POLICY BRIEF

Integrating Regional Organization–Civil Society Partnerships into the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Summary

The adoption of the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda this coming September will provide a platform for enhancing global partnerships, particularly between regional organizations and civil society. Integrating the action plans for regional organizations and civil society actors will be crucial for enhancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next fifteen years. For this partnership to thrive, a number of opportunities and challenges should be addressed. The following recommendations are offered in this report:

- The forthcoming General Assembly High-Level Thematic Debate on regional organizations in the post-2015 agenda should focus on overcoming barriers to effective partnerships with civil society for SDG monitoring and implementation.
- The UN, regional organizations, and civil society organizations should investigate how current national development policies overlap with the post-2015 agenda in order to strategize how to best implement the SDGs.
- Partnerships should be established among regional organizations, national governments, and civil society in the creation of locally and regionally-specific indicators and the development of procedures for peer review and monitoring of SDG implementation.

This paper builds upon the analysis contained in the October 2014 Policy Brief, *Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding: The Role of Civil Society*, produced in cooperation with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). It examines the evolution of the global development agenda leading to the adoption of the SDGs, considers the role of regional organizations and civil society organizations in this process, and discusses specific challenges and opportunities for building partnerships to achieve development and peacebuilding goals.

From MDG to SDG

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2000 as a plan to eradicate global poverty by 2015. The MDGs comprised eight goals, with each goal assigned targets and indicators to measure the progress of implementation. These goals catalyzed universal engagement in support of a global agenda that acknowledged development challenges as the root cause of threats to international peace and security. Yet the MDG process encountered several obstacles because the framework lacked a comprehensive and participatory approach.

The MDG framework did not encompass the required indicators to ensure the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty within fifteen years.[1] The drafters of the MDGs strongly urged that the outcomes of the MDG process be quantifiable, but the creation of indicators to monitor and evaluate the goals missed many roots causes of poverty and inequality.[2] These gaps in the MDG measurement framework led to policies that could not successfully accomplish the stated goals or build greater equality across North-South, ethnic, and gender divides. The focus on meeting the designated targets rather than developing multidimensional policies to achieve the goals has been criticized as a flawed approach to eradicating poverty.[3]

While incorporating indicators and targets into a development agenda is critical to monitoring progress, the MDG framework did not comprehensively match indicators to the eight goals or account for different levels of development across regions. Systems for measuring progress varied across different regions. The lack of systematic planning for developing an unbiased and comprehensive group of indicators resulted in a disjointed global agenda which could not adequately monitor the progress of the MDG goals.

Development economist William Easterly has argued that the MDGs were biased particularly against Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has been the furthest behind other regions in meeting the targets, but Easterly argues that the MDG framework simplified how to measure social and economic progress, thereby distorting measurements of African progress.[4] One of the biases can be seen in measurements of poverty, a focal point for the MDGs. Easterly points to the extreme weighting of indicators measuring the absolute poverty line and the benchmark year used to measure growth. The starting date for the evaluation of progress was 1990 rather than the 2000 date for the adoption of MDG goals. This made countries accountable for conditions that existed ten years before the MDGs were implemented. Poverty indicators were measured only at the national level and did not account for local disparities, especially among the socially, economically, and/or politically excluded.[5] As a result, African countries began the MDG reporting process at a disproportionately low level compared to other regions due to the continent's poor economic growth in the 1990s. According to Easterly, this amounted to "penalizing [Africa] for its high initial poverty rate."[6]

The MDG framework neglected linking the global agenda with the creation of national action plans to systematically implement the goals. This created a gap between the desired outcomes of the global agenda and realities at the local level. A "top-down" approach with little room for local adaption made it difficult for countries in the Global South to achieve the international requirements. In some countries

national political leaders felt frustration at the imposition of an external 'donor-centric agenda' without feeling empowered to create local development solutions.[7] The MDG framework also ignored how some development issues have cross-border effects, failing to acknowledge that countries cannot be expected to solve problems caused by neighboring states. Urging states to address development problems without accounting for differential regional conditions or allowing for local input created obstacles to the successful implementation of the MDG framework.

Development and Peacebuilding

The MDGs also failed to account for the security problems that cause and exacerbate development challenges. Discussions during the creation of new development goals emphasized the necessity of addressing issues of human security. It is well known and firmly established in research that development and peace are closely related. Article 55 of the UN Charter specifically links the building of peace to the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development. Paul Collier and other scholars have shown that failures of economic development are a fundamental cause of armed conflict.[8] Studies also show a strong relationship between measures of social and economic inequality and the risk of armed violence. Inequalities of access to political power and economic opportunity among different cultural or identity groups are often a source of conflict.[9] The evidence suggests that efforts to advance equitable economic development help to prevent armed conflict. The progress of development advances the prospects for peace.

The reverse is also true. Armed conflict is one of the greatest causes of poverty and a major obstacle to sustainable development. The *World Development Report 2011* observes that the cost of a major civil war is equivalent to more than thirty years of typical GDP growth for a medium-sized developing country. Trade levels take twenty years to recover.[10] Research confirms the harmful effects of war on human development, resulting in higher levels of poverty and hunger in addition to reduced access to clean water. Wars also reduce life expectancy and may slow the general decline in infant mortality rates.[11] The presence of armed conflict is one of the greatest barriers to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals.[12] Bringing a security dimension into the sustainable development process is an appropriate acknowledgement of the links between development and the prevention of armed conflict.

Moving Toward 2030

In 2012, UN officials and development policy stakeholders convened the Rio+20 conference in order to analyze the failures of the MDGs and the need for a more inclusive development policy.[13] The Rio+20 gathering provided a forum for discussing how the international community should pursue development goals in a way that creates long-lasting change. The outcome document of the conference, entitled "The Future We Want," outlined how to move forward with the lessons learned from the MDG framework.[14] The report identified key principles of human development which were far more encompassing than the original eight goals identified in the MDGs. Rio+20 launched an international process of identifying the

weaknesses of current development agendas and creating a more inclusive platform for multiple actors to identify what should be included in the next global agenda to overcome poverty.

After Rio+20, the UN launched several consultations to begin investigating how to create a stronger development agenda with input from groups that were sidelined in the creation of the MDG agenda, including civil society, regional organizations, and the private sector. These consultations resulted in a new set of goals to be launched in 2015 with the ending of the MDG process. The revision process yielded 17 goals, broken into six core themes. These new Sustainable Development Goals comprise the forthcoming Post-2015 Development Agenda to be launched at the United Nations this September.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda

This year's General Assembly will officially agree upon the new Sustainable Development Goals and the comprising indicators which will monitor how well or poorly the post-2015 agenda is implemented in the next fifteen years. The indicators are still being discussed, and at present they total 169. The final set of goals, targets, and indicators will be decided at the General Assembly in fall 2015.

In preparation for the September debate on the SDG framework, several consultations are still in progress to create a strong action plan for implementation. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon appointed Amina Mohammed as Special Advisor on Post-2015 Development Planning. The Secretary General also established the UN System

2. Source: The road to dignity by 2030, Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development goals

Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda which includes over 60 agencies and international organizations to help coordinate the implementation of the post-2015 agenda across the entire UN system. Other UN initiatives seek to make the post-2015 process as diverse as possible, focusing on multiple themes and bringing in previously excluded stakeholders. The UN also created technical focal points on financing the initiatives and developing statistical indicators that better analyze the intricacies of the development agenda.[15] Discussions on these technical issues have revealed the importance of partnering with all stakeholders in order to successfully implement the goals and monitor progress.

The UN Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) and the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) have become active participants in the SDG consultation processes. Both groups have published key reports on how to apply the new framework with enhanced partnerships.[16] Collaboration with the

RECs and civil society reflects a substantive shift from the MDG process. Recognition of regional organizations and civil society as partners for the post-2015 agenda creates opportunities for deeper engagement in the future, as will be discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

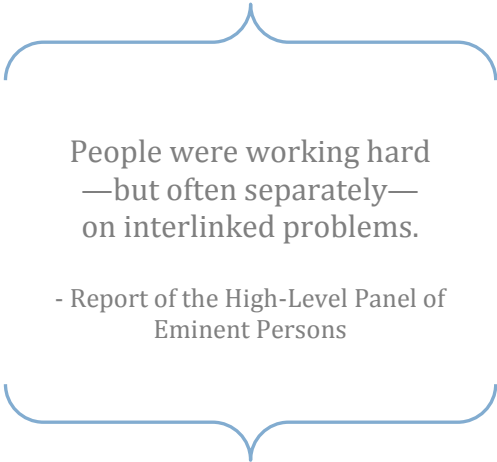| 17 Sustainable Development Goals |
|---|
| 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere. |
| 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. |
| 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. |
| 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. |
| 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. |
| 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. |
| 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. |
| 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. |
| 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. |
| 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries. |
| 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. |
| 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. |
| 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum) |
| 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. |
| 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. |
| 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. |
| 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. |

While the formation of the post-2015 development agenda has already demonstrated significant progress in adopting a more inclusive and comprehensive development policy framework, there is still much more work to be accomplished to ensure a successful SDG process. Some of the problems that existed in the MDG process persist in the new process. At present, the new framework does not sufficiently specify how local input can be implemented in mechanisms for eradicating poverty. Nor does it provide a governance structure for addressing regional and cross-border effects. If the SDGs are to be successful by the year 2030, stakeholders will have to find methods of implementation that allow countries and regions to uniquely address their development needs while reporting their progress according to the global indicators set for the post-2015 agenda.

A key obstacle confronting the implementation of the SDGs is how to finance such a vast agenda. The UN and donor states and agencies have already faced difficulty in the past decade raising sufficient funds to meet development program goals in a volatile economic climate.[17] The MDGs mobilized some external financing for development, but the primary source of funding relied upon domestic resources, particularly taxation.[18] This dependence upon domestic revenues has been especially challenging for low income countries and has been a particular disadvantage for states in sub-Saharan Africa struggling to keep up with local and global development agendas. If the SDGs are to achieve all seventeen goals by 2030, a great deal of money will be needed beyond what developing states are able to provide. This will depend upon the political will of donor states to implement the agenda they are establishing. The Third

International Conference on Financing for Development is scheduled for this July in Addis Ababa to discuss financing the implementation of the post-2015 agenda.[19] To date concrete plans for financing have not been established. As a result conversations have focused on the role of partnerships for helping support the financing, monitoring, and evaluation of the SDGs. Much more clarity and specificity on the availability of external funding and support will be necessary if the SDGs are to be realized.

The Role of Partnerships

Goal 8 of the MDG framework, the priority of global partnerships for development, is also included in the post-2015 SDG agenda. Goal 17 of the SDG framework explicitly calls upon multiple stakeholders to cooperate in achieving the goals by 2030. Special attention in the post-2015 deliberations has been given to the private sector as a critical partner for financing the development agenda. The private sector is an important stakeholder for providing resources and helping to assure sustainability, especially through financing and creating durable employment opportunities. Some civil society organizations have expressed concerns about an over-emphasis on engaging the private sector, criticizing what they describe as "partnership euphoria" and worrying that a focus on "quantitative financial needs" could lead to business-driven, rather than development-driven agendas.[20]

> People were working hard —but often separately— on interlinked problems.
>
> - Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons

It is appropriate to involve the private sector in discussions about the creation and implementation of development partnerships, but other actors are equally important in the multi-stakeholder processes that will be necessary to create more sustainable development policy. Both regional organizations and civil society groups need to be included. They can provide accountability and are critical implementers of development policies at the local, national, and regional levels. Regional organizations and civil society groups have great potential for facilitating the implementation of the sustainable development goals.[21]

Integrating Regional Organizations

Regional organizations receive special attention for their role in maintaining peace and security in the United Nations Charter. Two types of regional organization are included in the ordering of the UN system—regional entities within the UN system and Chapter VIII entities.[22] Both types of regional organization are vital partners for the post-2015 agenda, although each has a unique role. The regional economic commissions (RECs) are part of the former classification and span five regions: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The Regional Economic Commissions have taken an active role during the SDG consultation process. In 2013, the five commissions published a joint report entitled, "A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015

United Nations Development Agenda," which detailed the key regional priorities for the post-2015 agenda based on multiple regional consultations, including with regional civil society organizations.[23] The report assessed the implementation of MDGs at the regional level and reaffirmed some of the main critiques of the MDG framework. The report noted that a focus on the indicators diverted attention from quality implementation and left countries struggling to find means to achieve the goals. A gap between global and national monitoring compounded this inability to implement nationally what was agreed upon globally.[24]

In addition to analyzing the results of the MDG process, the REC report also analyzed the priorities for future development in each region. The priorities include overcoming youth unemployment, empowering women, and building climate change resilience. The key message emphasized in the report is "that there are many commonalities among the regions, but their different circumstances strongly suggest a nuanced approach."[25] The RECs have been able to emphasize this point throughout the UN consultation process.

For effective regional participation to occur, Chapter VIII regional organizations will also need to be crucial partners. These regional organizations (RIGOs) are "exogenous to the UN system," usually having observer status at the UN and their own specialized institutions.[26] The UN Charter extends a role to regional organizations in helping maintain regional peace and security, but it does not operationalize how that role should be performed, only noting that it is within the context of the Security Council's primary responsibility for international peace and security. Initiatives to institutionalize cooperation with regional organizations at the UN include the introduction of High-Level Meetings between the UN Secretary-General and regional organizations and a 'framework for cooperation' between the UN Security Council and regional organizations.[27] Yet these efforts have not been consistent or globally balanced. The UN has given more attention to certain organizations—like the African Union (AU)—than others.[28] With no clear structure for interaction between the UN and regional organizations, collaboration is often ad hoc and overly complex, hindering effective partnerships.

Over the decades, especially when the Security Council has been unable to act because of differences among the permanent members, regional organizations have filled the gaps left by UN inaction and achieved gains in helping to fulfill UN objectives.[29] As noted in the October 2014 policy brief on regional organizations and peacebuilding, the "nuanced local knowledge and networks" of RIGOs enable them to be "ideal platforms for dialogue and mediation."[30] This allows RIGOs to better prevent and contain conflict in their region before the international community has to intervene. They also have a special role in advancing development and economic progress, especially since many regional and sub-regional organizations were created to facilitate economic cooperation. This regional economic foundation for development creates a possibility for significant RIGO contributions to the SDG process.

Chapter VIII regional organizations have become a vital part of the international system. They have the potential to play an important role in realizing the new SDG goals and should be integrated fully into the implementation framework. Regional organizations have found that partnerships with civil society can support the fulfillment of global policy agendas, for example in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on the role of women in peace and security, as noted below. Similar partnerships with

civil society on the broad SDG agenda can help regional organizations become better integrated into the post-2015 development framework.

Empowering Civil Society

Civil society organizations have become an integral part of the international system, particularly in areas of human development and peacebuilding. Civil society is defined by the UN Global Compact as

> *non-governmental and non-profit entities that seek to bring about positive social and environmental change. These include advocacy groups as well as organizations operating at the field level…[and] can be "multi-national" and international in nature, or small grassroots groups.[31]*

Civil society was not identified as a critical stakeholder in the formation of the UN system, but these groups have experienced significant growth in numbers and influence since the mid-80s. This expanded role for civil society is based in part on new models of peacebuilding and development. It has created additional opportunities for international security and development cooperation. Many in the international community have come to recognize the benefits of incorporating civil society organizations in UN policy making and implementation.[32] An example of this type of coordination with civil society is the UN Integrated Civil Society Organizations System (iCSO), launched by the department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), a network for NGOs and civil society groups that interacts with the United Nations and its member agencies and funds.[33]

Civil society organizations were not involved in determining the MDG goals and the indicators to measure implementation, but they have played an active role in the SDG process. Civil society groups were leading voices in identifying the failure of MDG indicators to take into account the nuances of local and regional differences in implementation capability. During the recent process of developing the SDGs, civil society groups have been more prominently involved and have been important advocates for creating a more inclusive development framework that reflects social needs and political and economic realities on the ground in low income countries.

Civil society groups have launched initiatives to create this more inclusive process by engaging people from around the world and creating platforms for voicing citizen opinions about the goals of global development. This effort included helping the UN launch the "MY World" survey which allowed anyone to indicate his or her preference for international policy goals.[34] Special initiatives like the "Global Youth Call" consultations incorporated the voices of youth to ensure that leaders of the next generation can engage in the creation and implementation of the SDGs. Civil society groups have lobbied for the inclusion of key targets in the SDG framework that were lacking in the MDG framework.

> It is critical to approach development holistically, and evaluate it comprehensively, to ensure that efforts are continually advancing justice, equality, equity, and sustainability.
>
> - UN-NGLS consultations with civil society

They have called for more attention to the rights of women, youth, indigenous persons, and migrant workers. They have also urged the creation of targets and indicators which enhance economic and political access for marginalized groups.[35]

Civil society recommendations for implementing the post-2015 agenda at the international, regional, and national levels can be found in the consultation reports published by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Office (UN-NGLS).[36] The active participation of civil society in the SDG debate has already resulted in a more inclusive process. Maintaining and deepening this civil society involvement can help to assure development policies that are more responsive to the needs of local populations and better serve those who are the intended beneficiaries.

The UN has encouraged cooperation between regional organizations and civil society for peacemaking, calling for joint strategies and a "division of labor" in support of preventive diplomacy.[37] Civil society participation in peace processes and their support for diplomatic initiatives are often critical to securing durable peace. Similar forms of cooperation exist for civil society involvement in programs for economic development, for example in utilizing NGOs as contractors for the delivery of humanitarian aid and for development assistance programs. Yet governments and regional organizations often overlook the potential benefits of deeper levels of partnership with civil society. For their part, CSOs often find existing mechanisms for interaction with regional and international organizations inadequate. Greater understanding and cooperation is needed to take full advantage of the contributions civil society and regional organizations can make together in working together to advance the SDGs.

Opportunities and Challenges

Regional organizations and civil society organizations can act as bridges between the global development agenda and local needs on the ground in specific communities. To avoid the shortcomings of the MDG process, the new development framework should include a strong link between international objectives and local acceptance and implementation. This will require a clear plan for connecting the local to the international and engaging regional organizations and CSOs in the implementation of the SDGs.

Opportunities for Regional Organizations

Regional organizations have unique capabilities and roles that provide opportunities for engaging the SDG process and enhancing implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. They govern between the international and the national level and are able to contribute to a "locally-owned" agenda through already established partnerships with national governments.[38] They are better able to understand and address trans-border 'spillover' effects that are beyond the scope of national governments but are still localized within a region. RIGOs can help to resolve transnational differences on problems like cross-border conflicts and the effects of climate change and can help build the capacity of countries to mitigate such problems. Their sensitivity to the needs of an entire region can help national governments navigate the requirements of a global agenda.

The United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) conducted a study of regional participation in the MDG framework and found that such regional approaches helped to improve the implementation process. Regions that applied the MDG framework on the basis of already existing regional and national strategies were far more successful in meeting the objectives than regional organizations that tried to adopt entirely new policies. The UNU-CRIS report concludes that regional adoptions of the post-2015 agenda should try to align SDG policies with '*pre-existing*' strategies.[39]

An example of linking regional efforts to global agendas through preexisting strategies can be seen in two African sub regional organizations. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) have developed regional action plans for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.[40] The connection of national plans with regional encouragement and a global agenda demonstrates an excellent opportunity for implementing the post-2015 agenda on gender equality. The prospect of renewed resources and reinvigorated political will through the SDG process may provide opportunities for regional organizations to help build the capacity of member states for enhancing the role of women in peace and security and achieving other SDG goals.

> There are many commonalities among the regions, but their different circumstances strongly suggest a nuanced approach.
>
> - REC Consultation Report

Another opportunity that regional organizations provide as partners of the SDG framework is their role in monitoring and assessing progress. In order to track how well or poorly the post-2015 agenda is being implemented, monitoring and evaluation will be required. The MDGs did not have a good system for data collection, which resulted in disjointed reporting and no clear understanding of how well the different levels of governance were implementing the goals. If the SDGs are to be successful, systematic monitoring at all levels will be necessary.

A challenge with monitoring requirements is that they can be seen as intrusive and may be resented by local governments as meddling in the affairs of state. National resistance to international monitoring creates obstacles to measuring progress and could stymie the implementation of SDG goals. RIGOs help to overcome this problem by serving as intermediaries and by developing regional mechanisms for peer evaluations. This approach is able to gain the confidence of individual countries while meeting international requirements. Most regional organizations already engage in various forms of peer review for other global standards, for instance in monitoring early warning triggers for conflict prevention. A level of trust and comfort with such approaches already exists and can be used as a basis for developing regional SDG monitoring processes. The UN High Level Panel Report released in May 2013 mentions that regional level monitoring "could complement global monitoring" since "it is often easier to review policies in-depth with friendly and constructive neighbours than with the whole world."[41]

Regional organizations have consistently been cited as crucial partners for the implementation of the SDG framework. They have the potential to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the SDG implementation process. Discussions on the role of regional organizations are far from complete, however, with another high level panel on the role of regional organizations scheduled for May 2015.[42] If these discussions are to empower regional organizations to collaborate fully in the post-2015 agenda, the challenges to their participation will need to be addressed.

Challenges for Regional Organizations

The report by the RECs declares that if regional initiatives are to be successfully integrated into the post-2015 agenda, "there needs to be an adjustment at the level of global governance structures to allow for the pursuit of regional priorities and policies."[43] Regional analysis of unique development challenges can improve implementation of the policy process, but realizing this benefit will require removing the obstacles to effective regional participation. The REC report pinpoints problems in the structures of trade, finance, and environmental policies as impediments to the engagement of regional organizations. For instance, regional organizations in the Global South feel unable to exert influence in the international finance and trade structures created by Bretton Woods institutions like the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO).[44] In order to ensure flexibility for countries to participate in international trade while protecting their domestic industries, reform to trade architectures will have to be carefully constructed in partnership with regional organizations. Adjusting regional trade and finance structures will require an effort to "rebalance power relations," according to the UN-NGLS consultation report.[45] This will be a long term process, but discussion of the need for such change can occur now.

The key challenge lies in leaving spaces for locally-owned approaches while adhering to a global agenda. The related challenge is considering how to allow regional reporting on indicators without hindering the ability to compare implementation across multiple regions. Mechanisms are also needed to hold regional organizations accountable for their monitoring and evaluation efforts. The creation of a multi-tiered governance and monitoring structure that can implement global goals while being flexible enough to adapt to specific needs at the regional and sub-regional level is one of the greatest challenges of the post-2015 process.

The most obvious but most difficult hurdle to overcome is the unevenness of regional capacity across the world.[46] While RECs have institutional mandates and capacity that can be more easily applied within the SDG process, Chapter VIII entities do not have this kind of structural uniformity. The EU has architectures that already begin to provide space for implementing the post-2015 agenda, but other RIGOs do not currently have that level of capacity. The success of the SDGs will depend upon the ability of stakeholders to build capacity not only at the local and national levels but within regions as well.

Civil society organizations can be important partners in this process, working with regional organizations, the UN, and other stakeholders to develop common development objectives. In 2014, for example, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) joined with the UN, civil society groups and the private sector to develop a statement of agreed principles and recommendations regarding the post-2015 agenda. The document envisions a broad regional agenda for advancing

governance and capacities at the local and national level while adhering to a global development agenda.[47] The success of the SDG framework will depend upon this type of interaction among RIGOs, CSOs, and the UN in creating more effective institutional responses to local and regional needs.

Opportunities for Civil Society

Civil society organizations have a number of opportunities for collaboration in the post-2015 agenda, especially in partnership with regional organizations. Civil society has been recognized for its role in providing transparency and accountability to international processes. The post-2015 development agenda will be no exception. Civil society groups have already participated in formal and informal decision making on the SDG process, and they will continue to play a role in helping to achieve the 2030 objectives.

In its 2013 report on the role of partnerships, the UN High-Level Panel highlighted the active role for civil society could play in providing transparency on the implementation of the SDGs and challenging countries and regions if their targets are too 'conservative'.[48] The High-Level Panel also recommended allowing civil society to lobby for the indicators that are unique to local contexts and collaborate with regional organizations in monitoring these indicators.[49] The process of allowing countries to set their own targets in coordination with the post-2015 agenda should help create deeper engagement with the SDG process by multiple stakeholders, including civil society and regional organizations.

Collaboration with regional organizations in monitoring SDG implementation is an important area of civil society engagement. CSOs can assist in shaping norms, laws, and policies which enhance regional bodies' capacities. By coordinating with the implementation efforts of regional organizations and keeping them accountable to the SDG agenda, CSOs can provide legitimating effects for regional organizations. In return, regional organizations can provide additional openings for CSO participation and interaction, especially where civil society groups might face constraints at the national and international level.

An example of successful civil society engagement with regional organizations can be found in the work of FemLINKPACIFIC, the secretariat of GPPAC's Pacific regional network. Building upon an established relationship with the Pacific Island Forum of States (PIFS), FemLINKPACIFIC played an important role in support of the PIFS decision in 2012 to adopt a regional action plan on women, peace, and security. PIFS Leaders also adopted a Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, with Australia pledging $320 million in assistance over a ten year period to fund an initiative to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women.[50] The saliency of women's issues among the Pacific island states would not have been as high without FemLINKPACIFIC's strong advocacy.

Like regional organizations, civil society can act as a vital conduit between the global and the local. It is in the self-interest of states and regional bodies to maintain and enhance partnerships with CSOs and to work with them as key stakeholders for implementation and support for the SDG process. The opportunities for civil society to take a larger role in the post-2015 agenda are significant, but challenges that could inhibit participation must be addressed.

Challenges for Civil Society

In some countries and regions and at the international level, CSOs face barriers to their participation. Some regional organizations constrain CSO participation in a way that limits their capacity to provide transparency and accountability. Incentives for lessening these restraints and promoting collaboration with civil society will be vital for implementing the post-2015 agenda. It will be important for regional organizations and civil society to engage in dialogue on ways to facilitate increased collaboration in a mutually beneficial manner.

Another challenge confronting the integration of civil society into the post-2015 agenda flows from the experience of the MDG process, especially the lack of clear guidelines on how to report at the local level on global goals. While much work has been put into the development of indicators that are much more encompassing than the MDGs, information gaps still exist at the local level which will need to be filled. A particular need will be the creation of unique indicators that reflect the realities of a particular country and/or region. For this local adaption to be successful, civil society organizations will need resources and training on designating and reporting on appropriate indicators and how to improve SDG implementation.

Civil society groups have had a voice in the formation of the sustainable development goals, but this cannot be the sole extent of their participation. They also need to be critical stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs. They can play a valuable role in monitoring progress and keeping other stakeholders transparent and accountable. For this to occur, CSOs need to be further recognized as major partners and empowered to engage fully at all stages of the post-2015 process.

Recommendations

The identified opportunities and challenges for both regional organizations and civil society partnership will be key points of discussion in the coming months. The following are recommendations for more comprehensively engaging regional organizations and civil society in the post-2015 agenda.

Regional Organizations

1. Focus on overcoming barriers to effective partnerships for SDG monitoring and implementation during the High-Level Thematic Debate with the UN General Assembly this May.[51]
2. Identify overlap between the post-2015 agenda and current regional/sub-regional development policies so that SDG implementation is applied to current development action plans.
3. Partner with national governments in the creation of region-specific indicators to establish relationships for peer review/monitoring, specifically in peace and security issues.
4. Consult civil society on the development of strong partnerships for building transparency in the reporting process.

Civil Society Organizations

1. Identify how locally specific needs can link to the post-2015 agenda and engage the UN and regional organizations in creating comprehensive indicators to reflect these needs.
2. Challenge countries and regions if their targets are too 'conservative' and encourage transparency in the reporting process.[52]
3. Engage regional organizations in dialogue to build strong partnerships on the post-2015 agenda.

United Nations

1. Facilitate dialogue with Chapter VIII organizations, RECs, and civil society on how to create space for local adaptations to the post-2015 agenda.
2. Assist regional organizations and civil society in helping governments create national action plans for implementing the post-2015 agenda.
3. Discuss regionally sensitive indicators with the regions and incorporate these indicators into the regional peer review process.

[1] Mark Tran, "Mark Malloch-Brown: developing the MDGs was a bit like nuclear fusion," *The Guardian*, November 16, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/nov/16/mark-malloch-brown-mdgs-nuclear.

[2] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 17.

[3] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," (E/ESCWA/OES/2013/2/13-0077), http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 40.

[4] William Easterly, "How the Millennium Development Goals are Unfair to Africa," *Brookings Global Economy and Development* Working Paper 14 (November 2007), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2007/11/poverty-easterly/11_poverty_easterly.pdf.

[5] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 18.

[6] William Easterly, "How the Millennium Development Goals are Unfair to Africa," *Brookings Global Economy and Development* Working Paper 14 (November 2007), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2007/11/poverty-easterly/11_poverty_easterly.pdf, 7.

[7] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 5.

[8] Paul Collier et al, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 20003), 53.

[9] Frances Stewart, "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and some Hypotheses," in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, ed. by Frances Stewart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13.

[10] The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2011), 5-6.

[11] Scott Gates et al.," Development Consequences of Armed Conflict," *World Development* 40, No. 9 (2012), 1717-18.

[12] Scott Gates et al.,"Development Consequences of Armed Conflict," *World Development* 40, No. 9 (2012), 1721.

[13] "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 sustainable development agenda," United Nations General Assembly (A/69/700), December 4, 2014, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&referer=/english/&Lang=E, 6.

[14] "The Future We Want," *Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html.

[15] "Statistics and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda," *UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, July 2013, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/UNTT_MonitoringReport_WEB.pdf.

[16] "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), November 8, 2013, http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un-ngls.org%2FIMG%2Fpdf%2FUN-NGLS_Post-2015_Regional_Consultation_September_2013.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHxi9ebOMO6GLV67bDI_y3xIuuEug; "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf.

[17] Vararat Atisophon et al, "Revisiting MDG Cost Estimates from a Domestic Resource Mobilisation Perspective," *OECD Development Centre* Working Paper No. 306 (December 2011), http://www.oecd.org/social/poverty/49301301.pdf, 11.

[18] *Ibid*, 17.

[19] "Third International Conference on Financing for Development," *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/overview/third-conference-ffd.html (accessed April 6, 2015).

[20] "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), November 8, 2013, http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un-ngls.org%2FIMG%2Fpdf%2FUN-NGLS_Post-

2015_Regional_Consultation_September_2013.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHxi9ebOMO6GLV67bDI_y3xIuuE
ug, 86.

[21] Box quote from, "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development," *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013, http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf, 7.

[22] Emanuela Maria Cavaleri, "The Post-2015 UN Development Framework: Perspectives for Regional Involvement," *UNU-CRIS Working Papers* (W-2014/12), http://www.cris.unu.edu/fileadmin/workingpapers/W-2014-12.pdf, pg. 7.

[23] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf.

[24] *Ibid*, 40.

[25] *Ibid,* 80.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid*, 96.

[28] *Ibid,* 98.

[29] Luk Van Langenhove, Tania Felicio and Ademola Abass, "The UN and Regional Organisations for Peace: Tracking a Slippery Partnership," in *The United Nations and the Regions: Third World Report on Regional Integration*, ed. Philippe De Lombaerde, Francis Bart and Tania Felicio, vol. 3 of *United Nations University Series on Regionalism* (The Netherlands: Springer, 2012), 94.

[30] Sarah Smiles Persinger, "Regional Organizations and Peacebuilding: The Role of Civil Society," *Kroc Institute, GPPAC, and Alliance for Peacebuilding Policy Brief*, October 2014, http://www.gppac.net/documents/130492842/0/Regional+Organizations+and+Peacebuilding+The+Role+of+Civil+Society+%282%29.pdf/33b07303-3984-4930-9cd4-688925b21b6d.

[31] "Civil Society," *United Nations Global Compact,* https://www.unglobalcompact.org/HowToParticipate/civil_society/index.html (accessed April 10, 2015).

[32] Christoph Spurk, "Understanding Civil Society," in *Civil Society & Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 15.

[33] "Integrated Civil Society Organizations System," *NGO Branch United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/login.do (accessed April 20, 2015).

[34] "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 sustainable development agenda," United Nations General Assembly (A/69/700), December 4, 2014, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&referer=/english/&Lang=E, 8.

[35] "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), November 8, 2013, http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un-ngls.org%2FIMG%2Fpdf%2FUN-NGLS_Post-2015_Regional_Consultation_September_2013.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHxi9ebOMO6GLV67bDI_y3xIuuEug, 14.

[36] "Policy Brief #3: Recommendations on Means of Implementation in the New Global Partnership for Sustainable Development," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), December 2013, http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/pdf/UN-NGLS_Brief_for_OWG_on_SDGs-MOI-Dec_2013.pdf; "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), November 8, 2013, http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un-ngls.org%2FIMG%2Fpdf%2FUN-NGLS_Post-2015_Regional_Consultation_September_2013.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHxi9ebOMO6GLV67bDI_y3xIuuEug, 8.

[37] United Nations Secretary General, Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results: Report of the UN Secretary General (New York: United Nations, 2011), 21, accessed July 10, 2014, http://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/undpa/shared/undpa/pdf/SG%20Report%20on%20Preventive%20Diplomacy.pdf.

[38] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 2-3.

[39] Emanuela Maria Cavaleri, "The Post-2015 UN Development Framework: Perspectives for Regional Involvement," *UNU-CRIS Working Papers* (W-2014/12), http://www.cris.unu.edu/fileadmin/workingpapers/W-2014-12.pdf, 15.

[40] "Towards a Continental Results Framework on Women Peace and Security in Africa," *Fifty-Ninth Session of the Commission of the Status of Women* (concept note for Side Event: High-Level Interactive Dialogue), http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/2015/osaa%20concept%20note%20%20%20csw%2059%20%20%20wps%2010%20march%20%20final.pdf, 2.

[41] "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development," *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013, http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf, 22.

[42] "Concept Note: High-level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on 'Strengthening Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and sub-regional organizations'," *UN Trusteeship Council*, February 24, 2015, http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/03/240215_strengthening-cooperation-between-the-un-and-regional-and-sub-regional.pdf.

[43] "A regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda," *United Nations*, June 2013, http://www.regionalcommissions.org/post2015regionalreport.pdf, 23.

[44] *Ibid*, 83.

[45] "Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society," United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS), November 8, 2013, http://www.google.com/url?q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un-ngls.org%2FIMG%2Fpdf%2FUN-NGLS_Post-2015_Regional_Consultation_September_2013.pdf&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHxi9ebOMO6GLV67bDI_y3xIuuEug, 10.

[46] Ramesh Thakur and Luk Van Langenhove, "Enhancing Global Governance Through Regional Integration," Global Governance 12, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 234.

[47] "Nargarkot Statement: South Asia Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Sustainable Development Goals and the Means of Implementation," *UN ESCAP*, August 2014, http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SA%20consultation_Post-2015_Nepal_Outcome%20document_0.pdf.

[48] "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development," *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013, http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf, 58.

[49] "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development," *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013, http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf, 58.

[50] "43rd Pacific Islands Forum Communique: Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration," *Pacific Women in Politics*, August 31, 2012, http://www.pacwip.org/resources/news/2012/43rd-pacific-islands-forum-communique-annex-1-pacific-leaders-gender-equality-declaration.html.

[51] "Concept Note: High-level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on 'Strengthening Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and sub-regional organizations'," *UN Trusteeship Council*, February 24, 2015, http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/03/240215_strengthening-cooperation-between-the-un-and-regional-and-sub-regional.pdf.

[52] "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development," *Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013, http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf, 58.