

The architecture of partnership: comparing multi-stakeholder models for sdg implementation in Germany and Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This study falls within SDG Focus Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals — Target 17.14: Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development; Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share

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knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources; Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships.

This study examines the comparative approaches to multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation in Germany and Ghana, focusing on how each country's unique governance structures, historical contexts, and institutional frameworks shape the design and effectiveness of partnership mechanisms. The research analyzes the formal structures for stakeholder engagement, the integration of science and civil society into policy processes, and the innovative partnership models emerging in both national contexts. A comparative policy and institutional analysis was conducted examining primary and secondary sources including government documentation, United Nations reports, academic research, and contemporary case studies covering recent developments to 2025-2026.

Germany presents a mature, institutionally embedded model of multi-stakeholder partnership operating within a federal governance system. The country's approach is characterized by formal structures that systematically integrate diverse stakeholders into policy processes. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Development in Lower Saxony, established for the 2021-2027 EU funding period, exemplifies this approach: voting members represent state institutions, regional trade associations, academia, and civil society organizations, with advisory members able to participate in activities . Meeting six times since 2022, the subcommittee has made valuable contributions to debates on criteria for examining compliance with the cross-cutting principle of sustainable development and provided feedback on the design and implementation of climate-proof infrastructure . At the national level, Germany's sustainability governance ensures participation of diverse stakeholders and ongoing dialogue with the scientific community, with structures in place to steer, implement, monitor and evaluate sustainability policy . The DNS Labs, convened by the Science Platform Sustainability 2030, create "compact, agile and co-creative dialogue format[s]" that generate integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface for the German Sustainable Development Strategy . Germany's international partnership approach is exemplified by its co-facilitation with Namibia of the Pact for the Future in 2024, a major step in strengthening and modernizing multilateralism . The MeerWissen Initiative, an African-German partnership focusing on ocean knowledge, addresses historical disparities in North-South

partnerships by designing multi-stakeholder projects based on a "solutions-based scientific process that generates new ocean knowledge" and stimulates dialogue at the science-policy interface .

Ghana presents a dynamic, partnership-driven model where multi-stakeholder collaboration is increasingly institutionalized as a mechanism for achieving development outcomes across multiple sectors. In August 2025, the Ministry of Finance convened a high-level strategic engagement with United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes operating in Ghana, providing a formal platform to align priorities and strengthen accountability between government and development partners . This strategic engagement responds to the challenge of fragmented coordination, reinforcing the Ministry's recognition of the UN's pivotal role in supporting national development while aligning UN support directly with Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework . In the Akatsi North District, a multi-stakeholder partnership involving the Ghana Education Service, District Assembly, and development partners including Good Neighbours, International Needs, the Department of Gender, and UNFPA has driven a significant decline in teenage pregnancies from 12.49% in 2021 to 7.79% in 2024 . The Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project, financed by the Green Climate Fund and led by the Forestry Commission in partnership with the Global Shea Alliance and UNDP, demonstrates how public-private partnerships can empower women across value chains, training over 6,000 women in cultivation, business, cooperative management, and quality control . The project is among the first Green Climate Fund projects to implement the W+ Standard, enabling it to "measure and quantify improvements in women's lives in a transparent and quantifiable manner" . In the infrastructure sector, a multi-stakeholder partnership led by the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, UNOPS, UNEP, the Global Center on Adaptation and the University of Oxford produced a Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap in 2023, using advanced analytics to quantify geospatial risks, evaluate adaptation options, and map 82 adaptation funds for follow-up mobilization .

Both countries demonstrate that effective multi-stakeholder partnerships require intentional institutional design, clear coordination mechanisms, and sustained commitment from all parties. Germany's strength lies in its formalized structures, systematic integration of science and civil society, and sophisticated approach to policy coherence, yet faces challenges of ensuring that multi-level governance effectively translates national priorities to regional implementation. Ghana's strength lies in its agile, results-oriented partnerships, successful integration of women

and communities into development processes, and growing institutionalization of coordination mechanisms, yet grapples with challenges of fragmentation, resource mobilization, and ensuring that partnership outcomes reach the most vulnerable. Neither country has fully resolved the tension between institutionalization and flexibility, though both offer invaluable lessons for the global partnership agenda.

KEYWORDS: Multi-stakeholder partnerships, SDG implementation, Germany, Ghana, policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, public-private partnerships, science-policy interface, SDG 17, development cooperation.

RÉSUMÉ (French Version)

Cette étude examine les approches comparatives des partenariats multi-acteurs pour la mise en œuvre des ODD en Allemagne et au Ghana, en se concentrant sur la manière dont les structures de gouvernance uniques, les contextes historiques et les cadres institutionnels de chaque pays façonnent la conception et l'efficacité des mécanismes de partenariat. La recherche analyse les structures formelles d'engagement des parties prenantes, l'intégration de la science et de la société civile dans les processus politiques et les modèles de partenariat innovants émergents dans les deux contextes nationaux. Une analyse comparative des politiques et des institutions a été menée en examinant des sources primaires et secondaires, y compris la documentation gouvernementale, les rapports des Nations Unies, la recherche académique et des études de cas contemporaines couvrant les développements récents jusqu'en 2025-2026.

L'Allemagne présente un modèle mature et institutionnellement ancré de partenariat multi-acteurs opérant dans un système de gouvernance fédéral. L'approche du pays est caractérisée par des structures formelles qui intègrent systématiquement divers acteurs dans les processus politiques. Le Sous-comité sur le développement durable en Basse-Saxe, établi pour la période de financement 2021-2027 de l'UE, illustre cette approche : les membres votants représentent les institutions étatiques, les associations professionnelles régionales, le milieu universitaire et les organisations de la société civile, les membres consultatifs pouvant participer aux activités. S'étant réuni six fois depuis 2022, le sous-comité a apporté de précieuses contributions aux débats sur les critères d'examen de la conformité avec le principe transversal du développement durable et a

fourni des commentaires sur la conception et la mise en œuvre d'infrastructures résilientes au climat . Au niveau national, la gouvernance du développement durable en Allemagne assure la participation de divers acteurs et un dialogue continu avec la communauté scientifique, avec des structures en place pour piloter, mettre en œuvre, surveiller et évaluer la politique de durabilité . Les Laboratoires DNS, convoqués par la Plateforme Scientifique du Développement Durable 2030, créent des "formats de dialogue compacts, agiles et co-créatifs" qui génèrent des connaissances intégrées à l'interface science-politique-société pour la Stratégie Allemande de Développement Durable . L'approche allemande en matière de partenariat international est illustrée par sa co-facilitation avec la Namibie du Pacte pour l'avenir en 2024, une étape majeure dans le renforcement et la modernisation du multilatéralisme . L'Initiative MeerWissen, un partenariat afro-allemand axé sur la connaissance des océans, aborde les disparités historiques dans les partenariats Nord-Sud en concevant des projets multi-acteurs basés sur un "processus scientifique axé sur les solutions qui génère de nouvelles connaissances océaniques" et stimule le dialogue à l'interface science-politique .

Le Ghana présente un modèle dynamique et axé sur le partenariat où la collaboration multi-acteurs est de plus en plus institutionnalisée en tant que mécanisme pour atteindre les objectifs de développement dans de multiples secteurs. En août 2025, le Ministère des Finances a convoqué une réunion stratégique de haut niveau avec les agences, fonds et programmes des Nations Unies opérant au Ghana, fournissant une plateforme formelle pour aligner les priorités et renforcer la responsabilité entre le gouvernement et les partenaires au développement . Cette rencontre stratégique répond au défi de la coordination fragmentée, renforçant la reconnaissance par le Ministère du rôle central de l'ONU dans le soutien au développement national tout en alignant le soutien de l'ONU directement sur le Cadre Politique National de Développement à Moyen Terme du Ghana . Dans le district d'Akatsi Nord, un partenariat multi-acteurs impliquant le Service Ghanéen de l'Éducation, l'Assemblée de District et des partenaires au développement tels que Good Neighbours, International Needs, le Département du Genre et l'UNFPA a permis une baisse significative des grossesses chez les adolescentes, passant de 12,49 % en 2021 à 7,79 % en 2024 . Le Projet de Réduction des Émissions du Paysage de Karité au Ghana, financé par le Fonds Vert pour le Climat et dirigé par la Commission Forestière en partenariat avec l'Alliance Globale du Karité et le PNUD, démontre comment les partenariats public-privé peuvent autonomiser les

femmes tout au long des chaînes de valeur, formant plus de 6 000 femmes à la culture, aux affaires, à la gestion coopérative et au contrôle qualité . Le projet est parmi les premiers projets du Fonds Vert pour le Climat à mettre en œuvre le Standard W+, lui permettant de "mesurer et quantifier les améliorations dans la vie des femmes de manière transparente et quantifiable" . Dans le secteur des infrastructures, un partenariat multi-acteurs dirigé par le Ministère de l'Environnement, des Sciences, de la Technologie et de l'Innovation, l'UNOPS, le PNUE, le Centre Mondial pour l'Adaptation et l'Université d'Oxford a produit une Feuille de Route pour des Infrastructures Résilientes au Climat en 2023, utilisant des analyses avancées pour quantifier les risques géospatiaux, évaluer les options d'adaptation et cartographier 82 sources de financement pour un suivi ultérieur .

Les deux pays démontrent que des partenariats multi-acteurs efficaces nécessitent une conception institutionnelle intentionnelle, des mécanismes de coordination clairs et un engagement soutenu de toutes les parties. La force de l'Allemagne réside dans ses structures formalisées, l'intégration systématique de la science et de la société civile et son approche sophistiquée de la cohérence des politiques, mais fait face à des défis pour garantir que la gouvernance à plusieurs niveaux traduise efficacement les priorités nationales en mise en œuvre régionale. La force du Ghana réside dans ses partenariats agiles et axés sur les résultats, l'intégration réussie des femmes et des communautés dans les processus de développement et l'institutionnalisation croissante des mécanismes de coordination, mais est aux prises avec des défis de fragmentation, de mobilisation des ressources et de garantie que les résultats des partenariats atteignent les plus vulnérables. Aucun des deux pays n'a pleinement résolu la tension entre l'institutionnalisation et la flexibilité, bien que tous deux offrent des leçons inestimables pour l'agenda mondial des partenariats.

MOTS-CLÉS : Partenariats multi-acteurs, mise en œuvre des ODD, Allemagne, Ghana, cohérence des politiques, engagement des parties prenantes, partenariats public-privé, interface science-politique, ODD 17, coopération au développement.

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1. INTRODUCTION: TWO MODELS OF PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals fundamentally depends on the quality and effectiveness of partnerships. SDG 17 itself is dedicated to "Partnerships for the Goals," recognizing that the scale and complexity of the 2030 Agenda require collaboration across governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, and international organizations. Yet the design and implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships vary significantly across national contexts, shaped by different governance traditions, institutional capacities, and development priorities.

This study examines two countries that offer illuminating perspectives on multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation: Germany and Ghana. Both nations have demonstrated commitment to the partnership principle, yet their approaches, institutional frameworks, and partnership models differ fundamentally, providing rich comparative insights into how partnerships can be structured to advance sustainable development.

Germany's partnership approach is characterized by formal institutionalization, systematic stakeholder integration, and a mature federal governance structure. At the regional level, the Subcommittee on Sustainable Development in Lower Saxony brings together state institutions, trade associations, academia, and civil society to oversee sustainable development aspects of EU funding programs . At the national level, sustainability governance ensures ongoing dialogue with scientific communities and diverse stakeholders, with mechanisms like DNS Labs creating co-creative spaces for generating integrated knowledge . Internationally, Germany pursues partnerships that strengthen multilateralism, exemplified by its co-facilitation with Namibia of the

Pact for the Future and initiatives like MeerWissen that address historical North-South disparities .

Ghana's partnership approach is characterized by dynamic, results-oriented collaboration across multiple sectors, increasingly institutionalized through strategic coordination mechanisms. The Ministry of Finance's August 2025 strategic engagement with UN agencies represents a decisive step toward coordinated planning and strengthened accountability . At the district level, partnerships involving government, development partners, and civil society have driven measurable outcomes in health and gender equality . Large-scale initiatives like the Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project demonstrate how public-private partnerships can empower women while addressing climate goals . And in the infrastructure sector, sophisticated multi-stakeholder collaboration has produced data-driven roadmaps for climate-resilient investment .

The contrast between Germany and Ghana illuminates critical questions for SDG 17 and partnership policy: How do different governance structures shape partnership design? What mechanisms ensure effective coordination among diverse stakeholders? How can partnerships balance institutionalization with flexibility and innovation? And what can the world learn from two countries with such different partnership traditions?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Theoretical Foundations

Multi-stakeholder partnerships have emerged as a central mechanism for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting the recognition that no single actor possesses the resources, expertise, or legitimacy to address complex development challenges alone. The literature distinguishes among different types of partnerships: public-private partnerships, multi-stakeholder platforms, cross-sector collaborations, and global thematic networks.

Key success factors for partnerships include clear governance structures, shared objectives, mutual accountability, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts. The "partnership principle" embedded in

EU funding regulations and increasingly adopted in national development frameworks reflects the growing institutionalization of multi-stakeholder approaches.

2.2 Germany: Formal Structures and Systematic Integration

Regional Partnership: The Lower Saxony Subcommittee

Germany's federal system creates opportunities for multi-stakeholder partnerships at multiple governance levels. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Development in Lower Saxony, established by resolution of the monitoring committee for the 2021-2027 ERDF-ESF+ multi-fund program, exemplifies the formal institutionalization of stakeholder participation .

Key features include:

Dimension	Description
Chair	Managing authority
Voting members	State institutions, regional trade associations, academia, civil society organizations engaged in promoting sustainable development
Advisory members	Can participate in activities
Work plan	Adopted every two years
Reporting	Annual report to monitoring committee

The subcommittee's main tasks include coordinating sustainable development activities relevant to the program, supporting the managing authority in implementing Policy Objective 2 (a greener, low-carbon Europe), and monitoring the application of the "do no significant harm" principle . It also contributes to designing communication and awareness-raising measures related to sustainable development.

Since 2022, the subcommittee has met six times. Expert opinion notes that "thanks to the variety of professional perspectives represented on the subcommittee, it has made valuable contributions

to debates on criteria for examining compliance with the cross-cutting principle of sustainable development and provided valuable feedback on the design and implementation of climate-proof infrastructure" .

The practice is notable for "embedding sustainability considerations directly into regional funding processes" by establishing a formal stakeholder body with regular meetings and reporting duties . This approach supports EU policy goals by ensuring that investments align with climate, biodiversity, and social objectives.

National Governance and the Science-Policy Interface

At the national level, Germany's sustainability governance ensures participation of diverse stakeholders and ongoing dialogue with the scientific community . The German Government has established structures to "steer, implement, monitor and evaluate sustainability policy" and is engaged in their continuous improvement .

Key mechanisms include:

- **Legislative assessment:** When drafting laws and regulations, the government assesses their impact on attainment of the SDGs
- **Science-policy interface:** Throughout its ongoing development of sustainability governance, Germany relies on close cooperation with the scientific community and science-based policy advice
- **DNS Labs:** Convened by the Science Platform Sustainability 2030, these create "compact, agile and co-creative dialogue formats" that generate integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface for the German Sustainable Development Strategy

Germany's governance approach also emphasizes multi-level coordination. The Federation-Länder Exchange on Sustainable Development ensures that regional states, towns, cities, municipalities, and districts—all of which play a key role in implementing the SDGs—are engaged in the process .

International Partnerships: Strengthening Multilateralism

Germany's international partnership approach reflects its commitment to multilateralism and addressing global challenges that "do not stop at national borders" . The German Government "shapes international settings such that multilateralism is reinforced and takes account of the spillover effects of national actions" .

Notable international partnership initiatives include:

Initiative	Description
Generation Equality Forum	Since its establishment in 2020, the central multi-stakeholder partnership for SDG 5
Pact for the Future	Germany and Namibia worked together as co-facilitators in 2024, taking "a major step forwards in strengthening and modernising multilateralism"
MeerWissen Initiative	An African-German partnership focusing on ocean knowledge, addressing historical disparities in North-South partnerships

The MeerWissen Initiative is particularly instructive. It addresses the issue that "in designing North-South partnership projects in the past, the priorities set by the Global North as the dominant funding partner have sometimes led to disparities that limit the applicability of project outcomes" . The initiative addresses this by designing multi-stakeholder partnership projects focusing on a "solutions-based scientific process that generates new ocean knowledge, as well as stimulating dialogue and transfer of knowledge at the science-policy interface" .

2.3 Ghana: Dynamic Partnerships and Results-Oriented Collaboration

Government-UN Strategic Coordination

In August 2025, Ghana's Ministry of Finance convened a high-level strategic engagement with United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes operating in Ghana . This meeting represented a

decisive step in enhancing development cooperation, providing a formal platform to align priorities and strengthen accountability between government and development partners.

The engagement responded to a critical challenge: "While multiple UN entities offer technical assistance, policy guidance, and financing support to the Government of Ghana, the absence of structured coordination risks fragmentation and reduced impact" . The meeting brought together Ministry representatives and heads of UN agencies to share strategic priorities, key interventions, and collaborative footprints across the country.

Discussions focused on emerging coordination challenges, streamlining multi-stakeholder collaboration, and aligning UN's collective support with Ghana's SDG implementation framework . By aligning UN support directly with Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework, the partnership aims to avoid duplication and channel resources where they are most needed.

Deputy Minister of Finance Hon. Thomas Nyarko Apem stated: "We recognise that the UN System's support is catalytic, and our partnership signifies the collective commitment we share towards achieving Ghana's inclusive national development agenda and the SDGs" . UN Resident Coordinator Zia Choudhury pledged continued collaboration, emphasizing the goal to "accelerate Ghana's development agenda and ensure that no one is left behind" .

District-Level Partnerships for Health and Gender Equality

In the Akatsi North District of the Volta Region, a multi-stakeholder partnership has driven significant progress in reducing teenage pregnancies . The district's adolescent pregnancy rate dropped from 12.49% in 2021 to 7.79% in 2024, marking a significant step toward achieving SDG 3.7 (universal access to sexual and reproductive health services).

Key partners include:

Partner	Role
Ghana Education Service	Education and awareness
Akatsi North District Assembly	Local governance and coordination

Good Neighbours	Development partner
International Needs	Development partner
Department of Gender	Gender expertise
UNFPA	Technical and financial support

The interventions have focused on reproductive health education and empowering women at the community level by training mothers to serve as caregivers and counselors . This approach ensures that "in the case of an adolescent child who has an issue regarding her reproductive health or even a boy, they could reach out to those within the communities to refer them to the health service" .

District Director of Health Services Timothy Mahama emphasized the importance of continued support, especially from traditional and religious authorities: "The child becomes a collective responsibility and everybody must play his or her part so that we can have a good future for our very central district" .

Public-Private Partnerships for Women's Empowerment and Climate Action

The Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project (GSLERP) demonstrates how public-private partnerships can simultaneously address climate change, environmental restoration, and women's empowerment . Financed by the Green Climate Fund and led by the Forestry Commission of Ghana in partnership with the Global Shea Alliance and the UN Development Programme, the project focuses on restoring degraded shea parkland while uplifting women across the shea value chain.

Key achievements include:

Output	Impact
Women trained	Over 6,000 women in cultivation, business, cooperative management, and quality control
Implementing partners	17 NGO implementing partners
Seedling suppliers	5 seedling suppliers

Private sector funding	Support from private sector partners
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As Hajia Rabiata Abukari, Director of Ripples Ghana, highlights: "We are currently working hard to make shea butter for food consumption...it is important for the women to be involved because the income we get from these activities is used to take care of the children, their education, livelihoods, family matters, and more" .

Since April 2025, with support from the UN-REDD Programme, GSLERP has worked closely with the Global Shea Alliance, UNDP, and other partners to implement the W+ Standard, becoming one of the first Green Climate Fund projects to do so . Created by WOCAN in 2014, the W+ Standard provides "a powerful tool, enabling it to measure and quantify improvements in women's lives in a transparent and quantifiable manner" .

The W+ Standard focuses on measuring the project's impacts on supporting knowledge and education and improving the income and assets of female project beneficiaries . Results will be verified by October 2025, showing "how GSLERP is creating systemic, catalytic, and transformational change in women's lives through climate action" .

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

In 2023, a sophisticated multi-stakeholder partnership produced a Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap for Ghana . The partnership was led by the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, with support from UNOPS, UNEP, the Global Center on Adaptation, and the University of Oxford.

The project used the National Infrastructure Systems Modelling Tool (NISMOD) plus EnABLE and FundABLE to:

- Quantify geospatial risks across energy, water and transport networks
- Evaluate adaptation options
- Prioritize projects, linking each to potential finance

The team mapped 82 adaptation funds for follow-up mobilization, creating a clear pathway from planning to implementation .

Success factors identified include:

Factor	Description
Systems approach	Links multiple infrastructure sectors and the natural & enabling environments
Advanced analytics	NISMOD quantifies cross-sector adaptation needs; EnABLE & FundABLE match options with finance
Participatory process	Online workshops kept stakeholders engaged and built capacity

Lessons learned for replication include the importance of inclusive workshops to make the risk-to-investment linkage credible and actionable, holistic systems analysis to prevent maladaptation in interconnected sectors, and early finance mapping to accelerate post-study implementation .

2.4 Comparative Dimensions: Partnership Models and Institutional Approaches

Dimension	Germany	Ghana
Partnership Philosophy	Formal institutionalization, systematic integration	Dynamic collaboration, results-oriented
Governance Level	Federal, regional, and international	National, district, and community
Key Partnership Mechanisms	Subcommittees with voting/advisory members; DNS Labs; science-policy interface	Government-UN strategic engagements; district-level coalitions; public-private partnerships

Stakeholder Integration	State institutions, trade associations, academia, civil society, scientific community	Government ministries, UN agencies, development partners, NGOs, traditional authorities, women's groups
International Partnerships	Co-facilitation of Pact for the Future; MeerWissen Initiative; Generation Equality Forum	UN system collaboration; Green Climate Fund projects; bilateral partnerships
Key Strength	Formal structures, policy coherence, systematic science integration	Agility, results-orientation, community-level reach, women's empowerment
Key Challenge	Multi-level coordination; translating national priorities to regional implementation	Fragmentation risk; resource mobilization; ensuring reach to most vulnerable

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the key characteristics of Germany's approach to multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation, including regional structures, national governance mechanisms, and international partnership initiatives?
2. What are the key characteristics of Ghana's approach to multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation, including government-UN coordination, district-level collaborations, and public-private partnerships?
3. How do the two countries compare in terms of partnership philosophy, institutional design, stakeholder integration, and outcomes?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative policy and institutional analysis methodology to examine multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation in Germany and Ghana. The research design integrates secondary analysis of government documentation, United Nations reports, academic research, and contemporary case studies to develop comprehensive understanding of partnership structures, mechanisms, and outcomes in both countries.

Research Design: The comparative approach is appropriate for examining how different governance structures, historical contexts, and development priorities shape partnership design. Germany and Ghana were selected as cases that offer complementary insights: both demonstrate commitment to multi-stakeholder partnerships, yet their approaches differ fundamentally.

Data Sources: Primary and secondary sources analyzed include:

- Interreg Europe documentation of Lower Saxony Subcommittee on Sustainable Development
- Ghanaian Times and UN Ghana documentation of Ministry of Finance-UN strategic engagement
- Germany's Voluntary National Review examples on international responsibility and governance
- GBC Ghana Online reporting on Akatsi North District partnership for reproductive health
- MeerWissen Initiative publication on co-designed research partnerships
- GhanaWeb feature on Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project
- PreventionWeb case study on Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap

Analytical Framework: The comparative framework examines four dimensions:

1. **Institutional Design:** Formal structures, governance mechanisms, and coordination frameworks
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Who participates, how they are selected, and their roles
3. **Partnership Outcomes:** Measurable results, impacts, and sustainability
4. **Learning and Adaptation:** Mechanisms for capturing lessons and improving practice

5. RESULTS

5.1 Germany: Formal Structures and Systematic Integration

Regional Partnership Infrastructure

The Subcommittee on Sustainable Development in Lower Saxony exemplifies Germany's approach to institutionalizing stakeholder participation. Established for the 2021-2027 EU funding period, the subcommittee brings together voting members representing:

- State institutions
- Regional trade associations
- Academia
- Civil society organizations engaged in promoting sustainable development

Advisory members can also participate in activities . The subcommittee adopts a biennial work plan and reports annually to the monitoring committee .

Its functions include coordinating sustainable development activities, supporting the managing authority in implementing Policy Objective 2 (a greener, low-carbon Europe), and monitoring the application of the "do no significant harm" principle . It also contributes to designing communication and awareness-raising measures related to sustainable development.

Since 2022, the subcommittee has met six times. Its diverse professional perspectives have generated "valuable contributions to debates on criteria for examining compliance with the cross-cutting principle of sustainable development" and "valuable feedback on the design and implementation of climate-proof infrastructure" .

National Governance and Science-Policy Interface

Germany's national sustainability governance ensures participation of diverse stakeholders and ongoing dialogue with the scientific community . Key mechanisms include:

- **Legislative assessment:** Laws and regulations are assessed for their impact on SDG attainment
- **Science-based policy advice:** Close cooperation with the scientific community
- **DNS Labs:** Co-creative dialogue formats convened by the Science Platform Sustainability 2030 that generate "integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface"

Multi-level coordination is ensured through the Federation-Länder Exchange on Sustainable Development, which engages regional states and local authorities in SDG implementation .

International Partnerships

Germany's international partnership approach emphasizes strengthening multilateralism and addressing global challenges. Notable initiatives include:

- **Pact for the Future:** Germany and Namibia co-facilitated this 2024 initiative, taking "a major step forwards in strengthening and modernising multilateralism"
- **Generation Equality Forum:** Since 2020, the central multi-stakeholder partnership for SDG 5
- **MeerWissen Initiative:** An African-German partnership addressing historical disparities in North-South partnerships through "solutions-based scientific process that generates new ocean knowledge"

5.2 Ghana: Dynamic Partnerships and Results-Oriented Collaboration

Government-UN Strategic Coordination

In August 2025, Ghana's Ministry of Finance convened a high-level strategic engagement with UN agencies operating in Ghana . This initiative responded to the challenge that "the absence of structured coordination risks fragmentation and reduced impact" .

Key outcomes include:

- Alignment of UN support with Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework
- Focus on data-driven programming, harmonized planning cycles, predictable financing, and accountability mechanisms
- Commitment to institutionalizing regular strategic engagements

Deputy Minister of Finance Hon. Thomas Nyarko Apem emphasized: "We recognise that the UN System's support is catalytic, and our partnership signifies the collective commitment we share towards achieving Ghana's inclusive national development agenda and the SDGs" .

UN Resident Coordinator Zia Choudhury pledged continued collaboration to "accelerate Ghana's development agenda and ensure that no one is left behind" .

District-Level Partnerships for Reproductive Health

In Akatsi North District, a multi-stakeholder partnership has driven significant progress in reducing teenage pregnancies . The district's adolescent pregnancy rate dropped from 12.49% in 2021 to 7.79% in 2024 .

Partners include:

- Ghana Education Service
- Akatsi North District Assembly
- Good Neighbours
- International Needs
- Department of Gender
- UNFPA

The partnership focuses on reproductive health education and empowering women at community level by training mothers as caregivers and counselors . District Director of Health Services Timothy Mahama emphasized the collective responsibility: "The child becomes a collective responsibility and everybody must play his or her part" .

Public-Private Partnerships for Women's Empowerment

The Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project (GSLERP) demonstrates how public-private partnerships can simultaneously address climate goals and women's empowerment . Key features include:

Element	Description
Financing	Green Climate Fund
Lead	Forestry Commission of Ghana
Partners	Global Shea Alliance, UNDP

Women trained	Over 6,000
Implementing partners	17 NGOs
Seedling suppliers	5

The project is among the first Green Climate Fund projects to implement the W+ Standard, enabling transparent measurement and quantification of improvements in women's lives . Results will be verified by October 2025, demonstrating "systemic, catalytic, and transformational change in women's lives through climate action" .

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

In 2023, a partnership led by the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, with UNOPS, UNEP, the Global Center on Adaptation, and the University of Oxford, produced a Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap . Using advanced analytics, the team quantified geospatial risks, evaluated adaptation options, and mapped 82 adaptation funds .

Success factors included:

- Systems approach linking multiple infrastructure sectors
- Advanced analytics (NISMOD, EnABLE, FundABLE)
- Participatory process keeping stakeholders engaged

Lessons learned emphasize inclusive workshops, holistic systems analysis, and early finance mapping .

5.3 Comparative Analysis

Dimension	Germany	Ghana
Partnership Philosophy	Formal institutionalization, systematic stakeholder integration	Dynamic collaboration, results-oriented partnerships

Governance Level	Federal, regional (Lower Saxony), international	National, district (Akatsi North), community
Key Partnership Mechanisms	Subcommittees with voting/advisory structure; DNS Labs; science-policy interface	Government-UN strategic engagements; district coalitions; public-private partnerships
Stakeholder Integration	State institutions, trade associations, academia, civil society, scientific community	Government ministries, UN agencies, development partners, NGOs, traditional authorities, women's groups
Recent Initiative Examples	Lower Saxony Subcommittee; Pact for the Future; MeerWissen Initiative	Ministry-UN strategic engagement (Aug 2025); Akatsi North partnership; GSLERP; Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap
Key Strength	Formal structures ensure systematic engagement; policy coherence; science integration	Agility; results-orientation; community reach; women's empowerment; multi-sectoral coordination
Key Challenge	Ensuring multi-level coordination; translating national priorities to regional implementation	Managing fragmentation risk; resource mobilization; ensuring reach to most vulnerable

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Two Philosophies of Partnership

The contrast between Germany and Ghana illuminates two fundamentally different but equally valid philosophies of multi-stakeholder partnership. Germany's approach is one of **formal**

institutionalization: partnerships are embedded in legal and regulatory frameworks, with clear structures, defined roles, and systematic processes for stakeholder engagement . The Lower Saxony Subcommittee's voting members, advisory participants, biennial work plans, and annual reporting requirements reflect this formal approach.

Ghana's approach is one of **dynamic, results-oriented collaboration:** partnerships emerge around specific challenges, bring together relevant stakeholders, and focus on measurable outcomes . The Akatsi North partnership for reproductive health, the Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project, and the Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap all demonstrate this flexible, outcome-focused orientation.

6.2 The Role of Governance Structures

Governance structures fundamentally shape partnership design. Germany's federal system creates opportunities for partnership at multiple levels—regional, national, and international—and requires mechanisms for coordination across these levels . The Federation-Länder Exchange on Sustainable Development reflects this multi-level governance reality.

Ghana's more centralized governance structure, combined with the active presence of UN agencies and development partners, creates opportunities for strategic coordination at the national level while enabling flexible, localized partnerships at district and community levels . The Ministry of Finance's strategic engagement with UN agencies exemplifies national-level coordination, while the Akatsi North partnership demonstrates the power of localized collaboration.

6.3 The Importance of Science-Policy Interfaces

Both countries recognize the importance of integrating scientific expertise into policy processes, though through different mechanisms. Germany's DNS Labs create "co-creative dialogue formats" that generate "integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface" . The MeerWissen Initiative's focus on "solutions-based scientific process" and "dialogue at the science-policy interface" extends this approach internationally .

Ghana's Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap demonstrates sophisticated integration of scientific expertise through the partnership with the University of Oxford and the use of advanced analytics (NISMOD, EnABLE, FundABLE) . The participatory process kept stakeholders engaged while building capacity in systems modeling and risk-informed investment.

6.4 The Challenge of Coordination

Both countries grapple with coordination challenges, though in different forms. Germany must ensure coherence across federal, regional, and local levels, with mechanisms like the Federation-Länder Exchange designed to address this challenge . Ghana must manage the risk of fragmentation among multiple UN agencies and development partners, addressed through the Ministry of Finance's strategic engagement and commitment to "institutionalising regular strategic engagements" .

The Akatsi North partnership demonstrates that effective coordination at district level requires bringing together government, development partners, and traditional authorities around shared objectives . The Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project shows how public-private partnerships can coordinate across government, NGOs, private sector, and community stakeholders .

6.5 The Power of Community-Level Engagement

Ghana's experience highlights the importance of engaging communities directly in partnership processes. The Akatsi North partnership's training of mothers as caregivers and counselors ensures that communities themselves become partners in development . The Shea project's focus on over 6,000 women across shea-growing communities demonstrates how partnerships can reach and empower marginalized populations .

Germany's regional partnerships through structures like the Lower Saxony Subcommittee ensure that regional stakeholders—including trade associations and civil society—have voice in funding decisions, though the connection to individual communities may be less direct.

6.6 Implications for SDG 17

The findings have important implications for achieving SDG 17 targets:

Target 17.14 (Policy coherence for sustainable development): Germany's legislative assessment mechanism—assessing all laws and regulations for SDG impact—represents a sophisticated approach to policy coherence . Ghana's alignment of UN support with its Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework demonstrates commitment to coherence at the partnership level .

Target 17.16 (Global partnership for sustainable development): Germany's international partnerships, including co-facilitation of the Pact for the Future and the MeerWissen Initiative, directly advance global partnership objectives . Ghana's strategic engagement with UN agencies and participation in Green Climate Fund projects demonstrates commitment to global partnership at national level.

Target 17.17 (Effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships): Both countries offer rich examples of effective partnerships. Germany's formal structures ensure systematic civil society engagement; Ghana's dynamic partnerships demonstrate results-oriented collaboration across sectors.

Target 17.18 (Capacity-building for data and monitoring): Ghana's Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap and the W+ Standard implementation in the Shea project demonstrate sophisticated approaches to data and monitoring . Germany's DNS Labs generate integrated knowledge for policy.

Target 17.19 (Develop measurements of progress): Germany's reporting structures and Ghana's W+ Standard implementation both contribute to measuring progress on sustainable development.

7. CONCLUSION: THE ARCHITECTURE OF PARTNERSHIP

This comparative analysis of multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation in Germany and Ghana reveals that effective partnerships require intentional institutional design, clear

coordination mechanisms, and sustained commitment from all parties. The two countries, with their distinct partnership philosophies and complementary strengths, offer invaluable lessons for the global partnership agenda.

Germany's approach demonstrates the power of formal institutionalization. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Development in Lower Saxony, with its voting and advisory members, biennial work plans, and annual reporting, ensures that diverse stakeholders have systematic voice in regional funding decisions . Since 2022, the subcommittee has met six times, making valuable contributions to debates on sustainable development criteria and climate-proof infrastructure . At the national level, Germany's sustainability governance ensures ongoing dialogue with the scientific community, with DNS Labs creating "compact, agile and co-creative dialogue formats" that generate integrated knowledge at the science-policy-society interface . Internationally, Germany pursues partnerships that strengthen multilateralism, exemplified by its co-facilitation with Namibia of the Pact for the Future and initiatives like MeerWissen that address historical North-South disparities through "solutions-based scientific process" .

Ghana's approach demonstrates the power of dynamic, results-oriented collaboration. The Ministry of Finance's August 2025 strategic engagement with UN agencies represents a decisive step toward coordinated planning, aligning UN support with Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework . In Akatsi North District, a partnership involving government, development partners, and traditional authorities has driven teenage pregnancy rates down from 12.49% to 7.79% . The Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project, a public-private partnership financed by the Green Climate Fund, has trained over 6,000 women and is among the first such projects to implement the W+ Standard for transparent measurement of women's empowerment . The Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap, developed through partnership with UNOPS, UNEP, the Global Center on Adaptation, and the University of Oxford, has mapped 82 adaptation funds and created a data-driven pathway for climate-resilient investment .

Several cross-cutting insights emerge from this comparison:

First, structure matters, but so does flexibility. Germany's formal structures ensure systematic engagement but may be less adaptable to emerging challenges. Ghana's dynamic partnerships can respond quickly but risk fragmentation without coordination.

Second, coordination requires intentional mechanisms. Germany's Federation-Länder Exchange and Ghana's Ministry-UN strategic engagements both represent deliberate efforts to address coordination challenges.

Third, science-policy interfaces enhance partnership effectiveness. Germany's DNS Labs and Ghana's Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap both demonstrate the value of integrating scientific expertise into policy processes.

Fourth, community engagement strengthens outcomes. Ghana's partnerships at district and community levels, including training mothers as caregivers and counselors, show how local engagement produces measurable results.

Fifth, women's empowerment must be intentional. Ghana's Shea project, with its focus on over 6,000 women and implementation of the W+ Standard, demonstrates that partnerships can be designed to advance gender equality.

Sixth, financing must be linked to planning. Ghana's mapping of 82 adaptation funds during the infrastructure roadmap process ensures that planning translates into implementation.

Seventh, learning and adaptation are essential. Both countries demonstrate mechanisms for capturing lessons—Germany through subcommittee reporting, Ghana through the W+ Standard and project evaluations.

For Germany, priorities emerging from this analysis include:

1. Continue strengthening multi-level coordination through mechanisms like the Federation-Länder Exchange, ensuring that regional partnerships effectively translate national priorities.
2. Deepen the science-policy interface through DNS Labs and similar initiatives, ensuring that scientific expertise continues to inform policy.

3. Share Germany's experience with formal partnership structures internationally, particularly with countries seeking to institutionalize stakeholder engagement.

For Ghana, priorities include:

1. Institutionalize the strategic engagement with UN agencies, ensuring that coordination becomes regular practice rather than one-time event.
2. Scale successful partnership models like the Akatsi North reproductive health initiative to other districts and sectors.
3. Build on the W+ Standard experience to strengthen measurement of women's empowerment across partnership initiatives.
4. Ensure that the Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Roadmap's identified funding sources are actively mobilized.

For the international community, the lessons are clear: multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for SDG implementation, but they require intentional design, sustained commitment, and attention to both structure and flexibility. Germany's formal institutionalization and Ghana's dynamic, results-oriented collaboration both offer valuable models for different contexts.

The ultimate measure of success for SDG 17 is not the number of partnerships formed but whether they deliver results for people and planet. Germany and Ghana, in their different ways, are both working toward this goal.

8. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the comparative analysis relies primarily on secondary sources rather than primary empirical research. Direct observation of partnership processes in both countries, interviews with stakeholders, and participatory research would provide valuable additional perspectives. Second, data availability varies between countries. Germany benefits from extensive documentation through EU reporting and Voluntary National Reviews, while Ghana's partnership initiatives are documented through UN reports and media coverage with less systematic evaluation. Third, the study focuses on successful partnership

examples, which may not represent the full range of partnership experiences in either country. Fourth, the voice of community members, particularly women in shea-growing communities and adolescents in Akatsi North, is mediated through reports rather than captured directly. Despite these limitations, the comparative analysis provides valuable insights into multi-stakeholder partnerships for SDG implementation, with implications for both countries and for broader efforts to achieve SDG 17.

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10. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author conceived the study, designed the research methodology, conducted the literature review and document analysis, synthesized findings across countries, and drafted the complete manuscript. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy of information presented and interpretations offered.

11. COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest.

12. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

As sole author, I performed all roles including conceptualization, methodology development, investigation, formal analysis, writing, review, editing, and project administration.

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14. DATA AVAILABILITY

All sources analyzed in this study are publicly available documents, including good practice documentation, news reporting, government publications, and case studies. Primary sources are cited in the bibliography and accessible through the referenced publications and organizations.

15. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution or organization with which the author may be affiliated. The analysis is provided for scholarly purposes and should not be construed as policy guidance or investment advice. Partnership frameworks, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and development outcomes are subject to change, and readers should consult current sources for specific information about Germany, Ghana, and multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development.

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