



# 6. LOCALISATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) FOR LIVING DELTAS

The analysis, application and spatially local adoption of SDGs at the delta context level is a core mission of the Living Deltas Hub. As a point of coordination and delivery of coherent and well understood policy instruments, the SDG work of the Hub provides a vital cross cutting link and has been notably successful in laying the groundwork for subsequent delivery of SDG centred development impact at the delta level.



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office



Climate change & biodiversity



Science, research, technology



Open societies & conflict resolution

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



## Achievements

The Hub tackles two key, interrelated challenges – (i) the need for effective monitoring of the SDGs in localised delta contexts and (ii) the need for inclusive and participatory monitoring of the SDGs that gives voice to disadvantaged and marginalised populations. Our response has already achieved significant impacts at local and global levels in engaging vulnerable and marginalised groups, building local capacity, and addressing COVID impacts on participation.

Experience across several contexts both within and outside the Hub’s scope reinforces the concept that “what gets measured, gets done”: effective monitoring of socio-ecological systems is essential to meeting delta sustainability challenges. Background experience of the Co-Is from co-designing methodologies for participatory and inclusive grassroots SDG monitoring with Sightsavers India, to foster attitudinal and policy change from the ‘bottom up’ is being delivered with the hub activities. This pilot has focused on a particular intersection of disadvantage - young people with disabilities - around SDGs 4 and 10. The current activity profile for the delta regions is outlined in below.

Data and monitoring for the SDGs is a priority challenge identified by all Hub countries, as outlined in the Voluntary National Reviews for Bangladesh (2020)<sup>1</sup>, India (2020)<sup>2</sup>, and Vietnam (2018)<sup>3</sup>. The challenge from a Hub perspective is localisation. Ensuring the inclusive participation of local communities and ‘left behind’ vulnerable and marginalised groups (women, youth, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, the poorest) is central to transforming delta futures through inclusive governance, and good practice in realising the SDGs<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26302VNR\\_2020\\_Bangladesh\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26302VNR_2020_Bangladesh_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26279VNR\\_2020\\_India\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26279VNR_2020_India_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19967VNR\\_of\\_Viet\\_Nam.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19967VNR_of_Viet_Nam.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> This is carefully outline in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development publication on What is a Good Practice? A framework to analyse the Quality of Stakeholder Engagement in implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda [link](#).

## Who benefits?

**Local and national government:** To build the capacity of local and national government to engage with the SDGs in a delta context, and improve policies for SDG implementation, we have focused on two provinces in Vietnam - Nam Dinh and Vinh Phuc (led by WARECOD). This involved directly embedding the SDG framework in future local initiatives. The initial stage of this process was completed through a series of 18 meetings with local government and Ministries, to establish joint working approaches mostly focused on delivery of basic services and social safety nets ('adaptive' and 'absorptive' capacities – SDG 1).

The first stage combines data collection, research, and impact. Meetings are designed to both deliver information and systematically research the dynamic between local and national policymaking on poverty reduction, via 9 focus group discussions with grassroots communities and a survey of 353 households withing the SDG1 indicator set. Deltas are dynamic and highly heterogeneous, both in ecosystems and population. Results from this research in these two provinces are now being combined with research on the Vietnamese national context for delivery and comparison testing in 2021-22 across all delta contexts.

Our work generate research-led solutions for co-developing more effective implementation strategies with national and local stakeholders in 2022-2024. Reflecting interdisciplinary research in the WP on the interlinkages between SDGs, these will incorporate issues of inclusion, climate change and biodiversity into current poverty alleviation agendas. The next stage of the work will build the capacity of local people, NGOs, and marginalised groups to monitor the SDGs for themselves through a series of community workshops in 2021-22 and, longer-term, establishment of fora for participatory SDG monitoring across the Delta regions.

The Hub has and continues to engage in the policy development community embedding the local SDG-based measures and assessment frameworks through the Vietnam Rivers Association (WARECOD: Hub partner, is one of the four executive board members). VRN undertakes independent monitoring and evaluation of water resources in Vietnam<sup>5</sup>.

**Impacts of COVID-19:** Our work pivoted to study the challenges for inclusivity posed by COVID-19 and has developed the Hub's global and regional leadership, with a Newcastle University-led team of Hub personnel formed a new partnership with UN DESA to generate global insights into COVID-19's impacts on SDG implementation and review at local and national levels.

The co-designed research finds (1) disadvantaged and marginalised groups, especially older people, people with disabilities, women and girls, and youth were most at risk of exclusion from SDG processes in the context of COVID-19, and (2) that pathways for meaningful and participatory stakeholder engagement had been hard-hit by the pandemic. This new evidence reinforces the urgent challenge for inclusion and participation and highlights the need for technological responses to COVID-19 that address the 'digital divide'.

The impact and stakeholder engagement was launched by the UN in April and engagement with this framework is central to the Hub's localised SDG framework; see Figure 1<sup>6</sup>. At the request of the UN Economic Commission for Asia-Pacific, Living Deltas and UN prepared a 'snapshot' report for the region for this year's Asia-Pacific Regional Forum for Sustainable Development<sup>7</sup>. Counterpart reports were then prepared for all the Regional Fora contributing to understanding and policy debates around the SDGs across the world.

Acknowledged by the UN as an important contribution to the policy debate on ensuring the inclusion of marginalised groups in the context of COVID-19, the report has influenced the work of the UN Expert Group on 'Building Back Better for Older Persons' (March 2021)<sup>8</sup>. Early results were presented to national and local governments at UN workshops in December 2020. Key findings and research-led solutions were presented to an audience of 150 states and stakeholders during a UN webinar in May 2021<sup>9</sup>. Regional UN bodies and the global UN SDG system, then, have been beneficiaries of Hub partnership, resource and research this year. This has developed the relationships that will be conduits for the Hub's future impacts.

<sup>5</sup> VRN Network structure is here: <https://vrn.org.vn/about-us/network-structure/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/impacts-covid-19-stakeholder-engagement-sdgs-32589>

<sup>7</sup> Full report and summary are provided here <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/asiapacific-snapshot-stakeholder-engagement-around-sdgs-during-covid-19-pandemic-32838>.

<sup>8</sup> Building back better documents are reported here [https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/02/Naiara-Garcia-Da-Costa\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/02/Naiara-Garcia-Da-Costa_Paper.pdf), reflects the work summarised earlier.

<sup>9</sup> See embedded video link at the bottom of <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/PartnershipAccelerator> last accessed 8/7/2021.

## Asia/Pacific Snapshot: Stakeholder engagement around the SDGs during the COVID-19 pandemic

### Executive Summary

This paper presents some key findings from a survey addressing the current and future impacts of COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement and partnerships for implementation, follow up and review of the SDGs. The main report - which assesses data at a global level - is available [here](#) and an Executive Summary highlighting key themes and findings can be found [here](#).

<sup>1</sup>Stakeholder responses were from these countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tuvalu, Viet Nam.

<sup>2</sup>This report was developed by Dr Anh Vu and Dr Jack O'Connor from the Living Deltas Hub, Dr Graham Long (graham.long@ncl.ac.uk) and Dr Emily Clough are the overall project leads for this work.



Every activity discussed has been designed with inclusivity and disadvantage as a focus of study. Local level work in Vietnam has spotlighted the intersection of poverty, ethnicity and gender; work in India has empowered young people with disabilities, and women and girls. Ongoing work in all countries focuses, in line with the SDGs, on 'left behind' groups, the availability of disaggregated data and the need for participation and voice for such populations. Participatory monitoring for the SDGs, through its capacity to extend recognition and space for vulnerable and marginalised populations, is a powerful way to address structural inequalities and exclusion. Global level work focused on inequalities amongst stakeholders and highlighted challenges for older people, people with disabilities, women and girls, and young people. A series of UN webinars have offered learning and capacity-building in engaging these groups, in part as a response to our work<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 1:** UN commissioned Hub report on stakeholder engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>10</sup> Webinar links are provided here: <https://sdgs.un.org/events/voluntary-local-review-series-leaving-no-one-behind-32673>, last accessed 8/7/2021

## Summary of development impact of this work

Institutional & policy gap	Living Deltas contribution	Pathways to impact
Gaps in effective monitoring of SDG implementation at local delta scales.	Identifying gaps in monitoring regimes; developing indicators, contributing additional data, to help fill monitoring gaps.	Policy influence around hub findings stakeholder engagement. Data generated by the Hub.
Absence of Inclusive and participatory implementation and review of the SDGs.	New methodologies, processes and partnerships for participatory SDG monitoring in deltas.	Development and piloting of methodology for SDG monitoring. Widening, applying methodology and insights in all hub countries through stakeholder partnerships and capacity building.
Shortfalls in inclusive, transformative governance for SDGs in deltas at local, national, and regional level.	Inputs to, and spaces for, debate and awareness around SDGs and delta futures.	Policy influence. Partnerships to create, maintain, spaces and processes - including local participatory fora; support for national civil society SDG coalitions, creation of regional contact group.

## People involved in this work

Name	Gender	Discipline	Work Package	Institution	Country
Graham Long	M	Political science	Delta SDGs	Newcastle University	UK
Lan Ngoc	F	Participatory approaches	Delta Social Ecological Systems Delta SDGs	WARECOD	VN
Jack O'Connor	M	Environmental science	Delta SDGs	United Nations University	DE
Vo Than Son	M	Environmental studies	Delta SDGs	Vietnam National University	VN
Anh Vu	F	Political science	Delta SDGs	Newcastle University	UK