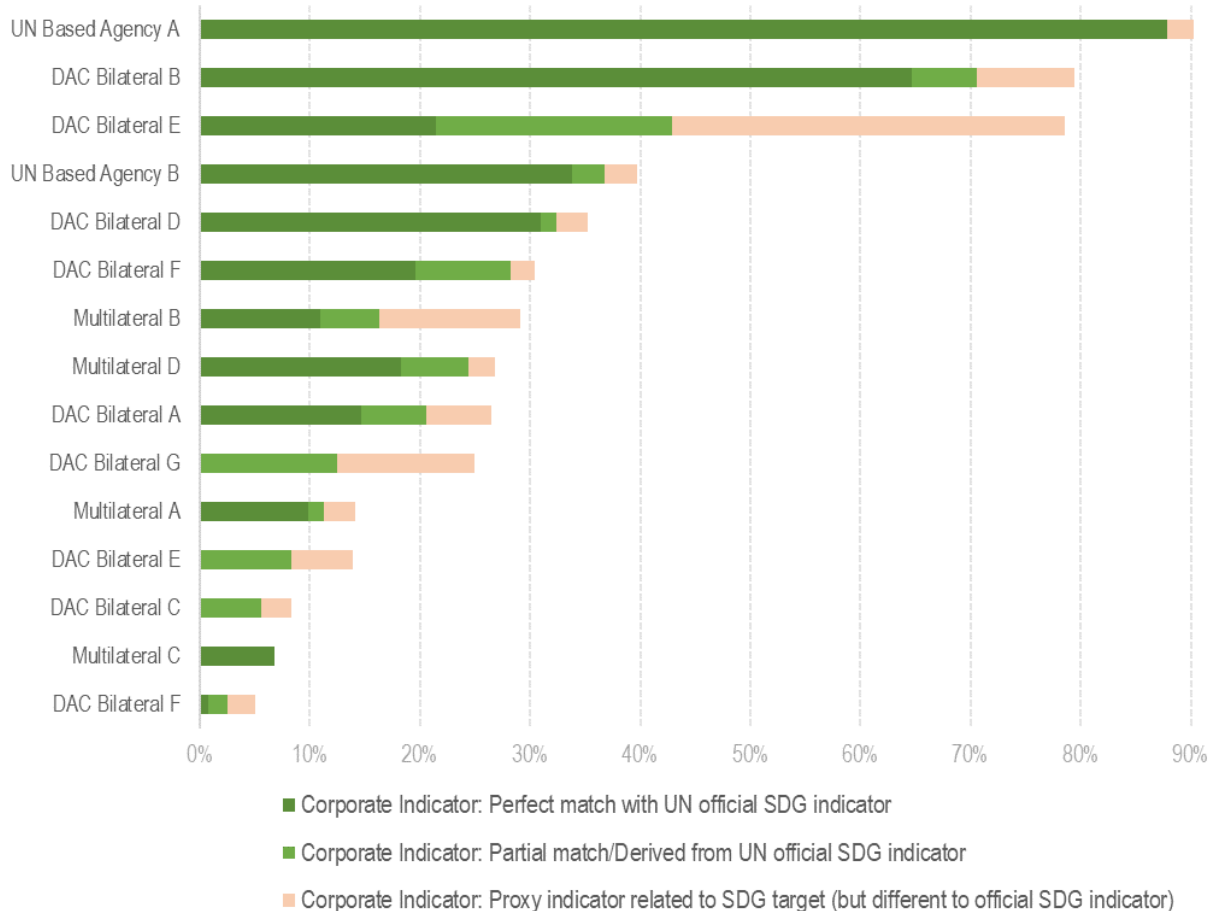
The quality of alignment to the official SDG framework suggest different perceptions, the data shows that, in general, providers tend to rely on official SDG indicator definitions, although several bilateral providers choose to adjust some of the SDG indicators to meet their own reporting needs, or rely on alternative proxy indicators that align with the SDG target of interest (Figure 3.3, panel 2). In contrast, UN agencies tend to stick with official definitions. In our comparative country research, to be discussed later in this chapter, we find that those diverging behaviours create difficulties in aligning to joined-up monitoring approaches to measure SDG results at country level, leading to parallel data-gathering and compounding gaps in SDG data.

Figure 3.3. Depth of alignment to the SDG indicator framework

Panel 1. Intensity of alignment to the official SDG indicator framework



Panel 2. Alignment with official SDG indicator definitions tends to be higher among UN agencies



Source: Authors' analysis based on 17 publicly available corporate results frameworks of major bilateral and multilateral providers. a

Nevertheless, corporate or overarching results frameworks that rely on SDG indicators have been a powerful driver of SDG uptake at country and project levels. Using data for 50 bilateral and multilateral development co-operation providers (Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, A baseline survey of the guiding principles on managing for sustainable development results, 2021), we find a strong correlation (0.61) between the usage (and intensity of use) of SDG indicators in corporate results frameworks, and the extent to which country-level results frameworks use SDG indicators.

The mechanisms of transmission are varied and complementary:

- **Institutional:** Since 2016, a large number of providers have re-aligned their mandate, development policies and strategies to contribute to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which explains the reorientation of associated results frameworks towards achieving SDG results. This includes the vast majority of UN agencies, many bilateral providers, and some regional development banks.
- **Direct:** Many providers have introduced standard or mandatory corporate results indicators to allow for aggregated reporting on the results of their development co-operation portfolio. Country-, sector- and project-level results frameworks often include these standard or mandatory indicators, some of which correspond to SDG indicators. This is the *direct* route.
- **Indirect:** Some providers have actively issued guidance, training, tools and advisory support from headquarters to programme and project teams to encourage the effective use of the SDG framework, in general or for specific SDGs. These actions have created enabling conditions for increased usage of SDG-related indicators in programming practices.

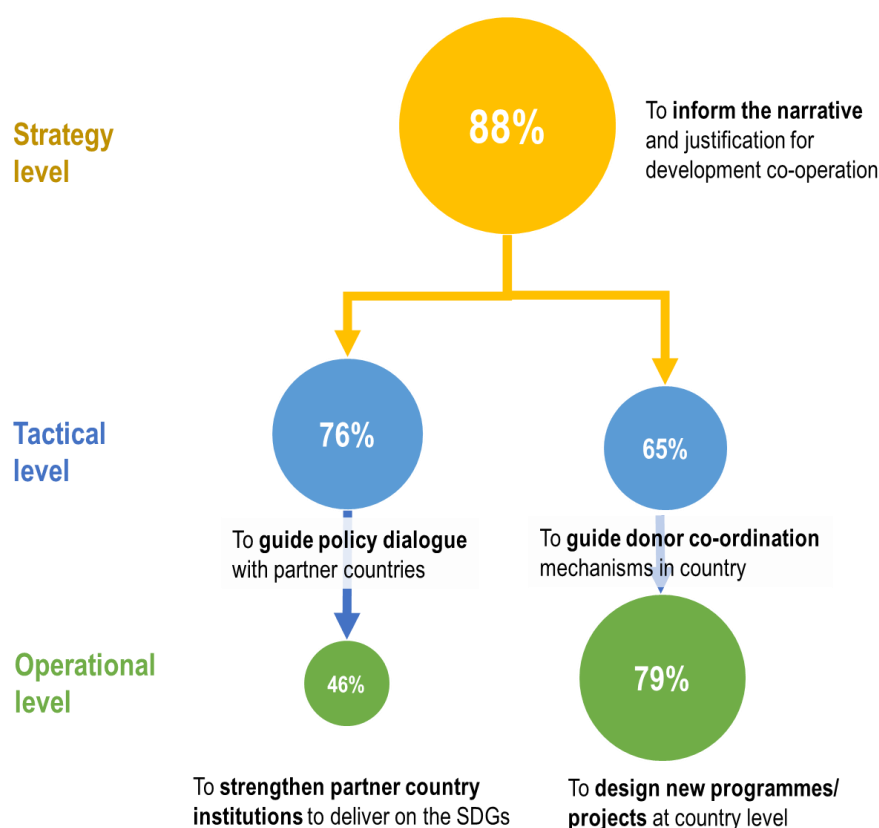
In our comparative analysis of development co-operation provider practices, we find that **all three mechanisms of transmission are self-reinforcing and achieve the greatest effect when deployed together**. Furthermore, incentives for using the SDG framework multiply when the partner country government is also on a journey to better integrate the SDGs into policymaking, stakeholder engagement, budgeting and service delivery, as in the case of Bangladesh (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022).

Country-level practices have evolved, but the associated results frameworks are yet to adapt to the SDG framework

At country level, the SDGs have provided a narrative and source of legitimacy for development co-operation providers. Save for a few exceptions, all interviewees reaffirmed their commitment to that consensus agenda, and recounted ways in which the SDGs helped inform policy dialogue with the partner government or influenced substantive discussions within donor co-ordination mechanisms in the country (Figure 3.4). Most providers could also refer to specific development programmes and projects that (it could be argued) targeted one of the global Goals, although using SDG indicators to design the results frameworks associated with those interventions was much less of a concern for the majority. In contrast, few beyond the UN agencies and a handful of bilateral providers had been actively engaged in supporting partner governments in mainstreaming the SDGs in their policies, budgets and programmes.

Figure 3.4. How do development partners discuss and use the SDGs at country level?

Reported experiences of 103 country offices and embassies in Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa, and Uganda



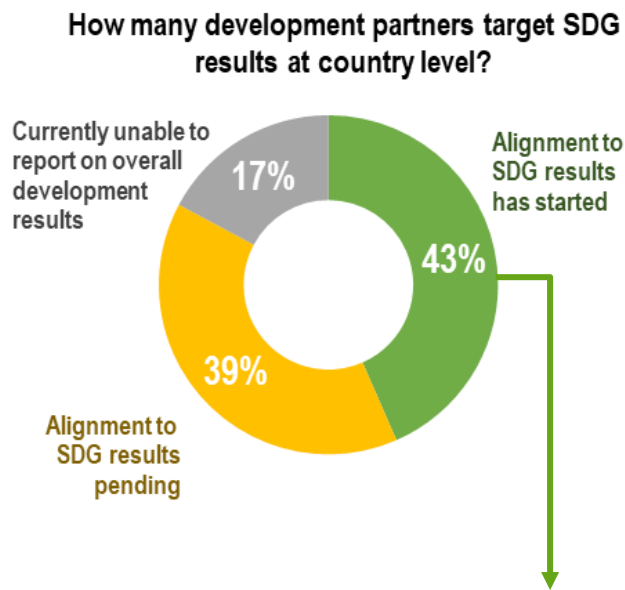
Note: Data covers experiences during the 2017-20 period (i.e., between the approval of the SDGs and the start of the 2020-22 pandemic). Data refers to the use of the SDGs at country level for strategic, tactical and operational purposes.

Source: Data from OECD country case studies in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022).

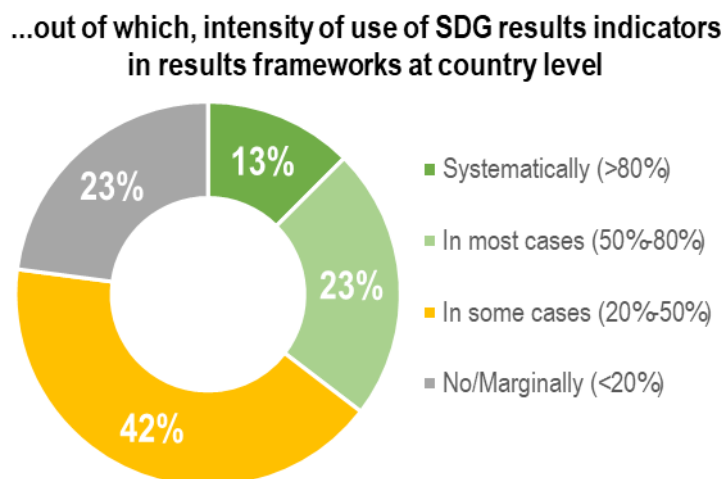
While the SDGs reshaped the ways and language that development partners use to interact and co-operate at country level, the impact on results frameworks has been more limited. Data on the level and depth of alignment to the SDG framework collected during the case studies of Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda show that only two-fifths of providers had started using the SDG framework (in country strategies or at project level) by 2020, that is, five years after the SDGs were approved. And even among that sub-group, the depth of alignment to the SDG framework was weak among many development partners at country level (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Alignment to SDG results at country level

Panel 1. Extent of alignment to SDG results in country results frameworks



Panel 2. Depth of alignment



Note: Sample includes 103 bilateral and multilateral providers of development co-operation during 2016-2020.

Source: Data collected for the OECD country case studies in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022) and (Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, A baseline survey of the guiding principles on managing for sustainable development results, 2021).

Interviewees referred to numerous contextual, organisational and technical factors that had made broader or deeper alignment to the SDG framework difficult. Still, three structural constraints stood out:

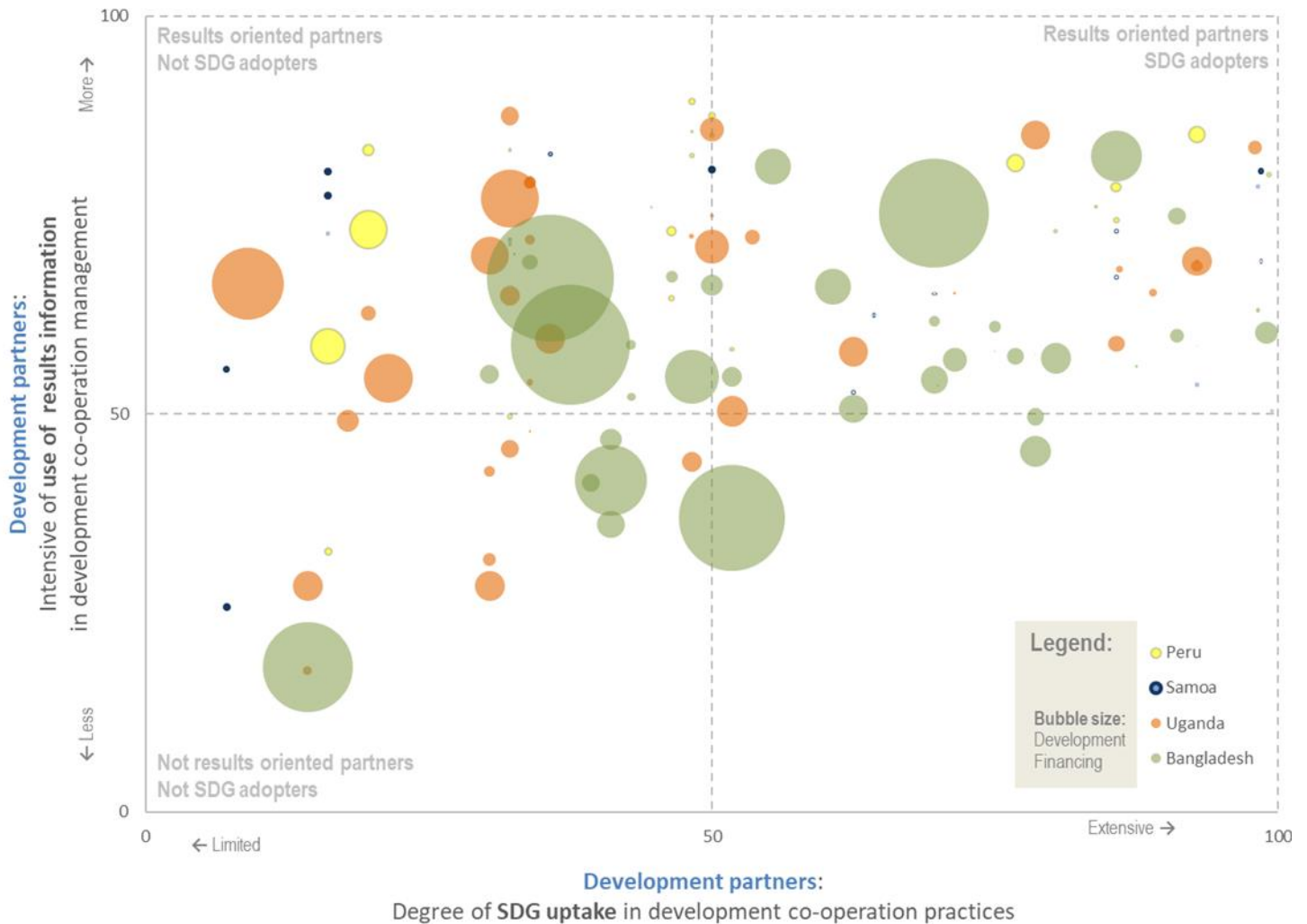
First, country leadership in SDG focus and SDG framework adoption has been uneven, creating different incentive structures for development co-operation providers. By design in 2015, partner country governments were expected to lead in SDG alignment, both politically (with leadership embracing the SDGs as a top priority and preferred language for development outcomes) and technically (by laying down national strategies and results frameworks that could effectively allow development partners to anchor their own efforts to a common agenda). As shown in the figure below (Figure 3.6), and detailed in the series of country-specific figures included in the annex (Figure A B.2), the gravitational pull of countries such as Bangladesh (which had made the most progress in aligning political discourses, policies and government practices to the SDG framework) is significant enough to incentivise many development partners to align and adapt to the SDG framework. This includes major providers that consistently show a very low level of SDG focus in our other country case studies.

The second difficulty relates to providers' own results-based approaches. Persisting challenges in institutionalising or adapting results-based management systems in development agencies and ministries – issues that preceded the SDGs – limit the formal demand and actual use of results information (including SDG results data) in development practice (Vähämäki & Verger, 2019). The quantitative, politically neutral nature of the SDG framework pose difficulties for other providers, given the focus of their development portfolios and the way their impact is currently assessed. As such, the empirical analysis distinguished three clusters of providers that show a limited use of the SDG framework due to internal incentives or constraints:

- The first cluster includes a notable number of (mostly bilateral) development agencies and ministries lacked the institutional capabilities, systems and delivery practices that corresponded to standard results-based management practices, and the development and use of results frameworks where SDG indicators could fit is still rare.
- A second (smaller) cluster of providers, with high capabilities to use results-based management practices and tools, have increasingly chosen to work with more flexible approaches with local implementers (i.e. without results frameworks or overly structured results reporting mechanisms), particularly in difficult contexts or on politically-sensitive issues, which has made the focus of alignment to specific SDG indicators in those programmes and projects a secondary issue.
- Finally, a third (even smaller) cluster of providers expressed difficulties in using the SDG framework, as they worked on issues that were difficult to measure with quantitative metrics (including intangible issues such as empowerment, social capital, capacity-building, resilience, attitude and behaviour changes, policy influencing, and peace and security), or they focused on issues that are insufficiently addressed in the SDG framework (e.g. culture, human rights, systemic injustices, mental health, systemic and structural barriers), despite their overall commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 3.6. Development co-operation providers: Use of the SDG framework at country level

SDG adoption at country level is guided by partner countries' and headquarters' leadership on the SDGs, when combined with managerial systems that actively use results information



Notes: Sample of 119 development co-operation providers active in Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda. Data collected between late 2019 and 2021, reflecting the last three years of policy dialogue, country activities, programmes and projects.

Source: Data collected for the OECD country case studies in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022)

The third constraint is time. Countries' alignment of planning, monitoring and statistical systems to the SDG framework necessarily needed a transition period. As such, for most countries, two or more iterations of national development strategies after 2015 were required to observe a significant level of alignment to the SDG framework. Similarly, redirecting countries' administrative data and statistical systems to produce regular quality SDG data was going to require significant investments and time. These lags in strategic planning and country data predictably discouraged most development co-operation providers from aligning their country-level frameworks and monitoring systems to the SDGs.

But, as line ministries rewired their sector policies, plans and monitoring practices, sector alignment to the SDG framework was more likely. The following section analyses providers' experiences in Kenya, Myanmar and Ethiopia, in the education, energy and water and sanitation sectors.

It summarises emerging opportunities and obstacles for alignment, measurement and use of SDG indicators as a shared framework for results at country level.

Sector-level results frameworks offer the greatest potential for alignment, joined-up measurement and sustained delivery of SDG results

The SDG indicator framework offers a particularly promising opportunity to join up forces and standardise measurement practices at sector level. As some sector ministries have made faster progress in SDG alignment, and as government-development partner co-ordination mechanisms on substantive and technical issues continue to gravitate around sector co-ordination mechanisms (OECD/UNDP, 2019), the possibility of convergence of action around a shared sector framework for results was always going to precede a broader convergence at country level.

Adoption costs for SDG indicators and sector co-ordination dynamics among development co-operation providers affect the degree of uptake of SDG indicators. A comparative deep dive in the education, sanitation and energy sectors in Kenya, Ethiopia and Myanmar reveals that, although there was growing availability of SDG data during the 2016-19 period, the use of SDG indicators in these sectors remained generally weak due to lingering adherence to past standards (OECD, 2019). For instance:

- In **education** (SDG indicator 4.1.1 on *learning outcomes*), most frameworks continued to primarily focus on school enrolment rather than on assessments of learning outcomes. While the focus of development co-operation support to the education sector has moved from access to quality, the transition in monitoring systems at country level requires co-ordinated action towards supporting and aligning with partner countries' national assessments of learning outcomes – with the aim of ensuring consistent measurement of education results. Development partners in Kenya and Myanmar systematically used non-harmonised methods for monitoring education results during 2016-19, which had led to disjointed collective action and data gaps.
- Furthermore, development co-operation providers were inconsistent in how they defined SDG-related indicators, such as in the **sanitation** sector (SDG indicator 6.2.1 on *access to sanitation and hand-washing facilities*) in Kenya and Myanmar. These inconsistencies posed significant barriers to harmonisation, joint measurement, and use of SDG results information, highlighting the need for increased investment in sector-wide monitoring systems and alignment of project indicators with the official SDG indicator definition. Such action could mitigate the increased reporting burden observed on national stakeholders and fill the gaps in data availability against many providers' results indicators.
- A closer look to the **energy sector** (SDG 7.1.1 on *access to electricity*) painted a similar picture. Despite broad adoption of the official SDG indicator due to similarities with well-established sector performance measurements, variations in proxy indicators and data collection methods obstructed harmonised measurement of electricity access, particularly in Ethiopia. The sector comparison in Kenya and Ethiopia underscored the need for improved alignment, increased emphasis on output and outcome indicators, and greater reliance on real-time data providers, including public and private utilities. Interestingly, the use of pooled funds and co-ordinated mechanisms for financing and monitoring in Kenya supported a surge in national data for this indicator, and a record increase in energy access compared to other African countries. In contrast, support to the energy sector in Ethiopia was highly fragmented, and up to 40 different definitions for SDG 7.1.1 were used in development co-operation projects, leading to incompatible data on electricity access and significant blind spots, which might have contributed to a slower progress in electricity access across the country.

Across all three countries, development co-operation providers working in the education, water and sanitation and energy sectors planned their results frameworks and monitoring approaches in ways that

reflected the (higher or lower) costs of adopting the SDG indicators in those countries – in particular to data availability issues, complexity, measurement inertias and other contextual factors (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. SDG indicator complexity matters for adoption and measurement at the country level

	Cost of alignment to SDG indicator	(1) SDG indicator classification (United Nations' Tier)	(2) Design: <i>Intrinsic complexity</i>	(3) Measurement inertia: <i>Similarities to MDG indicator or established sector indicator</i>	(4) Contextual factors
SDG 4.1.1 (Learning outcomes)	High	●○○ <i>Since 2018:</i> ●●○	▼ Multi-layered: three different assessments required, in two dimensions (reading, maths) ▼ More difficult to communicate and report	▼ Different. MDG 2 main focus on access (enrolment, completion, dropouts); focus on proficiency levels more difficult	▲ ▼ Partner country adoption is uneven ▼ Several assessments needed; comparability and uptake vary by country ▲ ▼ Public provision high, but fragmented
SDG 6.2.1 (Access to sanitation and hand-washing facilities)	Medium	●●● <i>Since 2017:</i> ●●○	▼ Double-layered and multi-dimensional (i.e. sanitation ladder) Relatively easy to communicate and report	▲ ▼ Moderately similar: MDG 7.9: Simpler measure of access to improved sanitation facility But MDG 7 had no hygiene/handwashing indicator	▲ Partner countries aligned to "sanitation" sub-indicator ▲ Unified monitoring: WHO-UNICEF Monitoring Programme; part of household surveys ▼ Fragmented provision
SDG 7.1.1 (Access to electricity)	Low	●●●	▲ Simple indicator construction (% people with electricity access) ▲ Easy to communicate and report (though provides a partial picture)	▲ Sector equivalent. SDG 7.1.1 similar to well-established indicators for sector results measurement; no MDG equivalent	▲ Partner country adoption ▼ A variety of household survey types and other country and sector-specific surveys ▼ Fragmented provision (e.g. market, off-grid solutions)

Notes: Contextual factors are country-specific to Ethiopia, Kenya and Myanmar, that affect the benefits or costs of adopting the indicator.

Source: Authors' update based on (OECD, 2019). See Annex B for a systematic analysis of the SDG framework. Consult (OECD, 2023) for individual assessments of 249 SDG indicators and subindicators, including their profile and features related to the cost of adoption.

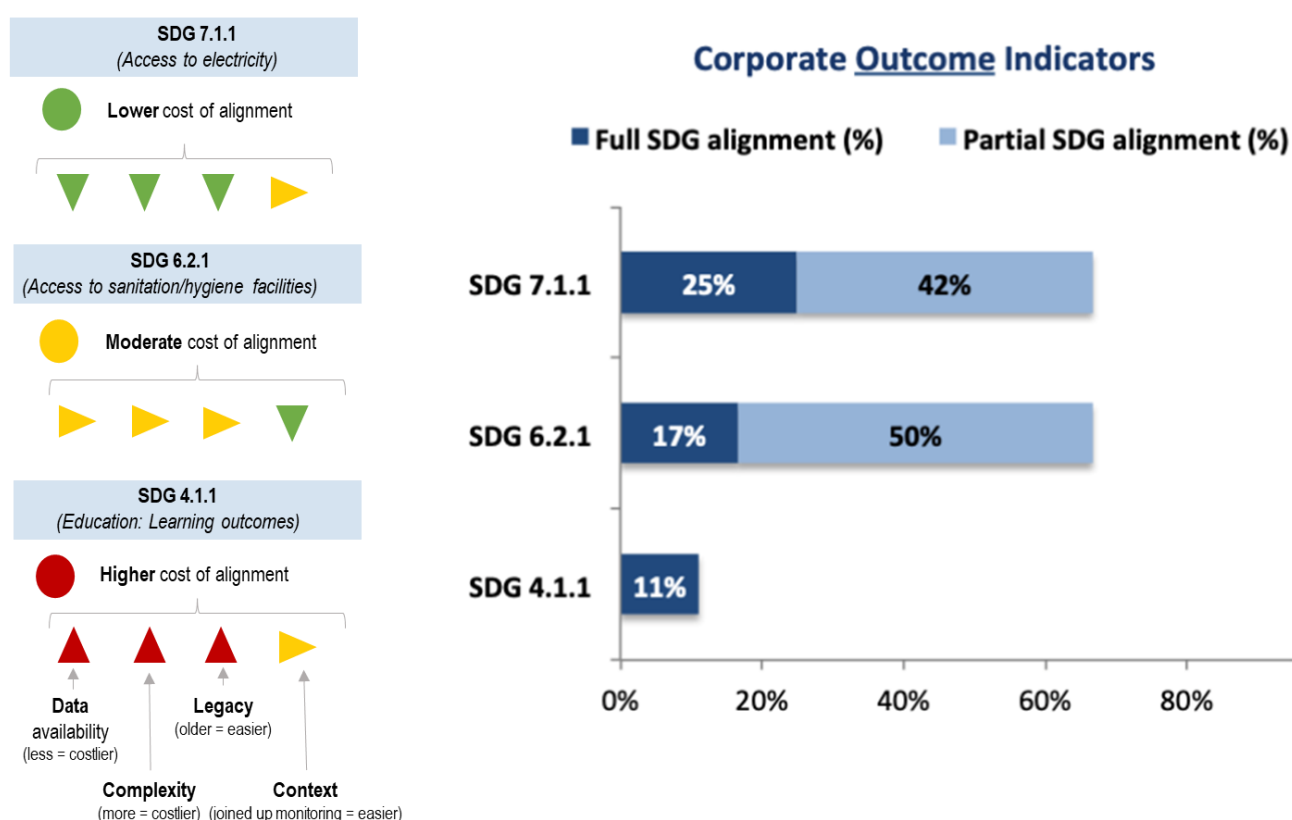
These cost- and context-related effects could also be noted at headquarter level. SDG indicators with a higher cost of adoption tended to be less prevalent in corporate results frameworks – even when they covered strategic priorities for those providers, such as quality of education (Figure 3.7). As such, collectively addressing the underlying causes that make some of the SDG indicators costlier than others – particularly the issues of data availability and sector co-ordination around monitoring – could help increase the use of these SDG indicators in practice (OECD, 2023). Interviewees at headquarters and country level frequently mentioned several opportunities and feasible actions that could help remedy the situation (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1. Opportunities for enhanced harmonisation: Observations across all case studies

- To promote internal coherence, where corporate standard indicators are in place, ensure these are included in all sector or country-level results frameworks.
- Some provider country-level or sector indicators are not publicly available online. Making results frameworks publicly available would increase opportunities for harmonisation.
- Make all results data against indicators publicly available.
- New indicators should not be introduced unless data can and will be collected against these indicators. Instead, provider results frameworks should include indicators linked to the SDGs and to partner countries' national and sector results frameworks; and provide capacity-building support to partner countries to increase their ability to monitor the SDGs and collect data against national development plan indicators.

Figure 3.7. SDG indicator usage depends on cost of adoption

As some official SDG indicators are easier to align to and monitor at country level, development co-operation providers tend to use them in line with official UN definitions when reporting on overall development results.



Notes: Colour-coding (green, amber, red) denotes the relative cost of SDG indicator adoption based on the four criteria of data availability, complexity, legacy/novelty, and context (i.e., prevalent sector monitoring practices in countries). "Full SDG alignment": Uses the UN official definition for the indicator. "Partial SDG alignment": The official UN definition has been marginally adjusted (e.g., to focus on a sub-segment of the target beneficiaries). Note that there are no cases of "partial SDG alignment" for SDG 4.1.1.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on (OECD, 2019) data.

Sector-monitoring practices have become harder to co-ordinate given the progressive increase in number of development co-operation providers, and their growing emphasis on measuring their development impact. We noted those trends towards fragmentation of efforts and proliferation of indicators across our three country case studies (OECD, 2019).

However, despite the challenges, there were also promising examples of government-led co-ordination groups successfully using joint monitoring approaches, such as in the energy sector in Kenya or in the sanitation sector in Myanmar, demonstrating potential strategies for future harmonisation efforts (Table 3.2). In other words, while the intrinsic characteristics, complexity and data availability of a given SDG indicator may initially discourage its adoption, our comparative in-country research revealed that governments, development co-operation providers and other important domestic stakeholders can act in a co-ordinated manner to establish measurement standards, frameworks and systems that encourage the progressive convergence of all monitoring practice around shared SDG results indicators. This requires greater transparency of results frameworks in use by all, joined-up approaches to planning and data collection, sizeable sector programmes to which others can contribute resources or complement with their development interventions, and progressive digitalisation practices and platforms to enable data access, interoperability and use.

Table 3.2. Development co-operation dynamics and monitoring practices impact country SDG data

	Fragmentation No of providers in the sector	Proliferation No of provider sector indicators	Measurement approach and data availability
SDG 4.1.1 ETHIOPIA:	High (11)	Very high (59)	▲ SDG aligned; regular national assessments; multi-donor pooled programming. ▼ Proliferation of other provider indicators; coverage issues in national data.
MYANMAR:	High (10)	Medium (16)	▲ UN-coordinated national and sector monitoring (although MDG focus). ▼ SDG not monitored; some project-driven monitoring; results often not public.
SDG 6.2.1 MYANMAR:	Low (4)	Low (6)	▲ Joint monitoring; good administrative data; new plan will include SDG. ▼ Challenges to align to SDG definition; disaggregation; some results not public.
KENYA:	High (8)	High (23)	▲ Joint approach; strong central agencies; good household surveys; SDG-like. ▼ Local monitoring an issue; several project-driven indicators; results not public.
SDG 7.1.1 KENYA:	Medium (6)	High (26)	▲ Baseline (WB survey); utility does sector-wide real time monitoring. ▼ Project-driven monitoring; results data inconsistent and often not public.
ETHIOPIA:	Medium (5)	High (25)	▲ Baseline (WB survey); potential for sector-wide SDG approach (not yet). ▼ Project-driven monitoring; results data inconsistent and often not public.

Notes: Observed development co-operation practices that contributed positively (green) or negatively (red) to SDG data availability at country level across case studies.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on (OECD, 2019).

Ultimately, our analysis suggests that synchronisation with partner countries' planning cycles, investment in statistical systems (as opposed to relying on costly parallel monitoring processes that generate incompatible data), co-ordinated and integrated monitoring at sector level, and a focus on data disaggregation can enhance SDG indicator implementation, monitoring and data availability in those sectors.

3.3. Main challenges

As discussed, all development organisations faced challenges and gaps in fully integrating Agenda 2030 and the SDG framework (Table 3.3). These included:

- **Misperceptions about the SDG framework**, including a perception of technical complexity and scale, and unclarity on which entity (government, United Nations, all) is responsible for promoting, monitoring and delivering on the SDG framework.
- **A need for greater policy coherence**: Sector silos and approaches continued to dominate the design and management of programmes and projects, as only 10% of providers had managed to systematically use cross-sector approaches to planning, monitoring, learning and reporting systems (Guerrero-Ruiz, Schnatz, & Verger, A baseline survey of the guiding principles on managing for sustainable development results, 2021, p. 27).
- **Weak co-ordination among different stakeholders** to tackle global and country-focused issues, and, frequently, a lack of organisational or contextual incentives to work towards a shared agenda for SDG results. Instead, the prevalent focus is on achieving own planned organisational results.
- **Inherited weaknesses in results-based management systems**: Over 60% of providers (particularly bilateral donors) reported inadequately resourced systems. Amongst the dominant issues, a weak results culture and incentives within their organisations, inadequate IT systems supporting data collection and management and cumbersome processes. In interviews at country level, staff shared the importance of the results agenda, but there was a widespread perception that current results-based management systems mostly encouraged upwards reporting of results for internal accountability, discouraging the use of “more complex” frameworks such as the SDGs.
- **Data gaps** act as significant constraints in effectively planning, tracking or using SDG-aligned results frameworks in development practice. In the absence of readily available, disaggregated, timely and credible data, providers in Bangladesh, Uganda, Samoa and Peru took decisions to adapt or avoid aligning with the SDG indicator framework.

Table 3.3 summarises the most frequently mentioned obstacles identified during the country interviews. Addressing these challenges and harnessing the opportunities for further integration will be crucial to achieving the ambitious goals set out by Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The global pandemic and its aftermath offered a unique opportunity to address several of these issues (Box 1).

Table 3.3. What are the issues?

Based on responses in 131 in-depth interviews and focus groups in Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda

Key issues	Most frequently cited arguments not to use SDG indicators	Observed effect
1. Lack of steering	Lack of leadership or guidance from headquarters and capitals.	Where there is a lack of institutional thrust from above, operational staff at country level do not sense a need to use the SDG framework (unless the partner country government places it at the top of the agenda).
2. Knowledge gap	Broad support for the SDGs is met with a widespread perception among country-based staff and managers that the SDG framework is a complex, multi-faceted indicator framework. Uncertainties about how to use it effectively and efficiently in practice prevail.	Usual business to define country-level results (for example, reliance on legacy indicators like the MDGs) prevails. Limited harmonisation of measurement practices around SDG indicators.
3. Slow SDG adoption	Slow progress in SDG adoption by partner countries, due to planning cycles, variable political interest, delays in completing the global SDG framework until 2020, and other competing (regional or thematic)	In most countries, parts of the SDG indicator framework have been incorporated in national results frameworks, but the whole set has not become the only standard for results

	development frameworks and priorities.	measurement.
4. Co-ordination issues	Co-ordination mechanisms typically focused on information sharing and light division of labour, rather than about co-ordination around results or the SDGs. Lack of effective SDG-oriented co-ordination mechanisms.	General perception that the SDGs are the primary responsibility of the government and, among development partners, the United Nations. Most partners in wait-and-see mode.
5. Internal pressures for results	Pressure to focus on short-term, attributable results in development co-operation (vs SDG impact).	Providers have emphasised the use of output indicators, while a majority of SDG indicators refer to outcomes/impact. Use of these is more common in intermediate frameworks (e.g. country strategy) than at the project level.
6. Weak systems	Weak results-based management systems and culture, discouraging use of SDG indicators.	SDG indicator adoption is very low among providers with weaker results-oriented systems, or among those that use looser adaptable approaches to planning for results (e.g. no results frameworks).
7. Lack of SDG data	Lack of SDG data in some countries or sectors. Limited resources available for national statistical systems in partner countries to carry out the transition to SDG measurement faster (although with significant gains in recent years in most countries).	In the face of limited SDG data readily available, providers are incentivised to meet their SDG (and other) data needs by using parallel, one-off data collection processes.

Source: Authors' summary based on qualitative assessment of most frequently mentioned issues, based on 131 in-depth individual interviews and focus groups with development co-operation providers, government officials, non-profit leaders, private sector and other country-level stakeholders in Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda during 2019-20.

Box 3.2 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on results-based approaches for the SDGs

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, development partners faced significant challenges and opportunities in managing for sustainable development results. The reset of previous strategies and plans, a review of existing portfolios and their fitness vis-à-vis a rapidly evolving global phenomenon, and openness to relax requirements and explore alternative methods to achieve results that would help counter-act the worst effects of the pandemic created the perfect conditions for innovation.

An OECD review of real-time responses to the pandemic, conducted in mid-2020, explored the impacts of the pandemic on results-based approaches and on the focus on the SDGs.

Key findings

The pandemic led to disruptions in development projects and the ability of providers to collect results data due to travel restrictions and lockdowns. Additionally, it had substantial implications for results frameworks and indicators, with the potential to cause delays and distortions in measurement and reporting. This, in turn, affected decision-making, learning and accountability processes, challenging the traditional models for results-based management, and making previous strategies and frameworks outdated given the fast-changing context. The deep and sustained negative impact of COVID-19, and the successive global crises that followed, on SDG progress is well documented (UN, 2023).

However, the pandemic also presented an opportunity for providers to adapt and innovate in their results-based approaches. Real-time, remote monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methods were extensively employed, with remote data-collection tools seeing increased use and creating positive disruptions in how data is collected and shared. Simultaneously, the pandemic prompted a (temporary) shift towards more flexible, adaptive management approaches that could respond to the rapidly changing context. In particular, the crisis underscored the importance of real-time learning and decision-making to navigate the uncertainties, and the need for resilience and adaptability in results-based management systems. It also contributed to spreading the concept of interlinkages and interdependence of all the SDGs (e.g., integrated cross-sector planning, foresight, systems approach), which were mostly theoretical or distant issues for many sector programme and project managers until then.

Turning a crisis into an opportunity

Three policy-oriented recommendations for development co-operation providers emerged:

1. The SDG framework could facilitate a **systems-thinking approach** to the crisis. The SDGs provided a way to visualise the interconnectedness of COVID-19 effects with other dimensions, helping countries and providers prepare holistic responses. This framework could also serve as a harmonised set of results indicators for multiple providers to use in their response, emphasising the need for real-time results data for evidence-based policy making.
2. **Innovations in monitoring and evaluation methods** could strengthen these functions within development ministries and agencies, leading to better use of results data for decision-making and learning. The DAC Network on Development Evaluation's (EvalNet) decision to conduct a major, real-time evaluation that could provide insights for future decision-making was a major landmark in integrated, global learning (OECD, 2023).
3. Providers needed to scale up support for **alternative data-gathering methods** and enhanced national monitoring and statistical capacities amid the pandemic. An array of rapid socio-economic assessments using joined-up monitoring approaches were conducted in a majority of ODA-eligible countries, often with an SDG lens included, which served as a shared evidence

base for development co-operation programming in 2020-21. At the same time, the pandemic caused delays and significant data gaps in partner country statistics, which might have encouraged development co-operation providers to rely on one-off or parallel data collection processes to compensate for the gaps in country data.

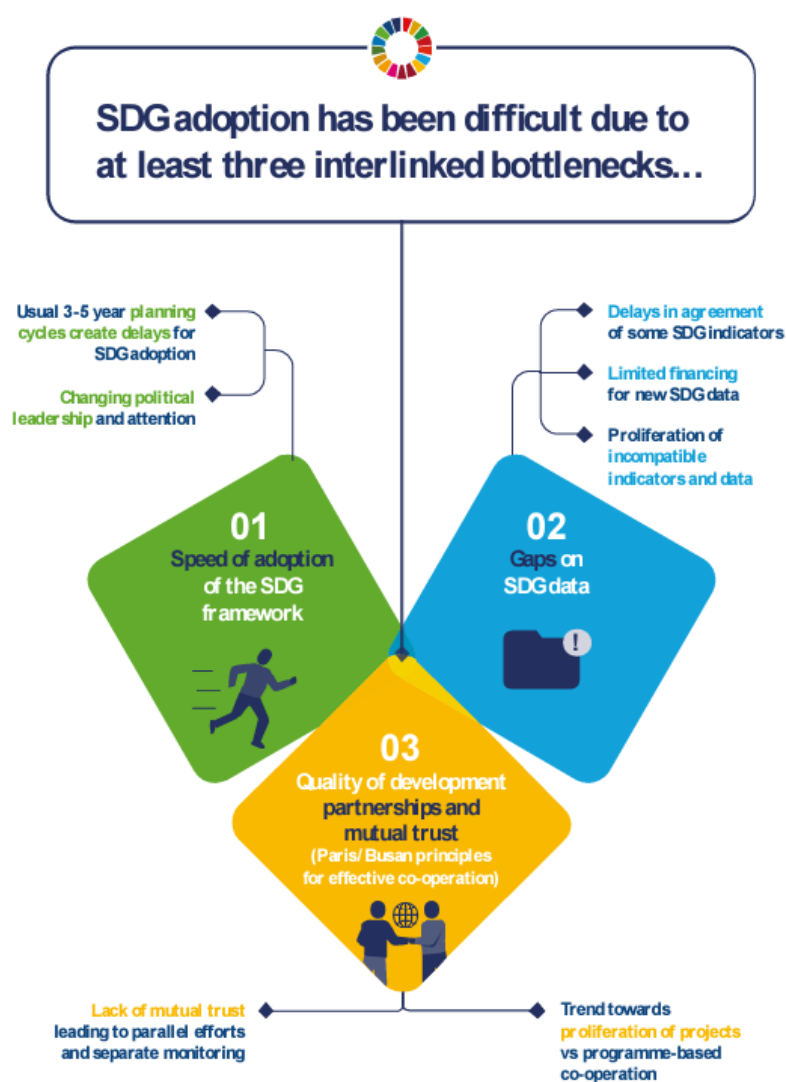
The pandemic offered an opportunity to unblock some of the institutional bottlenecks discussed above, adapt norms and processes, and adopt bolder, joined-up approaches to face the scale of the current and future challenges ahead.

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on (Guerrero-Ruiz, Verger, & Malhotra, Managing for sustainable results in development co-operation in uncertain times, 2020)

4. Overcoming bottlenecks in SDG alignment

Adopting a global standard is always challenging, and this is the case as governments and development partners around the world attempt to integrate the SDG framework into their policies and development programmes. Infographic 4.1 summarises the key issues that *SDG adopters* face.

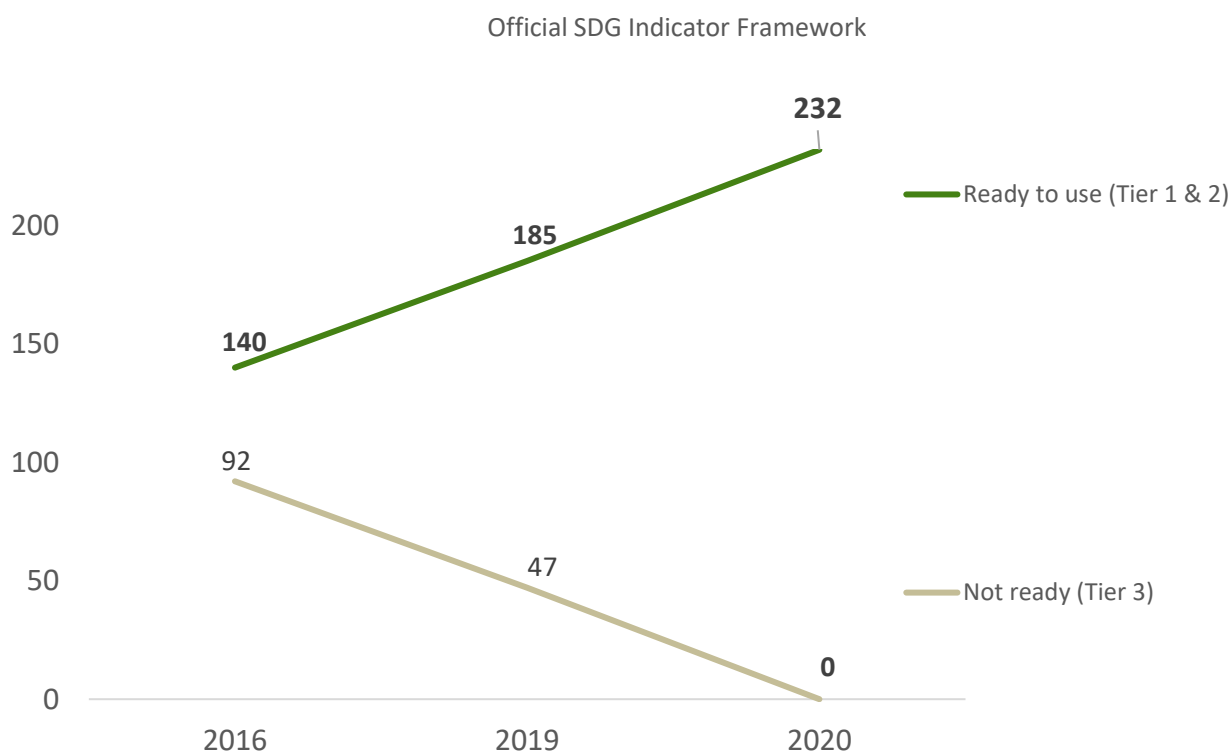
Infographic 4.1. Why SDG adoption in development co-operation has been difficult



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the comparative set of country case studies and surveys completed by development partners.

On the technical side, delays in completing the SDG indicator framework (until 2020, see Figure 4.1), coupled with the intrinsic characteristics of each specific indicator² (see statistical analysis in Annex Table A B.1), led to limited uptake and data collection for significant parts of the SDG framework.³

Figure 4.1. Readiness of official SDG indicators over time



Source: Authors' elaboration on the basis of (UN, 2023)

On the political and organisational side, geopolitical competition and proliferation in the development co-operation landscape, disruptions in planning cycles due to the pandemic and other local and global crises, and growing mistrust between certain partner countries and development partners, has led to less effective policy dialogue and country-level co-ordination around a shared results framework such as the SDGs.

² Our regression analysis suggests that SDG adopters privilege indicators that: reflect outcomes and impacts; data is widely available for most countries; data can be aggregated up or disaggregated (to report to key stakeholders); results can be more easily attributed to own actions, ideally in absolute (value) terms; and the indicator has a variety of domestic and international data sources (alternatives). SDG indicators that are typically included in other countries and organisation's results frameworks are also more frequently included due to diffusion and hegemonic practices.

³ The "limited use of a given SDG indicator – lack of SDG data" combination is a phenomenon which is self-reinforcing and can only be countered with significant collective action, investments and mutual commitment to transition to new measurement standards.

4.1. Enablers of SDG adoption

Our comparative study across Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar, Peru, Samoa and Uganda, enriched by technical dialogues in Sierra Leone, Malawi, Tanzania and Saint Lucia (2022-23), identified effective strategies to integrate the SDG framework into international development co-operation, and to stimulate collaboration for greater collective impact.

a) Political leadership on SDG alignment

Integrating the SDG framework into development co-operation policies, budgets and monitoring systems requires sustained political leadership. Mainstreaming the SDGs adequately and comprehensively is a complicated task both technically and organisationally. It necessitates redefining objectives in line with the SDGs, establishing clear methodologies to achieve them, promoting cross-sector approaches with appropriate structures, systems, guidance and capacities, and strengthening monitoring systems. This transformation involves managing trade-offs with internal institutional dynamics, and requires a sound and coherent change-management process. To overcome these obstacles over time, leadership must champion the transition process.

Political leadership means placing the SDGs at the core of politics. For example, all development partners in **Bangladesh** have followed the country's leadership in SDG alignment. Its national plan and policies place the SDGs front and centre, driving line ministries and development partners to adopt them and guide policy and action with SDG results in focus. Similarly, the **European Commission** made the SDG framework a core focus of development co-operation in 2017. Planning and monitoring of results are progressively focusing on SDGs in its partner country programmes.

b) Collaborative approaches enhance the SDG focus at country level

Many development organisations prioritise their own performance in development co-operation, often leading to risk aversion and a focus on short-term goals. This practice discourages crucial collaboration for sustainable SDG outcomes, especially in fragile situations. By contrast, organisations that emphasise SDG-alignment strategies and prioritise country ownership, partnerships, transparency, and mutual accountability, tend to maximise synergies, data-availability and, consequently, the impact of SDG-focused investments.

Examples of this were seen in Kenya and Uganda. In **Kenya**, development partners investing in the energy sector pooled their investments, significantly accelerating national electrification. Using harmonised SDG indicators for joint monitoring, electricity access increased from 18% to 75% in just seven years. Country-led joint monitoring and management of these investments were part of the drivers behind this success story. In **Uganda**, public institutions and various development partners are enhancing co-ordination, data pooling and support to increase the reliability and regularity of governance-related SDG 16 data. This includes growing administrative capacity to register newborns and monitor service quality, alongside joint investments in SDG 16 data.

c) Sound results-based management systems are a pre-requisite for SDG alignment

Many development partners have invested in improving their results-based approaches for development co-operation, enhancing their results-based management; a qualitative condition for meaningful alignment to the SDG framework (see Figure 3.6 and Annex Figure A B.2). As the figures for multiple partner countries

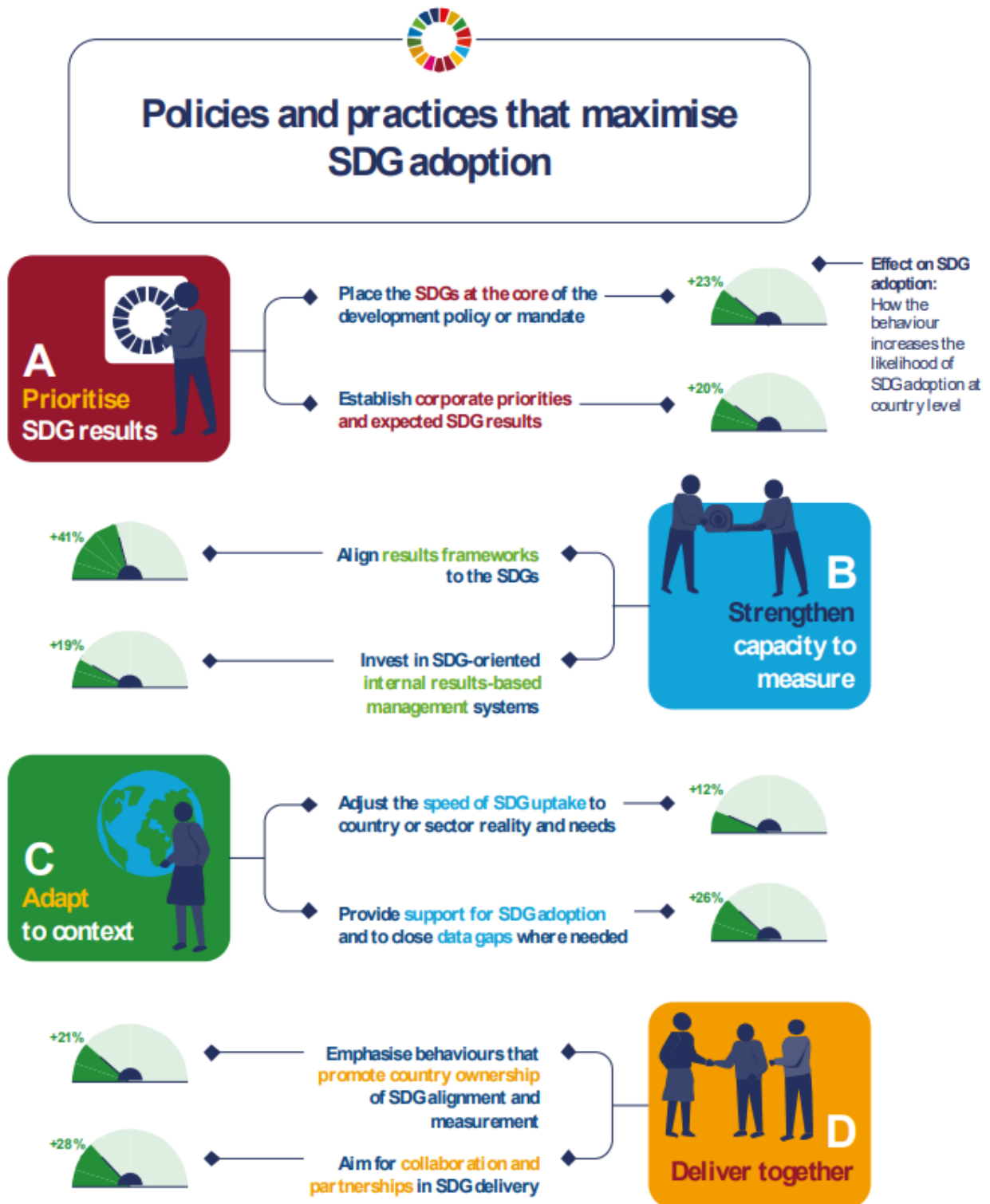
show, no development co-operation provider with weak results-based approaches has been able to effectively align to and use the SDG framework in development practice.

By contrast, development partners possessing a sound, well-resourced system, robust methodologies and a mature organisational culture of results and learning are better equipped to take full advantage of the SDG framework, to apply cross-sector approaches and account for synergies and trade-offs. Those with sufficient delegation of responsibilities to country offices and embassies are also more capable of flexibly tailoring their SDG-aligned frameworks to changing or complex country contexts. These partners have also been more active in supporting countries in their transition to SDG-oriented dialogue and policies.

4.2. Main findings: Good donorship practices for effective SDG adoption

Comparing the group of SDG adopters with those development partners that had a limited use of the SDG framework, a number of statistically significant differences in these two groups' practices provide insights into successful strategies for SDG alignment:

Infographic 4.2. Good donorship practices to maximise SDG adoption



Source: Authors' elaboration based on a comparative analysis of over 50 development partners, 7 country case studies and 3 country dialogues.

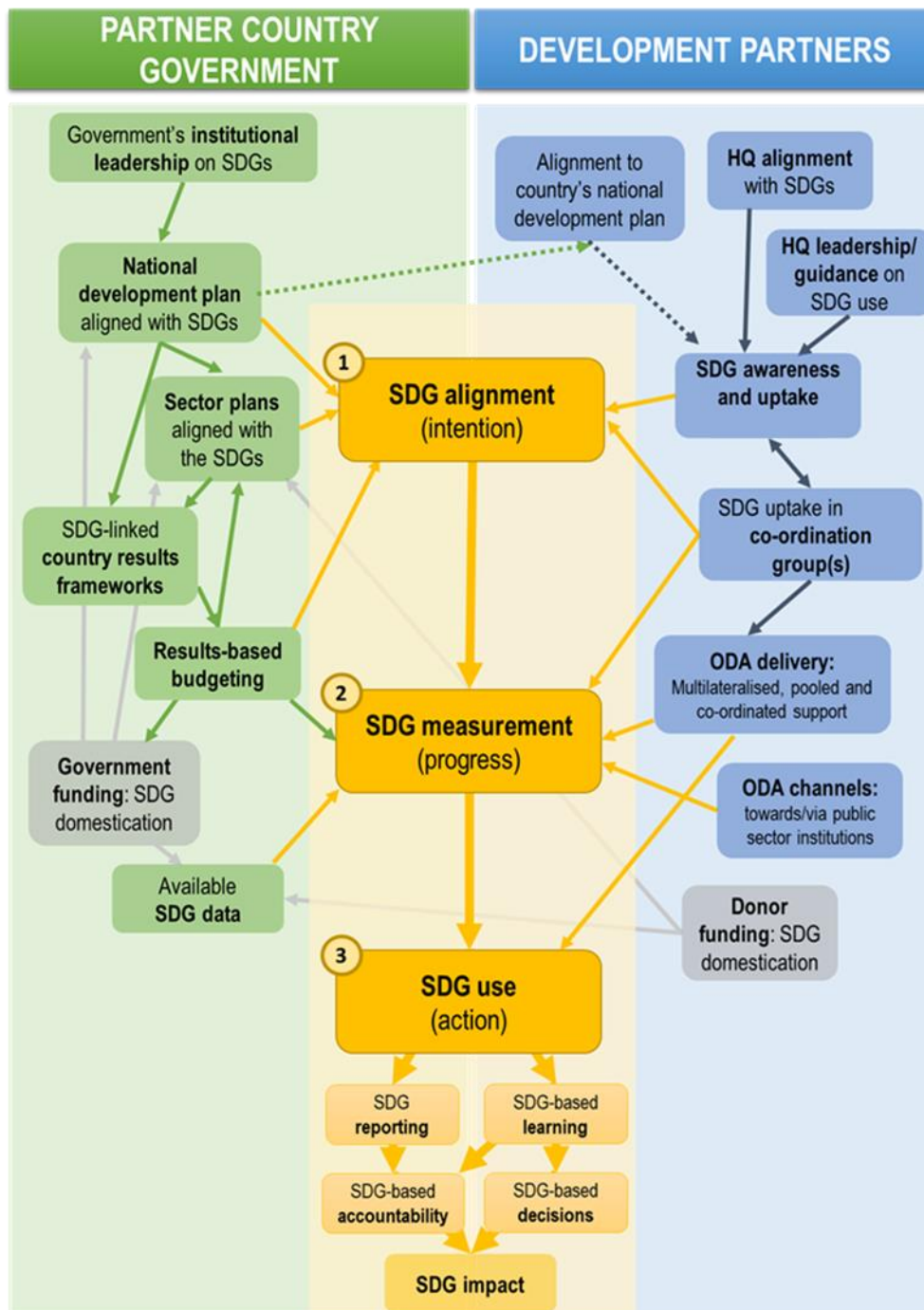
However, aligning development co-operation to the SDG framework in the abstract does not yield results. The comparative case studies, country diagnostics and subsequent country dialogues also revealed the

enabling conditions and behaviours that both governments and development partners need to put in place in order to maximise the collective use of the SDGs for a positive impact on sustainable development.

Figure 4.2 summarises the processes that lead to a successful integration and use of the SDGs in development practice – as observed in particular in Bangladesh during the 2016-20 period.

Figure 4.2. Actions that maximise SDG alignment, monitoring and use

From SDG alignment to SDG impact: Levers available to governments and development co-operation providers



4.3. Conclusion and suggested policy actions

This comparative study suggests that a successful alignment of development co-operation to SDG results is built on three broad foundations. First, successful “SDG adopters” promote the achievement of SDG results from the top and invest in systems and management practices to support the alignment process. Second, SDG adopters respect and invest in partner-country ownership, synchronising and adapting their development co-operation processes with those of their partner countries while supporting their own SDG transition. Finally, understanding that no country, ministry or agency can deliver on the SDGs alone, successful SDG adopters proactively partner with other country-level institutions and peers around specific SDG results. Events such as the pandemic can be used to trigger the organisational transformation that the SDGs require.

To support a fair and sustainable recovery on the road to 2030, development co-operation leaders, managers and policy makers manage this SDG transition successfully should consider how to manage the institutional transformation process from a political and organisational stand-point, in ways that enable organisations become more capable to connect and support country-led transitions towards sustainable development policies and practices, while building partnerships with others to enhance the collective impact of development efforts (OECD, 2021).

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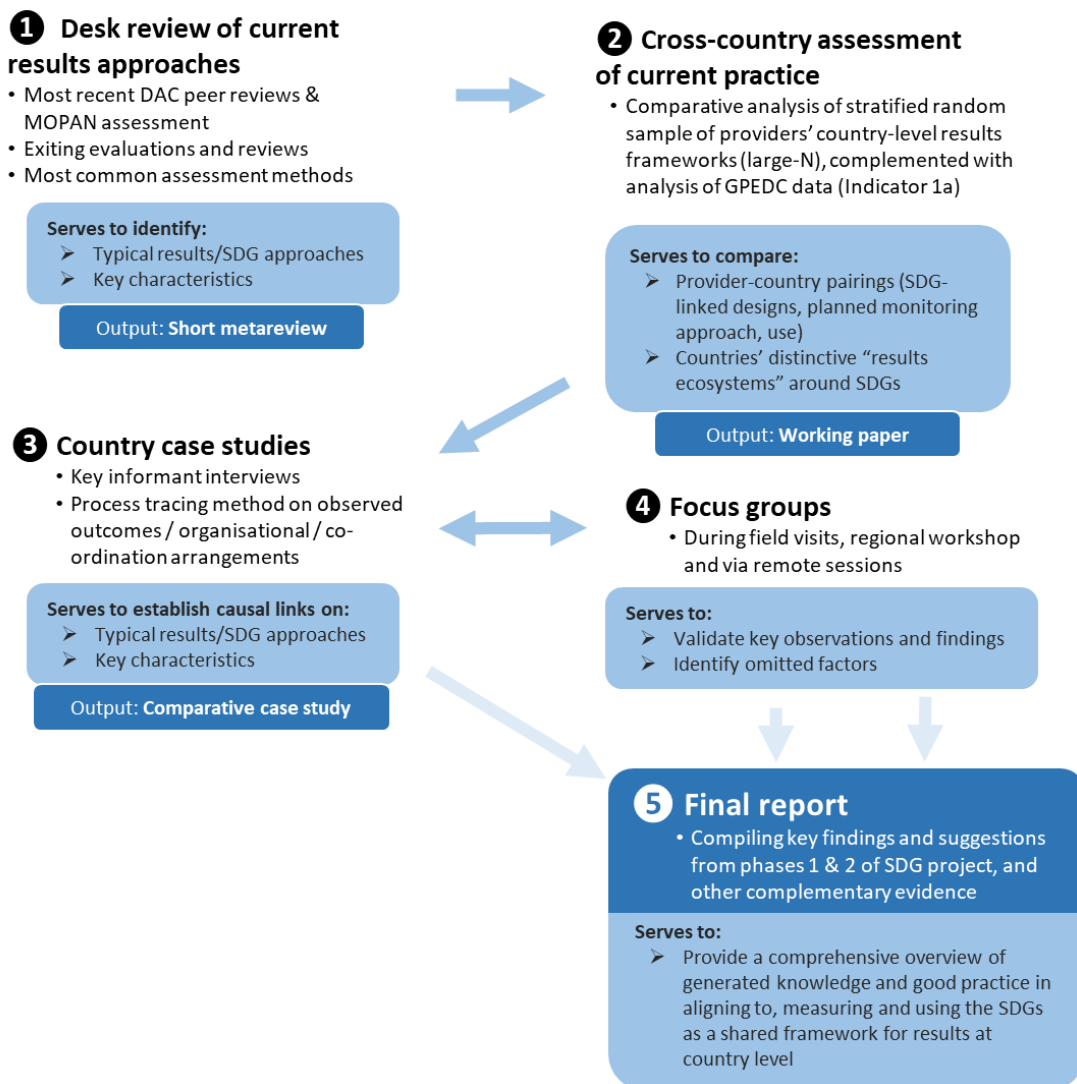
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Annex A. Analytical framework and methods

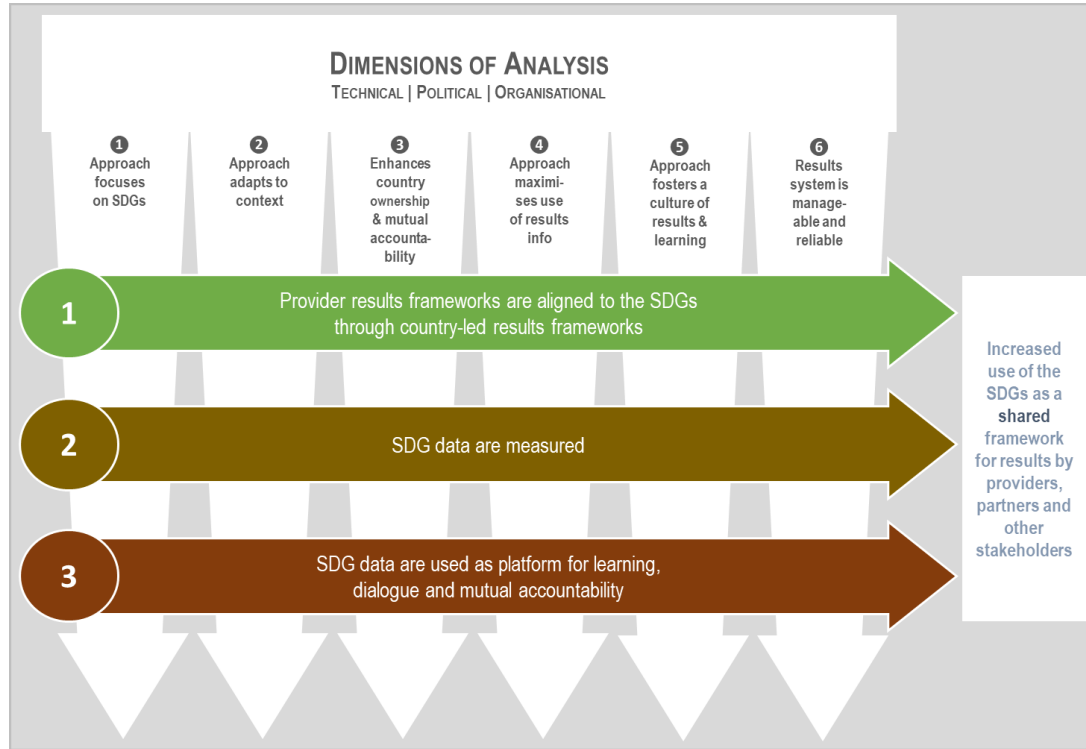
This Annex presents the mixed methods approach that was utilised to analyse the comparative use of the SDG framework at sector (OECD, 2019) and country level (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022). In all these sector and country case studies, the research team carried out a desk review of strategies, plans, portfolios and results frameworks, in-depth (45 to 60 minute) interviews with officials across government ministries and agencies, and with over 90% of country-based officials in the development co-operation system, complementary surveys, focus groups and closing sense-making workshops with all the participants.

Figure A A.1. Methodological approach

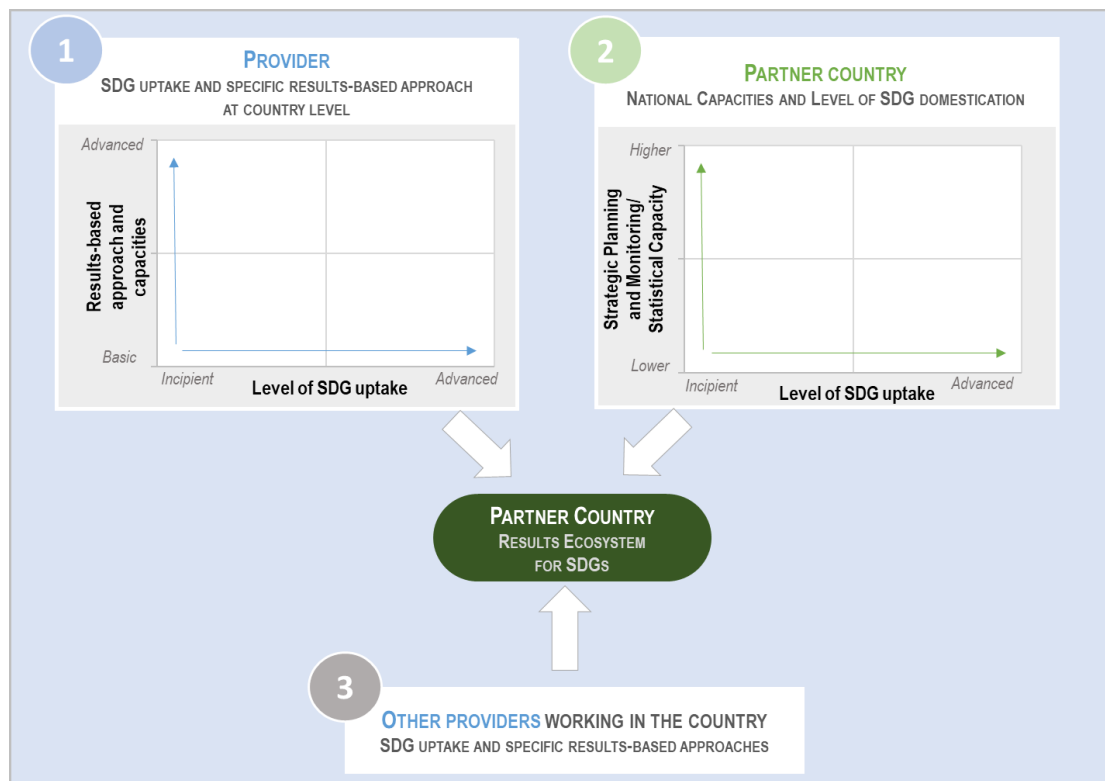


Analytical framework

Figure A A.2. Key dimensions of analysis and hypothesised country-partner interactions



Hypothesised interactions in SDG alignment at country level

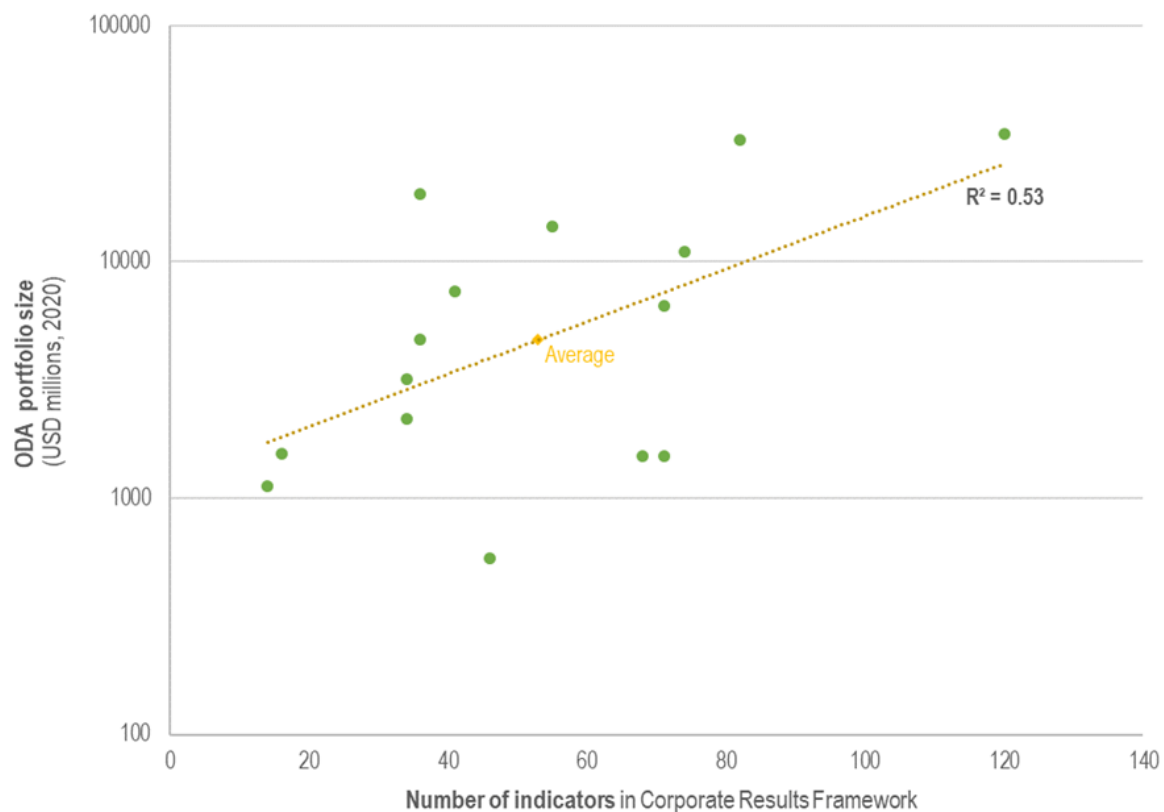


Annex B. Statistical Annex

This report argues that corporate results frameworks aligned to the SDG framework are a significant predictor of SDG indicator use at country level. The figure below also shows that larger ODA portfolios use a higher number of corporate results indicators. As a consequence, larger SDG-aligned donors can exert a broader influence in aligning country-level results frameworks across a wider number of sectors.

Figure A B.1. Number of indicators in corporate results frameworks

Larger ODA programmes tend to require more headline indicators to reflect their breadth of results



Note: The trend reflects a linear regression, reflecting a moderate correlation between portfolio size and the number of corporate results indicators used for strategy-level monitoring. Note vertical axis is expressed as a log of total ODA portfolio size (i.e. orders of magnitude).

Source: Sample of 16 diverse bilateral and multilateral organisations with publicly available corporate results framework as of 2021.

Table A B.1 presents the results of a regression analysis estimating the average marginal effects of a number of intrinsic or contextual characteristics of SDG indicators (independent variables) on the likelihood that the indicator is used in development co-operation results frameworks in practice (dependent variable). The full sample includes all 249 SDG indicators and sub-indicators. Further details and definitions can be found in (OECD, 2023).

Table A B.1. Intrinsic and contextual characteristics drive the usage of SDG indicators in results frameworks for development co-operation

Regression and average marginal effects: Use of SDG indicators in development co-operation frameworks
Likelihood of use based on SDG indicator characteristics

Independent variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	Z-score	P-value	95% Confidence Interval (Lower)	95% Confidence Interval (Upper)	Maximum effect (min-max)
Nature of indicator (i.e. from inputs to outcomes/impacts)	0.093	0.029	3.21	0.001	0.036	0.149	37%
UN tier classification	0.349	0.063	5.54	0	0.225	0.472	35%
Aggregability of the indicator	0.082	0.031	2.68	0.007	0.022	0.142	33%
Level of control (internal vs external)	0.077	0.013	6.06	0	0.052	0.102	31%
Number of data sources	0.048	0.027	1.8	0.072	-0.004	0.101	29%
Inclusion in country/corporate frameworks	0.113	0.058	1.96	0.05	0.000	0.226	23%
Relevance for development co-operation results	0.105	0.059	1.79	0.074	-0.010	0.220	21%
Type of change (absolute vs relative change)	0.157	0.055	2.87	0.004	0.050	0.265	16%
Levels of disaggregation	0.043	0.020	2.16	0.031	0.004	0.082	13%
Focused on national results (vs global)	0.167	0.193	0.86	0.388	-0.212	0.546	17%
Communication effectiveness	0.035	0.030	1.17	0.243	-0.023	0.093	7%
Complexity of SDG indicator	0.021	0.020	1.04	0.301	-0.018	0.060	6%
Number of synergies with other SDGs	-0.001	0.026	-0.04	0.969	-0.053	0.051	0%
Typical frequency of data collection	-0.001	0.001	-1.37	0.171	-0.003	0.001	0%
Leading vs lagging indicator	-0.006	0.065	-0.08	0.932	-0.134	0.123	-1%

Note: Sample of 249 SDG indicators and sub-indicators. The marginal effect is the change in the outcome for each unit change in the predictor, holding other factors constant. Each predictor's marginal effect is calculated and presented in this table along with the standard error, z-score, P-value, and 95% confidence interval. The last column presents the maximum effect on probabilities when we compare the minimum value for a given independent variable with its maximum (e.g. for the variable 'nature of indicator', indicators reflecting outcomes and impacts are 37% more likely to be included in development co-operation frameworks than input indicators).

Source: Authors' estimates based on analysis of the SDG indicator framework and data from (OECD, 2023) and (UN, 2023).

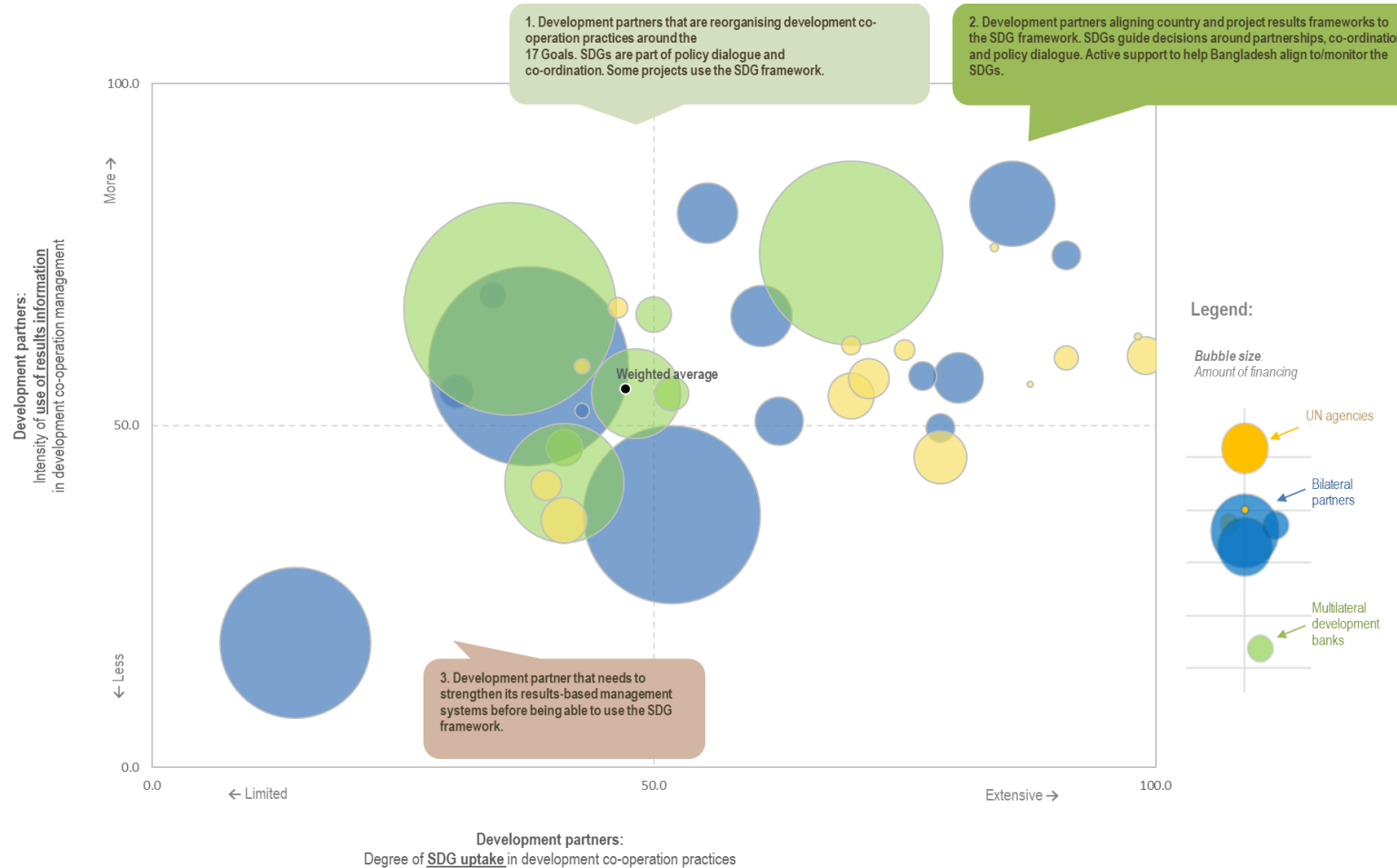
Several intrinsic and contextual characteristics drive the use of SDG indicators in development co-operation results frameworks. In particular, SDG indicators are more likely to be used if they are outcome-oriented (+37% likely use by development co-operation providers), current data availability is high (+35%), can be potentially aggregated (+33%) and disaggregated (+13%) into relevant categories, can be used to 'attribute' results to the provider's interventions (+31%), are frequently in national development plans and corporate results frameworks (+23%), and the issue that the indicator covers is substantively relevant to measuring development co-operation results (+21%). Other intrinsic characteristics of the SDG indicators included in the analysis have a more ambiguous effect, which is dependent on the specific context or circumstances.

Development co-operation: Quality of results-based approaches and SDG uptake

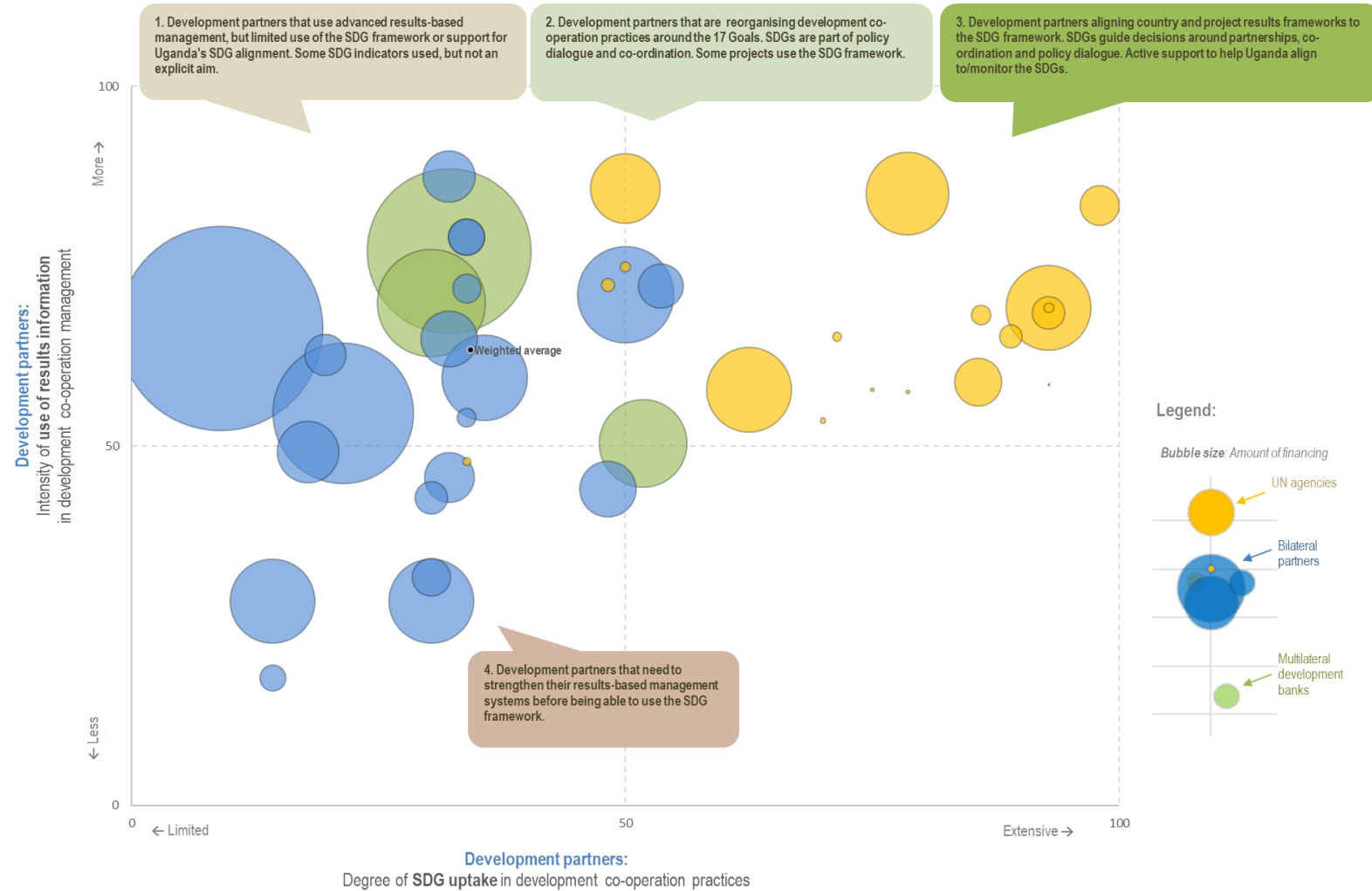
Regardless of the country's level of uptake of the SDGs and other context-specific characteristics, the quality of results-based approaches to delivery of development assistance is one major factor constraining the level of alignment and use of the SDG framework. See results for the four country comparisons (Bangladesh, Peru, Samoa and Uganda) in Figure A B.2 below, as estimated in (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Sachin, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Kirby, & Schnatz, 2021) (Guerrero-Ruiz, Sachin, & Schnatz, 2021) (Schnatz, Guerrero-Ruiz, & Sachin, 2022):

Figure A B.2. Alignment to SDG results amongst development co-operation providers in each country

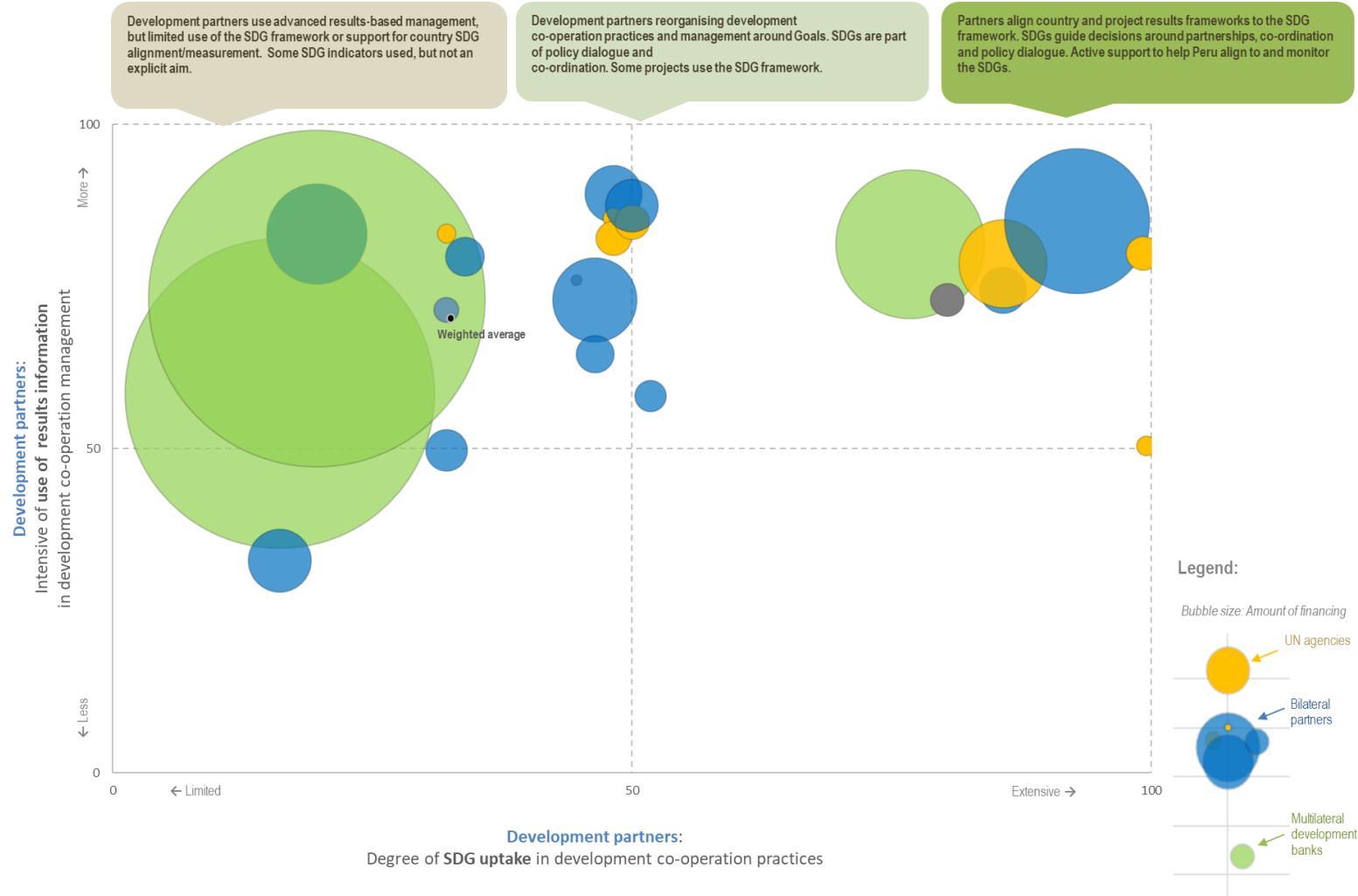
Bangladesh: Alignment to SDG results driven by strong country leadership and SDG-aligned frameworks & dialogue; Provider RBM capacity as only deterrent.



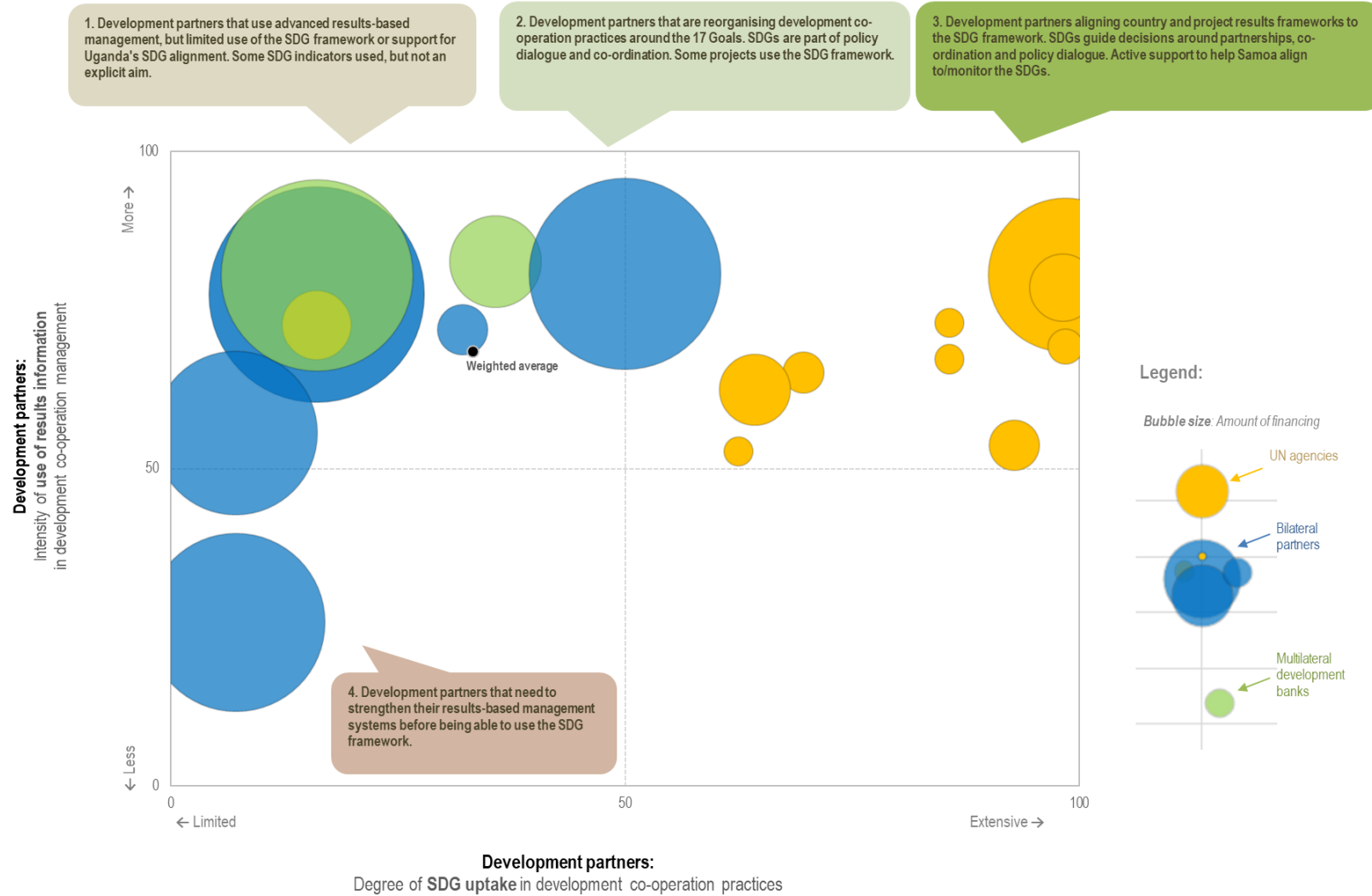
Uganda: Alignment to SDG results limited by low country use of SDGs in policy dialogue and limited SDG integration in country sector frameworks.



Peru: Alignment to SDG results mostly driven by headquarters; no capacity constraints but ownership uneven across government.



Samoa: Alignment to SDG results driven by headquarters; but lack of active use by the country (due to capacity constraints) disincentivises use by non-UN partners.



Annex C. List of development co-operation providers covered in the analysis

Bilateral providers

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Canada
China, P.R.
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
European Commission
France
Germany (BMZ, KfW, GIZ)
Iceland
India
Ireland
Japan
Korea
Kuwait
Latvia
Lithuania
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Qatar

Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States (USAID, MCC)

Multilateral providers

African Development Bank
Asian Development Bank
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
Caribbean Development Bank
Development Bank of Latin America (CAF)
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
European Investment Bank
FAO
Global Environmental Facility
Global Fund
IFAD
IICA
ILO
IMF
Inter-American Development Bank
IOM

Multilateral providers (continues)

Islamic Development Bank

OPEC Fund for International Development

UN Mine Action Service

UN Resident Co-ordinator Offices

UN Women

UNAIDS

UNCDF

UNCTAD

UNDP

UNEP

UNESCO

UNFPA

UNHCOHR

UNHSP

UNICEF

UNIDO

UNODC

UNOPS

UNWOMEN

WFP

WHO

World Bank Group

World Health Organisation