

Implementing the SDGs Challenges and Responses

A civil society perspective

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Some IEF perspectives

IEF is a Baha'i-inspired professional organization for environment and sustainability, accredited by UN in the science/technology major group. It addresses:

- Interface of science and ethics
- Climate change and environmental sustainability
- Extremes of wealth and poverty, a just economy
- International environmental governance
- Gap between scientific urgency and political realism

Fundamental systems change is needed to transition to a sustainable society

Human-centred development

- Creating new measures of development at the individual level will help to change the focus from creating wealth to creating well-being in a spirit of justice and equity
- Values-based indicators can make people conscious of their real desires and motivations, and build an emotional commitment to change
- By getting the signaling right, we can measure implementation of the social contract for a just and sustainable society

Incorporating the ethical dimension

International Environment Forum proposals to include ethical and spiritual considerations in UN policies and programmes:

- UN Permanent Forum on Ethics and Religion
- Office of Ethical Assessment in UN Secretariat

Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General

The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet

Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda, released 4 December 2014

"young people will be the torch bearers... the first truly globalized, interconnected, and highly mobilized civil society, ready and able to serve as a participant, joint steward, and powerful engine of change and transformation."

Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General

- fundamental transformation is needed in society and the economy
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) define a paradigm shift for people and planet
- inclusive and people-centred, leaving no one behind
- integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions
- in a spirit of solidarity, cooperation, mutual accountability
- with the participation of governments and all stakeholders

This is clearly more than a government responsibility

Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General

transformative partnerships built upon

- principles and values
- shared vision
- shared goals
- participation of all relevant stakeholders
- mobilizing the power of culture
- mutual accountability at the center

How do we build these partnerships with civil society?

Sustainable Development Goals

These goals constitute an integrated, indivisible set of global priorities for sustainable development.... The goals and targets integrate economic, social and environmental aspects and recognize their interlinkages in achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions

How do we achieve this integration in practice?

some SDG targets for CSOs

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

12.1 implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on **sustainable consumption and production** (10YFP), all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries

12.3 by 2030 halve per capita global **food waste** at the retail and consumer level, and reduce food losses along production and supply chains including post-harvest losses

12.5 by 2030, substantially reduce **waste generation** through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse

12.6 encourage **companies**, especially large and trans-national companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

12.8 by 2030 ensure that **people everywhere** have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

12.a support developing countries to strengthen their **scientific and technological capacities** to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

Science and SDG targets

ICSU/ISSC Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective

Of 169 targets beneath the 17 draft goals:

- 29% are well defined and based on the latest scientific evidence
- 54% need more work
- 17% are weak or non-essential
- Many targets suffer from lack of integration, repetition, vague, qualitative language
- need hard, measurable, time-bound, quantitative targets
- goals are presented in 'silos' without interlinking
- danger of conflict between different goals
- trade-offs between overcoming poverty and moving towards sustainability

Much still needs to be done by everyone to implement the SDGs

Challenge of SDG indicators

Example for Goal 14 - Oceans

- **Global Ocean Commission**
(www.globaloceancommission.org) - 30 indicators for goal 14
- **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**
(unsdsn.org) - 39 relevant indicators, 14 for goal 14
- **UN Statistical Commission** - 50 relevant indicators, 20 for goal 14
- there is little overlap between the indicators
- many indicators are “to be developed” or difficult to implement
- many targets do not have indicators proposed

The scientific community and civil society can help fill the gap

Alternative measures of progress

- SDG target **17.19** *By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product....*
- Stiglitz et al. 2009 beyond GDP
- Bhutan Gross National Happiness
- World Happiness Report 2013
- OECD; European Environment Agency
- World Bank living life project
- Many national projects on well-being and happiness

Implementing the SDGs

- All countries will be expected to adapt the SDGs, targets and indicators to their national situation
- Due consideration to their fair share of the global responsibility
- Integrated approach cutting across all departmental responsibilities
- Strengthened statistical service for data collection on relevant indicators, annual reporting, disaggregated
- Regular national reports to the United Nations

Is there a role for non-state actors?

Can we rely on governments?

Governments are more concerned with:

- Domestic political priorities
- National self-interest
- Economic interests of the most powerful
- Little incentive to pursue common long-term interests
- Only superficial commitment to international obligations (UN Charter, Declarations, SDGs)

Appropriating the SDGs

The United Nations process is essentially top-down, building a global consensus among governments

The SDGs need to be appropriated by individuals, communities and civil society to start a bottom-up process, translating the goals into local realities

We should not wait for governments to act, as they always do too little, too late

Implementing SDGs at multiple levels

- Nested structures with responsibility devolved to lower levels
- Transparent access to information
- Consultative processes for setting principles and priorities and reviewing progress
- Stakeholder participation in monitoring and management
- Sense of ownership and responsibility

Advancing through learning

- Make progress where possible
- Build governance mechanisms in small steps
- Learning through action, reflection and consultation
- Build confidence in institutions and roles of stakeholders
- Initiatives from civil society organizations as well as governments

Some challenges

- The SDGs are ambitious even if everyone supports them. What to we do with the major part of humanity that could not care less (greedy, corrupt, violent, selfish)?
- How do we keep our focus on SDGs despite the challenges ahead?
- What do we do to fill all the gaps in targets and indicators?
- How do we translate the SDGs into actions people can take in their own lives and communities?