MAINSTREAMING SCALING INITIATIVE

Country Platforms and Scaling

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An Exploration of Key Issues

by

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Abstract

The idea that country platforms can improve the effectiveness of development and climate action has gained increased traction in recent years, so has the idea that development and climate action must follow a systematic scaling approach to achieve transformational impact at scale. The purpose of this exploratory note is to bring these two ideas together to determine whether and how country platforms can support transformational scaling and whether and how a focus on scaling can make country platforms more effective. The note is exploratory and uses ChatGPT as a research aide along with references from the literature and examples from the **Initiative on Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations** undertaken by the **Scaling Community of Practice** (SCoP). The note aims to stimulate and provide a background for a discussion in the SCoP about how the concepts and practical application of country platforms and scaling complement each other and about how we can incorporate a focus on country platforms into our work in connection with **the Campaign to Mainstream Scaling 2026-2030**.

This paper concludes that country platforms are not a silver bullet. But neither is scaling. For country platforms and for scaling to succeed, the following conditions have to be met:

- Country platforms and scaling efforts both need to be transformational in design and implementation, not merely transactional.
- Transformational country platforms and scaling are intricately linked: the same factors determine their respective effectiveness.
- Transformational scaling must be an integral part of the design of country platforms and transformational scaling at country scale generally requires the establishment of a country platform.
- Country platforms and scaling involve complex interactions between a multiplicity of partners; this creates important tradeoffs in their design in terms of scope, inclusiveness, and costs.
- The effective functioning of country platforms and of scaling pathways requires that incentives and accountabilities among actors/stakeholders are aligned; very importantly, they also require that capacity, incentives and accountabilities within these organizations are aligned.
- Institutional infrastructure to support country platforms and scaling has to be developed and supported.
- The costs of country platform development and of scaling have to be transparently accounted for and funded.

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A. Introduction

The idea that country platforms can improve the effectiveness of development and climate action has gained increased traction in recent years, so has the idea that development and climate action must follow a systematic scaling approach to achieve transformational impact at scale. The purpose of this note is to bring these two ideas together to determine whether and how country platforms can support transformational scaling and whether and how a focus on scaling can make country platforms more effective.

The note is exploratory and uses ChatGPT as a research aide (Annex 1) along with references from the literature (Annexes 2 and 3) and examples from the **SCoP's Initiative on Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations**. Among the 28 case studies under this initiative two in particular represent examples of support for country platforms, the **Global Financing Facility (GFF)** and the **Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF)**.[1]

This note aims to stimulate and provide a background for a discussion in the Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) about how the concepts and practical application of country platforms and scaling complement each other and about how we can incorporate a focus on country platforms into our work in connection with **the Campaign to Mainstream Scaling 2026-2030**.

The note first summarizes the ChatGPT responses to four key questions and then explores selected issues regarding the link between country platforms and scaling. It closes with a summary of takeaways.

B. How ChatGPT interprets the connection between country platforms and scaling

I chose to interrogate ChatGPT to help summarize the latest thinking on country platforms and scaling, to build on what already exists in the public realm and as a basis for defining the gaps in current thinking and analysis. As a first step I put the following four questions to ChatGPT:[2]

A. How does a systematic approach to scaling support country platforms for development and climate action?

B. How do country platforms for development and climate change action support transformational impact at scale?

[1] I also draw on my personal experience with country-level aid coordination efforts as a World Bank program manager and as a facilitator of a county-strategy exercise in Tajikistan (see Linn, 2010, listed under general references in Annex 3).

[2] Two additional questions were asked of ChatGPT but are not reported on here in detail: "E. What are some successful country platforms other than for climate action?" and "F. Comparison between non-climate and climate-focused country platforms." For answers to these questions, see Annex 1.

C. What are the limitations of country platforms for development and climate change action in supporting transformational impact at scale?

D. How to align incentives in implementing country platforms for development and climate action?

The full answers are reported in Annex 1.

The answers offered by ChatGPT are comprehensive, well organized, and generally reflect the recent literature on country platforms and scaling. Table 1 represents a summary of key points.

Table 1: Summary of ChatGPT responses

Definition of "Country Platform": Country platforms are nationally-led coordination mechanisms designed to align public, private, and international stakeholders around a shared development or climate vision. They often involve: National governments (as conveners); donors, multilateral development banks; private sector and civil society; technical experts and communities.

Definition of "Systematic Approach to Scaling"? It refers to a deliberate, structured method to grow and replicate effective interventions or innovations in a way that: maintains or improves effectiveness; responds to local needs and contexts; ensures sustainability and inclusiveness.

How scaling supports country platforms	How do country platforms support transformational impact at scale?	Limitations of country platforms in supporting scaling?
1. Aligns Scalable Solutions with National Priorities 2. Promotes Evidence-Based Decision-Making 3. Enables Coordination Among Diverse Stakeholders 4. Ensures Adaptability and Local Ownership 5. Improves Resource Mobilization and Efficiency 6. Strengthens Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability 7. Facilitates Innovation Transfer and Learning **Conclusion:** A systematic approach to scaling empowers country platforms to translate plans into action at scale, foster coherence across actors, and ensure that climate and development interventions are impactful, sustainable, and inclusive. It is not just about	1. Aligning National Priorities with Global Goals 2. Coordinating Stakeholders and Reducing Fragmentation 3. Mobilizing and Blending Finance 4. Scaling Up Proven Solutions 5. Driving Policy and Regulatory Reform 6. Monitoring, Accountability, and Learning **Conclusion:** Country platforms enable transformational impact at scale by acting as integrated systems for aligning, financing, implementing, and scaling development and climate action. Their strength lies in national leadership, broad stakeholder engagement, and the capacity to mobilize resources toward inclusive, low-carbon, and climate-resilient growth.	1. Weak National Ownership or Political Will 2. Fragmented or Inadequate Institutional Capacity 3. Financing Gaps and Unpredictable Support 4. Overly Complex or Bureaucratic Structures 5. Limited Focus on Local Inclusion and Equity 6. Misalignment Between Development and Climate Goals 7. Inadequate Monitoring, Learning, and Accountability 8. Vulnerability to Donor and Market Volatility 9. Lack of Flexibility for Transformational Change **Conclusion:** While country platforms offer a promising approach for scaling development and climate action, they are not a silver bullet. Addressing their limitations—through stronger

doing more—it's about doing better, faster, and together.		national ownership, inclusive governance, sustained finance, and capacity building—is essential for realizing their transformational potential.
How to align incentives in implementing country platforms for development and climate action ChatGPT highlights incentives for selected actors (Government, donors, private sector, MDBs and DFIs, CSOs and local communities); it also considers selected incentive instruments (results-based finance, performance contracts or compacts, tiered risk-sharing structures, data transparency platforms, joint governance boards). It also provides an implementation checklist: • Is there a **national vision/strategy** guiding the platform? • Are all key stakeholder groups meaningfully involved in design and governance? • Are **financing instruments** tailored to different stakeholder risk/return profiles? • Are there mechanisms for **transparency, accountability, and feedback**? • Is the platform agile enough to adapt to evolving needs or crises?		

Source: Annex 1

Table 1 does not represent the comprehensiveness and detail provided by the ChatGPT response. For that, the full text in Annex 1 needs to be consulted. It also contains ChatGPT's references to specific country and regional examples of the application of country platforms.

C. Key issues in connecting country platforms and scaling

In this section I highlight and explore selected issues relevant to the links between country platforms and scaling. Most of these go beyond aspects and issues addressed in the ChatGPT response and in the country platform and scaling literature.

1. Country platforms need to be transformational, not just transactional.

In its recent work on mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations, the SCoP stressed the distinction between transactional and transformational scaling.[3]

- "Transactional scaling" refers to "doing more" with one-off interventions – more resources, larger projects, more co-financiers – and measures success in terms of the scale of funding and results achieved by a project's or program's end, with impact usually expressed against a baseline rather than relative to the size of the problem.
- "Transformational scaling" aims to deliver long-term sustainable impact at large scale beyond a project's lifetime and emphasizes a viable business or funding model and adequate resources for ensuring ongoing delivery of goods and services over time, with one or more implementing organizations having the necessary mandate, capacity and reach to continue to implement at scale when external funders depart. Transformational scaling is usually accompanied by a significant effort at sustainable systems change to strengthen capacity, the policy enabling environment and, where appropriate, market systems. The success of transformational scaling is measured in terms of results and impact relative to the size of the problem (the denominator), not against the baseline.

By extension, we can also ask whether country platforms are transactional or transformational in design and implementation.[4] A transformational country platform will aim at long-term development or climate goals by addressing the problem(s) at a national scale and will measure success in terms of progress towards these targets. Individual programs and projects under the platform will be designed and implemented to contribute to pathways towards the long-term goals, rather than as one-off engagements with limited results measured against baseline. And participants in the platform will engage with a view to support transformational programs, form partnerships that stress effective cooperation or coordination and smooth

[3] The definition of transactional and transformational scaling is adapted from Kohl, Linn and Cooley (2024). The term "transformational" is used in this paper as synonymous with the term "transformative," which is often used in the development and climate literature.

[4] Kirkbride and Figueroa (2020) and Prescott and Stibbe (2020) refer to "transformative partnership platforms" for SDG implementation, but do not draw the distinction with "transactional" platforms. Nor do they explore the linkage between transformational scaling and transformational country platforms.

handoff from one to another, and measure their contribution in terms of progress by the country towards long-term scale goals. Furthermore, transformational country platforms will focus on policy change and institution building not as one-off actions (such as adoption of a law or setting up of an institution) but as long-term and sustained efforts that focus on implementation of policies and institutional changes. Local ownership, sustainable and scalable business models, and effective long-term financing plans leading towards financial self-reliance are key aspect of a transformational country platform.

Transactional country platforms in contrast focus on short-to-medium term goals and measure progress against baseline. Projects and programs, partnerships, policy reform and institution building remain one-off, externally driven and not oriented towards self-reliance.

The country platforms supported by the GFF and SOFF are designed as transformational platforms as documented in the respective case studies. In the case of GFF, the support for country platforms in the area of maternal, child and adolescent health and nutrition is an explicit part of the design of this financing facility. In the case of SOFF, there is no reference to the concept of country platform, but de facto the design of the interventions at country-level in support of effective weather observations results in the development of a country platform for the support of a sustainable hydromet value chain.

2. Transformational country platforms require a focus on the same factors that are required for effective scaling.

The responses of ChatGPT demonstrate the close overlap between the success factors for country platforms and scaling: a long-term vision of sustainable impact at scale, evidence based and adaptive decision making in implementation, ownership of the agenda by national (local) stakeholders, creation of the necessary enabling conditions (esp. policies and institutions), effective partnerships, collaboration and/or coordination among key actors/participants, and transparent monitoring and evaluation during implementation.

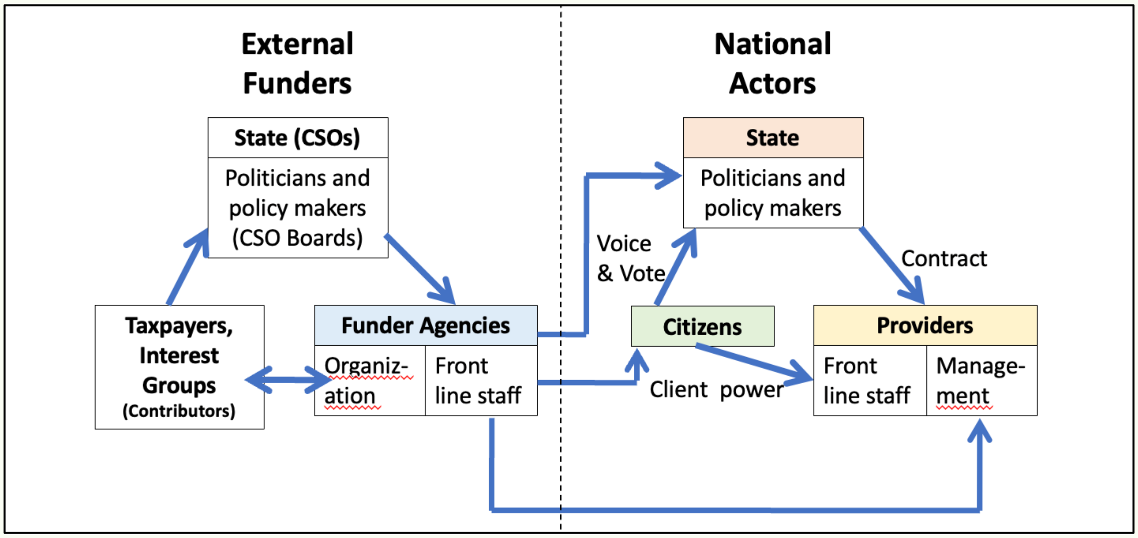
3. Transformational country platforms and scaling are mutually supportive.

The responses of ChatGPT to the first two questions correctly highlight the mutual interdependency of transformational country platforms and scaling. For country platforms to be transformational they have to incorporate a long-term scaling perspective, where actors, programs and projects focus on appropriate pathways for sustainable impact at scale. In turn, country platforms are a helpful and often essential instrument for effective scaling by providing the organizational framework that allows all relevant actors to come together and seek to design and implement mutually aligned actions that support pathways towards sustainable impact at scale.

4. Transformational country platforms and scaling involve a complex alignment process.

Country platforms and scaling involve many actors who have to be coordinated for effective delivery on the country platform goals and on the scaling pathways in support of transformational impact at scale. Figure 1 is a simple, high-level representation of key actor groups involved and their potential interactions.[5] National actors include the state, service providers and citizens. The external actors are principally the international funders, public and private; they depend on their national governments (or philanthropic organizations) that in turn depend on the support of their tax payers and interest groups (or on their contributors in the case of philanthropic organizations). The relationships between actor groups are complex, involving direct, indirect and possible two-way linkages. Country platforms ideally need to encompass all relevant national stakeholders as well as external funders (official funders, international philanthropic organizations and private investors); these are shown in Figure 1 by the color shaded boxes. External funder agencies are accountable to their authorizing bodies (the governments or boards) and to their tax payers and other interest groups in their countries of origin, who therefore bear an indirect influence on country platforms and scaling.

Figure 1. Principal actor groups for country platforms and scaling



Source: Adapted from Linn (2012), which in turn was based on World Bank (2004)

[5] This framework was used in Linn (2012) to analyze incentives and accountability for scaling, and in turn is based on World Bank (2004). For external funders, it focuses mostly on public sector (and philanthropic) actors. Private external funders (investors) could also be integrated into the graphical framework, in which case private investors would take the place of "funder agencies" with a principal accountability to shareholders.

Once one allows for the inevitable multiplicity of actors within each actor group, the challenge of achieving alignment becomes even more pronounced. Moreover, the number of actors and hence complexity will expand with the scope of the country platform and scaling pathway considered. Country platforms and scaling pathways that are sector or subsector specific, such as vertical funds, will involve fewer actors that need to be aligned than is the case for multisector or comprehensive national planning efforts.

But even vertical funds face alignment challenges: In the case of GFF, the alignment issue has been recognized as a central concern with a special committee set up including high-level representatives of national governments and of funder organizations. Its aim has been to find solutions that would facilitate sustained alignment of key actors around shared objectives. In the case of SOFF, the secretariat has to coordinate over 70 external partners, not counting the multiplicity of domestic partners in-country. Moreover, vertical funds and their country platforms and scaling efforts face pressures to broaden their scope due to inevitable linkages with other sectors (as has been the case for example with the Global Fund, which has been criticized for the distorting health sector impacts of its exclusive focus on a limited number of specific health threats).

Finally, within each organization one generally needs to distinguish between top management and front-line staff (as shown in Figure 1 for funder agencies and providers). While management sets the overall direction (e.g., supporting country platforms or scaling pathways), front-line staff are in charge of designing and implementing the specific activities in support of country platforms and scaling, but they often face conflicting demands on their limited time and resources as a result of "unfunded mandates." This aspect has not been recognized sufficiently in the case of the country platform literature, but has been one of the central findings of the SCoP's Initiative on Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations. We will return to this important aspect when considering next the issue of incentives and accountability.[6]

5. Incentives and accountability are central to transformational country platforms and scaling

A key factor helping the multiple actors align with a common strategy under a country platform or scaling initiative are the incentives that they operate under. The important role of incentives and accountability in ensuring effective scaling has been recognized for scaling, but apparently less so for country platforms. For scaling, Linn (2013) applied the framework in Figure 1 to focus on the incentives for national actors and for external actors, with the main incentive/accountability challenges and instrumentalities for addressing them summarized in Table 2 and 3 respectively (next page).

[6] One issue not addressed in this note is that for each country there may well be multiple (sub)sectoral and thematic country platforms. In that case a further complexity is the management of linkages and overlaps across country platforms arises.

For country platforms, it is notable that when asked about the limitations of county platforms, ChatGPT does not explicitly list challenges of incentives and accountability (see Annex 1). This indicates that so far the incentive/accountability issue has been given little attention in the country platform literature. Only when asked specifically about how to align incentives for country platforms does ChatGPT provide a detailed answer considering separately the potential incentives for governments, donors, private actors, MDBs and civil society/local communities, along with ways to align incentives for each of these groups. It also lists a limited number of mechanisms that are helpful in aligning incentives: results-based finance (RBF), performance contracts or compacts, tiered risk-sharing structures, data transparency platforms, and joint governance boards. The literature on Country Platforms listed in Annex 2 generally does not address incentive and accountability challenges or, where it does, does so very superficially.

Table 2. National incentive/accountability challenges and instruments to address them

Incentive/accountability challenges	Instruments to address these challenges
‣ Direct route from citizens to providers often doesn't exist or function ‣ Principal-agent problems along the indirect route from citizens to providers ‣ Strong biases against replication and scaling up within political and bureaucratic systems ‣ Focus on the new and different ‣ For competitive markets: ▪ Short route only ▪ Clear incentives for scaling up (in principle) ▪ But market failures and problems with incentives for innovation	‣ Intergovernmental incentive grants ‣ Performance contracts between governments and providers ‣ Competitions and tournaments ‣ Financial incentives (subsidies, etc.) ‣ Community empowerment ‣ Information ‣ Internal management ‣ Democratic accountability

Source: Adapted from Linn (2013)

Table 3. External funder incentive/accountability challenges and instruments to address them

Incentive/accountability challenges	Instruments to address these challenges
▸ Direct- and in direct-route issues in recipient countries ▸ Direct- and indirect-route issues in donor countries ▪ Special interests ▪ Fragmentation, silos and discontinuities within and across agencies ▪ Focus on innovation ▪ Short-time horizon ▪ Lack of incentives for cooperation/coordination ▪ Lack of investible projects ▸ Issues with aid instruments ▪ Undermining citizens' voice (if through government) ▪ Undermining state capacity (if direct) ▪ Fragmentation, small projects, lack of donor cooperation	▸ Results-based finance (RBF)/Cash on delivery (COD) ▸ Programmatic aid ▸ Support for ▸ Support through competitions and tournaments ▸ Support for project preparation ▸ Aid for democracy development/community empowerment ▸ Agency-internal incentives/accountabilities ▸ Improvements in monitoring and evaluation ▸ Improvements in international aid architecture

Source: Adapted from Linn (2013)

ChatGPT and the scaling literature, while offering limited insights and guidance on inter-agency incentive/accountability issues, have nothing to say on intra-organizational incentives and accountability. The SCoP's work on institutionalizing scaling in government organizations[7] and its Initiative on mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations[8] are an exception. For funders in particular, the SCoP mainstreaming work stresses the need for front-line staff and middle management to have clear scaling capacity, incentives and accountability based on

[7] Igras and Cooley (2022). **https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Advancing-Change-from-the-Outside-In-1.pdf**

[8] Kohl, Linn and Cooley (2024). **https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/wpcontent/uploads/2024/06/FINAL-Interim-synthesis-report.pdf**

- mission and vision statements that focus on transformational results at scale;
- operational policy guidance and scaling tools; on budget resources for analysis, partnership building and coordination;
- the availability of financial instruments for support of scaling;
- scaling skills acquisition and performance incentives; and
- learning and accountability through monitoring and evaluation systems that incorporate scaling explicitly.

The 27 case studies of funder scaling practices carried out under the SCoP's mainstreaming initiative demonstrates that very few funders so far have addressed the challenge of creating internal incentives and accountabilities (and the related capacity needs) for effective mainstreaming of scaling in their organizations. It stands to reason that they also have limited capacity, incentives and accountability to support transformational country platforms.

The GFF and SOFF represent exceptions to this experience: The GFF has a well-developed approach to creating incentives for scaling and country platforms. The grants which GFF provides to countries have been used to support the development of long-term visions and investment plans based on in-depth health sector analyses, the creation of broadly inclusive country platforms with a policy reform and institution building agenda, financing plans, transparent data collection and intensive monitoring and evaluation focused on the long-term transformational results agenda. It also addressed some of the intra-organizational incentive issues in the World Bank by grant-cofinancing for World Bank projects[9] and in this connection offering additional budget resources for World Bank project staff for analysis, country dialogue and coordination.

However, despite this availability of incentives, the GFF has encountered persistent difficulties with ensuring the alignment of national and external actors in the health sector around country-owned strategies, including that of World Bank country teams. One explanation for this experience is that the incentives which the GFF has been able to offer have not been large enough to offset the disincentives embedded in current national political and bureaucratic structures and in World Bank operational practices. In the case of other external (non-World Bank) funders, GFF does not offer any outright incentives in a context where the internal incentives for these other funder organizations generally militate against effective alignment with country platform and scaling pathways.

SOFF also has a well-articulated incentive structure for its national partner organizations, for implementing partners and for technical peer advisers (results-based grant funding for meteorological organizations, and cost reimbursement for implementing entities and peer advisors). During its first three years of existence these incentives appear to have worked well,

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[9] Specifically for IDA projects. IDA (the International Development Association) provides highly concessional credits and grants to low-income developing countries.

but it remains to be seen whether that experience will last over the long haul. For the moment, the main constraint is the lack of sufficient funding for SOFF itself which has meant that it has not been able to meet the demand from countries ready to invest in improved weather and climate observation capacity.

6. Country platforms and scaling need an institutional infrastructure

Country platforms and scaling pathways need an institutional infrastructure to support their effective functioning. In the case of the country platforms a secretariat has to be established (either with an existing organization or newly created). The secretariat serves as a convening and coordinating body, supports the development of an inclusive consultation process, formulates a country strategy, creates a transparent information base, and monitors and evaluates implementation. In the case of scaling pathways, an intermediary function is generally required to support the development of an inclusive vision of transformational impact at scale, provide analysis, information, finance and incentives for the various partners to join forces, support the policy and institutional changes required, and support monitoring and evaluation.

In the case of GFF and SOFF, the secretariats of these multilateral facilities have acted as key external supporters of country platforms and served as scaling intermediaries, bringing together and incentivizing national and international actors and partners to pursue sustainable impact at scale at country level. In the longer term, however, it is critical that the secretariats' intermediating functions are taken over fully by national, rather than external organizations.

7. The costs of country platforms and scaling need to be transparently accounted for and funded

One of the key findings of the SCoP's initiative on Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations is that effective scaling involves costs and requires dedicated resources and funding. The costs include the time, institutional and financial resources necessary to develop and sustain ownership, to build consensus and partnerships that support scaling pathways at country level, and to finance the intermediary function, the required incentives, and the analytical, monitoring and evaluation work that are needed. The same is true for country platforms. The costs of their institutional infrastructure and required incentives need to be accounted for and funded. We found that the prevalence of "unfunded" mandates has been a major constraint to mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations and they will likely also constrain country platforms.

In the case of GFF and SOFF a limited number of international funders have financed the establishment and functioning of these two organizations, covering their organizational costs and financing (some of) the analytical, investment and incentive requirements for effective country platform development and program delivery. In both cases, their limited financial resources have imposed constraints on the effectiveness of their support for country platforms and scaling.

D. Implications for the development of country platforms and scaling efforts

Increasing effectiveness of international development action has long been the goal of many international forums, conferences and agreements, including the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness in Rome, Paris, Accra and Busan and the recurrent Financing for Development conferences organized by ECOSOC. Among the principal stated goals are ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability. However, in practice there has been little progress at country level in achieving these objectives and in particular achieving the coordination, cooperation and alignment required for transformational and sustainable development impact at scale.

Country platforms and scaling are among the most recent entrants in the efforts to improve development effectiveness. Country platforms are not a silver bullet, as noted by ChatGPT (see Table 1). But neither is scaling. For country platforms and for scaling to succeed, the conditions summarized in the following bullets have to be met; the preceding analysis provides the justification for each bullet:

- Country platforms and scaling efforts both need to be transformational in design and implementation, not merely transactional.
- Transformational country platforms and scaling are intricately linked: the same factors determine their respective effectiveness.
- Transformational scaling must be an integral part of the design of country platforms and transformational scaling at country scale generally requires the establishment of a country platform.
- Country platforms and scaling involve complex interactions between a multiplicity of partners; this creates important tradeoffs in their design in terms of scope, inclusiveness, and costs.
- The effective functioning of country platforms and of scaling pathways requires that incentives and accountabilities among actors/stakeholders are aligned; very importantly, they also require that capacity, incentives and accountabilities within these organizations are aligned.
- Institutional infrastructure to support country platforms and scaling has to be developed and supported.
- The costs of country platform development and of scaling have to be transparently accounted for and funded.

As part of the Scaling Campaign 2026-2030, the SCoP has identified a possible initiative on country platforms and scaling as follows:

"*Country Platforms As a Locus for Country Scaling.* This would examine the shifts in leadership, ownership, governance and incentives needed to maximize the value of country platforms as Transformational Country Platforms so they can serve as a foundation for achieving sustainable outcomes at scale. What are examples of where such efforts have been successful at getting traction around scaling? Pros and cons of single- vs multi-sectoral platforms? Implications for sustainable scaling of who convenes and participates in these platforms, how they are governed, staffed, and resourced? What are typical challenges? What is needed to test and learn from more effective use of transformational country platforms in the future?

The conclusions of the exploratory analysis in this note confirms that country platforms and scaling are intricately related and mutually supportive and highlights specific aspects of these linkages that deserve further exploration as part of the Campaign. But the main takeaway so far is this: without an explicit focus on transformational scaling by all major actors involved, country platforms will not achieve long-term development impact at a national scale in their areas of engagement.

Annex 1. Country Platforms and Scaling: Answers by ChatGPT

A. How does a systematic approach to scaling support country platforms for development and climate action?

ChatGPT said:

A **systematic approach to scaling** plays a crucial role in supporting **country platforms** for **development and climate action** by providing a structured, coherent, and adaptable framework for implementation, coordination, and long-term impact. Here's how this approach adds value:

What Is a "Systematic Approach to Scaling"?

It refers to a deliberate, structured method to grow and replicate effective interventions or innovations in a way that:

- Maintains or improves effectiveness,
- Responds to local needs and contexts,
- Ensures sustainability and inclusiveness.

What Are "Country Platforms"?

Country platforms are nationally-led coordination mechanisms designed to align public, private, and international stakeholders around a shared development or climate vision. They often involve:

- National governments (as conveners),
- Donors, multilateral development banks,
- Private sector and civil society,
- Technical experts and communities.

They aim to:

- Coordinate financing,
- Align priorities with national strategies,
- Enhance accountability,
- Enable transformational impact in areas like climate mitigation, adaptation, energy transition, or resilience.

How a Systematic Approach to Scaling Supports Country Platforms

1. Aligns Scalable Solutions with National Priorities
    - Systematic scaling ensures interventions are embedded in **national strategies,** such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), or development plans.
    - This improves coherence between **global commitments and local action.**

2. Promotes Evidence-Based Decision-Making
    - Scaling systematically relies on **data, evaluation, and learning,** which helps country platforms make informed choices about which interventions to expand.
    - Example: Choosing climate-smart agriculture practices that have proven effective in similar regions.

3. Enables Coordination Among Diverse Stakeholders
    - A scaling framework helps country platforms organize the **who, what, and how** across sectors and funders.
    - It identifies roles, avoids duplication, and enhances collective impact.

4. Ensures Adaptability and Local Ownership
    - Systematic scaling emphasizes **contextual adaptation** rather than just replication.
    - Encourages local innovation and ownership, increasing **sustainability and legitimacy** of climate and development solutions.

5. Improves Resource Mobilization and Efficiency
    - Clear scaling pathways and cost-effective models make it easier to attract **blended finance, climate funds, or private investment.**
    - Investors are more likely to support initiatives with a proven scaling strategy.

6. Strengthens Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability
    - Systematic approaches embed **metrics and feedback loops,** allowing country platforms to track progress, course-correct, and demonstrate impact.
    - This builds trust among stakeholders and improves transparency.

7. Facilitates Innovation Transfer and Learning

- Successful models from one area (e.g., solar mini-grids, mangrove restoration) can be scaled across regions or sectors through deliberate **knowledge-sharing frameworks.**
- Encourages cross-country learning within platforms like the NDC Partnership or African Union initiatives.

Real-world Examples

- **Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan** uses a country platform to coordinate donors, private sector, and government around clean energy. A systematic scaling approach ensures pilot projects in solar energy are replicated nationally with tailored financing models.
- **Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)** scaled through government leadership, donor alignment, and learning loops—demonstrating how social protection and climate resilience can be scaled via a country platform.
- **LEDS GP (Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership)** promotes systematic scaling of low-carbon development strategies across member countries, using national platforms as entry points.

Conclusion

A systematic approach to scaling empowers country platforms to **translate plans into action at scale**, foster coherence across actors, and ensure that **climate and development interventions are impactful, sustainable, and inclusive.** It is not just about doing more—it's about doing better, faster, and together.

B. How do country platforms for development and climate change action support transformational impact at scale?

ChatGPT said:

Country platforms for development and climate change action are strategic frameworks that align national priorities with international support to drive **transformational impact at scale**. They serve as coordination hubs that integrate funding, policy, and technical assistance, bringing together government, private sector, development partners, and civil society to achieve shared goals. Here's how they support large-scale transformational change:

1. Aligning National Priorities with Global Goals

Country platforms ensure that domestic development and climate objectives (e.g., NDCs, NAPs, SDGs) are at the center of planning and investment efforts. This alignment:

- Helps mobilize international climate finance and development aid toward nationally owned plans.
- Ensures coherence across sectors (e.g., energy, agriculture, water) and policy domains (climate, economic, social).

2. Coordinating Stakeholders and Reducing Fragmentation

They act as convening mechanisms that bring together:

- Government ministries and agencies
- **Development partners** (donors, MDBs, UN bodies)
- Private sector and investors
- Local communities and civil society

This coordination prevents duplication, ensures resource efficiency, and increases impact by integrating efforts under a unified national platform.

3. Mobilizing and Blending Finance

Transformational change requires significant funding. Country platforms help:

- **Blend public and private finance**, de-risking investments through concessional funding or guarantees.
- **Access climate finance** (e.g., Green Climate Fund, CIFs, Adaptation Fund).
- **Leverage private sector capital** by creating bankable pipelines of climate-resilient and low-carbon projects.

4. Scaling Up Proven Solutions

By identifying and replicating successful pilots or innovations, country platforms enable:

- **Replication at national or regional level** (e.g., clean energy mini-grids, climate-smart agriculture).
- **Institutional support for scaling**, such as policy reform, incentives, or capacity building.

5. Driving Policy and Regulatory Reform

They provide a structured approach for:

- **Policy coherence and reforms** (e.g., carbon pricing, fossil fuel subsidy reform).
- Strengthening **enabling environments** that attract climate-smart investments.

6. Monitoring, Accountability, and Learning

Country platforms typically include M&E mechanisms that:

- Track progress toward climate and development outcomes.
- Ensure accountability for results.
- Enable adaptive learning and course correction.

Examples in Practice

- **JETP (Just Energy Transition Partnerships)** – e.g., South Africa, Indonesia: Country platforms mobilize international funding to support energy transition aligned with national plans.
- **NDC Partnership:** Supports countries to integrate climate goals into development plans through a country-led, coordinated approach.
- **World Bank's CCDRs (Country Climate and Development Reports):** Guide investment and policy priorities for climate-resilient development.

Conclusion

Country platforms enable transformational impact at scale by acting as integrated systems for aligning, financing, implementing, and scaling development and climate action. Their strength lies in national leadership, broad stakeholder engagement, and the capacity to mobilize resources toward inclusive, low-carbon, and climate-resilient growth.

C. What are the limitations of country platforms for development and climate change action in supporting transformational impact at scale?

ChatGPT said:

Country platforms offer a powerful model for aligning national development and climate goals with international support, but they also face several **critical limitations** that can constrain their ability to deliver **transformational impact at scale**.

Here are the key limitations:

1. Weak National Ownership or Political Will
   - Some country platforms may be **donor-driven** rather than truly **country-led**, leading to misalignment with national priorities or limited buy-in.
   - **Frequent political changes**, weak governance, or vested interests can stall platform implementation or disrupt continuity.
2. Fragmented or Inadequate Institutional Capacity
   - **Limited technical, financial, or coordination capacity** within governments can hinder platform design, execution, and oversight.
   - Coordination across ministries (e.g., environment, energy, finance) is often **weak or siloed**, undermining integrated planning and implementation.
3. Financing Gaps and Unpredictable Support
   - Country platforms often depend on external funding that may be delayed, fragmented, or insufficient.
   - **Private sector engagement** can be low due to high risks, lack of bankable projects, or weak enabling environments.
   - Blended finance mechanisms are often complex, and concessional finance may not materialize at the scale promised.
4. Overly Complex or Bureaucratic Structures
   - Some platforms become **highly bureaucratic**, with **slow decision-making** and overlapping responsibilities.
   - Complexity can discourage participation from local stakeholders or the private sector, undermining inclusivity and agility.
5. Limited Focus on Local Inclusion and Equity
   - Platforms may prioritize **macro-level investments** and overlook **community-level impacts**, indigenous rights, or gender dimensions.
   - Local stakeholders often have **limited voice** in decision-making processes, which weakens social legitimacy and sustainability.
6. Misalignment Between Development and Climate Goals

- Trade-offs between **short-term development objectives** (e.g., job creation) and **long-term climate goals** (e.g., decarbonization) are not always reconciled.
- Without careful design, platforms may support projects that are **development-oriented but not climate-resilient** or **low-carbon**.

7. Inadequate Monitoring, Learning, and Accountability
   - M&E frameworks may be weak, lacking robust data systems or clarity on **outcomes versus outputs**.
   - There is often **limited transparency** on platform performance, making it difficult to learn, adapt, or hold actors accountable.

8. Vulnerability to Donor and Market Volatility
   - Shifting donor priorities or changes in global markets (e.g., energy prices, debt crises) can impact the stability and direction of country platforms.
   - Reliance on **external consultants or short-term technical assistance** can lead to dependency rather than building lasting institutional capacity.

9. Lack of Flexibility for Transformational Change
   - Platforms can be **overly focused on predefined projects** and fail to support **systemic change**, such as large-scale behavior shifts, new business models, or disruptive innovation.
   - Risk aversion among funders may prevent experimentation or bold reforms necessary for true transformation.

Conclusion

While country platforms offer a promising approach for scaling development and climate action, they are not a silver bullet. Addressing their limitations—through stronger national ownership, inclusive governance, sustained finance, and capacity building—is essential for realizing their transformational potential.

D. How to align incentives in implementing country platforms for development and climate action?

ChatGPT said:

Aligning incentives in implementing **country platforms** for development and climate action is essential for ensuring cooperation, accountability, and long-term impact among diverse stakeholders—including governments, international donors, private investors, and civil society. Here's a structured breakdown of how to align incentives effectively:

What Are Country Platforms

Country platforms are nationally-led coordination mechanisms designed to align finance, policy, and implementation across stakeholders for development or climate goals. They act as a central hub for aligning public, private, and international resources with national priorities.

Key Principles for Incentive Alignment

1. Government Ownership with Clear Accountability
   - **Incentive:** Governments want sovereignty, credibility, and access to concessional finance.
   - **How to align:** Ensure the platform is **nationally led**, with clear mandates and transparency mechanisms (e.g., dashboards, reporting) to increase trust from donors and investors.

2. Donor Coordination and Predictability
   - **Incentive:** Donors want visibility, coordination, and impact from their contributions.
   - How to align:
     - Commit to **medium- to long-term funding** tied to platform milestones.
     - Use **blended finance structures** to de-risk investments.
     - Coordinate through **joint financing frameworks** or multi-donor trust funds.

3. Private Sector Participation
   - **Incentive:** Private actors want risk-adjusted returns and regulatory stability.
   - How to align:
     - Create **bankable pipelines** of climate and development projects.
     - Use guarantees, insurance, and first-loss capital.
     - Provide **policy stability**, e.g., through regulatory frameworks and PPAs (Power Purchase Agreements) for energy projects.

4. Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and DFIs
   - **Incentive:** MDBs want scalable, high-impact investments aligned with their mandates.
   - How to align:
     - Streamline **approval processes** through platform coordination.
     - Allow MDBs to **co-create policy reforms** with governments.
     - Leverage MDB risk mitigation instruments to crowd in private capital.

5. Civil Society and Local Communities
   - **Incentive:** These actors want social equity, local ownership, and inclusion.
   - How to align:
     - Include civil society in governance structures of the platform.
     - Ensure **benefit-sharing** in projects (e.g., job creation, local infrastructure).
     - Use **free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)** for indigenous or land-based projects.

Mechanisms to Align Incentives

Mechanism	How It Helps
Results-based finance (RBF)	Links disbursement to measurable outcomes, aligning funding with delivery.
Performance contracts or compacts	Formalize commitments between stakeholders, setting mutual expectations.
Tiered risk-sharing structures	De-risk investments for private players while protecting public funds.
Data transparency platforms	Builds trust via open tracking of finance flows and project implementation.
Joint governance boards	Shared decision-making helps balance power and align agendas.

Case Study Examples

- South Africa Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP):
  - Blends public and private finance.
  - Centers government leadership while offering donors performance metrics.
- Indonesia SDG One Platform:

- A unified funding and technical assistance platform with multi-stakeholder buy-in.
- Uses layered finance to attract private capital.

Implementation Checklist

- Is there a **national vision/strategy** guiding the platform?
- Are all key stakeholder groups meaningfully involved in design and governance?
- Are **financing instruments** tailored to different stakeholder risk/return profiles?
- Are there mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and feedback?
- Is the platform agile enough to adapt to evolving needs or crises?

E. What are some successful country platforms other than for climate action?

ChatGPT said:

Country platforms have been used successfully beyond climate action in various development contexts—such as health, education, agriculture, and post-conflict reconstruction—often to **coordinate aid**, **align national strategies**, and **mobilize resources** at scale. Below are some notable examples:

1. International Health Partnership (IHP+) / UHC2030 Platforms – Health Sector

- **Countries**: Ethiopia, Nepal, Mozambique, and others
- **Purpose**: Align donor support with national health strategies and strengthen health systems.
- Success Factors:
    - Strong country ownership (especially in Ethiopia).
    - Harmonization of donor support around a single health sector strategy.
    - Improved accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Impact**: Helped improve maternal and child health outcomes and build primary health care systems in low-income countries.

2. New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition – Agriculture

- **Countries**: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, etc.
- **Purpose**: Increase private investment in agriculture and food security.
- Success Factors:
    - High-level political commitment.
    - Integration of public and private sector actors.
    - Clear investment frameworks.
- **Limitations**: Criticized for inadequate consultation with local communities and limited impact on smallholders.

3. Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) – Post-Conflict Recovery

- **Country**: Afghanistan
- **Purpose**: Coordinate funding from multiple donors into a single trust fund to support governance, health, education, and infrastructure.
- Success Factors:
    - Unified mechanism for donor coordination.
    - Alignment with national priorities.
    - Strong fiduciary oversight by the World Bank.

- **Impact:** Played a critical role in rebuilding state functions post-2001 and improving service delivery.

4. General Budget Support Platforms – Economic Governance

- **Countries:** Rwanda, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, and others
- **Purpose:** Donor funds directly support national budgets based on agreed policy and reform benchmarks.
- Success Factors:
  - Promoted policy dialogue and reform.
  - Encouraged country-led development planning.
  - Pooled risk among donors.
- **Impact:** Supported macroeconomic stability and public financial management reform.
- **Limitations:** Vulnerable to political and governance issues; some donors pulled back due to misuse or lack of progress.

5. Compact with Africa (G20 Initiative) – Investment and Reform

- **Countries:** Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Rwanda, Ghana, Senegal, others
- **Purpose:** Promote private investment and macroeconomic reform through compact agreements between countries, G20 members, and institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and AfDB.
- Success Factors:
  - Focus on creating an investment-friendly environment.
  - Commitment to reforms in exchange for international support.
- **Impact:** Helped raise international investor interest, especially in stable, reform-oriented countries.

6. Local Education Groups (LEGs) under Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

- **Countries:** Bangladesh, Malawi, Sierra Leone, etc.
- **Purpose:** Coordinate education financing and planning at the national level.
- Success Factors:
  - Inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms.
  - Data-driven national education sector plans.
- **Impact:** Helped increase school enrollment, improve literacy, and expand access to education.

Key Takeaways

Successful non-climate country platforms typically share these features:

- Strong national leadership and clear strategy
- Alignment of donor funding with national priorities
- Multi-stakeholder participation

- Transparent governance and results monitoring

They work best when platforms are **embedded in national systems**, **inclusive**, and **flexible** enough to adapt to changing needs.

F. Comparison between non-climate and climate-focused country platforms

Here's a **comparison table** between **non-climate** and **climate-focused** country platforms, showing similarities and differences in their purpose, design, success factors, and limitations:

Country Platform Comparison: Climate vs. Non-Climate

Feature	Climate-Focused Platforms	Non-Climate Platforms
Primary Goal	Align and scale up action on climate mitigation and adaptation (e.g. NDCs, energy transitions)	Support development goals in health, education, agriculture, post-conflict recovery, governance, etc.
Examples	- Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) - NDC Partnership - Climate Investment Funds (CIF) country programs	- IHP+/UHC2030 (Health) - GPE/LEGs (Education) - ARTF (Afghanistan) - G20 Compact with Africa
Lead Actor	Typically led by Ministry of Environment, Energy, or Finance with support from international climate funds and MDBs	Usually led by line ministries (e.g. Health, Education, Finance) with donor and development partner coordination
Financing Mechanisms	- Mix of grants, concessional loans, guarantees - Heavy reliance on climate finance institutions (e.g. GCF, CIF) - Increasing use of blended finance	- Pooled funds (e.g. ARTF) - Budget support - Donor-aligned project financing - Sector-wide approaches (SWAps)
Success Factors	- National ownership of climate goals - Integration with economic planning - Donor alignment around NDCs or energy transitions - Access to climate finance	- Strong institutional leadership - Inclusive sector planning - Harmonized donor support - Long-term engagement (esp. in fragile states)
Challenges	- Slow disbursement of climate funds - Complex governance and	- Political instability or weak governance - Donor fatigue or shifting

	conditionalities - Limited private sector engagement in early stages - Conflicts between development and decarbonization	priorities - Limited scalability beyond pilots - Capacity constraints in ministries
Inclusivity	Often weak at community level, though improving via just transition frameworks	Varies by sector; health and education often better at involving civil society and local actors
Transformation Potential	High, especially for economy-wide shifts (e.g. energy, agriculture, infrastructure decarbonization)	High in social outcomes (e.g. health access, literacy), though often incremental rather than systemic

Key Differences

Climate Platforms	Non-Climate Platforms
Require **long-term vision and systemic change** (e.g. carbon neutrality, resilience)	Often focus on service delivery and sector-specific improvements
Strong emphasis on policy reform and cross-sector coordination	Typically built around one sector or policy domain
Success depends heavily on mobilizing and blending climate finance	More reliant on ODA, pooled funds, or national budgets

Convergence Trends

Many non-climate platforms are integrating climate resilience, especially in sectors like:

- **Health** (climate-resilient health systems)
- **Agriculture** (climate-smart food systems)
- **Education** (green skills, infrastructure)

Conversely, **climate platforms** increasingly focus on **co-benefits** like job creation, equity, and health—blurring the lines between development and climate outcomes.

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