Platforms that Perform: Navigating Country Platform Implementation

ALEXIA LATORTUE · JARED GOODMAN

Abstract

Country platforms—mechanisms that align national priorities, policy reforms, investment pipelines, and financing from diverse partners—are gaining momentum amid broader turbulence in development and climate finance. With official aid in retreat, many emerging markets and developing economies are turning to platforms to mobilize resources, strengthen ownership, and coordinate across fragmented systems. Yet this strong interest risks disappointment if platforms are deployed in contexts where they cannot deliver, or if expectations exceed what they can achieve in implementation, potentially contributing to broader disillusionment with development assistance.

This paper focuses on the complex implementation choices that impact the effectiveness of country platforms. Drawing on more than 50 interviews with government officials, development partners, private sector actors, and civil society, we examine the binding constraints that platforms can and cannot address, as well as the risks associated with misaligned ambition, weak coordination, and fragile political settlements. We highlight four critical issues that impact implementation and offer recommendations for how to navigate them: delivering genuine country ownership and leadership; sequencing launches to sustain momentum; calibrating scope to deliver both near-term benefits and long-term transformation; and structuring capital in ways that unlock complementary public and private finance.

Our hope is to inspire reflection on when platforms are the best approach and to help shape emerging platforms so that they are best positioned to deliver.

POLICY PAPER 364 • OCTOBER 2025

Platforms that Perform: Navigating Country Platform Implementation

Alexia Latortue
Center for Global Development (Distinguished Non-Resident Fellow)

Jared Goodman
Consultant, seconded to the Center for Global Development

The Center for Global Development is grateful for contributions from Open Society Foundations in support of this work.

Alexia Latortue and Jared Goodman. 2025. "Platforms that Perform: Navigating Country Platform Implementation." CGD Policy Paper 364. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. https://www.cgdev.org/publication/platforms-perform-navigating-country-platform-implementation

CENTER FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT
2055 L Street, NW Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20036

1 Abbey Gardens
Great College Street
London
SW1P 3SE

www.cgdev.org

Contents

Renewed momentum for country platforms?

This year has been turbulent for countries, institutions, and people who care about climate and development finance. The United States has dismantled the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), though the Millennium Challenge Corporation has thankfully been spared from the same fate, and the United States Development Finance Corporation is poised for growth.[1] Major European donor countries, amid pressure to increase spending on other priorities, have been announcing a set of cutbacks to official development assistance (ODA).[2] Multilateral development banks, once proudly and aggressively announcing commitments on climate finance and the energy transition, are now much quieter and timid.

At the same time, there is a strong and even defiant response from emerging markets and developing countries (EMDEs). Many leaders have lamented how they ended up in situations of such dependency, particularly in the health and education sectors.[3] Others are calling for countries to take more responsibility and firmly assume ownership of their own development journeys.

Amid this turbulence, there appears to be a renewed push and even exuberance around one tool in the development finance playbook among EMDEs, partner institutions, and intergovernmental processes like the Group of 20 (G20) and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP30): the country platform. One of the five pillars of the Circle of Finance Ministers' Roadmap from Baku to Belem is on country platforms and domestic capacity.[4] The 4th Financing for Development Conference, recently concluded in Seville, called for "enhancing inclusive, country-led national coordination platforms to support national plans and strategies."[5] While the form of country platforms varies, one useful definition is "voluntary country-level mechanisms, set out by governments and designed to foster collaboration among development partners, based on a shared strategic vision and priorities."[6]

Evidence of this strong interest is apparent across EMDEs. Countries are increasingly exploring establishing their own platforms or supporting each other through peer exchanges. By our count, a new cohort of over 10 platforms is likely to be announced this year in the run-up to COP30.

1 The White House FY2026 budget request calls for a increase in DFC's contingent liability capacity from $60 to $250 billion. See DFC FY 2026 Congressional Budget Justification.

2 According to the OCED, official development assistance (ODA) dropped 7 percent last year, the first time in six years that aid levels have fallen. Forward-looking estimates forecast a drop of between 9 percent and 17 percent in future years. See International aid falls in 2024 for first time in six years and Cuts in official development assistance: OECD projections for 2025 and the near term from the OECD this year.

3 For example, see WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus's recent comments in Mo Ibrahim Foundation, The end of aid is an opportunity for sustainable self-reliance, July 29, 2025. For additional examples of African leaders responding to recent aid cuts and aid dependency, see Ayenat Mersie, "From 'Aid Trap' to 'Brutal' Cuts: African Leaders Confront a New Reality," Devex, July 8, 2025.

4 COP 30, Brasil launches COP30 Circle of Finance Ministers to support the Baku to Belém Roadmap to USD 1.3 trillion, April 15, 2025.

5 See Paragraph 40, Section A of the Compromise to Sevilla, June 16, 2025.

6 See Josué Tanaka, Archie Gilmour and Stefan Raubenheimer, "Country Platform Development Note", ODI Global, February 2025.

These platforms, in some cases, extend beyond climate to other development priorities. Country stakeholders across EMDEs mention several motivations for establishing these platforms, including accelerating resource mobilization for economic and climate transformations, unlocking private sector financing, and aligning financial and technical support across a multitude of development partners. Some even hope that country platforms are a way to do more with less in a time of decreasing development assistance and limited fiscal space. Many believe that country platforms are precisely the approach needed to meet this moment, where economics and politics intersect.

To support countries, donors, funders, and philanthropies are standing up new resources and capabilities to shape and support emerging platforms, such as the recently announced Knowledge and Network Hub for Country Platforms, to be hosted at the World Resources Institute (WRI).[7]

Ultimately, country platforms will only be worthwhile if they unlock development finance and policy reforms to deliver impact against stated ambitions in a just manner. Platforms have the potential to provide their host country with a variety of benefits. But they also present costs in terms of coordination, public sector capacity, and financial resources. It is vital, therefore, to understand the types of challenges and binding constraints that country platforms are well-positioned to address. The current strong interest in country platforms—if not well harnessed—could lead to more disappointment and disillusionment with development assistance. And, unless properly calibrated, it risks distracting from other, more fruitful paths to mobilizing resources and support. Country platforms are but one way of tackling big development priorities.

A robust body of literature and debate exists about country platforms. During the last five years alone, over 20 papers on country platforms have been published (see Appendix for some of the literature we found most informative in our research). Our aim, with this paper, is not to retread these critical insights and principles. Instead, this paper focuses on critical issues during implementation and suggests ideas to navigate them. First, the paper examines what we have learned about where and when country platforms are unlikely to be the best answer to the goals that countries define. Second, the paper identifies the complex decisions confronted by host countries and their development partners during implementation that often determine success and suggests solutions to approach them to achieve greater impact. We have investigated these questions through targeted interviews with practitioners in EMDE governments, development partners that contribute resources to platforms, and civil society actors that shape and support platforms.[8] This paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate around platforms, spark reflection on when platforms are the best approach, and help shape emerging platforms so that they are best positioned to deliver.

7 Announced on September 10, 2025 during the Second African Climate Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

8 These interviews were conducted under Chatham House rules. The responses are reflected in the perspectives put forward in this paper, but we have not attributed statements made in the interview process to specific stakeholders to encourage frank input. Please see our Note on Research Methodology and Sources at the end of this paper for more details about these conversations.

A look back, to move forward

Country platforms are not a new concept; they have a long history with ebbs and flows of interest. They have emerged as a solution to a set of problems that frequently confront EMDEs and development partners seeking to mobilize resources. The development community has experimented with various approaches and structures since the 1990s to overcome coordination challenges and partner with EMDEs to deliver economic, social, and human development.

Country platforms follow from a decades-long effort to move from "project-based" to "programmatic aid,"[9] recognizing that activities intended to support transformations of the recipient country's economies and systems required coordinated and synchronized efforts beyond the scope of what any single project could deliver. Moreover, it has since become widely accepted that these transformations require not only resources to deliver development projects but also a conducive policy environment. In the wake of the international financial institutions' (IFIs) structural adjustment era of the 1980s, the development community sought structures and institutions that could unlock transformative economic growth and development through improved policy planning and resource coordination.[10]

Comprehensive Development Frameworks and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, which operationalized them, were at the heart of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending in the 1990s. These frameworks aimed to establish a unified development strategy to which both donors and development partners could contribute. These approaches aimed to have countries develop medium-term plans for poverty reduction through consultative processes and with measurable outcomes. From these efforts, which initially focused on lower-income countries and did not involve stakeholders providing private finance, development practitioners began to gain experience in supporting countries in establishing longer-term plans and coordinating their own resources in support of those plans.

During the same period, development practitioners identified issues related to donor fragmentation, particularly in aid-concentrated sectors such as health and education. Through Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps),[11] development partners aimed to strengthen country leadership, pursue joint planning by governments and donors, achieve increased harmonization, and utilize country systems for the management of funds. From these initiatives, development partners took initial steps toward coordinating their development assistance through government-led processes.

The current generation of country platforms has emerged more prominently since their invocation in the 2018 G20 Eminent Persons Group Report on Global Financial Governance. The report highlighted country platforms as a central tool for aligning development finance with national

9 Jones, Stephen; Lawson, Andrew. Moving from projects to programmatic aid (English). Operations Evaluation Department (OED) working paper series; no. 5, Washington DC; World Bank.

10 Ibid.

11 David H. Peters, Ligia Paina, Finn Schleimann, Sector-wide approaches (SWAps) in health: what have we learned?, Health Policy and Planning, Volume 28, Issue 8, December 2013, Pages 884–890.

priorities and called for the creation of platforms as "single focal points" to channel technical assistance, public and private finance, and policy coordination.[12] The last five years alone have seen the emergence of a series of partnerships, most high-profile among them the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) in South Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Senegal, focused on accelerating the energy transition in select EMDEs.

Other platforms outside the JETP framework, with different and broader scopes, have also emerged in recent years, including the Egyptian Food, Water, and Energy Nexus (NWFE), the Bangladesh Climate and Development Platform, and Brazil's Climate and Ecological Transformation Investment Platform (BIP), to name a few. Some efforts bear similarities with platforms such as the World Bank/African Development Bank-led Mission 300 and V20 Climate Prosperity Plan processes.

We are now likely on the cusp of yet another generation of country platforms. Amidst near-term forecasts of contractions in available ODA and grant capital, some countries and development practitioners believe country platforms provide a way for the development and climate finance ecosystem to "do more with less," stretching the concessional resources that remain to the highest extent possible. Confronting the fragmented and sometimes misaligned structures in the current ecosystem, some development partners believe that country platforms provide a way to ease EMDE access to resources.[13] Recognizing the need to experiment with new models of development assistance and collaboration across development institutions, many advocate for reforms that could be piloted at the country level, rather than just at the architecture level.

A cautionary note: What platforms likely can't do

There are many hard-won lessons from previous eras of development cooperation and from past country platforms. While there is no one-size-fits-all model for country platforms, overloaded expectations about what they can achieve risk discrediting them.

Sector transformations—often the goal of country platforms—are complicated, systemic processes. Platforms are a tool to increase financial resources for targeted development priorities, as well as to unlock policy changes. Too often, it is presumed that access to finance is the binding constraint, even though in reality, more stubborn obstacles may exist.

Investments cannot proceed without conducive policy environments and supportive institutions. Private finance cannot backfill gaps in public finance or public

12 G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance. (2018). Making the Global Financial System Work for All: Report of the G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance. October 2018.

13 For a discussion on the role of country platforms in addressing fiscal challenges and access to international resources, see Bastien Bedossa, Andrea Cavallini, Sima Kammourieh, and Martin Kessler, eds., Planning and Implementing the Climate and Development Transformation: Country Platforms as Enablers, Policy Note 23, Finance for Development Lab & Coalition for Capacity for Climate Action, February 2025.

institutional capacity—they are complements, not substitutes. Countries with unresolved macroeconomic, fiscal, or political issues are unlikely to realize the full economic benefits from focusing on investments and development finance. Resources from donors and multilateral institutions, in those circumstances, will have a higher marginal benefit focused on addressing those challenges more directly.

Understanding where platforms typically have not been able to deliver might help to avoid deploying them in contexts where they are unlikely to be effective. We offer the following three insights out of concern that deploying platforms to pursue outcomes they are not suited to deliver discredits the tool, even in cases where it could be appropriately used.

Platforms should not aim to "buy ambition," though they can powerfully "back ambition"

Some conceptions of country platforms resemble a political deal.[14] Donors, development partners, and other interested parties make a large pool of resources available to a country, in the form of grants, public debt, and equity, as well as multilateral financing and international private capital.[15] There is intensive focus on a significant, public, announceable "headline number." In return, partners negotiate with the host country so that it increases its level of ambition in the given sector(s) covered by the platforms. The negotiations often take place outside of country planning processes, and the resultant deal and targets agreed to in the context of the platform are not embedded in national planning documents. Development partners are often motivated to press countries for more ambitious outcomes where global public goods are concerned, as has been the case with climate mitigation. The Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) followed this model.[16]

There are multiple challenges here. For ambition to translate into delivery, it must be truly owned and understood by the country, including both the technical and political pathways to success. Furthermore, placing too much emphasis on a political negotiation with external partners and focusing on headline targets can mean that there is insufficient investment internally in the hard work of forging consensus among key actors within a country on the technical pathways, reforms, investments, and capital needed. Additional resources can effectively *back or validate ambition*, helping countries overcome challenges, achieve greater scale, or move more quickly. But the core ambition and goals must be the country's.

Moreover, if the opening premise is framed as *buying ambition*, it can quickly poison relationships and foster a toxic dynamic as host countries seek compensation to make politically challenging

14 For example, see Hadley et al. (2022). Country platforms for climate action: something borrowed, something new? London: ODI.

15 For an example of this approach, see the announcement made by South Africa at the Launch of its JETP—Presidency, Republic of South Africa. (2021, November 2). Presidency on international partnership to support a just transition to a low carbon economy and a climate resilient society. Government of South Africa.

16 Hadley et al. (2022). Country platforms for climate action: something borrowed, something new? London: ODI.

reforms or make painful choices around prioritization and financing, and as funding partners increasingly micromanage out of fear of not getting their money's worth. For example, notwithstanding the robust political negotiation for the JETP in Indonesia and painstaking work on a Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan, as implementation progressed, it became clear that the Indonesians considered the JETP targets and plans as "aspirational" and gave more credence to targets in the key Indonesian planning documents for the electricity sector.

Ultimately, in a system where country ownership is fully valued, development partners can enable governments to achieve their self-defined ambitions. Outside resources can help lubricate a partially open window, but they cannot create the window. Country platforms cannot create ambition where it doesn't exist across a host country's political system, which in most countries will require, to varying degrees, bringing along business and society, not just the political class. And if they try, they are likely to face numerous future obstacles once the efforts shift from design to implementation.

Platforms don't automatically lead to collective action, even if they enhance information sharing and general coordination

Coordination or generic collaboration does not directly translate into effective operational collective action or division of labor. Partnerships do not consistently deliver outcomes better or faster and do not even consistently reduce transaction costs. But they always increase complexity. This happens because partners that join the partnership often don't collaborate as a collective, in ways that can generate leverage and specialization. Instead, too often, each institution brings its own priorities, own requirements, own diligence processes—even its own board dates or calendars for making decisions. Platforms can help when multiple types of finance require coordination. However, partners should come to platforms with the spirit of working differently if they are truly part of a collective, not working the same alongside others. This would require greater agility and flexibility from partners.

And the larger the group, the more difficult it may be to achieve effective coordination. Given the complex development priorities that country platforms are often set up to address, there is typically a drive to attract substantial resources. As a result, there may be an instinct to crowd in as many development partners as possible into a platform—"the more the merrier." Yet, additional partners introduce additional layers of coordination.

Host governments report having to dedicate considerable resources to managing these complexities, often diverting time, attention, and personnel from more impactful implementation tasks.[17] Host governments also report that significant breakthroughs and agreements are most often

17 For example, the EU estimates around €800mn in added costs in development assistance through ineffective coordination of aid between member states. See European Parliament. Directorate-General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies. (2013). The Cost of Non-Europe in Development Policy: Increasing coordination between EU donors. Brussels: European Parliament.

made bilaterally, even when a partnership is in place. In the development of the Egyptian NWFE platform, for instance, stakeholders reported that major donor resources came primarily from two donors—the US and Germany—and were unlocked through bilateral negotiations.

There is also a mismatch in the relationship and power dynamics, with one government (the host country) having to deal with 10 or more governments (donor countries). The irony is that the donors can align on some of the toughest asks while still bilaterally making their own demands where there is no donor consensus. Outside of the partnership, donors may engage with the host in ways that contradict the principles or values of the partnership.

Platforms struggle to untangle host government politics

Transformational projects and transactions require more than just finance. Enabling environments are a prerequisite for large-scale, privately financed deals. Enabling environment improvements and policy reforms can effectively demonstrate a host country's commitment and political resolve and can help unlock resources within a platform, such as the National Energy Compacts, which play a key role in defining policy reforms to unlock financing under the Mission 300 Initiative.[18] However, many of these policy reforms are politically difficult to formulate and implement.

Countries, and the governments that represent them, are not single unitary actors. Policy reforms often create winners and losers, with incumbent, vested private and public sector interests often among the latter. Within governments themselves, there are frequently competing visions, priorities, and beliefs about the desirability of reforms across ministries. Beyond ministries, multiple important players can block or support efforts, including utilities and state-owned companies.

Some country platforms have attempted to leverage head-of-government political commitments, announced upfront, to try to overcome these differences. But bureaucracies and legislatures across the world can slow, stall, or sabotage political decisions that have not been socialized sufficiently, negotiated transparently, or where implementation capacity is an afterthought. There is a fundamental mismatch between the time required for the projects and policy reforms under a platform to deliver impact and the shorter time frames of electoral politics.

Platforms, like any initiative, have windows of opportunity to deliver tangible benefits to stakeholders and maintain their support. If political negotiations consume that window, it becomes harder to keep that support. Country platforms struggle to establish a clear political direction, will, or alignment where one did not previously exist. Many elements of enabling environments are overtly political decisions that are better debated, considered, and addressed in domestic political institutions without the participation of external stakeholders.

18 See World Bank Group, Mission 300 is Powering Africa: National Energy Compacts.

Platform success factors: Critical issues and recommendations

For country platforms to meet the moment, they must be able to translate commitment and partnership into tangible benefits for host countries, their governments, their companies, and most importantly, their people. Announcements alone don't deliver. Indeed, big announcements can be a distraction that pulls attention, time, and resources away from other activities that could have a greater impact, like technical and financial analysis or investment planning. For instance, some close to the platform have claimed that the rush to announce the South Africa JETP by the 2021 COP26 Summit, before policy and pipeline work could be completed, has been a primary factor in delaying implementation and flow of finance, and hence eroding trust.[19]

Impact comes from thoughtful implementation—detailed design linked to national planning processes, development of investable pipelines, mobilization of finance, and robust monitoring—and clarity of what all actors bring to the table. Before and after high-level political negotiations and announcements at international gatherings, stakeholders must make numerous decisions about how to translate the announced vision into structures, processes, and priority projects that become the engines of delivery.

This paper identifies four common and complex implementation issues, around which host countries and their development partners make decisions, that determine the effectiveness of country platforms in delivering impact. Finding ways to navigate these choices may provide powerful levers to increase the effectiveness of platforms. The design and implementation pathways that successful country platforms make will take varying directions, based on the local context, ambition, and environment in which the platforms operate. But this paper provides ideas and approaches with the hope of inspiring leaders and partners of emerging country platforms to think hard about what solutions might work for them, to try some of these approaches, or offer yet more new ideas.

1. Delivering on country ownership and leadership: Ownership requires broad political and technical consensus, while country leadership requires execution capacity

There is broad agreement that impactful country platforms should be "country-owned and country-led."[20] The work of structuring political negotiations, cultivating political will, and forging political consensus within a host government is a vital prerequisite for country ownership.

Yet, alignment among political actors alone is unlikely to prove sufficient. Successful transformation requires alignment across the political and technical aspects of a sector and robust

19 For an explanation of these arguments, see Melanie Robinson & Crispian Olver. (2025). Are 'Country Platforms' the Key to Delivering Green Growth at Scale? World Resources Institute. February 19, 2025.

20 For example, see G20. (2020). G20 Reference Framework for Effective Country Platforms. Group of Twenty, Saudi Arabian Presidency, 23 February 2020.

implementation capacity. Government actors beyond ministries, such as parastatals, state-owned enterprises, national or public development banks, and regulators, may need to be consulted and brought in. For example, in the energy sector, quasi-independent regulatory commissions and state-owned or controlled utilities play an important gatekeeping role in approving and executing new generation investment decisions that will impact financial flows and tariff rates in the sector. Providing a voice to the private sector, including domestic companies and financial providers, is likely to result in more actionable plans for investment.[21] Forums and processes need to be developed so that an appropriately representative portion of civil society can provide input. These coalitions operate most effectively when all stakeholders are engaged from the outset, mitigating the risks that stakeholders are left to block from the outside should they disagree with the chosen direction For example, in South Africa, insufficient consultation with and provision of financial resources to communities dependent on the Komati coal plant led to calls for the plant to be reopened, representing a threat to progress under the JETP.[22]

Importantly, country ownership without effective execution capacity risks being just good rhetoric. Capacity for execution enables country leadership. Capacity needs to be embedded throughout many parts of government, from the different relevant ministries to the utilities and public development banks. Capacity may refer to having the specific skills that are needed or enough people and time to devote to the work. Both are crucial, and many countries report challenges with securing the long-term financing to help build internal capacity, which is distinct from hiring endless consultants, for which money is more readily available.

Each platform's structure and process must be tailored to the country's unique circumstances and the platform's own objectives. Some models prioritize proximity to heads of state, focused on maintaining political buy-in and facilitating cross-ministerial collaboration, as in the South African JETP.[23] Other models center platforms around ministries of finance or planning, concentrating on establishing durable structures and capabilities that can outlast political administrations, such as in the V20-supported Climate Prosperity Plans.[24] And more recently, there has been the emergence of new types of platforms that bring the secretariat or core coordinating unit closer to project-driven agencies, such as national development banks with strong project finance skills that can originate or facilitate transitions, as is the case with the Brazil Climate and Ecological Transformation Investment Platform (BIP).[25]

While there does not seem to be a universal model to drive country ownership and leadership across all circumstances, there is a universal need for funded coordination units with the necessary

21 For an example of how private sector engagement shaped platform design in Brazil, see World Economic Forum, "Brazil Country Platform: Case Study," Playbook of Solutions, July 2022.

22 The importance of stakeholder consultations in the South African JETP is discussed in more detail in World Resources Institute. "Are 'Country Platforms' the Key to Delivering Green Growth at Scale?" February 18, 2025.

23 For details on South Africa's JET PMU, see JET Implementation Plan governance and institutional architecture.

24 For details on Climate Prosperity Plans, see V20 Climate Prosperity Plans.

25 For details on Brazil's BIP, see Brazil Climate and Ecological Transformation Platform.

resources and longevity to enable countries to conduct the political and technical work required to inform their decisions. Capacity is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of countries exercising leadership of their platforms.

Recommendation

Philanthropic, bilateral funders, and other grant partners should provide responsive, multiyear readiness funding so that countries can invest in durable coordination structures that help them to exercise meaningful ownership and leadership.

Based on clear, quick, and straightforward eligibility criteria, funders could disburse grants for staffing secretariats over a three- to five-year period, allowing countries to recruit staff and build structures well-equipped to deliver over the course of the platform. This would allow the country to make the decisions required for a well-scoped, sequenced, and executed approach. Ideally, multiple philanthropic and public partners could pool their resources into a single fund, with transparent eligibility requirements and low transaction costs for countries to access.

2. Sequencing appropriately: Platforms should launch when they are able to establish sustainable momentum

Theories of change abound about what makes country platforms work. A predominant line of thinking, recently deployed in the design and launch of the JETPs, held that large, attention-grabbing political announcements could jump-start the challenging work of building political consensus and establishing the structures required for coordination, prioritization, and implementation of projects. By committing considerable resources and securing the highest level of political buy-in upfront, the thinking went, platforms could apply pressure on domestic systems to make difficult choices or undertake challenging work.

Yet, big announcements often short-circuit foundational work and pipeline development or create parallel plans that are not embedded in national planning processes. For instance, in the Indonesian JETP, the Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan developed to create a project pipeline was not aligned with Indonesia's primary energy plans, such as the Electricity Supply Business Plan, RUPTL of the national utility PLN,[26] and the National Electricity Master Plan, the RUKN.

As a result, there can be incredible frustration and a loss of momentum even before implementation starts in earnest. The foundations of sustainable momentum must extend beyond the political—having political champions and high-level attention is essential, but not sufficient. Without the internal political coalition-building, understanding policy priorities, agreed-upon technical pathways, and the initial project pipeline, political declarations may find themselves on a

26 For an analysis of the misalignment between the JETP targets and Indonesia's other energy sector plans, see Ember. "Captive coal expansion plan could undermine Indonesia's climate goals." February 19, 2025.

foundation of quicksand. Even in countries with strong long-term strategies, national adaptation plans, or other national planning documents, more detailed work and analysis are often needed to develop a clear sense of the technical pathways and investments required for implementation.

Specifically, understanding the required deliverables, reforms, and investable pipelines to be served by platforms requires analytics, project structuring, and other preparatory activities that could happen before platforms are launched.[27] Singular development finance projects themselves often take two years to develop,[28] so a substantial amount of preparatory and technical work is required if the platform is to deliver multiple projects within its lifetime.

The upfront investment required by countries to build a strong foundation and sequence appropriately can be significantly aided by patient and low-key providers of concessional resources. Such support equips countries to decide when they are best positioned to launch a platform able to use mobilized resources, accounting for political windows of opportunity.

Recommendations

Establish centers or open-source provision of analytical methods and tools.

While every context is specific, much of the required preparatory work for platforms involves similar analytical and technical tasks. The tools and approaches used to frame critical decisions (such as technical pathways for sectoral transformation) are likely to be broadly applicable. Investing in data, tools, and capabilities that can be readily made available or provided to interested countries significantly reduces resource requirements for this prework. At a minimum, those investing in developing tools and approaches should make them available in an open-source manner. The development of new tools or approaches should, whenever possible, be done through networks of providers with the closest possible proximity to the end users. Training trainers locally should also be encouraged to maximize uptake by relevant people in the country.

Make readiness and project preparation funding from multilateral climate funds more accessible to facilitate preparatory work.

There is concessional, pooled funding already available in existing funds, including in the multilateral climate funds, notably the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Climate Investment Funds (CIF). Indeed, in North Macedonia, the CIF's Accelerating the Coal Transition was critical to funding initial platform design.[29] Shareholders and management of these funds should enable the

27 For a useful description of the critical preparatory activity required and process considerations for a country platform launch, see Josué Tanaka, Archie Gilmour and Stefan Raubenheimer, "Country Platform Development Note", ODI Global, February 2025.

28 For an analysis of recent trends in MDB disbursal timetables, see Kenny, Charles. "World Bank Investment Projects Aren't Designed for Crises." Center for Global Development Blog, March 14, 2023.

29 See Just Transition Finance Lab. "North Macedonia: Tapping multilateral climate finance to kickstart an economy-wide just transition." March 2024.

creation of a fast-track window, possibly pooled, for the modest funding of early-stage preparatory work. For country platforms that are moving forward, these funds should establish and implement ways of working that improve ease and speed of access of funding, including, for example, a rolling application process, mutual acceptance of accreditation across funds, and a pre-announced maximum time for funding decisions. The timely availability of these funds should enable countries to do the necessary work ahead of a public launch.

3. "Right-sizing" the scope: Platform scopes can be calibrated to problems that have clear pathways to impact, to enable difficult political choices

Typically, host countries and their development partners turn to the country platform approach to address complex development priorities. In such cases, the reforms and projects involved often take time to materialize and can incur short-term costs before the benefits become clear. Successful platforms, therefore, must create pathways that make difficult choices more acceptable. To create spaces for beneficial political settlements, platforms must be positioned to provide tangible and measurable benefits to a broad range of local stakeholders, across different time horizons, including some wins or interim signals of progress in the shorter term.[30] Doing this in a way that does not lose sight of the comprehensive, longer-term, sought-after transformations that are hopefully enshrined in national planning documents becomes the key.[31]

Real economy benefits are most often the outcomes that people feel. In climate-focused platforms, avoided emissions are not easily understood or felt by local stakeholders.[32] Fortunately, the set of economic activities surrounding the decommissioning of emissions-intensive energy production, such as the expansion of renewable energy generation capacity or the creation of new jobs or skills, does have tangible and demonstrable co-benefits in the real economy and can often yield a positive return on investment. In addition, the projects supported by a platform are not the only potential source of benefits; platform-related policy changes or macroeconomic adjustments (e.g., debt relief) are additional pathways to produce near-term tangible results for people and businesses. Progress made under the JETPs on local content requirements in Indonesia or captive generation in South Africa is likely to have positive impacts beyond the projects funded under the platforms.

30 For a detailed discussion of the variety of political settlements pursued by country platforms, see Kelsall, T., Colenbrander, S., and Simpson, N. (2024). One size won't fit all: Designing country platforms for different political contexts. ODI Working Paper.

31 For a discussion on the need to focus on deep rather than broad scopes in sector transformation efforts in development finance, see Nancy Lee, Valerie Laxton, and Samuel Matthews, What Would the Ideal Development and Climate MDB Look Like? CGD Policy Paper 299, Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, June 2023.

32 For instance, in the context of the South Africa JETP, the Presidential Climate Commission found that a narrow focus on coal decommissioning imperiled support for the platform. See Presidential Climate Commission. (2023). PCC Report: Early Lessons and Recommendations from Komati's Decommissioning and Repurposing Project. Pretoria: Presidential Climate Commission.

Moreover, people don't feel average benefits. Any project or successful sectoral transformation will produce losers and winners. Care must be taken to understand the political economy and distributional impacts of a particular pathway and to implement measures to soften the transition for the losers.[33] This can include putting in place social safety nets to help the most vulnerable navigate the transition.

Given linkages between the breadth of scope and the ability to produce demonstrable benefits, a country platform cannot realistically encompass a host government's entire long-term economic development strategy. Nor can it even cover the whole Nationally Determined Contribution. In determining ambition and defining the scope of their platforms, countries need to define the vision for the sector in question, prioritize which subset of those pathways to target, and identify the aspects of that pathway that would benefit from coordinated support across providers of finance and expertise. There is no magic threshold for the "right-sized" scope; countries must thoughtfully determine for themselves what is appropriate for their context and goals.

Recommendations

Design platforms as sequential and incremental investment packages, within a comprehensive framework.

Within the context of a clear and ambitious national plan, one straightforward mechanism for connecting scope to demonstrable benefit would be to match the initial scope to the available investable pipeline of transactions or set of identified policy reforms. The initial scope would prioritize setting up mechanisms to organize various sources of finance in line with the needs of projects in the pipeline or implementing a priority set of policy reforms. With a handful of successful transactions to establish momentum, the scope of the platform could be expanded incrementally, through the inclusion of additional investment packages, by mutual agreement to bring in more complex projects or challenging sectors. Once the platform has a proven track record, external financial support is likely to increase to meet the expanded ambitions. More ambitious reforms, if needed, could also be undertaken. Country platforms would need to be thoughtful about how investment packages add up to a coherent sequence of policies and investments that together drive transformational progress.

Consider regional platforms carefully when the binding constraint crosses boundaries.

Connecting scope to demonstrable benefit does not necessarily mean narrowing the scope. Given concerns of over complexity, it might seem irresponsible to suggest a regional scope. But if the core

33 The importance of focus on the political economy of reforms in programmatic aid is well established in the literature. For a discussion of its importance for SWAps, see Vaillancourt, D. (2009). Do Health Sector-Wide Approaches Achieve Results? Emerging Evidence and Lessons from Six Countries. IEG Working Paper 2009/4. Washington, DC: World Bank Independent Evaluation Group.

development challenge requires coordination across jurisdictions, it is worth considering a regional approach. Many investable—and potentially high-impact—projects involve multiple countries. For instance, supply chains often require infrastructure coordinated across numerous jurisdictions. Transportation infrastructure sometimes crosses borders. EMDEs that struggle to attract external financial resources due to limited scale could consider forming joint platforms with neighboring countries, focused on unlocking specific transportation corridors and supply chains connected to real economic opportunities, as the rail- and port-focused Lobito Corridor in Southern Africa has. These conditions are more common in smaller, landlocked, or small island developing states.

4. Unlocking the full potential of capital: For platforms to unlock additional resources, they must bring together finance providers with different preferences for risk-adjusted returns

Country platforms are worth the transaction and coordination costs they bring when they unlock resources and options that wouldn't be available otherwise. Country platforms cannot raise new resources. Instead, they draw on those that are already available in development and climate finance ecosystems—resources from local and domestic private capital providers, development agencies, MDBs, DFIs, philanthropies, and other actors who provide resources for projects in their normal course of business.

Country platforms can help coordinate across these independent organizations to enable access to more resources dedicated to the same plan and facilitate a more efficient or catalytic use of these resources than would otherwise be the case. This becomes possible when organizations with different mandates, tolerances for risk, and capabilities in analyzing and underwriting projects can call upon the expertise and resources of others with different but complementary toolkits. Country platforms, through alignment of targets, sharing of information, and facilitation of coordination, increase the likelihood of a catalytic combination of resources. And for some smaller countries, or countries that are less visible to donors, country platforms can effectively introduce new actors and expertise into a country, as was the case with the CIF-supported work in North Macedonia that helped lead to the development of the country's Just Energy Transition Investment Platform.[34]

An innovation of more recent country platforms has been earlier engagement with the private sector. But just as with governments, the private sector cannot be treated as a unified entity. For instance, debt and equity providers have very different risk-return expectations, underwriting processes, and resources for engaging in project structuring. In Indonesia, for example, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ) played a constructive initial role in representing the private sector

34 For details on the development of the North Macedonian JETIP Platform, see "North Macedonia: Tapping Multilateral Climate Finance to Kickstart an Economy-Wide Just Transition." Case study. Just Transition Finance (London School of Economics), July 18, 2025.

during the formation of the JETP.[35] Yet GFANZ is primarily a group of international debt providers.[36] Involved stakeholders noted that international and domestic providers of equity, particularly project developers, were brought on much later, limiting the ability of private sector stakeholders to use catalytic deployments of equity to jump-start project structuring. The right mix of capital providers needs to be at the table so that early efforts prioritize capital flows that unlock other types of capital down the line. Some newer platforms, like the Brazil BIP, are trying to facilitate catalytic interactions between capital providers by connecting specific transactions with a diverse range of providers of finance through project calls.[37]

This strategic use of diverse types of capital would more easily materialize if all types of finance were pooled together or governed by a single entity. This has not been the case with country platforms to date, and current incentives and political imperatives do not suggest that significant change is underway. Processes that allow for the purposeful combination of resources from different providers offer another path towards those ends. Country platforms are most likely to fulfill their promise of unlocking additional resources where they succeed in maximizing the interactions between different types of complementary capital and reducing transaction costs, and move closer to operating as a "capital stack."

Recommendations

Tap local financial capabilities first.

Countries are well served by starting with an understanding of the capabilities and gaps in their domestic financial and capital markets. This runs contrary to the experience of many recent country platforms that have looked externally first to see what resources international public and private partners could bring to the table. Starting with mobilizing international resources increases the likelihood of a mismatch between available resources and what resources are required for the transactions that the platform is prioritizing. Local finance providers possess vital expertise and capabilities that are difficult for international financiers to replicate quickly. Their local currency finance avoids currency mismatches that increase risks for external funders. Local institutions, such as national development banks, often have networks and origination capabilities that can jump-start project pipelines, particularly where public or national development banks exist with strong structuring and origination capabilities. Using international resources to unlock these local capabilities can catalyze large pools of finance for projects. For instance, the government of South Africa is working to tap its deep local capital and insurance markets by partnering with the

35 For details of GFANZ role in Indonesia, see GFANZ Forms Working Group to Support Mobilization of Private Capital for the Indonesian Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), November 15, 2022.

36 For information on GFANZ Membership, see the GFANZ 2024 Progress Report, November 2024.

37 Brazil Climate and Ecological Transformation Investment Platform—Executive Presentation, BNDES, 2025.

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency to establish a Credit Guarantee Vehicle to enable blended international finance to provide risk sharing through international partners.[38]

Build on the pooled structures that already exist.

Host governments and their partners can, and should, look to build upon the already existing structures for pooled resources, such as the multilateral climate funds, trust funds, and financial intermediary funds already established at MDBs. Utilizing existing structures, where appropriately flexible, reduces the need for time-intensive negotiations and increases the accessibility of joint resources. The Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), a multi-donor trust fund at the African Development Bank, was utilized to channel resources towards the Senegalese JETP, particularly to identify "fast-track" renewable energy projects and implementation priorities.[39]

Focus efforts to pool resources on the scarcest, most catalytic, and most risk tolerant types of finance.

Development partners should challenge themselves and expend political capital to work towards pooled resources, at least of some of their resources. In this effort, they should prioritize types of finance most likely to mobilize additional forms of capital, such as grants, philanthropic capital, and early-stage equity. These flows have the highest ability to both expand the pipeline of investable transactions. Moreover, they have the highest ability to support the risk-adjusted returns of other elements of the capital stack in ways that make broader private participation possible. Pooling of resources can occur at a global, country, or sectoral level, depending on the needs of the platforms supported and the requirements of donors providing funds. Opportunities may arise to repurpose, reorient, or reprioritize separate initiatives that contain pooled concessional resources that emerged outside of a platform to support transactions within it, as is the case with Brazil's BIP and related initiatives such as Ecoinvest.[40]

Reduce transaction costs through a lead arranger model for critical categories of capital.

Much effort is often expended in crowding in as many providers of capital as possible, in the belief that more resources are better, and they are. But each new provider introduces its own processes, requirements, and diligence. Instead, the host government can designate lead arrangers for major capital provider categories, who do all initial processes, requirements, and diligence under a single system familiar to country stakeholders, in coordination with host countries. They can then work to distribute or syndicate their exposure to other similar organizations that commit to absorbing some of that lending capacity. For instance, where MDB capital is utilized, a single arranger can be designated by the country to do all the initial underwriting under its singular process,

38 For details on the launch of the Credit Guarantee Vehicle in South Africa, see "Government Launches Project for Investors in Energy Sector." 2025. SAnews, July 31, 2025.

39 For details on the use of the SEFA Trust Fund by donors such as the IPG Co-Chairs France and Germany, see the 2024 SEFA Annual Report.

40 Brazil Climate and Ecological Transformation Investment Platform—Executive Presentation, BNDES, 2025.

performance requirements, and diligences. After underwriting is complete, the lead arranger could syndicate its exposures to other MDBs, often through prearranged agreement. With this arrangement, the lion's share of coordination costs is borne by the external financing partners among themselves, rather than being foisted upon countries that struggle to manage them.

Coordinate capital allocation across the program rather than just within individual projects.

Projects are often structured to include the coordination of multiple capital providers across various capital types, making transactions bankable. Blended finance transactions combine public and private capital towards the same ends. However, in some circumstances, the most catalytic use of public capital is not within but across projects. For instance, a 100 percent publicly financed transmission project or recapitalization of a struggling utility may do more to enable private capital to flow into electricity generation than trying to use that same capital in a blended generation project. Moreover, allocating public funds to separate projects helps reduce coordination and project structuring costs when private capital is available.

The way forward: Next-generation country platforms and the international financial architecture in which they operate

We hope the lessons and ideas explored in this paper demonstrate that the strong interest in country platforms is not unfounded. Equally, we hope the paper conveyed our belief that countries' decisions on whether to launch a platform should be rooted in the core objectives they seek to achieve, what it will take to make progress, and how best to organize the work toward progress, rather than for the platform tool itself.

New approaches to platform design and execution have the potential to improve the performance of country platform delivery in situations where they are appropriate. In identifying what platforms fail to deliver, what challenges constrain their delivery, and what ideas could bypass those constraints, we aspire to support EMDE governments as they decide if, when, and how they want to invest in country platforms to tackle complex climate and development challenges and aspirations.

We hope that the ideas explored in this paper can also support finance and technical assistance providers in thinking through how they can best support host countries in achieving their ambitions, both individually and collectively. Radical collaboration is about more than exchanging openly in a series of meetings with other partners and a host country. It must include a willingness to work differently and adapt approaches to truly make the sum greater than the whole of individual parts. Many incentives—for both public and private financiers—run counter to making these changes, so this is also an issue for these organizations' shareholders to consider.

In this moment of turbulence within the international development ecosystem, country platforms can serve as a microcosm of some of the most important questions in development cooperation. Country platforms force stakeholders to consider:

- What political economies facilitate strategic prioritization and execution of policy reforms and sector transformations?
- What does effective country ownership and leadership mean in practice, and how can equal partnerships between countries operate?
- What does it take for bilateral and multilateral funders to truly work as a system, and where can competition or differentiated responsibilities between them spur better outcomes?
- How can different types of financial providers leverage each other to produce a multiplier effect?

The work of reimagining and reforming the international financial architecture will continue apace. The development and climate finance communities will be congregating over the next few months—in Washington, DC at the World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings, in Belem for the COP30 climate conference, and in Johannesburg for the G20 Leaders Summit—to advance agendas around MDB reform, climate finance architecture reform, private capital mobilization, and other topics. Moving beyond references or commitments to rely on country platforms within these agendas, we should work toward a relentless focus on effective implementation. As one interviewee rightly noted, "country platforms done well is the same thing as effective development cooperation."

Note on research methodology and sources

We conducted over 50 interviews with stakeholders involved in the formulation, design, and implementation of existing or emerging country platforms. These interviews were conducted under Chatham House rules, so the interviewees will not be cited. These stakeholders range from public sector actors in host governments to donors and development partners to civil society actors that support and research development and climate finance in EMDEs.

Additionally, we conducted an extensive literature review of reports, perspectives, and official documents relating to the development of country platforms and assessments of their performance to date. A selection of papers and reports can be found in the Appendix.

Appendix: Country platforms literature used in our research

Think tank and policy papers

Bardouille, Pepukaye, and Sara Jane Ahmed. 2025. *Realizing the Potential of Country Platforms*. Project Syndicate, July 21, 2025.

Bedossa, Bastien, Andrea Cavallini, Sima Kammourieh, and Martin Kessler. 2025. *Planning and Implementing the Climate and Development Transformation: Country Platforms as Enablers*. Finance for Development Lab & World Bank Group (C3A), February 26, 2025.

Curtin, Joseph, Claire Healy, and Mandy Rambharos. 2024. *Scaling the JETP Model—Prospects and Pathways for Action*. Rockefeller Foundation and Environmental Defense Fund, February 15, 2024.

Gilmour, Archie, Josué Tanaka, and Sarah Colenbrander. 2024. *Designing and Governing Country Platforms*. ODI, October 1, 2024.

Hadley, Sierd, Shakira Mustapha, Sarah Colenbrander, Mark Miller, and Adriana Quevedo. 2022. *Country Platforms for Climate Action: Something Borrowed, Something New?* ODI, June 24, 2022.

Jones, Stephen, and Andrew Lawson. 2000. *Moving from Projects to Programmatic Aid*. World Bank Group, June 1, 2000.

Kelsall, Tim, Sarah Colenbrander, and Nick Simpson. 2024. *One Size Won't Fit All: Designing Country Platforms for Different Political Contexts*. ODI, March 28, 2024.

Nancy Lee, Valerie Laxton, and Samuel Matthews, *What Would the Ideal Development and Climate MDB Look Like?* CGD Policy Paper 299, Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, June 2023.

Robinson, Melanie, and Crispian Olver. 2025. *Are "Country Platforms" the Key to Delivering Green Growth at Scale?* WRI, February 19, 2025.

Robinson, Melanie, and Gaia Larsen. 2025. *Financing Country Platforms*. WRI, June 26, 2025.

Sabogal Reyes, Laura, and Viktor Ahlgren. 2024. *Country Platforms for Climate Safety and Sustainable Development: The Next Generation of Climate & Development Partnerships*. E3G, September 4, 2024.

Seiler, Annika, Hannah Brown, and Samuel Matthews. 2023. *The JETPs of South Africa and Indonesia: A Blueprint for the Move Away from Coal?* CGD, July 25, 2023.

Sembene, Daouda, Nancy Lee, and Mark Plant. 2022. *Country Platforms and Delivery of Global Public Goods*. CGD, January 20, 2022.

Simpson, Nick, Archie Gilmour, and Michael Jacobs. 2023. *Taking Stock of Just Energy Transition Partnerships*. ODI, December 2, 2023.

Berglof, Erik, and R. Kyle Peters Jr. 2018. *Piloting the Country Platform*. LSE Institute of Global Affairs, January 1, 2018.

Duke, Rick, and Lauren Sidner. Forthcoming. *Renewables Realism: Power Past Broken Politics and Bad Policies*. MIT.

Official and multilateral reports

G20 (Brazil) TF-CLIMA. 2024. *Country Climate and Development Investment Platforms*. November 1, 2024.

G20 (Saudi Arabia) Finance Track. 2020. *G20 Reference Framework for Effective Country Platforms*. February 23, 2020.

G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance. 2018. *Making the Global Finance System Work for All*. October 1, 2018.

G20 (Brazil) FMCBG Meeting. 2024. *G20 Roadmap Towards Better, Bigger, and More Effective MDBs*. October 1, 2024.

GFANZ. 2021. *Country Platforms Action Plan*. November 3, 2021.

MDB Climate Action Group. 2024. *Country Platforms for Climate Action: MDB Statement of Common Understanding and Way Forward*. November 12, 2024.

MDB Group. 2023. *Statement of the Heads of Multilateral Development Banks Group: Strengthening Our Collaboration for Greater Impact*. October 13, 2023.