Executive Summary

Adopted at the UN Summit in September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the largest joint development goals for humanity to achieve collectively by 2030. Overcoming the limitations of the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which focused primarily on the growth of developing countries, the SDGs aim for integrated development of the global, where the three pillars of social development, economic development, and environmental preservation are balanced. The SDGs consist of 17 goals, 169 targets, and 235 indicators, designed under the grand principle of 'Leave No One Behind'. To manage this massive indicator system efficiently, it is structured around five core pillars known as the 5Ps (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, Partnership), emphasizing a multidimensional and comprehensive approach.

However, a decade after the establishment of the SDGs, the current global implementation status remains deeply concerning. According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025, only 35% of the 169 targets are showing adequate progress, while a staggering 48% show insufficient progress, and 18% have retrogressed below the 2015 baseline. Global polycrisis such as pandemics, climate crises, and geopolitical conflicts have severely damaged the implementation capacity of low-income developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, structurally entrenching disparities between countries. The Asian region is also seeing retrogressed performance in SDG 13 due to greenhouse gas emissions and natural disaster damage. Latin America is trapped in a development trap of low growth potential and extreme inequality. Africa faces a shortage of finance due to skyrocketing debt burdens and a decline in ODA.

According to major previous studies, the SDGs do not function as a mere list of independent indicators, but as an integrated system that forms close synergies and

causal networks among goals. In particular, SDG 4 is identified as a catalyst for capacity building in other fields and a key upstream driver for resolving inequality, while SDG 3 acts as an essential enabler for escaping poverty and building human capital. SDG 16 also serves as a critical foundation supporting the achievement of other goals. Under this linkage mechanism, development cooperation must shift away from fragmented, project-oriented support and transition into a strategic, integrated intervention framework that considers mutual connectivity.

To enhance the efficiency and integration of development cooperation, South Korea established the 'The 4th Basic Plan for International Development Cooperation (2026-2030)' and set up the four strategic goals for the grant ODA along with a unified grant ODA framework. Accordingly, KOICA pursued this study to scientifically diagnose the SDG implementation status of 46 partner countries—for which KOICA has established the 5-year Country Plans (CPs)—and to establish evidence-based strategic support plans that can maximize the ripple effects of limited ODA resources over the remaining five-year implementation period of SDGs.

This study constructed a multidimensional country-specific SDG analysis model drawing upon the perspectives of 'Focus on results', 'Country ownership', and 'Inclusive partnership' among the four principles of the 'Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)'. The analysis model consists of three core quantitative and qualitative axes:

① SDG Implementation Level (Focus on results): Based on the time-series data of country-specific SDG Index Scores and dashboards provided by the Sustainable Development Report (SDR) of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the study quantitatively analyzed the achievement levels and progress trajectories of each partner country by goal, and cross-verified these findings with the policy self-assessment content in the partner governments' Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

② Partner Country Concerns and Policy Directions (Country ownership): Qualitative policy analysis was performed based on VNRs submitted by each partner country to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Concurrently, a quantitative text-mining technique utilizing the European Commission's 'SDG Mapper' tool was applied to extract the frequency of key keyword appearances, thereby deriving the intensity of partner countries' policy priorities and strategic investment wills.

③ Donor Support (Inclusive partnership): By analyzing the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) data of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Official Development Finance (ODF) database of AidData, the study identified the extent to which development finance provided by the international community to partner countries was concentrated on or showed gaps in specific SDG goals.

In summary, this study combined the three criteria of SDG implementation level (high/low), partner country policy interest (high/low), and donor support scale (large/small) to structure a total of eight strategic intervention typologies to guide how KOICA should allocate ODA resources and intervene technically and politically. Based on this model, the study analyzed the 46 countries for which KOICA has established CPs, categorized the SDG goals supported by each country's CP programs into the corresponding typologies, and proposed future support plans tailored to each typology by country.

The analysis of KOICA's performance over the past ten years for the 46 main partner countries revealed that KOICA has highly concentrated its support on specific SDG goals, with distinct sectoral and regional variations. The five target areas where Korea historically held a comparative advantage—Education (SDG 4, 19%), Peace & Institutions (SDG 16, 16%), Zero Hunger & Agriculture (SDG 2, 14%), Health & Well-being (SDG 3, 13%), and Industry & Infrastructure (SDG 9, 9%)—accounted for over 70% of total support. On the other hand, direct support for Climate Action (SDG 13, 6%) and Gender Equality (SDG 5, 4%) was relatively low, and there was limited record of support in the areas of Reduced Inequalities (SDG

10), Life Below Water (SDG 14), and Global Partnerships (SDG 17), suggesting the need to diversify the ODA portfolio in the future.

The characteristics of support were highly differentiated by the income and geographical conditions of the partner countries. Asia received the largest volume of aid, where support was implemented in an integrated and diversified form, addressing basic infrastructure for economic and industrial development such as SDG 2, 3, and 9 alongside SDG 4. For Africa, which has significantly low income, resources have been intensively invested in establishing social safety nets directly linked to survival and reinforcing basic human capacities. In contrast, Eurasia and the Middle East, as well as Latin America, where middle-income and higher-income countries are clustered, are transitioning away from traditional basic support toward highly advanced development areas. Specifically, Eurasia and the Middle East have focused on SDG 16, SDG 4, and SDG 13, leveraging digital and technological innovation. In Latin America, the outstanding trend was the formulation of diversified projects, including SDG 16 covering judicial and public security institutional reforms, alongside SDG 3, 13, and 5.

A detailed examination of these typological analysis results yields significant implications for the immediate challenges faced by individual countries. For SDG 3 and SDG 16, despite the strong implementation will of partner governments, the 'Institutional Improvement and Capacity Building Type' predominated, where performance levels stagnated due to structural financial constraints and lack of systems. Therefore, simple financial subsidy projects should be avoided, and a governance-centered systemic approach encompassing laws, institutions, public official capacity training, and operational structure advancement is required. Conversely, SDG 4 showed a high achievement rate due to past cumulative investments, but frequently fell into the 'Alignment Re-examination and Selective Supplementation Type' as it slipped from the partner governments' recent priority rankings. This suggests accelerating a paradigm shift from building simple basic education infrastructure to technical education and cultivating advanced industrial talent. Furthermore, SDG 2 and SDG 9 were categorized as the 'Long-term

Environmental Response Type' in many developing countries, indicating that focus should be placed on improving adaptive resilience to withstand abrupt external environmental fluctuations (climate change, global supply chain shifts, etc.) rather than short-term performance-oriented projects.

In the meanwhile, to effectively anchor South Korea's four strategic goals for the grant ODA - strengthening technical, digital, and innovation capacities to development a skilled youth workforce, strengthening health resilience to foster thriving communities, advancing climate adaptation, mitigation, and improving access to energy to strengthening climate resilience and building sustainable and safe rural communities through income growth - the following detailed program implementation plans mapped to the typological results of this study are proposed:

①Strengthening technical, digital, and innovation capacities to development a skilled youth workforce: for this program, which mainly supports SDG 4, the 'Long-term Environmental Response Type' is predominantly derived. However, education and digital fields are the most core assets in which Korea possesses strengths and comparative advantages. Thus, a two-track approach is proposed based on the partner countries' economic level and stage of development. In the case of low-income countries in Asia/Africa, where basic literacy and digital device infrastructure are poor, resources should be invested in building basic human capital, such as digital literacy education and reinforcement of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers. Conversely, in middle-income countries that already possess basic infrastructure systems (such as Eurasia and Latin America), the policy focus must be boldly shifted toward ICT-based advanced industrial talent cultivation, fostering innovative startup ecosystems, and digital innovation linked to industrial diversification.

②Strengthening health resilience to foster thriving communities: for this program, which mainly supports SDG 3, is dominated by the 'Institutional Improvement and Capacity Building Type' due to lagging performance despite the partner governments' strong policy ownership. Therefore, rather than simple material

supply and temporary infrastructure support, ODA should be concentrated on strengthening the resilience of the local health and medical system itself. In countries with many remote areas completely cut off from primary healthcare access, the focus should be on the universal provision of key medical services such as essential nutrition and vaccines, and infrastructure expansion. At the same time, for countries already operating a basic healthcare system, design should incorporate legal and operational advancement and national system improvement, such as mobile digital healthcare-based management, specialization of healthcare workforce capacity, and national preventive management programs for chronic diseases.

③ Advancing climate adaptation, mitigation, and improving access to energy to strengthening climate resilience: for this program, which mainly supports SDG 13, the 'Selective Observation Type' is frequently observed. This implies that opportunities for large-scale standalone climate-related development projects through bilateral ODA may be limited due to the local policy conditions. As a solution, an indirect approach is appropriate; coordinating partnerships and co-investments with multilateral aid financial institutions like the Green Climate Fund and the World Bank to combine KOICA's complementary technical cooperation. Highly climate-vulnerable countries facing severe climate risks must focus on emergency distribution of small-scale renewable energy, adaptation capacity building, and survival support for climate-vulnerable populations. In countries equipped with green transition capabilities, KOICA should strategically enter high-level and legal transition frameworks, such as establishing carbon-neutral regulations and institutions and transferring green industrial technologies.

④Building sustainable and safe rural communities through income growth: for this program, which mainly supports SDG 2, the 'Selective Observation' and 'Demand Reconfirmation' typologies are mainly derived. Since rural and agricultural ODA is a crucial pillar for securing food security and preventing complex meteorological disasters, ODA resources should not be uniformly reduced. Instead, a paradigm differentiation is needed to design Korea's unique rural development experience

in alignment with partner countries through close policy dialogues. In countries with poor production environments, priority should be given to the agricultural productivity enhancement and the construction of reservoirs to prevent drought and flood. In countries where agricultural distribution networks are already formed, a strategic transition must be made to disseminate high-value models, such as introducing smart agriculture (ICT-linked smart farms), advancing high-value-added value chains (production-storage-processing-distribution), and diversifying non-agricultural income.

According to the comprehensive analysis of this research report, approximately 63% (40 out of 64 SDG typologies analyzed across 46 countries) fell into the 'Low Implementation Level' typologies. This is an empirical indicator demonstrating that KOICA's support has practically targeted the development bottlenecks that partner countries struggle to overcome on their own. In ODA allocation, there is no single formula stating that a specific typology is absolutely correct. Instead, an 'ownership-based' approach responding to recipient needs, an 'effectiveness-based' approach utilizing Korea's specialized technologies, and a 'cooperation-based' approach aligning with donor communities must be harmoniously fused. Ultimately, SDG implementation performance depends on a highly aligned support system that thoroughly diagnoses the unique socioeconomic context of the partner country and agilely aligns KOICA's comparative advantages with it.

Furthermore, considering that support for education, health, and peace/institutions acts as a 'facilitating basic condition (Enabler)' that accelerates the structural realization of other goals rather than stopping at improving single indicators, ODA planning capabilities that strategically leverage the highly multidimensional linkages of the SDGs are essential. By selectively and dimensionally clustering capabilities in implementing the four major programs with this in mind, the efficiency of the limited ODA budget can be maximized, inducing positive external spillover effects and synergies.

In conclusion, this study holds great analytical significance as it comprehensively and multi-dimensionally illuminated the SDG implementation status of 46 key