The Swedish Dialogue Forum Series on NDC and SDG alignment

Final report to the NDC Partnership on the events delivered in Vietnam, Tanzania, Cambodia, Zambia, and Uganda in 2018

SEI report
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The report draws out common themes and insights from the five dialogue forums and noteworthy differences between countries.
1. Introduction

During the spring of 2018, the Swedish embassies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Uganda delivered a series of dialogue forums focused on the implementation of Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and the alignment of NDCs with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) worked with the Swedish Foreign Ministry under the direction of Sweden’s Ambassador for Climate Change, Lars Ronnás, to support the Swedish embassies in planning and delivering the dialogue forums. SEI participated in each of the forums, giving presentations and moderating dialogue sessions. The dialogue series is part of Sweden’s contribution to the NDC-Partnership, which is a coalition of countries and institutions working to mobilize support and achieve ambitious climate goals while enhancing sustainable development.

This report begins with an introduction of the objectives of the NDC-Partnership and the objectives and structure of Sweden’s dialogue forum series. The report then draws out common themes and insights from the five dialogue forums and noteworthy differences between countries. The specific context for each country event and key discussion points and takeaways are outlined country-by-country in the final five sections.

2. The NDC-Partnership

Launched at COP22, the NDC-Partnership is made up of over 80 country members from developing and developed countries and a number of international institutions. The aims of the Partnership are to facilitate cooperation so that countries have access to the technical knowledge and financial support they need to achieve large-scale climate and sustainable development targets. The NDC Partnership is focused on building in-country capacity through:

- providing technical assistance and increasing knowledge sharing
- increasing access to climate support initiatives, best practices, analytical tools, and resources, and
- assisting partners to access financial support programmes and align development finance initiatives with NDC implementation.

The assistance the NDC-Partnership can provide includes supporting NDC policy formulation and implementation, developing knowledge products and platforms, helping countries to mobilize resources, and designing monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

3. Objectives of the Swedish Dialogue Forums

The objective of the series of national dialogue forums is to explore the opportunities, interlinkages and value of aligning climate policies and NDCs with development policies, specifically for SDG implementation. The aim for the Swedish Government has been to encourage discussion and debate among key stakeholders within each target country on how to address the imperatives of reinvigorating growth, improving livelihoods, and tackling climate change. In short, the forums aid in the search for a modern development model that can help to solve the current challenges of our societies. The dialogues were designed to help facilitate shared understanding on the degree of interaction and alignment between policies for advancing NDCs and SDGs. Consistent with the approach of the NDC-Partnership, each event in the dialogue series was tailored to the national context.

Uganda, Zambia, and Vietnam are currently members of the NDC-Partnership, while Tanzania and Cambodia are not. The Swedish Foreign Ministry encouraged Swedish embassies whose engagement work matched with the dialogue forum series’ project plan and timeline to participate, rather than only approaching embassies in countries that were already members of the NDC-Partnership. However, the results from each dialogue are highly relevant to the mandate of the NDC-Partnership.

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1. [http://ndcpartnership.org/about-ndc-partnership](http://ndcpartnership.org/about-ndc-partnership)
4. Structure of the dialogues

The dialogues delivered were each thematic in nature and tailored to the national priorities for development and core topics of interests. In general, the dialogues were designed to address what it means to pursue climate-compatible development policies, the priorities and challenges of adapting to climate change, development benefits when implementing NDCs, and strategies for addressing possible trade-offs between climate and development agendas.

The dialogues were set at the national level and decision makers from diverse, but relevant, national ministries were partners in each of the dialogues. Regional, city and local government representatives were also targeted by the Swedish embassies along with private sector stakeholders, local business leaders, NGOs, civil society organisations, research institutes, and youth groups.

The format for the dialogues varied depending on the local partners the Swedish embassy engaged with. However, given the goal of bringing together decision makers, local experts, and a variety of stakeholders to exchange knowledge and experience on climate and development goals, the preferred format was for shorter thematic expert presentations followed by audience participation in both group discussions and open seminar-style moderated discussions. Panel Q&As in the plenary sessions were also commonly used. The dialogue forums were designed in this way to maximise the possibility for participants to engage in dialogue with high-level representatives, expert presenters, and each other. The events with more participatory approaches tended to address a wider variety of issues, in particular in relation to local-level experiences. Those events structured around expert presentations tended to be more focused thematically. The choice between these approaches depended on the aims and topics of interest for the partners to the events.

5. Summary of outcomes

This section summarises common themes from the dialogue series as a whole and highlights some interesting differences between the events in different countries. The context of each country event and specific topical takeaways are outlined country by country in the five sections following this summary.

Participants

One highly positive outcome of the dialogue series was the ability of the Swedish embassies to attract participation from an impressive range of stakeholders. Each event was organised in collaboration with national-level decision makers and the events attracted policy makers from both national and local levels, government officials, the private sector, international organisations, NGOs and civil society, and researchers. Dialogues involving youth engagement were particularly dynamic. Several embassies also incorporated businesses with sustainable products and services such as providing safe low-emissions energy, health and sanitation services, and climate adaptation methods and technologies.

Policy coherence

The central motivation for the dialogue series was to create a forum for discussion on the linkages between the NDC and SDG development agendas and their practical implementation. For all the countries in the dialogue series, the importance of embedding NDC implementation within a broader development agenda was a clear and natural point of departure. Moreover, linkages between the NDC and SDG agendas were widely recognised by stakeholders and reflected in national policies and planning. However, it was at the event in Cambodia that the most specific discussions on the importance of working to better ensure coherence between national NDC policies and policies for the advancement of the SDGs took place. This reflects that policy coherence was a thematic focus for the event in Cambodia.

The event in Vietnam provided an interesting example of the practical importance of policy coherence. Concretely, participants discussed problems that had arisen due to a lack of coordinated and shared policy between river management authorities and coastal zone management authorities, such as erosion created by hydroelectric stations and illegal sand extraction. The Vietnam event also stood out as most
explicitly raising the prospects for collaboration with Swedish agencies to build capacity for coherent SDG implementation. This was a result of the participation of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management in the event and the fact that the Government of Vietnam is currently in the process of developing its new Maritime Strategy for 2020.

Capacity building and implementation
The two most common themes throughout the dialogue series were the need for capacity building and awareness raising, and the need to translate national climate and development policy into effective implementation. Capacity building was conceived of in broad terms and participants pointed to needs among both decision makers and the private sector. The importance of improving capacity at the local level to both adapt to climate change and to implement national policy was most prominent in the cases of Uganda and Zambia. This may reflect that these two dialogue forums were the most participatory in nature, with audience members playing a large role in determining the points of discussion during the events. Other common topics included the need to integrate climate and sustainability into policies across ministries and agencies, incorporation of sustainability thinking into business models, and the importance of knowledge dissemination, education, and training, particularly for young people.

With respect to implementation, a common topic of discussion were the gaps between fairly well-developed national policies and the implementation of those policies at regional and local levels. The importance of increased collaboration within government and between government, business, and civil society was another widely shared theme. The Swedish Embassy in Lusaka organised a second forum at the University of Zambia with academics working on research related to national planning and the actual implementation of new technologies. At this event the importance of forward-looking research and planning to address combined climate, energy, agricultural, and development issues was particularly stressed. Other events highlighted the importance of more research on the impacts of climate change to ensure effective planning and resource allocation.

Financing
The need for financing to achieve ambitious national goals and plans was a common theme in all the events. Access to international climate and development finance was one dimension of the dialogues. The contingency of ambitious national NDC and SDG policies on external financing was most explicitly addressed in the event in Uganda. However, there was also clear discussion at this event and others on the need to better mobilise local financing, on addressing challenges in local financial markets, and on the high capital costs for local sustainable businesses. The importance of sustained financing sources was also identified, for example for effective technological deployment. The events also highlighted the need for investment and financing roadmaps for NDC/SDG implementation.

Inclusive communication and education
Several of the events stressed challenges associated with the adoption of new norms and practices as important for achieving new and sustainable development models, as opposed to problems purely of technological availability or costs. The importance of educating young people on climate and sustainability issues and facilitating youth engagement were also mentioned in several of the events as one important means to addressing these challenges. Further, the need for communication and education to be inclusive by targeting women and vulnerable rural populations was discussed. The events that adopted a more participatory design tended to emphasise communication and education to a greater extent.

Trade-offs
Despite the clear buy-in to new sustainable development models reflected in national policy and in the discussions advanced in each of the dialogue forums, concerns about trade-offs between development and environmental goals were common themes. The importance of identifying trade-offs in order to manage them and the importance of identifying solutions that address poverty and the needs of rural groups were key themes at several events. Development policies aiming for swift industrialisation were seen as potentially in conflict with environmental sustainability. This concern was most explicitly discussed
at the event in Tanzania, and one key message was that multiple environmental challenges in the country could inhibit economic growth. However, although there were perspectives that development should take priority over environmental impacts over the short-term, there were also perspectives highlighting that the costs of waiting to address climate and other environmental issues are likely to be very high.

Hanoi, Vietnam – 5 and 6 March 2018

The Embassy of Sweden in Vietnam contributed to the dialogue forum series through participation in the 6th Vietnam International Water Week. Lars Ronnås participated in the conference’s opening plenary session on Water and the SDGs. The Embassy of Sweden also organised a session entitled Source to Sea in collaboration with the Director General of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI), SEI, and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). A study visit to the Nha Trang coastal area was also organised to investigate the damage to tourism and marine protection infrastructure from the powerful typhoon that hit the area in 2017.

The Source to Sea sessions addressed experiences from Asia and the Nordic countries on how to initiate sustainable actions among upstream actors to reduce negative land-based impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems supporting blue and green economic opportunities. A central question in the seminar was to identify the most important source-to-sea opportunities to improve the present management of large river and connected marine systems in Asia.

Key discussion points:

• Challenges of weak cooperation between the relevant water/maritime institutions (e.g. river vs coastal, and national vs local) in Vietnam undermining effective integrated water management. Resulting problems include illegal sand extraction and erosion associated with hydroelectric stations.

• Establishment of a joint management committee for the entire river system, with the aim of developing more sustainable management for the entire river system and the coastal area between.

• Significant interest expressed among Vietnam’s relevant authorities in learning from and utilizing Sweden’s unique water expertise, especially in marine planning. Cooperation envisioned as an input into Vietnam’s current development of a new Maritime Strategy for 2020.

• Specific interest expressed in further studying the implementation of Sweden’s ‘Source 2 Sea’ strategy and investigating its relevance for the Vietnamese context.

• The need to identify future green and blue economy opportunities. The importance of freshwater recycling was highlighted.

• The need to find new solutions to the problems that arise due to increasing climate change. A particular focus on mainly poor people in rural areas, coastal areas and in rapidly growing cities.

• Smart green technological innovations were suggested as one of the most sustainable ways to address water-related environmental issues.

• Data availability and especially the organisational capacity to use water-related data was highlighted. Specifically, there were calls for using available data and available expertise in a more effective way for sustainable marine management and planning.

• The importance of regional cooperation was also highlighted as crucial given the rapid levels of growth in the region.

• Future cooperation between Vietnam and Sweden in the field of water and sea management was viewed as highly welcomed.
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania – 1 June 2018

The Embassy of Sweden, together with the Embassy of Norway, organised a dialogue forum on June 1st in partnership with the Office of the Vice President of Tanzania. The Minister of State January Makamba at the Vice President’s Office presided over the meeting with several ministers attending, including the Vice President.

- The event attracted some 150 attendees and focused on three key themes:
  - The impact of environmental degradation on Tanzania’s development pathway.
  - The economic consequences of climate change for Tanzania.
  - The role of environmental management in Tanzania’s quest for industrialization.

The forum was structured around three moderated panel discussions on each theme. Each panel discussion started with an expert introduction to the topic. SEI experts introduced two of the themes and participated in the panels. A fourth and final panel drew on the discussion and lessons from the day with a focus on ways forward and recommendations. For each panel discussion, audience participants engaged with the panel.

Key discussion points:
- Concerns that numerous environmental challenges in Tanzania could inhibit economic growth.
- Engaged debates over the importance of focusing on economic growth first and addressing environmental challenges later or seeing environmental protection as key to sustained economic growth both now and into the future.
- The need to update knowledge on the economic impacts of climate change in Tanzania so that resources can be mobilised effectively. More generally, participants discussed the need for capacity building and raising competence levels on environmental issues and their potential economic impacts.
- The importance of adaptation for the agricultural sector in the context of expected population growth.
- The importance of taking action early on climate targets for economic reasons, i.e. early action means lower overall costs.
- Questions about how investors can advance industrialisation without undermining environmental goods and services. The importance of including environmental considerations in an industrialisation roadmap.
- The need to scale up payment for ecosystem services.
- The challenges associated with charcoal and land use change and the need for fuel switching.
- The need for more funding of R&D and to finance the scientific research and data needed to properly inform decision making. The need for researchers to present findings in a way that decision makers can understand and use was also discussed.
- The need to have different sectors and policy areas work together such as agriculture, energy, and environment.
- Proposed establishment of a carbon monitoring centre to work on climate change and prepare for REDD+. Also, the establishment of a national carbon monitoring programme to measure and verify carbon stock at a national level.
- Proposal that government should integrate environmental education in the national curriculum and provide funds for research and monitoring.
Lusaka, Zambia – 7 and 8 June 2018

The Embassy of Sweden in Zambia organised two back-to-back dialogue forums on June 7th and 8th. The first was in partnership with the Zambian Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the EU, and the UNDP. The second was in partnership with the University of Zambia.

Day one – 7 June

The day was structured around a combination of presentations, group discussions, and moderated dialogues. After opening remarks from the hosting partners, SEI set the stage for dialogue with a presentation on global climate impacts and global climate action. Following these opening sessions, the dialogue forum focused on two central themes.

The first was on the new structure developed by the Government of Zambia for the implementation of its NDCs and for the integration of Agenda 2030 into Zambia’s 7th National Development Plan. This was presented by a representative from Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. The second theme was on innovative and positive examples of technologies and methods for sustainable development and climate resilience, particularly related to bioenergy and agriculture. One of the examples presented was a business model for safe cookstoves fuelled by pellets on a pay-as-you-go system. The other example was of new agroforestry methods that deliver climate resilient agriculture and climate mitigation benefits. In addition to these themes, significant time was dedicated to four facilitated dialogue sessions that were moderate by SEI. The topics discussed in small groups and then again in plenary were:

- Good examples of working with mitigation in practice.
- How to improve energy services in a sustainable way.
- Good examples of working with adaptation and resilience.
- The challenges and opportunities for cooperation among stakeholders.

These dialogue sessions were designed to give participants opportunities to both share their own work with climate and development goals and to raise questions for discussion among all participants. The combination of presentations, Q&As, moderated dialogues, and a high-level panel with Q&A sessions resulted in a highly participatory event with very positive knowledge sharing and feedback from participants.

Key discussion points from day one:

- Discussion of the policy programme at the national level for the implementation of NDCs. Clear policy signals from government on the priority of its NDCs.
- Discussed the clear linkages in national NDCs plans to national SDG objectives in areas such as adaptation and food security, access to water and sanitation, energy access, and land use.
- Questions raised about implementation capacity at different levels of government.
- Highlighted ongoing work on sustainable fuel sources and land use issues.
- Discussed the need to incorporate renewable energy at the building faze in urban areas.
- Discussed the need for policies supporting sustainable construction and business models.
- The need to work with communication and local action, in particular needs to focus on youth engagement highlighted.
- Call to assist communities to self-strengthen and to promote self-governance for climate resilience.
• The need to focus on the local level when addressing climate impacts including more data and more focus on gender dimensions.

• The need to develop solutions tailored to poor rural populations.

**Day two – 8 June**

Day-two began with the same presentation from SEI and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources from day one. The main theme for day two at the University of Zambia was the role of research in advancing the NDCs and the SDGs. The topics that researchers presented on included: climate impacts on agriculture in the region, national solar energy potential and implementation needs, and climate and hydropower. The presentations indicated that climate impacts on agriculture and hydro-power are already apparent, and that Zambia has high potential to exploit solar energy but that there is a need for improved support systems (training, financing, and deployment).

After the presentations a high-level panel including representatives from the Government of Sweden and the Swedish Embassy in Zambia, leadership from the University of Zambia, Zambian government representatives, and academic researchers took questions from the audience in a 'fish bowl' format moderated by SEI. The audience was comprised chiefly of students and teachers from UNZA. Again, the format for the dialogue resulted in a highly participatory event and very positive feedback from participants.

**Key discussion points from day two:**

• There is a need for more research and forward planning to address the combined challenges of climate change and energy and food demand.

• The importance of preparing young people for the reforms required in addressing climate change.

• The need for inclusive communication and education, especially for women and vulnerable rural groups.

• The need for public policies that break the connections between economic growth and environmental damage.

• The clear international momentum on climate targets and the SDGs despite set-backs in the US position.

• Economics increasingly driving sustainable development rather than policy alone, e.g. solar energy becoming increasingly economically competitive.

• The importance of good weather information and the uptake of climate resilient farming methods.

• Deforestation as a key challenge for Zambia to achieve its NDCs.

• The need for policy to support the dissemination and use of the high levels of knowledge we already have on the new development pathways.

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia – 7 June 2018**

The Embassy of Sweden in Cambodia organised a dialogue forum on June 7th in partnership with the Government of Cambodia’s National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) and UNDP. The theme for the forum was ‘Integrating Nationally Determined Contributions in National Development Plans – International best practices and the way forward for Cambodia.’ The event was a full day with three sessions and attracted participants from the Cambodian government, the private sector, research institutes, civil society, and the media.

The dialogue forum was implemented within the framework of support to the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance, a strategic partner to the embassy. The event was the first ever opportunity for an
inter-ministerial discussion on the implementation of Cambodia’s NDCs. The conference focused on three key themes:

- Climate change, economic growth and SDGs: what’s the evidence on synergies and trade-offs?
- Exploring NDC - SDG Linkages.
- Translating NDC/SDG commitments into a coherent development vision for Cambodia.

Each session was structured around three presentations by panellists, followed by reflections from a senior respondent and a moderated discussion including questions from the audience. SEI presented its work on NDC-SDG linkages and its mapping of these linkages in existing Cambodian climate and development policies in the second thematic session, and moderated another session as well.

**Key discussion points:**

- The extensive linkages between NDCs under the Paris agreement and the SDGs beyond SDG 13. There was clear consensus that NDC implementation promotes multiple SDGs, and that there are opportunities to further strengthen the co-benefits of these two policy agendas, including through identifying and managing potential trade-offs.

- How the Government of Cambodia is integrating resilient, low carbon, green and inclusive development and resource efficiency agendas into national and sectoral development plans. The message from the Government of Cambodia was that current development policies and strategies in Cambodia are strongly aligned with the SDG agenda and new national development plans are strongly integrating NDC and SDG objectives.

- Important implementation challenges, such as: sustainable financing mechanisms, multi-stakeholder collaboration and inter-sector cooperation, technological availability, and improving awareness and practices among relevant stakeholders.

- Policy coherence as a key challenge, both across ministries and across regions, due to variation in conditions at local levels. Policy coherence is also something that needs to be addressed over time to ensure effective long-term planning.

- A need to increase awareness of the benefits of clean energy production and energy efficiency as important for the take up of available technologies and private sector capacity in Cambodia.

- Capacity development and awareness across public and private stakeholders was repeatedly identified as an important issue.

- Several speakers highlighted the clear economic, business, and adaptation benefits of investing in green energy and efficiency.

- Adaptation as a clear priority given that significant impacts climate change is expected to have on economic growth in Cambodia even if global warming is kept below 2°C.

- Given Cambodia’s ambition of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030, more understanding was called for on trade-offs between sustainability and development agendas. Policies for managing trade-offs are required, and questions about how Cambodia can best combine industrialisation policies with the SDGs need to be addressed.

- The development of effective policy incentives for private sector investment.

- Rapid population growth combined with urbanisation calls for increased focus on green city planning.
Kampala, Uganda – 19 June 2018

The Embassy of Sweden in Uganda organised a dialogue forum on June 19th in partnership with the Ministry of Water and Environment and with participation from UNDP Uganda, and the NDC-Partnership. The day was structured around two formats: first, a series of presentations, followed by a dialogue session and a high-level panel.

After opening remarks from the hosting partners, SEI set the stage for the dialogue with a presentation on global climate impacts and global climate action. Following these opening sessions, presentations were delivered on the linkages between NDCs and SDGs in the Ugandan context, progress on NDC implementation in Uganda, and on the work of the NDC-Partnership in Uganda and in the region. Following the presentations, a facilitated dialogue session was moderated by SEI. The dialogue session was structured around small group discussions among participants, followed by interaction with a high-level panel on the topics raised by local stakeholders in group discussion. The overall theme for the dialogue session was on the opportunities and challenges of advancing climate and development goals in Uganda.

Key discussion points:

• Clear policy signals at the national level for the implementation of NDCs.

• Clear linkages in national plans between NDCs and SDG objectives in areas such as access to energy, energy and land use change, adaptation and food security, and access to water and sanitation.

• However, concern expressed that ministries and agencies continue to work in silos, and that there is a need for more collaboration between agencies as well as more coherence between NDCs, development, and environmental policy.

• Clear signals from policy makers on the need for external financing to achieve an ambitious national climate agenda. Clear need to improve the conditions for domestic financing sources as well.

• Extensive focus in discussions on how to translate good national plans into effective implementation. Implementation faces numerous challenges with respect to levels of awareness, capacity, education, financing, and infrastructure at the local level. This includes capacity building for decision makers at both national and local levels and for the private sector.

• Questions raised on how to prioritise targets and how to address trade-offs between NDCs and SDGs. For example, how do we reduce emissions and increase industrialisation at the same time?

• Concern that there is currently too little engagement with the private sector in the implementation of NDCs and SDGs. A need to develop capacity in the private sector to see sustainability as an essential business process and also a need to create the policy and economic conditions that will allow private actors to invest.

• Discussions around access to cheap capital as crucial, as well as national roadmaps defining the investment and financing needs.

• The need to ensure that NDC implementation is addressing poverty reduction.

• Discussion on the challenges of poverty combined with multiple sustainability challenges including rapid urbanization, flooding, degradation of natural resources, insufficient access to energy, and vulnerability to shocks.

• Significant focus on the need for education, training and research. What are the skills needed to deliver on climate and development targets and how do we enhance youth engagement and youth employment?
• The importance of ensuring inclusion of rural areas and other vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

• Energy as a key sector facing multiple complex issues: e.g. weighing the role of renewable energy in relation to oil and gas, the need to look not just at the supply side but how to increase the demand side, poverty as a cause of unsustainable fuel sources, mismatches between centralisation of energy planning, delivery at local levels, and the potential for local energy generation.