From vision to reality: the journey of the SDGs

> "Agenda 2030 is regarded as the most inclusive intergovernmental policy process so far in the history of the United Nations. This outcome has been the result of the significant role played by civil society organisations in the actual negotiations and in helping shape the new agenda."
> **Nicholas Alipui et al, page 149**

SEALING THE DEAL

Seventeen goals and 169 targets were adopted by 193 UN member states in September 2015. Rather than maintaining the donor-recipient relationship that defined the MDGs, the new goals promote multi-stakeholder partnerships and are designed to be adapted to domestic realities, capacities and stages of development.

> "Local ownership is about broad-based engagement with a range of people within and outside the target institution(s) – people who should play a key role in diagnosing problems, identifying locally relevant remedies and leading the implementation of solutions."
> **Andrew Rathmell & Arthur Mellors, page 44**

NARROWING AND LOCALISING

The broader national strategy should be followed by a detailed consideration of what is required of the state – in terms of leadership, capacity, resources, partnerships – to achieve each target. This process requires assigning roles and areas of collaboration for each sector of government and identifying relevant existing indicators and sets of data. Responsibilities must also be devolved to local government and communities. For example, Saemaul Undong, a local development initiative in the Republic of Korea, encouraged rural communities to take charge of their own development. This people-centred approach has since been scaled up by the UNDP and exported to countries around the world, such as Bolivia and Uganda. Ultimately, these narrower, localised targets should identify the stepping stones towards the realisation of the SDGs over 15 years, comprising a 'timeline' of delivery.

> "Appropriate policies can harness the trade-investment nexus for the SDGs. Trade and investment policies must be interlinked, and part of a coherent broader set of policies." **Mukhisa Kituyi, page 69**

MAINSTREAMING OR SEPARATING?

While drawing up a more detailed strategy to achieve the SDGs, governments will be required to decide whether to incorporate the targets into existing policies – for example, on energy, social security and education – or to manage SDG implementation through a distinct policy track, with separate funding. According to Independent Research Forum 2015, both options carry risks; "mainstreaming would increase the chance that the SDG targets are internalized, and are more 'owned' by the respective sectors", but would make the goals, and the methods of implementation, more invisible. This lack of visibility could endanger state accountability for the realisation of the SDGs. Countries should share best practice on effective mainstreaming so that they can make an informed decision about how to map the SDGs against existing policy.

The Sustainable Development Goals represent a universal agenda that signals a departure from the aid-centric approach of the MDGs. Unlike their predecessor, the goals require all countries, rich and poor, to realign their development policies to reach the global ambitions of eradicating poverty, ensuring education for all and protecting the environment.

But while the goals are universal in nature, their complexity defies a one-size-fits all approach. The steps outlined below are designed provide states with some broad guidance for realising the 2030 Agenda, and some questions to consider at each stage of implementation

HAVING 'NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS'

> "It is only when the voices of the poor and vulnerable, who have a stake in shaping their future, are heard and heeded that development can become sustainable." **Ela Bhatt, page 18**

Discussion and data collection are required in order to identify where the need is greatest and to ensure no one is left behind. Many countries have set an example by establishing National Councils for Sustainable Development or similar bodies, designed to engage all stakeholders in the process of creating national strategies. This participatory process is necessary to prioritise the goals and targets, determine the level and nature of interventions needed, identify the resources and capacities required, and create a timeline for delivery. Investments must also be made in data collection by capitalising on new technologies and forging public-private partnerships to leverage private sector know-how and resources in this area, as recommended by the UN Data Revolution report: *A world that counts.*

BUILDING A BROAD STRATEGY

> "Many SDGs are interrelated and an integrated approach to address bottlenecks to achieving them will be needed, especially in light of the fact that the SDGs are more holistic in nature." **Mahmoud Mohieldin, page 12**

As the SDGs are interrelated and cannot be achieved in isolation, governments must develop broad strategies that allow different sectors to work together. These will enable countries to close the gap between domestic priorities and the global development framework. At this stage, this should entail identifying key areas for action, promoting coherence and setting clear objectives for effective monitoring and accountability. In Canada, for example, campaigners believe that their existing Federal Sustainable Development Strategy should be broadened out from its current environmental focus to wider aspects of sustainable development.

FINANCING THE SDGs

> "Domestic revenues provide governments with independent resources for investing in development, delivering public services, and increasing state capacity, accountability and responsiveness to their citizens." **Ben Dickinson, page 106**

Successful implementation on the SDGs heavily depends on how governments allocate resources, explore sources of untapped revenue, increase trade opportunities and provide sufficient development assistance to developing countries. Forward-looking companies must also take the lead by tailoring their business models for sustainable development. In his *Synthesis Report*, UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki moon identified tax reform as a major means of increased revenue. The public sector has the capacity to raise significantly more revenue by fighting tax evasion, rectifying inequities and tackling corruption in order to invest formerly wasted resources in sustainable development.

"The new Global Partnership envisages demands for ongoing North–South cooperation, but also goes beyond it to embrace South–South and Triangular cooperation as vital sources of innovation, knowledge, expertise and solutions for tackling development challenges." **Helen Clark, page 52**

SHARING RESOURCES

Regional partnerships provide important opportunities for sharing resources. For example, South-South and triangular development cooperation has the potential to facilitate the exchanging of skills, technical support and best practices. Trade, alongside foreign direct investment, is also a means for distributing new technologies and knowledge. According to the UN Technical Support Team, governments will need to formulate domestic trade policy as part of a coherent policy framework that incorporates environmental and social targets. A more universal and equitable trading system could help generate wider economic opportunities, including increased employment and greater efficiency of resources.

"(A)-dollar-a-day measures of poverty are inadequate. We need multi-dimensional measures of poverty for defining the challenge, framing the required actions and monitoring progress." **Richard Jolly, page 15**

CHOOSING INDICATORS

Progress on the SDGs will depend how it is measured. The UNDP's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) captures not only monetary poverty, but the various, overlapping disadvantages faced by the poor, including poor sanitation, malnutrition, and inadequate quality of housing and education. Governments would benefit from designing national MPIs by selecting indicators of poverty that apply to their specific country contexts. Identifying the country-specific nature of poverty will be an important step towards ensuring marginalised groups are not left behind. The Overseas Development Institute identifies these groups to include children, women from disadvantaged groups, members of the LGBTI community, and the estimated 375 million workers who earn less than $1.25 per day.

"We need a more efficient system to facilitate rapid feedback from the field about which policies and interventions are working and which are not." **Jamie Drummond, page 142**

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The outcome document calls on member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven". These reviews should comprise parliamentary scrutiny, with input from civil society, the private sector, indigenous communities and other stakeholders to ensure that they are both inclusive and accurate. According to Leo Williams, International Coordinator of the Beyond 2015 campaign, governments should develop "a public, inclusive and participatory national review mechanism", which includes members of the public – particularly from the most vulnerable groups – and their representatives. Regions should also develop mechanisms for peer review, says Williams, which should be transparent, and should encompass all SDGs, their targets and means of implementation.

"If we, the fragile development community, are cleaning house for the next generation of development, we need to carry forward the lessons of what has worked and leave behind whatever has not." **Gary Milante, page 114**

LEARNING THE LESSONS

States should not wait until 2030 to learn the lessons from the Sustainable Development Goals. Throughout the implementation process – from strategising and allocating resources, to monitoring and reporting – governments should continuously keep a record of what methods work and what needs to be improved, so that future development agendas can benefit from past experiences.

Compiled by Isabelle Younane, Campaigns & Communications Officer, UNA-UK