

2 Improving Policy Co-ordination at the Centre of Government in Honduras

This chapter assesses the capacity of the centre of government (CoG) to lead whole-of-government co-ordination in Honduras. The chapter discusses the role of CoG institutions responsible for cross-government co-ordination; the value of the planning framework in aligning entities towards shared objectives; the work of the sectoral cabinets as forums for inter-ministerial consultations and decision making; and the mechanisms for multi-level co-ordination with subnational governments. The chapter highlights the progress achieved in establishing a formal framework for improved co-ordination, as well as the limitations in its practical implementation.

Introduction

In the context of a highly fragmented public administration (expressed by the large number of public institutions) and in pressing fiscal conditions, securing strong co-ordination is critically important for Honduras. It can reduce inefficiencies and duplications and maximise impact through synergies and joined-up efforts. This chapter assesses the capacity of the centre of government (CoG) in Honduras to co-ordinate across administrative silos to promote policy coherence.

Co-ordination is a key function performed by the institutions and units at the CoG. Although this function can be exercised through diverse mechanisms, three factors are usually critical for the success of any co-ordination effort. First, the existence of an entity or individual with a clear and empowered mandate to drive cross-government co-ordination. Second, the establishment of collective priorities and objectives that align the work of ministries (hereinafter “secretariats” when referring to Honduran ministries) and agencies. And third, having systematic processes for inter-ministerial consultation in order to foster coherence in policy design and implementation.

This chapter analyses these elements in Honduras and is organised as follows. The first section briefly presents the role of the CoG in OECD countries. The next section then examines the fragmented nature of the public administration in Honduras as well as the co-ordination challenges that it generates. The final section focuses on the Honduran CoG institutions and analyses how co-ordination has operated in practice in the country.

The centre of government in OECD countries: From administrative support to whole-of-government co-ordination with a focus on results

Policy co-ordination is critical to dealing with complex policy challenges successfully. Although it was always a preoccupation in the field of public administration, it has become particularly relevant in many OECD and non-OECD countries in recent decades. Several factors account for this change of prioritisation (Alessandro, Lafuente and Santiso, 2013^[1]) (Cingolani and Fazekas, 2020^[2]) (Peters, 2018^[3]).

First, the overall growth of the public sector and, in particular, the increasing number of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies have challenged the capacity of government leaders to steer public action coherently towards collective goals. Second, there is a growing consensus that most high-level policy challenges, such as economic development, poverty reduction and climate change, are multidimensional and require concerted contributions from multiple ministries, agencies, levels of government, and non-state actors. This is connected to a third factor: the increased expectations of citizens for improved outcomes in these key policy areas. Securing co-ordination is thus a pressing challenge. In its absence, government action is likely to result in gaps, overlaps, contradictions, inefficiencies, and limited impact.

To design effective whole-of-government approaches, OECD countries increasingly tend to strengthen the institutional capacities of their centres of government. The centre of government refers to “the body or group of bodies that provide direct support and advice to the Head of Government and the Council of Ministries, typically encompassing institutions such as the Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Office of the President or Prime Minister, General Secretariat of the Presidency, although institutional configurations vary across countries” (OECD, 2018^[4]). In many OECD countries, the CoG has moved from administratively supporting the corresponding president or prime minister to becoming a central actor in the policy cycle. This often implies the acquisition of responsibilities to ensure coherence in the policy design and implementation processes, as well as to provide strategic and evidence-based advice to ensure that decisions are congruent and prudent (OECD, 2014^[5]).

The CoG is critical for producing co-ordination because spontaneous horizontal collaboration across ministries is often hampered by differing priorities and policy preferences and conflicting incentives. The

CoG is well placed to arbitrate between these different positions: one test of the effectiveness of the centre of government is its ability to play a mediator role in ministries' disagreements (OECD, 2020^[6]).

CoG institutions are usually the only ones empowered to convene ministries and agencies for joint work (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021^[7]). Their policy co-ordination role is performed either by supporting and fostering environments for co-ordination, or by being directly involved in shaping the contents of policy. In the first scenario, these units have generally contributed to preparing cabinet meetings or other inter-ministerial committees by managing their decision-making process and enforcing the rules of that process. In practice, co-ordination here implies collecting the required documents in advance of the meetings, enforcing deadlines, planning the agenda, drafting and controlling shared plans, facilitating information sharing, and ensuring that proper consultations have been followed, among other similar tasks (Alessandro, Lafuente and Santiso, 2013^[11]). Other types of CoG units are more focused on the substance of the co-ordination, i.e. not only on facilitating its processes but also on directing or shaping the contents of policy. These units are often responsible for ensuring coherence in priority policy areas (economic policy, social policy, national security, etc.). In the United States for instance, the NEC (National Economic Council) has co-ordinated the agencies having some sort of power over economic matters (such as the Treasury, the State, Commerce, and Labour Departments, among others), and so contribute to the shaping of ultimate policy decisions (Destler, 2012^[8]).

International experience suggests that the factors driving the success of co-ordination mechanisms are diverse, but three common elements stand out in particular. First, the fact that there are specific institutions or individuals who have been empowered to lead those mechanisms, either formally – through a law, which enhances the clarity of their duty – or informally, by communication of the chief executive. Second, the existence of shared priorities and objectives that align the work of ministries and agencies. And third, the existence of robust and systematic co-ordination routines, such as processes for inter-agency consultation, which reinforce the regular collaboration among the various branches of government and embed co-ordination into the launching of any policy decision. The following sections will analyse the extent to which the Honduran CoG has been able to consolidate these three critical elements.

Co-ordinating within a fragmented environment: The Honduran challenge

A highly fragmented public administration

The co-ordination capacity of the Honduran CoG should be evaluated within the context of the organisation of the country's public administration. The analysis of this chapter focuses on the structure of the government during the 2018-22 administration and recognises changes made in public institutions with the 2022-26 administration. In that context, during the 2018-22 administration, the public sector housed, *inter alia*, 11 state secretariats (ministries within which a large number of units exist), a central bank, 3 regulatory entities, 4 public entities for social security matters, 4 national universities, 75 other public institutions, 18 regional governments, 8 public companies, and over 100 companies where the state held equity (Secretaría de Finanzas, 2019^[9]). As discussed in Chapter 1 on the public sector effectiveness of Honduras, while the number of line ministries is relatively low in comparison with other Latin American countries, Honduras combines an influential presidency with an administration that is becoming increasingly fragmented. Over the past decade, the number of public institutions, as considered in the official budget documents, has gone from 75 in 2012 to 94 in 2015, and up to 106 in 2019 (Secretaría de Finanzas, 2012^[10]; Secretaría de Finanzas, 2015^[11]; Secretaría de Finanzas, 2019^[9]). Upon taking office in 2022, the newly elected government increased state secretaries to 24 and abolished 17 older entities – secretariats of state, special cabinets and sectoral cabinet programmes, outlined in Executive Decree PCM-05-2022 (Government of Honduras, 2022^[12]).

This fragmentation resulted from the successive creation of new entities, resulting in limited co-ordination or clarity of roles and responsibilities among them, as well as the lack of a comprehensive approach to the organisation of the public administration. Such a fragmented administration is partly the outcome of two important factors. First, a decades-long accumulation of public bodies and entities responding to emerging sectoral needs. Indeed, most of the institutions created during the 2018-22 administration belonged to the “decentralised public administration” and displayed varying levels of formal autonomy, hindering the prospects for coherent policy responses. The accumulation of public entities derived, in turn, from the “agencification” phenomenon pinpointed at the beginning of this chapter, i.e. the atomisation of administrative bodies motivated by the growth of agencies and other autonomous entities resulting from the processes of specialisation that have taken place in Honduras during the past decades. A concrete example during the 2018-22 period is the creation of the Secretariat of Transparency (*Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Transparencia*, SDT) which, despite the fact that it highlights some commitment to the transparency agenda, has created some co-ordination challenges that are analysed in Chapter 5 on open government. In 2022, the newly elected administration has abolished the SDT and created a Secretariat of State in the Offices of Transparency and the Fight against Corruption (Government of Honduras, 2022^[12]).

A second reason accounting for the high level of fragmentation in Honduras refers to the frequent partial modifications of the Public Administration Law (*Ley Administración Pública*) from 1986, which have not been accompanied by a comprehensive reform. This law has been recurrently amended for the past two decades through occasional decrees that sought to respond to the inefficiencies posed by the original framework. The result has been the accumulation of a huge legal corpus of decrees that have de facto outdated the original law precisely by attempting to stopgap its inefficiencies. Consequently, today no comprehensive public administration reform provides a holistic coherence to the entire body of institutions within the executive branch.

This fragmentation is aggravated due to the limited practice of multi-sector collaboration. The prevailing organisational culture does not foster joint planning and co-ordinating efforts. State secretariats and other public entities typically pursue their own programmes without assessing whether joint efforts with other secretariats or entities could have led to better aligned high-level government strategies as well as generate better and more efficient outcomes. The incentives for officials to invest time and resources in high-level, priority outcomes that cut across departmental boundaries seem scarce, and intra-secretariat vertical governance and accountability arrangements largely prevail. This considerably hampers the prospects for an efficient co-ordination framework, especially considering the system's public fragmentation.

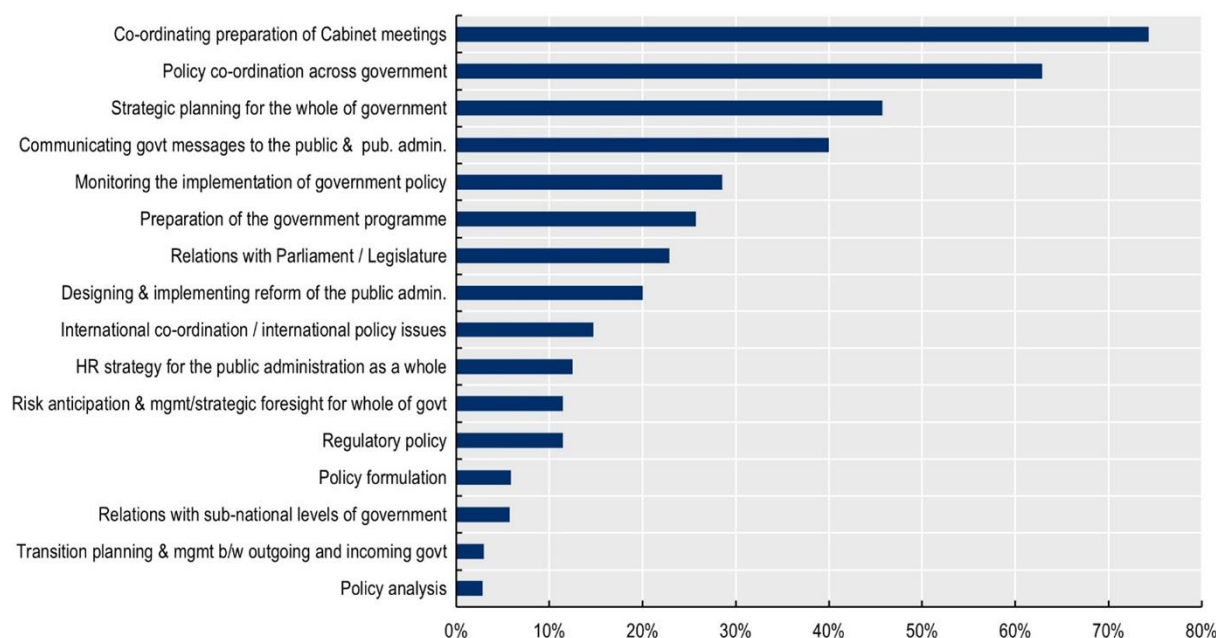
Taking these challenges into consideration, the government of Honduras could consider conducting a functional review of the public administration's functions and responsibilities in a detailed mapping to identify gaps, mandate overlaps and duplication across the executive branch. This could provide the needed coherence and clarity as well as reduce fragmentation and overlap across institutions. It is important to broadly communicate the findings of the review as well as the changes in the structure and responsibilities across government to raise awareness. The work could be led by the newly created Secretariat for Strategic Planning, which is in charge of steering the National Planning System for Social and Economic Development (see section below).

Towards a stronger centre of government in Honduras: Advancing a better-equipped framework to pursue whole-of-government co-ordination

The CoG concept does not refer to any concrete organisational structure: the institutions directly supporting the head of government can differ among countries, depending on the political system, the administrative structure, or even constitutional order of the country. Hence, the best way to identify the CoG in any given

country is to focus on the key crosscutting co-ordination functions that define it (OECD, 2004^[13]) (Alessandro, Lafuente and Santiso, 2013^[11]). Beyond frequent co-ordination of the preparation of cabinet meetings, and despite the heterogeneous range of institutional structures across OECD countries, the 2014 and 2017 OECD surveys on centre of government (OECD, 2014^[5]; OECD, 2017^[14]) concentrate the CoG work in five main functions: 1) policy co-ordination across government, which increasingly includes leading cross-departmental priority strategies; 2) supporting decision making by the head of government; 3) strategic planning for the whole of government; 4) monitoring the implementation of government policy, which means developing new mechanisms that emphasise outcomes rather than just tracking expenditures; and 5) public administration reform.

Figure 2.1. Top responsibilities delegated to the centre of government across OECD countries



Source: OECD (2017^[14]), *Government at a Glance*, https://doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2017-en.

The Honduran CoG units are intended to support both the presidency and the council of ministries. More concretely, during the 2018-22 administration the CoG included the following institutions, as per those performing the above-mentioned functions:

- The presidency, which in practice co-ordinates several important programmes, and within it the Office of Presidential Priorities, established in 2020 to enhance the delivery of high-level government priorities (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2020^[15]). This Office held ministerial rank and reported directly to the President.
- The Secretariat of General Co-ordination of the Government (SCGG), which played a key role in most of the areas described above. According to the Decree PCM-009-2018 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2018^[16]), the head of the SCGG was in charge of assisting the President of the Republic in the direction and co-ordination of the administration. To this end, the SCGG had the following competencies: strategic planning, within the framework of the Country Vision and the Nation Plan, and the definition of public policies; allocation of resources for the achievement of the objectives and goals defined in the Strategic Government Plan; the mechanisms and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the results of the government's management; recommendations to the President of the Republic to improve the effectiveness and impact of government policies and

programmes; formulation and implementation of transparency and anti-corruption policies and programmes; and analysis, proposal and implementation of plans for the modernisation and reform of the State. The SCGG was repealed by Executive Decree PCM-05-2022. Strategic planning functions have been assigned to the newly created Secretariat for Strategic Planning, which is in charge of steering the overall National Planning System for Social and Economic Development (Government of Honduras, 2022^[12]). The organisational structure of the SCGG was composed of:

- The Presidential Directorate for Strategic Planning, Budget for Results and Public Investment (*Dirección Presidencial de Planificación Estratégica, Presupuesto por Resultados, e Inversión Pública*, DPPI), was in charge of formulating the annual and pluriennial plans within the framework of the Country Vision and the National Plan, and assisting the entities of the executive branch in the formulation of annual institutional and operational planning.
- The Presidential Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation (*Dirección Presidencial de Monitoreo y Evaluación*, DPME), which created the mechanisms and procedures for monitoring/evaluating the results of government work, provided ongoing training to the Management Planning and Evaluation Units (*Unidades de Planificación y Evaluación de la Gestión*, UPEGs), and formulated recommendations to the president to improve the achievement of the objectives of the government. In the context of the 2022-26 administration, both the DPPI and the DPME were dissolved and their functions have been attributed to the Secretariat for Strategic Planning.
- The Secretariat of the Presidency (SEP), which emerges as the administrative right-hand ministry of the Presidency of the Republic. It was mainly responsible for co-ordinating the communications of the government, and holds the Cabinet Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. It was responsible for liaising with political parties in their relationship with the government. Most of the SEP units are purely administrative and seek to comply with the aforementioned functions, except for two:
 - The General Directorate of Civil Service. Provided for in the General Law of Public Administration (Decree No. 146-86), its main functions are to offer state agencies technical advice for personnel administration in order to achieve greater efficiency in public administration (Government of Honduras, 1986^[17]).
 - The Project Management Unit (UAP), created through Executive Decree No. PCM-008-2010 as a SEP body in charge of ensuring the co-ordinated implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects financed with national and external funds and executed by the SEP.
- The Secretariat of Finance (SEFIN). According to Article 57 of the Regulation on the Organisation, Functioning and Competence of the Executive Branch (Decreto Ejecutivo No. PCM-008-97, 1997^[18]), the SEFIN has functions and competencies for the administration of state assets. As with most Ministries of Finance, SEFIN performs both CoG functions (such as budget formulation aligned with the government's strategic planning) and sectoral functions (tax policy, debt policy, etc.).
- The Secretariat of Governance, Justice and Decentralisation (SGJD). According to Article 29 of the Public Administration Law, the SGJD is in charge of the Internal Regime of the Republic and, more importantly, of the direction, co-ordination, liaison, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the subnational (departmental and municipal) regimes (Government of Honduras, 1986^[17]).

In addition, the following institutional units and instruments are key in supporting co-ordination across the Honduran Government:

- The Secretariat of Transparency (SDT). The SDT was the institution responsible for assisting the President of the Republic in the formulation, promotion, co-ordination, execution and evaluation of strategies and public policies related to transparency and prevention of and fight against corruption.

Especially relevant to note is that the SDT integrally assumed SCGG functions related to modernisation and state reform.

- The sectoral cabinets; although they are an inter-ministerial arrangement with no staff or budget of their own, they also had responsibilities in policy co-ordination. It is worth noting that these cabinets were repealed with the 2022-26 administration.

Figure 2.2 identifies the institutions of the Honduran CoG that are expected to perform the five main functions presented above.

Figure 2.2. Main CoG functions and corresponding institutions in Honduras (period 2018-22)

Policy co-ordination across government	Supporting decision-making by the Head of Government	Strategic planning for the whole-of-government	Monitoring the implementation of policy	Public Administration Reform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCGG (+Sectoral Cabinets) • SEFIN • SGJD (with sub-national governments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCGG • SEP (communications, relations with Congress) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCGG • SEFIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCGG • Office of Presidential Priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCGG • SDT

Source: Own elaboration, with data from Executive Decrees PCM-146-86, PCM-008-2010, PCM-266-2013, PCM-001-2014, PCM-002-2014, PCM-009-2018 and PCM-111-2020, as well as from the Law on the Regulation of the Organisation, Functioning and Competence of the Executive Branch.

The following sections focus the analysis on the institutional setting described in Figure 2.2. While the structure of the CoG institutions has changed with the 2022-26 administration, the chapter provides recommendations on the public governance functions, mechanisms and practices needed to strengthen CoG policy co-ordination, regardless of the current institutional setting.

A seemingly solid policy co-ordination framework led by the SCGG

For the past decade, Honduras has made progress in setting a long-term planning structure for the country (see Chapter 3) as well as in enhancing the CoG institutional and technical capacities for pursuing those plans. However, these are only first steps within the long process of actually changing the institutional, cultural and political practices that have been entrenched within the Honduran Public Administration for decades.

As Chapter 3 will discuss, the encompassing legal reform that took place in Honduras under the 2009 Law for the Establishment of a Country Vision and the Adoption of a National Plan – and, more relevantly in institutional terms, under Executive Decree 266-2013 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2013_[19]) – entailed certain improvements in the consolidation and integration of national strategies, as well as in the consolidation of a comprehensive co-ordination framework that clarifies the role of the various public institutions in this respect. The major innovation derived from the role defined for the SCGG as the key co-ordinating entity of the government. This made the SCGG an entity to which all state secretariats as well as other relevant public bodies must resort for ensuring the alignment of their programmes with the national strategic documents – and therefore, for carrying their public policies forward. The SCGG was indeed the central CoG institution in Honduras, responsible (at least formally) for strategic planning within the framework of the Country Vision and the National Plan; for the definition of general government policies; and for the allocation of resources for achieving sectoral objectives and goals. Thus, in theory, the SCGG would play the critical CoG role of “guardian of the policymaking process” (OECD, 2004_[13]).

The SCGG was also tasked with ensuring the alignment of all single-sector and horizontal strategies with national strategic plans. Therefore, during the processes of creating or renewing strategies, the SCGG was in charge of ensuring close communication with relevant ministries to ensure that alignment. In this vein, and in order to facilitate the process, Executive Decree PCM-001-2014 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[20]) organised the entire public administration around five sectoral cabinets; these took the form of inter-ministerial committees seeking to harmonise public action across sectors, thus setting the stage for the SCGG to more easily co-ordinate with sectoral bodies (see below for further assessment of the role of the sectoral cabinets). Since the SCGG headed these cabinets, it fulfilled the function of chairing inter-ministerial meetings and resolving conflicts when disagreements arose, at least from a “within-sector” perspective.

As discussed in the first section, three factors are critical for successful co-ordination: 1) a specific institution empowered to drive co-ordination; 2) shared priorities across ministries; and 3) systematic inter-ministerial routines. In this vein, it is relevant to mention that the legal framework in Honduras developed during the past decade had formally set those three elements. First, it provided a clear and formal mandate to the SCGG as the body empowered to lead government co-ordination. Second, it defined shared objectives through the Country Vision and Nation Plan. And third, it established inter-ministerial instances through the sector cabinets. However, the practical implementation of this legal framework had several limitations. As previously discussed, the SCGG legal mandate had not been fully implemented in practice, and its capacity to drive the policy-making process to ensure co-ordinated action was limited. The following sections discuss these challenges in detail.

Honduras CoG institutions face a significant challenge in positioning themselves as leading in the co-ordination of policy priorities

The ability of CoG institutions in Honduras to co-ordinate national strategic objectives across the government lies in their ability to strategically lead strong and siloed ministries, which occasionally might not establish sector-specific strategies in a way that significantly contributes to the pursuit of whole-of-government strategic objectives. This signals the need for the CoG to improve effective implementation and communication of the national strategy across secretariats. The way in which the key CoG institutions co-ordinate among themselves for the preparation of national strategic plans is important in this respect. The practice found in Honduras for the analysis of this Review during 2021 differs significantly from OECD area best practices of cross-governmental planning of joint objectives. In the latter cases, there is an explicit attempt to identify a more streamlined set of high-level cross-government priorities and, for these, to establish systematic processes for multi-ministerial planning. In Honduras, there is a lack of clarity regarding government priorities. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the strategic planning framework, OECD good practice showcases an effective integration of the different components in the performance framework, such as planning and budgeting. This is not the case in Honduras, where each component tends to operate in a more fragmented way, lacking a clear prioritisation process.

Building on the recommendations of Chapter 3 that address how priorities could be better integrated in the planning framework, there is a need for CoG institutions to better implement and communicate those priorities. To that end, the government could consider progressively establishing a performance framework describing the set of joint goals and outcomes that the CoG is aiming to accomplish, and include clear responsibilities for line ministries. This would allow the CoG to create a shared vision and narrative for more strategic co-ordination. The government could publish the CoG strategic goals and objectives on line with up-to-date information regarding progress in achieving these priorities. The performance framework in the United States is a relevant example in that regard (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. United States performance framework

In the United States, a dedicated website (Performance.gov) communicates the goals and outcomes the federal government is working to accomplish, how it seeks to accomplish them, and how agencies are performing. Agencies are identifying both short- and long-term goals to be reflected in four-year strategic plans, annual performance plans, and a limited number of agency priority goals. The public is able to explore those goals, and the progress being made to meet them, on line on a central website that provides a comprehensive picture of government performance.

Based on the 2010 Government Performance and Results Modernization Act (GPRAMA), the government-wide framework requires federal agencies to set performance goals that deliver results for the American people, establish management processes to review progress, and regularly communicate progress being achieved against those goals.

Source: (Government of the United States, n.d.^[21]), www.performance.gov.

The internal lack of co-ordination within the CoG exacerbates the challenge. As in most public administrations, the roles and responsibilities of each ministry and agency are defined by law; their political mandates, budget allocations, and legal accountability induce a siloed approach in which each entity is mostly concerned about its own objectives and activities. As previously noted, the large number of public institutions in Honduras enhances this fragmentation. In turn, the fragmentation and insufficient collaboration across CoG entities leads to frequent gaps, overlaps and contradictions in the mandates and responsibilities of ministries and agencies. Even though such vertical structures could be effective when it comes to the generation of institutional knowledge of the public policy areas within their scope, complex and crosscutting policy challenges can hardly be addressed optimally through this administrative model. For instance, the CoG role of articulating implementation of a national strategic vision in Honduras was weakened by co-ordination gaps between the SCGG – in charge of steering implementation of the Country Vision/National Plan – and the SEFIN, in charge of budget setting and implementation (see Chapter 3). Within the SCGG itself, the department responsible for financial steering and hence co-ordination with the SEFIN (the Budget for Results Unit) seemed to remain disconnected from the units and institutions in charge of overall administrative reform (other units within the DPPI as well as within the DPTMG in the SDT, for instance). The creation of the Office of Presidential Priorities further exacerbated the potential for overlap already present between the SCGG, the SEFIN and the SDT. In addition, as discussed above, the SCGG was not able to fully implement the sectoral cabinets as a mechanism to promote cross-ministerial collaboration.

These gaps in horizontal co-ordination also become evident in the nature of the political-administrative interface in Honduras during the translation process of the national plans and the UPEGs into the institutional and annual operational plans (POAs). When converting those plans into actionable items, there could be more vertical communication between top civil servants and politicians, as well as more horizontal communication among ministries at all steps in the translation process, to improve coherence in establishing and implementing an integrated governmental programme reflecting the interconnections between the different strands that help advance the government's strategic objectives. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed analysis of the country's planning framework.

Against this backdrop, there is room to strengthen the different units performing core CoG functions. In light of the restructuring with the 2022-26 administration, the government could consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different CoG units to enhance their capacities and role as co-ordinating units. As done in countries such as New Zealand (Box 2.2), the government could consider codifying key CoG

processes and allocating concrete roles and responsibilities across units through dedicated guidelines or manuals. Clarifying processes and procedures through clear, simple and easy-to-find information can ultimately improve central government decision making.

Box 2.2. The Cabinet Manual and Guides in New Zealand

Through the cabinet office, the government of New Zealand published a Cabinet Manual in 2017 with the aim of guiding ministers, their offices and public officials working within the central government. It also provides a key source of information on the country's constitutional arrangements relevant to the executive branch. In essence, the Cabinet Manual provides guidance for central government decision making by providing key information that ranges from high-level appointments to the conduct of ministers and public servants, decision-making processes, developing legislation and management of public information.

To complement information from the Manual, the government published an interactive "CabNet", a secure platform for cabinet and cabinet committee meetings that centralises papers and minutes of decisions. It provides practical guidance for public officials on what information is needed and how it should be shared. In addition, New Zealand also published "CabGuide", which is an online platform that aims to provide further advice to public officials on the procedures and operations of the cabinet, cabinet committees and the executive council. It contains comprehensive guidelines on writing and lodging a paper (whether it is a consultation, a policy, appointment, legislation, etc.) as well as advice on necessary considerations for the paper depending on its objective and the obligations for its potential publication, either proactively or reactively.

First published in 1979, CabGuide ensures the continuity of government systems through successive administrations. The most recent edition, dating from 2017, presents a comprehensive update on the continuing development of cabinet government conventions and procedures. All government departments and ministers' offices were invited to provide feedback on the current Manual, and to make suggestions for any changes they deemed necessary. The text has also been updated to allow for legislative developments since 2008, and to incorporate guidance issued by cabinet minutes or cabinet office circulars. A new version currently in preparation will replace this edition.

Source: (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) of New Zealand, n.d.^[22]), <https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/cabguide>; (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) of New Zealand, n.d.^[23]), <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-business-units/cabinet-office/supporting-work-cabinet/cabinet-manual>; (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) of New Zealand, n.d.^[24]), <https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/what-cabnet>.

Too many co-ordination institutions do not equate to greater co-ordination: Sectoral cabinets, a well-intended but ill-conceived endeavour

The Decree PCM-001-2014 had organised the entire public administration around five sectoral cabinets. These cabinets functioned as inter-ministerial committees that attempted to enhance government co-ordination under the guidance of the SCGG (the CoG unit in charge of providing them support). While the cabinets were repealed with the 2022-26 administration, it is worth analysing whether or not they fulfilled their role and identifying the design and practical challenges they faced, in order to help the new administration with lessons learned.

Under Executive Decree PCM-001-2014 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[20]), these sectoral cabinets were reorganised around five sectors (previously there were up to seven cabinets), thus establishing:

- the Economic Cabinet
- the Social Cabinet
- the Governance and Decentralisation Cabinet
- the Infrastructure Cabinet
- the Security and Defence Cabinet.

The decree stipulated that the sectoral cabinets should align the institutions under their co-ordination (all the public entities dealing with matters related to their sector) with the national strategic planning and the budget assigned to them. Their “Deputy General Co-ordinators” (individuals empowered to lead a given sectoral cabinet and belonging to the SCGG structure) were responsible for monitoring the objectives and goals contained in the Sectoral Strategic and Operational Plans, evaluating their fulfilment and performance. Moreover, the sectoral cabinets were supposed to periodically ensure inter-institutional co-ordination, something that did not happen in practice, and submit their proposals and recommendations to the SCGG – which, as stated above, was in charge of evaluating them to check their compliance with the country’s strategic documents. It is only then that, if the presidency authorised them, such proposals were submitted for discussion and approval by the Council of Ministers.

In this light, the sectoral cabinet structure was a positive advancement in the construction of a better co-ordinated public administration in Honduras. In theory, this type of sectoral cabinet or inter-ministerial committee can enhance co-ordination between entities that share the same policy areas. By discussing and producing sectoral plans, the sectoral cabinets were thought to co-ordinate with institutions to align strategic objectives and national strategic planning under the supervision of the SCGG. In addition, under Executive Decree PCM-001-2014 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[20]), the sectoral cabinets were also entitled to monitor and evaluate the fulfilment of such objectives, which allows for a greater degree of co-ordinated action throughout the entire policy process. However, the cabinets faced significant challenges in improving co-ordination and maximising integrated strategy setting and implementation. As (Hallsworth, Parker and Rutter^[25]) point out, attempts to improve co-ordination have often suffered from a gap between theory and practice because of the presentation of impractical models of co-ordination or inefficiencies in providing the political support to turn desired practices into reality. This finding is key for the Honduran case in four aspects.

First, the cabinets had not gained sufficient “institutional legitimacy”. The “sectoral cabinet” structure had not been well received in practice by a large number of actors involved in the policy-making process. Some CoG institutions refused to accept the authority, for example, of the “Deputy General Co-ordinator” figure created by Executive Decree PCM-002-2014 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[26]). According to that decree, this figure was entitled:

- to analyse matters related to the secretariat, decentralised and autonomous entities and programmes that make up their sector
- to approve, at the proposal of the head of the respective institution, the Institutional Strategic and Operational Plans
- to recommend the allocation of budgetary expenditure ceilings, within the respective sectoral ceiling assigned by the SCGG
- to submit to the SCGG information on the monitoring/evaluation of the institutions and agencies that make up the corresponding sectoral cabinet
- to submit to the SCGG the resolutions and recommendations of the sectoral cabinets
- to propose to the SCGG the pertinent sectoral public policies.

Hence, the refusal to recognise the leverage of the Deputy General Co-ordinator led many institutions to work independently and in an unconnected manner, thus forfeiting the potential of the sectoral cabinets as a useful co-ordinating platform. Simultaneously, this challenge also translated into an increasing lack of leadership on the part of the cabinets: devoid of the legitimate support from the public entities that comprise their sectors, the cabinets may see their capacity to effectively co-ordinate these public institutions greatly diminished.

Second, sectoral cabinets experienced a notable “institutional overcrowding” – that is, they comprised an excessively vast amount of institutions within their realm. This also affected their efficiency in the perception of the most relevant entities. The number of public entities varied from one sectoral cabinet to another, but was never below 9 (which is the case for the Governance Cabinet). Indeed, the Social Cabinet housed 17 public institutions; the Infrastructure Cabinet, 17; the Security and Defence Cabinet, 22; and the Economic Cabinet, 32 (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[20]). These sectoral macrostructures made room for cumbersome platforms where joint co-ordination of all concerned institutions became unfeasible. Inefficiencies in management and co-ordination thus emerged as a result of the nature of the framework itself.

Third, the slim prospects for co-ordinated action also discouraged the involvement of key political figures within the cabinet. Most sectoral cabinets lacked decision makers or any other political authority within their frameworks; even though it is true that they were originally conceived as predominantly technical environments for co-operation, they were reduced to purely technical spaces unconnected with actual decision makers and hence with the policy-making process. Ministers and even lower-ranked political appointees did not participate in most of the sectoral cabinet network. The only two exceptions are found in the Social and Defence Cabinets, which did account for some degree of political participation within their structures, even though this was only occasional. Overall, there were no clear incentives or a clear performance framework to ensure active participation in the cabinets and the generation of concrete outcomes. The fact that, for example, the SEFIN did not take part in all these inter-ministerial committees indicated that the cabinets lacked the basic levers (such as the budget) to induce co-ordination.

Finally, the proliferation of co-ordination bodies may paradoxically have led to poor co-ordination performance. There was also an increasing number of entities outside the sectoral-cabinet realm with co-ordinating powers: the presidency led certain crosscutting programmes such as “Better Life” (*Vida Mejor* or “With a Job You Live Better” (*Con Chamba Vivís Mejor*). The Food and Nutritional Safety Technical Unit (*Unidad Técnica de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional*, UTSAN), within the SCGG, was also in charge of leading several plans (for example, the EUROSAN *Occidente* programme), and some projects with international funding also required the existence of a special co-ordinating body outside the cabinets (Honduras’s UN Permanent Mission, 2021^[27]). The diversity of co-ordinating institutions available in the system as well as the absence of any rule governing the circumstances in which each of those institutions was entitled to lead the co-ordination function generated confusion and prevented effective co-ordination from taking place. It furthermore allowed for discretion within the public administration when it came to the preferred co-ordination body to be used.

A lack of established processes for decision making at the sectoral cabinets

Neither Executive Decree PCM-001-2014 nor previous legislation had established robust processes of policy making that provided the sectoral cabinets with a clear and straightforward role. For example, in terms of adopting public policies, Executive Decree PCM-001-2014 stipulated that the cabinets shall meet periodically “to ensure inter-institutional co-ordination” and submit their proposals and even recommendations to the SCGG – which, as stated above, was in charge of evaluating them and consulting with the President of the Republic; if authorised by the latter, those proposals would be submitted for discussion and approval by the Council of Ministers (Diario Oficial de la República de Honduras, 2014^[20]). This involved proposals and recommendations originated at the cabinets themselves, but the legislation

remained silent about the role of the cabinets concerning public policy proposals and initiatives originated at the heart of their secretariats. Given the aforementioned tendency of secretariats to work independently and formulate their own policies according to secretariat-driven criteria, legislation de facto remained silent about the actual role of the cabinets during most of the policy-making process. There was no strong legal basis for secretariats' public policy initiatives needing to pass through sectoral cabinets before actually reaching the Council of Ministers and the presidency.

Therefore, in most decisions (and certainly in the most relevant ones), bilateral dialogue between ministers and the president prevailed, leaving the cabinets with a very minimal role in the exchange of information. This juncture weakened the cabinets' co-ordinating role and limited any suitable alignment of secretariats' policies with the government's national strategies, given that the co-ordination mechanisms in charge of monitoring that alignment (i.e. the sectoral cabinets) were often bypassed in the policy process.

To exploit the full potential of these types of co-ordination bodies, the government of Honduras could streamline and empower their functions with clear and simple processes for decision making. In terms of the functions, the government could consider establishing CoG-led co-ordinating bodies around a selection of key presidential priorities as well as revising and streamlining their membership to ensure efficiency. Moreover, the government could aim to provide the needed structure and guidance for the decision-making processes by defining objectives and plans for delivery for each body, as well as establishing protocols for sharing information, conducting consultations and reporting to the president (among other functions) across cabinets. Finally, elaborating an internal communication campaign could help empower and clarify the co-ordinating role of the CoG in these bodies. To this end, the government could follow examples from well-established sectoral cabinets with similar functions, such as the cabinet committees in Ireland (see Box 2.3).

Box 2.3. The creation and dissolution of cabinet committees in Ireland

The Cabinet Manual in Ireland defines three distinct types of committees and provides specific guidelines for their creation, operation and dissolution:

- Category 1: Committees established to examine major ongoing policy areas
- Category 2: Committees established to manage a particular issue of public importance
- Category 3: Ad hoc committees created to advance a particular item on the government's agenda and which generally conclude their work in a short period.

The Manual establishes clear guidelines and criteria for the establishment and dissolution of committees, their powers, procedures for monitoring and evaluating their work, and the administrative support structures necessary for their operation.

All cabinet committees are dissolved at the end of each government's term. The committees are also dissolved when they present a final report to the government, after having fulfilled their mission. The government's (re)creation of a cabinet committee should be documented, either formally or informally.

Cabinet committees, other than Category 3 (ad hoc) committees, must have a mandate that reinforces the achievement of a key government objective as set out in the government programme or major policy document; that is of significant public importance or is sensitive; that has a transverse dimension; and that cannot be adequately addressed by an existing cabinet committee.

Within three months of their establishment, cabinet committees (other than Category 3) must also establish a work programme for the coming year, which sets explicit priorities and targets to assess the achievement of key objectives. They must provide an activity report to the government at least once a

year, unless other reporting methods have been specified. These committees must also present a final report to the government at the end of their mandate.

The Chief Cabinet Secretary then submits an annual report to the head of government (*Taoiseach*), reviewing the operation and effectiveness of the cabinet committee system.

Source: (Government of Ireland, n.d.^[28]), *Cabinet Committees of the 32nd Government*, <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/48fd2-cabinet-committees-of-the-32nd-government/>.

The lack of information sharing across secretariats hinders co-ordinated public action

Another important element to facilitate inter-ministerial co-ordination is information and data sharing. As the (OECD^[14]) highlighted, communicating and sharing data in an open format among the various public actors and stakeholders involved in the policy-making process is crucial to guarantee policy co-ordination as well as to maintain the momentum of key cross-departmental government strategies and initiatives. Sharing information can enable a common understanding of the characteristics of the policy challenges and their potential solutions. It can also help co-ordinate policy implementation, by providing to the entities important information about the actions of their peers (timing, location, etc.).

In Honduras, information and data sharing remains a central challenge for the public administration, for two main reasons. First, the performance level of the national statistical system is modest. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Honduras scores 61 points out of 100 in the World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI), placing it in the third quintile globally and well below Latin American leaders Mexico (87), Chile (82) and Costa Rica (79) (World Bank, 2021^[29]). Evidence collected during the fact-finding mission shows that the country counts on incipient and underdeveloped information directories and databases, and hence lacks a comprehensive system of robust statistical information that can serve as a basis for evidence-informed policy making. Data collection and archiving methods are still rudimentary and occasionally unrepresentative of the actual distributions of the country's population and socio-economic activities, which might result in the reliance on inaccurate indicators, leading to a reluctance from stakeholders to rely on the data from the national statistical system. As found in Chapter 5, inadequate technology and management systems in the public sector hinder the quality of public information. Thus, strengthening the statistics and data systems is essential to improve composite and aggregate indicators that allow for high-quality public policies as well as for enhanced co-ordination.

Second, the absence of a common performance framework also affects the government's capacity and incentives to share information and data. State secretariats and public institutions tend to work independently and be motivated by secretariat-driven goals. They tend to separately build their own data and statistics, which means that they generally make use of different sources of information. Consequently, reliance on different information and reluctance to share data emerge as significant co-ordination challenges, which limits the ability of public institutions to have a holistic view of the country's problems, as well as of the ways they can most accurately contribute to such problems' solutions. This has become a recurrent issue in a large number of LAC countries (Agudelo, Chomali and Suniaga, 2020^[30]); however, the lack of co-ordination through data sharing is particularly concerning in countries with a fragmented public administration such as Honduras. During interviews with the OECD Secretariat, several government officials pointed out that beyond secretariats' own databases, there are recent attempts to favour the flow of statistical information through the creation of a single and comprehensive system of governmental information under the management of the centre of government. Yet, this system is still in its early stages and lacks the relevant data and instruments required to formulate sound public initiatives.

Given the importance of quality information and data for evidence-informed decision making, the government should first, increase efforts to strengthen the existing information system by linking it to a

performance framework and embedding a limited number of cross-ministerial priorities with a series of indicators. Second, the government could build capacities for public officials and set standards that facilitate the interoperability of information and data across the system. The Box 2.4 provides the relevant example of Finland, which uses indicators to measure and showcase impacts of the government programme.

Box 2.4. Finland: Setting priorities and indicators in the Strategic Government Programme

Prime Minister Sanna Marin's 2019-23 government programme, developed based on strategic objectives, supports a cross-sectoral approach and aims at addressing interlinkages in an effective manner. The programme is organised around seven strategic "themes", each managed by an inter-ministerial group composed of ministries that have a substantial link to the theme. The government is further focused on four big "priority goals": balanced finances, a 75% employment rate, carbon neutrality by 2035, and decreasing inequality. These strategic themes and priority goals are further specified with around 64 sub-goals having 70 indicators.

Overall, indicators based on information and data are used to evaluate the progress of the government's actions and the priority goals. To portray the impacts of government action, the government includes cross-sectoral indicators to describe economic, ecological and social wellbeing to inform decision making, in addition to existing sectoral indicators. Research-based data are also used to provide evidence on achieved impacts.

Source: Authors own elaboration based on information provided by the government of Finland and complemented by (Global Government Forum, 2019^[31]), <https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/the-power-of-priorities-goal-setting-in-finland-and-new-zealand/>.

To enhance the data management capacity, including collecting and using quality information and data, the government could conduct capacity-building workshops for public officials working in the CoG and in key line ministries, and provide through its General Directorate of Civil Service (*Dirección General de Servicio Civil*, DGSC) a range of targeted courses in relevant policy areas to develop the necessary capacities and skills in terms of information and data management. The government could also develop specific standards of data and information to facilitate its interoperability through the information system. The simplicity and usability of such standards are fundamental to ensure their uptake by stakeholders. France, for instance, developed a reference framework with recommendations to promote interoperability of information systems across the public sector (see Box 2.5).

Box 2.5. The General Reference Framework for Interoperability in France

In France, the General Reference Framework for Interoperability offers a series of recommendations to promote interoperability across information systems within the public sector. Following the rationale of the European Interoperability Framework, the French framework focuses on different levels of interoperability, setting standards for each level that are to be implemented by public sector organisations. Standards are therefore established for technical, semantic or syntactic interoperability to guarantee that public sector organisations and systems are as interoperable as possible:

- Semantic interoperability refers to the meaning of different words, which often varies among public sector organisations. This interoperability aims to streamline the definition of words across public sector organisations to ensure there is agreement regarding the meaning of data that are exchanged and on the context of the exchange.
- Technical interoperability refers to data formats and data exchange protocols as well as the conditions and storage formats of these data. This interoperability ensures that data can be properly exchanged among public sector organisations and in the right format.
- Syntactic interoperability stands as a subset of technical interoperability as it focuses on the technical format data should have in order to be properly exchanged among public sector organisations.

Source: OECD (2019^[32]), *The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector*, OECD Digital Government Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/059814a7-en>; (Government of Brazil, n.d.^[33]), <https://www.enap.gov.br/pt/>.

Sub-national governments face major difficulties aligning with national strategies: The challenge posed by vertical co-ordination

A final key challenge faced by the Honduran administration refers to co-ordinating among the different levels of government. Two main typologies of problems are identified: those linked to the insufficient clarity and inconsistencies of the multi-level co-ordinating framework itself, and those that are operational in nature.

Regarding the co-ordinating framework, there was significant confusion over the roles of the SCGG and the SGJD in managing the relationship of central government with municipalities and, more concretely, in ensuring the alignment of territorial plans with broader national plans. As specified in the Regulatory Framework Law for Municipal Development Planning (*Ley Marco Normativo de Planificación del Desarrollo Municipal*), municipalities, through their UPEGs, were obliged to develop municipal development plans, which had to be aligned with national strategies. According to the law, the SCGG established the norms and facilitated and co-ordinated the processes of articulation of territorial planning, securing alignment with national and sectoral action plans. In parallel, the SGJD, through the Directorate of Planning and Governance, promoted and co-ordinated processes for the formulation of Municipal Development Plans. During the 2018-22 administration, both secretariats were responsible for municipal planning processes and were supposed to complement each other's functions to ensure territorial development. Subnational governments prioritised their needs according to their own requirements in terms of public services, which is why they also had their own planning and strategy unit that prepares and executes development plans (in line with national strategies and in accordance with the budget of the central government). The new Executive Decree PCM-05-2022 provides that these responsibilities fall under the SGJD acting with the new Secretariat for Strategic Planning.

When it comes to articulating and monitoring plans, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter the SCGG generally took the lead. In turn, at the subnational level, this duty was the responsibility of the SGJD. The SGJD would thus have no competencies concerning institutional planning at the national level but rather in co-ordinating municipal planning. This created co-ordination challenges with the SCGG, which in practice also worked with municipalities. In this regard, despite the existence of a legal framework establishing the roles and responsibilities of both entities, there were no formal or operational arrangements between the SCGG and the SGJD on how to effectively co-ordinate municipal planning to ensure its coherence with the overall national planning. This led to separate and uncoordinated efforts. As a consequence, municipal plans were frequently misaligned with broader national strategies. During the fact-finding mission, Honduran government officials mentioned that following various (and often

contradictory) guidelines from different co-ordinating bodies tends to translate into ambiguous territorial plans and hides the key priorities with which those plans should align.

Beyond the need for further articulating, at least in practice, the relationship between the government actors involved in the co-ordination with the municipalities, two other issues deepen the inconsistencies of the multi-level co-ordinating framework in Honduras. First, government officials highlighted during the fact-finding mission significant challenges of co-ordination between state secretariats and subnational governments. Although municipal plans should be aligned with broader national strategies (and potentially with broader sectoral strategies), overall the state secretariats instead propose programmes and projects that prioritise the fulfilment of their own institutional plans, regardless of their suitability with municipal strategies; this makes them likely to disregard those subnational instruments. In other words, secretariats sometimes fail to take into account the particular needs and characteristics of most subnational governments, and there is no institution in charge of raising subnational needs through the line ministries.

Second, there is no co-ordination framework regulating how or when secretariats approach departments and municipalities. As a consequence, subnational governments are frequently faced with a vast amount of diverging programmes and working groups from numerous line ministries. Such a large number of unconnected programmes presented to the municipalities overwhelms their capacity to efficiently manage them, hence also limiting their potential impact. Moreover, approval and implementation of development co-operation projects is frequently not aligned with existing municipal plans. This contributes to allocating resources into similar or even overlapping programmes in certain departments, and to further disconnecting the planning process with actual policy making. Ultimately, these dynamics unveil the significant constraints faced by the SGJD in attempting real policy co-ordination at the subnational level.

Finally, multi-level co-ordination is hindered by the institutional weakness of the SGJD. As the body in charge of co-ordinating subnational public action, the SGJD lacks a consistent level of resources that would allow for the successful fulfilment of its duties. In terms of its administrative capacity, the SGJD lacks sufficient human resources to tackle its assigned workload, which hinders its ability to co-ordinate effectively. For example, currently one of the key SGJD units is in charge of monitoring and co-ordinating nearly 300 institutional plans at the subnational level; however, as stated by several government officials during the fact-finding mission, as of November 2021 the unit had at its disposal only six civil servants to perform such a task.

There is thus a need to clarify the responsibilities assigned to the different levels of government and to strengthen multi-level co-ordination. In terms of responsibilities, the government could further clarify the role of the CoG institutions in co-ordinating with subnational governments by streamlining and clearly articulating their responsibilities, as well as those of the departments and municipalities; these should be tailored to local circumstances and be agreed by all levels of government. In relation to multi-level co-ordination, the government could create a formal mechanism for consultation, co-ordination, co-operation and joint decision making across levels of government. Creating a permanent space that increases vertical dialogue and communication can help the local planning process to be better aligned with national strategies while also delivering on local needs and characteristics. For instance, Portugal created a Council for Territorial Dialogue to better communicate and co-ordinate on key policies and programmes across all levels of government. The Council, created in 2015, is chaired by the Prime Minister and benefits from the participation of central and local governments (OECD, 2019^[34]). In Colombia, the most important planning tool at the subnational level is the Department Development Plan, which is the blueprint for the Governor's term. Strategic planning at this level is supported by various vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms, such as the "*Pactos Territoriales*" used to carry out multi-level initiatives that contribute to the objectives of the National Development Plan. Such a practice could be useful in Honduras when UPEGs create their municipal development plans.

In regard to the planning processes at the national and municipal level, the government could simplify these by identifying a selection of critical geographic areas and seek to align interventions from different

ministries and levels of government coherently. This place-based approach can create a stronger collective impact than each intervention being implemented separately. The practice is championed by countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, which use place-based interventions to revitalise deprived areas or specific vulnerable population groups (see Box 2.6).

Box 2.6. Place-based interventions in the United Kingdom and the United States

Sure Start in the United Kingdom

Sure Start is a UK programme aimed at helping parents and children in disadvantaged areas. It does so by providing a series of services to support children’s education, health and well-being. Under the framework of the Programme for Government Outcomes, Sure Start is aligned with five key policy outcomes: improved language skills; early identification of developmental delay; improved access to services; enhanced parenting skills; and effectively integrated services. The government also provides infographics with statistical data accessible in an open format.

Promise Neighbourhoods in the United States

The “Promise Neighbourhood” programme is a US strategy aimed at addressing the economic difficulties of communities with targeted interventions for children and youth. Funded by the Department of Education, the programme design is based on a results framework with ten indicators that each community should aim to achieve. It also provides enough flexibility to each community to achieve its intended results based on its local specificities.

Source: (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.^[35]), <https://promiseneighborhoods.ed.gov/background/about>; (Department of Education, n.d.^[36]), <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/sure-start>.

Conclusion

Honduras has made certain progress towards establishing the key pillars for leading policy co-ordination from the centre of government. First, the legal framework has clarified the co-ordinating role of one key CoG entity: what was the SCGG and is now the Secretariat of Strategic Planning (*Secretaría de Planificación Estratégica*). Second, the planning framework provides whole-of-government and sectoral objectives that, in theory, could help foster cross-ministerial collaboration. Third, the creation of sectoral cabinets was an interesting initiative for robust inter-ministerial consultations and decision making. These were potentially key factors for successful inter-ministerial co-ordination led by a strong CoG.

Despite progress made in the past years in an ongoing effort to reform public administration, further efforts are needed for Honduras to increase the level of implementation. With a highly fragmented public administration, the role of SCGG frequently overlapped with similar efforts led by other CoG units and lacked a clear prioritisation process, in particular for high-level cross-government priorities. Thus, the SCGG was not able to consolidate a proper co-ordinating role, and that translated into a lack of co-ordination both within the CoG units and across government entities. Moreover, a consistent policy-making process for the sectoral cabinets was not established, and other channels (such as bilateral discussions between the president and each minister) often superseded the work of the cabinets. These have therefore become instances of information exchange between lower-level officials, thus causing the cabinets to fall short of their potential. Another important challenge is the absence of a performance framework, which affects the government’s capacity and incentives to share information and data across secretariats. Finally,

multi-level co-ordination also presents challenges: there were overlapping roles by the SCGG and the SGJD and weaknesses in aligning projects with the existing plans.

All these challenges result in weak cross-government co-ordination in Honduras. Although the establishment of the SCGG and the sectoral cabinets were steps in the right direction, there is still ample room for enhancing co-ordination and coherence in practice.

Recommendations

Improving policy co-ordination from the centre of government

- Conduct a functional review of the public administration's functions and responsibilities in a detailed mapping to identify gaps, mandate overlaps and duplication across the executive branch.
 - The mapping should include a clarification of the level at which each of the entities are located, in order to establish a clear hierarchy across public bodies.
 - Broadly communicate the findings of the review as well as any changes in the structure and responsibilities across the government to raise awareness.
- Create a shared vision and narrative of the government's priorities for a more strategic co-ordination, by establishing a performance framework describing the set of joint goals and outcomes that the CoG is aiming to accomplish and including the clear responsibilities for line ministries.
 - Use an institution with a mandate similar to the former sectoral cabinets to disseminate the CoG-focused performance framework and engage a wide set of ministries in the priority-setting process. This could help incentivise, acknowledge and reward contributions from line ministries to those common goals and outcomes, as well as position the role of CoG institutions as key enablers.
 - Publish the strategic goals and objectives of the CoG online with up-to-date information regarding progress in achieving these priorities.
- Strengthen the core CoG functions by further clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different units to enhance their co-ordination capacities.
 - Codify key CoG processes and the allocation of concrete roles and responsibilities across units through dedicated guidelines or manuals.
- Exploit the full potential of the multi-government stakeholders mechanisms as key co-ordinating bodies by streamlining and empowering their functions with clear and simple processes for decision making.
 - Establish CoG-led co-ordinating bodies around a selection of key presidential priorities, and revise and streamline their membership to ensure efficiency.
 - Define objectives and plans for delivery for each body as well as establishing protocols for sharing information, conducting consultations and reporting to the president, among other functions, across cabinets.
 - Elaborate an internal communication campaign to empower and clarify the co-ordinating role of the CoG in these bodies.

Improving information sharing across secretariats for evidence-informed decision making

- Strengthen the existing information system by linking it to a performance framework and embedding a limited number of cross-ministerial priorities with a series of indicators.

- Build capacities for public officials and set standards that facilitate the interoperability of information and data across the system.
- Enhance the data management capacity, including collecting and using quality information and data.
 - Conduct capacity-building workshops for public officials working in the CoG and in key line ministries, and provide through the General Directorate of Civil Service a range of targeted courses in relevant policy areas to develop the necessary capacities and skills in terms of information and data management.
 - Develop specific standards of data and information to facilitate their interoperability through the information system. The simplicity and usability of such standards are fundamental to ensure the system's uptake by stakeholders.

Strengthening vertical co-ordination to better align territorial plans with national strategies

- Clarify the responsibilities assigned to the different levels of government in terms of strategic planning, by streamlining and clearly articulating and communicating the roles of the central government institutions in charge of co-ordinating with subnational governments, as well as those of the departments and municipalities, while recognising the ongoing decentralisation process.
 - Ensure that the responsibilities for strategic planning are tailored to local circumstances and that they are agreed by all levels of government.
- Strengthen multi-level co-ordination by creating a formal mechanism for consultation, co-ordination, co-operation and joint decision making across levels of government.
- Simplify the planning processes at the national and municipal level by identifying a selection of critical geographic areas and seek to align interventions from different ministries and levels of government coherently.

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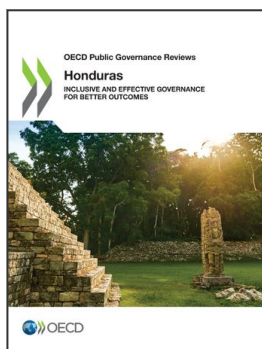
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