

Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation Translating General Development Goals into Practical Policies

This document summarises the main findings from the consultation discussion prompted by the question: *how do national and subnational policy makers and stakeholders translate the global SDGs into actionable policies and targets in their specific context.*

Two main areas of discussion emerged from the forum:

- i. The disconnect between international processes and national and local level adoption and implementation of goals,; and,
- ii. The need for coherence across international, national and local agendas, while similarly allowing for flexibility and adaptation to national and local context and priority areas.

Prominent as a means to address these areas was the need to foster stakeholder participation and to develop effective lines of communication across the post-2015 process and through to on-the-ground implementation. Both issues and effective approaches were highlighted as seen in the work being carried out by various participating CSOs.

Full discussion available at: <https://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/483280>



A. BACKGROUND

While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been successful in driving a global push towards the elimination of poverty, they also highlight areas to learn from in the development of the post-2015 agenda and SDGs. As the MDGs come to an end, research is showing that a one-size-fits-all approach to development does not fit all; that generic goals are not relevant and/or applicable across all countries. For the future SDGs, it is important to 'translate' general goals and targets into country-specific policies and action plans.

Governments could 'translate' the global SDGs into nationally relevant policies and action plans on their own, but they would gain more commitment if they involve civil society, private sector and other stakeholders in this process. To support these efforts, much can be learned from the experiences with the MDGs, Local Agenda 21 and other development projects to support the translation of the SDGs into something that is practical and makes sense at home.

The third discussion in the Regional Online Consultation sought to draw on CSO experiences and knowledge to address how to effectively translate global SDGs into actionable policies and targets.

B. KEY DISCUSSION AREAS

Coherence across Agendas

- A large disconnect remains between global, national, and local levels and agendas; and, between those that participate/attend high-level meetings and develop policy, and those that are involved in actual implementation.
- In the agenda, there are vital issues like poverty, inequality and climate change which universally important, however, the level and intensity thereof, and responsibility and priority are different.
- Actions cannot be the same for all nations as a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not practical across different social, geographical, economic and environmental contexts.
- Often policies remain on paper and do not become action.
- Even if the agenda is relevant locally, absence of stricter accountability, rule of law and a bottom-up approach towards implementation, are equally barriers to the achievement of good development outcomes.

Localizing the Agenda:

- Coherence with national agendas is a crucial precursor for relevance, but next steps for 'localization' are also necessary. The 'audience' following SDGs processes either nationally, regionally or globally has been limited to a few.
- The people formulating the SDGs are entirely separate from the people actually implementing actions towards these goals.
- The implementation stages involve many more stakeholders and therefore their understanding of the goals is very important. The audience most likely to engage is the middle-class and those with university education - not the target audience for a discussion on development priorities.
- General public lack of awareness and understanding of the role of the SDGs and their relevance and importance:
 - High-level discussions can be difficult to understand and follow for people with no prior exposure to the process and language involved.

- **Failure to engage and effectively include those that are most affected by the issues at hand and by the SDGs (i.e. poor and marginalized populations)** (see E.2).

C. KEY AREAS FOR ACTION

Discussions focused largely on awareness and accessibility of information, engagement and the importance of the target audience and context.

Promoting effective translation of SDGs into policy:

Development of a common and inclusive vision that allows for a coherent but flexible approach for effective implementation of SDGs.

- Develop a nationally coherent approach by revisiting national policies and programmes in relation to national targets, and approaching national plans, programmes and budgets should in an integrated manner.
- Recognition of the important role local authorities can play in the implementation of SDGs. Local government authorities should be strengthened by the decentralization of power and revenue generating authorities. Encourage local authorities to work in competitive manner, ultimately contributing towards the achievement of national targets.
- States should set up their own targets which can more accurately reflect on-the-ground realities, and create national level indicators for practical and accurate assessment, all of which run parallel to global targets.
- Engage with national and local stakeholders to develop a common vision and set of goals, and specific actions to be taken to contribute towards this common vision, rather than simply adopting the international agenda and SDGs. Effective translation of international SDGs into national context requires common understanding and commitment by key national-level development actors.
- Establish a high-level multi-stakeholder mechanism at the national and local levels, contributing towards the development of national targets which are commensurate with local targets.
- Allow for local voluntary goal setting, under the broader national goals, and in doing so; reflect specific context and priorities, and the diverse voices within communities. A sense of ownership by local communities will bring commitment and motivate citizens to achieve the goals (see D.5).
- Maintain continuous support to all the actions taken (ensuring continuity of assistance).
- Promote accountability and transparency.

Promoting effective translation of policy into practical action:

Based on localization and inclusive participation, facilitate the sharing of information, communication and education amongst all relevant stakeholders (bringing all on board), to promote understanding and ownership and effective adaptation of policy into practice in a locally relevant manner.

- Translation of agenda, goals and targets into local language(s).
- Development of more easily understood content to reach a wider audience, and making any relevant outputs on SDGs, targets and actions more user-friendly and accessible.
- Regular dialogues and meetings with key stakeholders for transparency and accountability, and to promote ongoing innovation and improvement.
- Identification and training of local representatives for on-the-ground implementation, rather than bringing in outside support. Community leaders are

far more likely to successfully communicate potential actions to their communities than someone 'from the outside'.

- Maintain continuous support to all the actions taken (ensuring continuity of assistance).
- Promote engagement with representation from marginalized groups (see E.3).
- Identify and focus on major local issues of concern and priorities.
- Use of education and awareness to promote acceptance that everyone will not benefit equally from all policies/projects, but that everyone needs to work together for the realization of bigger goals.

D. OTHER IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISCUSSION

One discussion contributor suggested the creation of a "Global Development Goals Framework". This suggestion was well received by participants as a way of addressing some of the issues that had been highlighted in the discussion. This framework would be a tool to workout pathways for converting global initiatives to local levels, and would specifically include:

1. Harmonizing approaches which operate with both top-down and bottom-up approaches;
2. Continuing interaction between the two entities, as to avoid communication gaps;
3. Global institutions should help national governments to strengthen their implementation policies, to ease the trickledown of SDGs into national, local and community levels;
4. Global agencies should undertake capacity building exercises, as most poor developing countries lack technical expertise to undertake the transformation process;
5. Continuous advocacy and awareness should be launched by the global actors; and,
6. Global institutions, by way of incentives to the national governments, should include "green initiatives" in the transformation process. These green initiatives would have a 'lubricating effect', and would serve as a stepping-stone to motivate national governments to work towards the transformation of the SDGs into their policies, programs and plans.

E. LESSONS TO LEARN FROM PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

1. Highlighting the Disconnect: In this regard, there are very few schemes or policies which reflect components of Goal 16 on governance and peaceful societies – viewed as essential to combat to the current turmoil the world over. A gross example of a disconnect between local reality in Pakistan and global reporting is shared here: National estimates show current coverage of safe water and sanitation in rural areas of Pakistan to be 20 *per cent* and 10 *per cent* respectively. Corresponding figures published by the Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) of WHO-UNICEF, however, estimate approximately 90 *per cent* coverage. This demonstrates a major disconnect and lack of interaction between global and national programs and plans, bringing into question the integrity of both.

2. Disconnect with poor and marginalized populations: Workshops carried out by a participant with local women in an Indian community found that while challenges faced by women relating to water, energy, sanitation or health were completely practical and localized, they were not visible in the suggested targets. Moreover, women at the

local level had little, if any, awareness about what has happened with the MDGs or the proposed SDGs and the agenda-setting processes.

3. Inclusion of marginalized populations: Traditionally, women and girls have been underrepresented in policy-making process throughout Small Island Developing States, where men traditionally speak on behalf of villages without female input. The Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance (PYWLA) is a network of regional donor agencies committed to realizing gender equality through leadership, both by providing training and fostering opportunities for participation. PYWLA works to ensure that marginalized groups are involved and eventually engaged in high-level processes that benefit them. Organizations like the PYWLA are crucial going forward in these processes to guarantee a more measured and wholly representative response in policy decision-making.

4. Innovative ways of bridging global SDGs with local capacity and context: A community-led development initiative in Gujarat Raj Samadhiyala gram panchayat in Rajkot district, India, has successfully improved sanitation, water resource availability and waste management in their village. Neighboring Pakistan has taken note of the success of the village's actions, and approached village leaders to help transfer this innovation into similar villages across the border. Representatives from the village are helping to teach other villages how they can adopt similar strategies for sustainable development within their given context.

5. Fostering ownership: The above examples from this consultation demonstrate how people take pride in their achievements, and are interested in sharing practices and information. This demonstrates the role of ownership in the development process that comes from personal involvement, and its applicability and importance for effective implementation of SDGs.