



Enabling Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals

A Co-Creation Workshop - 20 September 2016

Context

Following the official launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Development Practice Committee (DPC) of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) set itself the task of enabling ACFID members to take a coherent approach to their programming so that programs consider the impact of all the SDGs. This focus was identified in the context of ACFID's broader engagement with the SDGs and through broad consultation with the ACFID membership.

Rationale

The idea for a co-creation workshop emerged from discussion among DPC members tasked with actioning the task outlined above. Consultation with ACFID members and a review of known engagements with the SDGs indicated that most organisations were able to effectively engage with the SDGs at a surface level. For example, by identifying specific goals that linked to aspects of their organisation's work. However, deeper engagement with the SDGs as a whole at the level of program design, implementation and impact measurement was seen as far more challenging.

The co-creation workshop concept set out to bring together a diverse range of ACFID members, academics, private sector representatives and others with an interest in exploring what a deeper engagement with the SDGs might mean for Australian NGOs and a range of practical tools that could assist ACFID members in doing this.

Process

The co-creation workshop followed the general outline of a human-centred design process, drawing largely on methodologies and approaches from www.ideo.org. The workshop focused primarily on the three middle stages of a human-centred design process; define, ideate and prototype. The first process step of empathize was largely addressed by having two thirds of participants who are intended end-users of the tools. The final step of test will be done post-workshop by ACFID members who volunteer to test one or more of the prototypes.

The morning session of the workshop was largely devoted to defining and ideas, particularly in terms of building a shared understanding of what deep engagement with the SDGs might look like and some sharing of ideas for tools or approaches that could assist ACFID members. The afternoon session was largely spent on a rapid prototyping and feedback exercise to develop drafts of actual tools. At the end of the workshop participants shared feedback on the process and ideas about appropriate next steps.

Outcomes

The co-creation workshop had set a goal of developing a conceptual draft for a toolkit containing between two and four tools or approaches that could provide practical assistance to ACFID members wishing to engage more deeply with the Sustainable Development Goals. The intent was for these tools or approaches to be drafted and, with some additional refinement, to be ready for pilot testing

with ACFID members. This was largely achieved during the course of the workshop with four tools or approaches being completed at an early draft stage. These are described in summary below.

Transformational Development

A guided thinking and discussion tool applicable to program design or review based around the Rao-Kelleher change matrix. The intended purpose is to enable ACFID members to challenge assumptions about how transformational change happens and what our role/contribution is while highlighting the importance of systemic approaches to change. The tool encourages users to plan or review their program activities against the four domains of the Rao-Kelleher change matrix and proposes a series of guiding discussion/reflection questions that cover three primary applications: 1) program design and impact measurement; 2) collaboration and coordination with other change agents; and 3) communicating with stakeholders and supporters.

Systems Thinking Approach

Consists of several related concepts that would enhance ACFID members' capacity to utilize systems thinking in program design processes. One concept focuses on skilling up and proposes a series of one day workshops that focus on systems thinking, resilience thinking, triple bottom line and transformational approaches. A related concept involves using an action learning example to build depth and breadth as a proof of concept for using systems thinking for regional development to more efficiently deliver social impact. An in-depth example took a problem and developed a systems loop diagram to help demonstrate the value of systems thinking in identifying feedback loops and areas for intervention. A short video was proposed as a means of communicating the process.

Collaboration

An approach to stimulating collaboration amongst ACFID members and other development actors from civil society, private sector, government and academia or other institutions such as think-tanks. The process identified potential barriers to increased collaboration such as: competing priorities, silos, technology, resources, lack of information and competition. A mapping tool to identify: what is happening; who the actors are and what their strengths are; where the gaps are; and what collaboration exists is proposed. The tool might be a collective mapping exercise or a guideline for an individual ACFID member or group of members to use when planning an activity.

Measurement

Tackles the problem that many ACFID members don't yet have clear SDG measurement and reporting strategies and are not quite sure how to undertake the process of developing one. The product is a step-by-step guide to adapting and strengthening a member's approach to SDG reporting and measurement. The details of the guidance are still to be developed but would include several steps as follows: raising awareness of the SDGs and their relevance; reviewing the organisation's program against the SDGs both superficially and then in more depth; and finally a gap analysis to identify possible changes or adaptations to the organisations program measurement systems and approaches.

Opportunity for Further Engagement

ACFID is calling on members who have an interest in any of the above tools or approaches to contact the DPC regarding opportunities to work on further refining and pilot testing of the tools. If you have an interest please contact Kate Angus: KAngus@acfid.asn.au

This workshop is supported by the RDI



A collaboration between
the Australian Council for
International Development
and Australian universities