

SDGs, my take

By Musa Chibwana, CRNSA Coordinator

Musa.chibwana@crnsa.net

So the SDGs were launched last week by the UN after a couple of years debating their framing and coverage. The 17 goals and 169 targets seek to take over from where the MDGs left off while addressing the gaps that were identified. Here are my observations and prognosis:

1. The SDGs do well to address key systemic barriers to sustainable development such as inequality, unsustainable consumption patterns, weak institutional capacity and environmental degradation which the MDGs did not pay attention to.
2. Since we are now thinking of implementation at national level, there seem to be overlaps amongst the goals. SDG 1 on ending poverty in all its forms (greater progress in framing than end extreme poverty as was previously framed) cannot be achieved without achievement of SDG 2 on food security and SDG8 on macroeconomic policies related to targets on full and productive employment and decent work. The foregoing will rely on SDG 10 as well on reduction of inequality, which is related to enhancing resilience to climate change –SDG13. Overall, the success of all the foregoing will lead to better health and wellbeing thereby contributing to SDG3. What am I saying? While there are 17 Goals in total, civil society has to work with its government in prioritising in view of the overlaps that exist. The prioritising should however not leave the governments in their comfort zones, but should stretch them to do more.
3. One of the major challenges with the SDG framing is that it does not identify the various social groups which the governments have to mobilise in delivering the goals. As civil society, we have to claim that space in both complementing and holding the governments accountable-it will not be given to us as we have seen with the SDGs!
4. You may be wondering like I am, these are 17 Goals, but the question is, what is the ideal picture that we see when all of them are achieved? The succinct overall goal or vision to be achieved is missing from the framing. What are the 17 goals feeding into? This has to be interpreted since it is not readily provided with the goals.
5. These goals are not coming into vacuum, the governments have their own development plans some of which are going to end, for example, in five years or two years. In this case, where do the SDGs come in at national level? It is our prerogative as civil society to engage with our governments so that the SDGs are mainstreamed into the existing development agendas. We should avoid SDG orphan hood (child protection people would know about this better!) were the country does not adopt any of the goals under the pretext that they have their vision 2020. I'm sure there are linkages that can be identified so that the national development plans fit into the global development framework or vice versa.
6. It has been estimated that the full realisation of the SDGs will require USD1 trillion each year at global level. Our various countries can easily excuse themselves by saying that they do not have the resources to implement these goals. This is where civil society is expected to play a part in ensuring that the available resources are used judiciously. Colleagues, anyone who does child rights work should be interested about this subject because it directly has a bearing on the fulfilment of children's rights in their country. I always argue that a national budget or local authority's budget is a human rights instrument! Let's lobby for earmark taxes to address issues of e.g. education or health. I yearn for a time when our social policies are wholly funded nationally.

7. Civil society organisations should create platforms for children to engage with duty bearers on implementation of the SDGs and the national development agendas in place.
8. Lastly, to measure progress, there must be the data that is systematically collected. Civil society organisations should lobby governments to budget for this element. Sometimes it's not prioritised in national budgets. Lets measure the progress we are making!