

Survey of CoNGO Members Regarding SDG Efforts

Work-in-Progress/Update

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Background

Earlier this year, TruMerit, a CoNGO member organization formerly known as CGFNS International, began working with CoNGO leadership to design and distribute a survey of the organization's members a contribution to strengthening the collective voice and evidence base of the NGO community at the United Nations.

Since CoNGO itself comprises more than 500 organizations representing diverse thematic areas and cumulatively operating across most of the world's developing countries, the survey results and analysis will provide an in-depth examination of how NGOs are confronting development challenges and, importantly, where and what integrated approaches are showing impact.

The survey was disseminated in August 2025 by the CoNGO to the contacts it has on file for each member organization. While the response rate has been minimal thus far (only 29 NGOs have responded), the collected data indicate its potential value for analysis and, importantly, further engagement by CoNGO with its membership, as well as for CoNGO's potential for increasing its own value as a source of updated information and analysis on NGO activities with the UN system (and beyond) on issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This would include, for example, opportunities to showcase successful initiatives and measurable outcomes while also identifying areas that need greater support or innovation.

Initially, we envision an analysis of findings that will contribute to the creation of a report for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2026. And, as part of the UN80 commemoration, these survey outcomes will be used to amplify the impact of the NGO community while remaining focused on key substantive issues.

Survey methodology

The survey is a comprehensive 27-question instrument covering multiple dimensions of NGO work on the Sustainable Development Goals. Questions addressed organizational themes, specific SDG goals and targets being pursued, geographic scope of operations, successful outcomes achieved, challenges faced, and areas requiring additional support or innovation. The survey utilizes a combination of multiple-choice selections, checkboxes for SDG-specific targets (allowing organizations to identify which of the 169 targets they address), and open-ended text responses to capture nuanced information about interventions and measurable outcomes.

The survey was distributed via email to CoNGO member organization contacts on file, with a direct link to the Qualtrics survey platform. TruMerit manages the survey administration, data collection, and analysis through its Qualtrics account, while CoNGO facilitated distribution to its membership network. The survey was designed to be completed in approximately 15 minutes, balancing the need for comprehensive data with respect for participants' time. Responses were collected anonymously through the Qualtrics platform and then aggregated for analysis, with all organizational identifiers kept confidential in the analytical process unless organizations explicitly consented to being named in case studies of successful interventions.

Increasing CoNGO member participation in the survey

As detailed below in this work-in-progress report, the preliminary results from the 29 responding organizations demonstrate significant promise and reveal valuable insights into NGO contributions to SDG implementation. However, to create a truly representative picture of CoNGO member activities and impact, **broader participation is essential.**

The survey will be resent to all CoNGO members on October 30, 2025. We strongly encourage all member organizations that have not yet responded to complete the survey when they receive this second distribution. The 15-minute time investment will contribute to a collective knowledge base that can amplify civil society's voice at the United Nations, inform advocacy strategies, and demonstrate the breadth and depth of NGO contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

To support participation, we have streamlined the response process. If you encounter any technical difficulties—such as being unable to select certain countries from the dropdown menu or other survey functionality issues—please contact TruMerit directly (bslaugh@trumerit.org), and we will manually add the information to ensure your organization's work is accurately captured. Follow-up email reminders will be sent to ensure all members have the opportunity to participate.

We are seeking responses from all CoNGO member organizations to create an accurate and comprehensive picture of what is taking place on the ground with SDG implementation. Your organization's experience—whether it works on one SDG or many, operates in one country or globally, faces unique challenges or has developed innovative solutions—is valuable to this collective effort. The strength of this analysis depends on broad participation that reflects the full diversity of CoNGO's membership.

This initiative exemplifies the essential role that active member engagement plays in advancing CoNGO's mission and demonstrates how individual organizations can leverage their expertise to support the broader network. By pooling knowledge, documenting impact, and presenting unified evidence of civil society's contributions to sustainable development, member organizations strengthen the credibility and influence of the entire NGO sector in global governance.

TruMerit's commitment to this analytical work reflects a broader call for all CoNGO member organizations to actively contribute their skills, insights, and resources toward collective efforts that strengthen civil society's role in addressing complex global challenges and supporting Member States in achieving the SDGs.

Preliminary Findings

Key areas to be analyzed

Important Note: The findings presented below are based on preliminary data from 29 responding organizations and represent an initial snapshot of NGO activities and impact. While these early results reveal promising patterns and valuable insights, they should be understood as preliminary indicators rather than definitive conclusions about the full CoNGO membership. We anticipate that this analysis will evolve and become more robust as additional organizations participate in the survey.

The current respondent pool demonstrates the potential value of comprehensive participation—with broader engagement from CoNGO's 522 member organizations, we will be able to present a more complete and representative picture of civil society's contributions to the SDGs, identify patterns across different regions and thematic areas, and provide more actionable recommendations for collective advocacy and partnership strategies.

Nature of NGO work

Preliminary results indicate NGOs are at the forefront of SDG implementation, addressing an average of 10.2 interconnected SDGs through integrated programming that bridges education, gender equality, health, poverty reduction, and achieving measurable outcomes in partnership-building (62%), community engagement (55%), and knowledge advancement (45%)—even while facing significant resource constraints that affect two-thirds of respondents, thereby filling critical gaps in Member States' capacity to reach vulnerable populations and deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

NGO priorities

SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) emerged as the most prioritized goals, each addressed by 69% of organizations (20 out of 29), with 18 organizations working on both simultaneously, thereby demonstrating sophisticated understanding of the interconnection between education access and gender equality.

This strategic focus reflects their recognition that investing in education and women's empowerment creates multiplier effects across other development objectives, from poverty reduction to health outcomes and economic growth. Organizations demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovation in achieving measurable impact despite operating constraints.

Gaps in SDG coverage

The survey also revealed critical gaps in SDG coverage that present opportunities for strategic expansion. SDG 14 (Life Below Water) is addressed by only 17% of organizations, SDG 15 (Life on Land) by 24%, and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by 31%. This gap suggests potential areas for CoNGO to facilitate new partnerships, connect member organizations with environmental expertise and funding streams, and integrate climate considerations into existing education, health, and poverty programs.

SDG integration patterns

Of the 29 responding organizations, 18 are working simultaneously on SDG 4 (Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), representing the strongest co-occurrence pattern across the group. This reflects the understanding that education is fundamental to achieving gender equality.

Most frequently addressed SDG targets

- 5.1 End discrimination against women and girls—17 organizations
- 5.2 End all violence against and exploitation of women and girls—16 organizations
- 4.1 Free primary and secondary education—14 organizations
- 4.5 Eliminate all discrimination in education—13 organizations
- 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage—12 organizations
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective partnerships—11 organizations
- 16.2 Protect children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and violence—11 organizations

Organizational themes and focus areas

Theme	Organizations	Percentage of respondents
Education	18	62%
Health	14	48%
Gender equality	13	45%
Poverty reduction	12	41%
Environmental and sustainable development	12	41%
Economic growth and employment	10	34%
Peace building	10	34%
Development	10	34%
Human rights and rule of law	8	28%
Inequity and inequality	8	28%

Thematic clustering

Organizations cluster into four primary approaches:

- **Rights-based (52%):** Gender equality, human rights, inequality reduction
- **Development-focused (62%):** Education, health, economic growth
- **Environmental (34%):** Sustainability, climate action
- **Social cohesion (31%):** Peace building, culture

Challenges and barriers

Challenge	Organizations	Percentage of respondents
Financial resources	19	66%
Political limitations or lack of political will	9	31%
Lack of expertise	5	17%
Government interventions	4	14%
Conflict	4	14%
Labor issues	3	10%
Greenwashing/bluewashing efforts	3	10%

A critical challenge: financial resources

Two-thirds of organizations cite financial resources as a primary challenge, affecting:

- Program scale and reach
- Long-term sustainability and planning
- Staffing and organizational capacity
- Innovation and risk-taking ability

Geographic impact: Particularly acute in Afghanistan, Ghana, Nigeria, and Latin American countries.

Political and contextual challenges

Political limitations (31%): Nine organizations report political constraints that restrict civic space, limit advocacy capacity, and hinder policy reform efforts. This challenge is particularly severe in authoritarian contexts and conflict zones.

Conflict zones (14%): Organizations operating in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Ukraine face significant operational barriers including security risks, access challenges, and disrupted program delivery.

Government interventions (14%): Regulatory barriers, bureaucratic challenges, and restrictive policies impede organizational operations in multiple countries.

Notable Example: Afghanistan Social Workers Organization (ASWPO)

ASWPO reports working under an “extremely restrictive environment” with “severe limitations on women’s participation” yet continues to deliver community-based psychosocial support, advocate for social work education at Kabul University, and maintain partnerships with UN agencies and international NGOs. This demonstrates remarkable resilience and adaptive capacity under extreme conditions.

Successful outcomes and achievements

Outcome Type	Organizations	Percentage of respondents
Establishment of meaningful partnerships	18	62%
Community engagement and outreach	16	55%
Knowledge creation and advancement	13	45%
Innovative products and services	8	28%
New policy, legal, or regulatory frameworks	5	17%

Partnership success despite constraints

Of the 19 organizations facing financial challenges, **15 (79%)** still report successful partnership establishment, suggesting that collaboration serves as a strategic coping mechanism for resource constraints.

Notable successful interventions

The following examples of successful interventions were provided directly by survey respondents in their open-ended responses, demonstrating measurable outcomes and innovative approaches to SDG implementation:

PPSEAWA Thailand—Economic Empowerment Program

“Hygiene Street Food: Creating Opportunities for Former Women Prisoners” provides four months of vocational training, financial support for starting businesses, and ongoing counseling and financial literacy training. This partnership model involves the Thailand Institute of Justice, Department of Corrections, academic institutions, and the private sector.

Measurable outcome: Participants have a **reoffending rate of only 8.1%** in the first year, compared to 15.58% for non-participants.

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation—Global Multi-SDG Approach

Operating in 69 countries across all 17 SDGs, Tzu Chi demonstrates comprehensive integration of poverty reduction, disaster relief, health services, education, and environmental sustainability. The organization’s global reach and multi-sectoral approach exemplify scalable SDG implementation.

Soroptimist International—Addressing Gender Equality Across 122 Countries

With presence in 122 countries, Soroptimist implements successful projects addressing women’s poverty, education, health, and economic empowerment. The organization demonstrates effective scaling of gender equality initiatives across diverse cultural and economic contexts.

SIL Global—Language and Education Development

Working in 100+ countries to implement national laws protecting local and minoritized languages, particularly in primary education. This work addresses SDG 4 while preserving cultural heritage and supporting indigenous communities.

Geographic distribution and scale

Organization reach

Scale	Count	Examples
Global (50+ countries)	5	Buddhist Tzu Chi (69), ICN (130+), Soroptimist (122), René Mey (61), ICMCI (45)
Regional (10–50 countries)	8	PPSEAWA, IASLIM, SIL Global, Airline Ambassadors
Multi-country (2–9)	11	SONSIEL, TruMerit, KOVSG, OSMTH
Single country	5	AAUW (USA), Olympe (Canada), ASWPO (Afghanistan)

Regional presence

Asia-Pacific: 14 organizations active—Strong focus on gender equality, education, and health. Key countries include Philippines, India, Thailand, Indonesia, and China.

Europe: 12 organizations—Emphasis on governance, sustainable development, and innovation. Significant presence in UK, France, Germany, and Belgium.

Africa: 9 organizations active—Priority on poverty reduction, health, and education. Notable work in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya.

North America: 8 organizations active—Leadership in innovation, partnerships, and advocacy. Based primarily in USA and Canada.

Latin America: 7 organizations active—Focus on poverty reduction, human rights, and environmental sustainability. Coverage includes Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Central American countries.