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Policy Brief

Sustainable Development Goals: Post-2015

Localizing SDGs in Kenya: Building on the Lessons Learned of the MDGs.
What Role Can the UN System Play in the Process?

May 2017



Acronyms

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| CIDP | County Integrated Development Plans |
| MAF | MDGs Acceleration Framework |
| MAPS | Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MTP | Medium Term Plan |
| NSC | National Steering Committee |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| OWG | Open Working Group |
| PWDs | People with Disabilities |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UNCTs | UN Country Teams |
| UNDS | United Nations Development System |
| UNGA | UN General Assembly |



Introduction

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development-Rio+20-took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 20-22 June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document captioned **‘The Future We Want’** and contained clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of Post-2015 development agenda, building on the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹ The Member States called for the establishment of the Open Working Group (OWG) to elaborate the successor global development agenda to the MDGs. Following series of thematic consultations (11 in all) in 88 countries including 26 in Sub-Saharan Africa led by Governments and the United Nations (UN) with over 7 million people participating in the MY World online survey (Two million from Africa including about 20,000 from Kenya), the OWG finalized and submitted a proposal for a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to the UN General Assembly on 19 July 2014 for consideration.

The proposal of the OWG contained a broad range of sustainable development issues including ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests. On 5 December 2014, the UN General Assembly, at its 68th Session, accepted the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report captioned **‘The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet’**. Member States then agreed that the 17 SDGs proposed by the OWG would be the main basis for the Post-2015 intergovernmental process.

In the UN Secretary-General's Synthesis Report, he expressed the commitment of the United Nations System to continue its reform and make itself “fit for purpose” to respond to the challenges of the emerging Post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs and Post-2015 Development Agenda were adopted by UN Member States in September 2015 at the UN Sustainable Development Summit under the theme, **‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’**. With the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, Member States in both developed and developing countries committed to the localization and implementation of the 17 global goals.

In view of the above, the policy brief speaks of localization and implementation of the SDGs in Kenya, building on the lessons of the MDGs. Thereafter, it speaks of the role the United Nations

¹ The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda



Development System (UNDS) in Kenya can play in supporting the Government at both national and county levels in the moving the process forward through its guiding framework produced by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)-The MAPS-Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support.

MDGs Implementation in Kenya and Lessons Learned

Kenya was one of many developing countries that adopted and implemented the MDGs; though the country was a late starter, as it adopted the MDGs in 2002. In 2004, the Cabinet issued a Memo to have the MDGs mainstreamed in all policy documents at national and local levels, the latter formerly represented by Districts.

The existing evidence shows that the implementation of the MDGs in Kenya required an institutional framework, with the highest-ranking body being the National Steering Committee (NSC), which was intended to provide strategic policy direction and oversight to the implementation of the MDGs. The NSC was to be chaired by the Head of the Public Service and other members to include Permanent Secretaries (today referred to as Principal Secretaries), the head of the United Nations Development System, representatives of bilateral and other multilateral partners, the private sector, civil society organizations, and representatives of research and academic institutions. However, the NSC was never established, which may have denied the MDGs implementation process a high level political profile that was so necessary for effective and successful implementation of the MDGs. This is one of the lessons learned that should be taken forward in the implementation of the SDGs.

Secondly, implementation of the MDGs was done without an advocacy and implementation roadmap and strategy to guide their successful implementation in Kenya. For instance, it took the country ten years to do advocacy work on the MDGs, with just little time for actual implementation. In fact, it was only in June 2014 that the country published its MDGs Acceleration Framework (MAF) with the assistance of the UNDS, even though the MAF process started in 2010. Moreover, the fact that oversight responsibility for the implementation and coordination of the MDGs was left mostly to the MDGs Unit/Secretariat did not create the kind of synergies required of all sectors to effectively support the implementation of the MDGs. The importance of cross sectoral linkages and policy coherence of the SDGs cannot be overemphasized. Overall, a different approach to the implementation of the SDGs would need to be adopted and this must include proper coordination and enhanced synergies across sectors.



Thirdly, the role of the private sector and research and academic institutions was very much overlooked in the implementation of the MDGs. It was only in the latter part of the MDGs that some outreach activities with the private sector and academic institutions started to take off, which had little or no impact on the implementation of the MDGs. With the spirit of leaving no one behind, this approach would be revisited for the SDGs. All relevant actors and players must be on board from the onset of implementation of the SDGs.

Fourthly, the implementation of the MDGs was heavily donor-dependent. In other words, there was high dependence on donor support for the achievement of the MDGs. Kenya did the costing of the MDGs to determine the resource requirement for implementation and achievement of the MDGs. It was realized that it would have taken the country an estimated \$61 billion from 2005 – 2015 to achieve the MDGs. In other words, Kenya needed \$5.1 billion annually to support the achievement of the MDGs. Since this was not factored into the national budget of the country, it was difficult, if not impossible, to successfully support the implementation of the MDGs. Going forward, new sources of funding would need to be identified, with domestic resources making up a lion share of these sources.

Lastly, the issue of timely and reliable data was a major challenge that affected the implementation and effective tracking and reporting on the MDGs. Whilst tremendous effort was made by the Government of Kenya to report on the progress made on MDGs implementation every two years, the absence of timely and reliable sex-disaggregated data for some sectors including poverty, maternal and child health, environment, gender, etc., made it challenging to report effectively on these sectors, thus hampering policy design and implementation. This is an important lesson that must be considered in the implementation of the SDGs in Kenya.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda Process in Kenya

In all the efforts around the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Kenya remained an active player from the inception to this day. Represented by its Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Ambassador Kamau Macharia, Kenya served as Co-chair of the OWG with Hungary, represented by its Permanent Representative, Csaba Körösi. Both Ambassadors played an important role in overseeing the articulation of the Post-2015 development agenda.

Unlike the formulation process of the MDGs, the formulation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda was global, national, regional, local and country-specific. The entire process was participatory and consultative and involved so many actors including governments, the private



sector, civil society, women and youth groups, persons with disabilities, communities and grassroots organizations.

At the home front, the Government of Kenya, with the support of the UNDS (under the technical leadership of UNDP) and other development partners, undertook several consultations at the national, local and community levels. These consultations culminated into a Position Paper in which five strategic priority areas (Agriculture and food security; employment and enterprise; health; universal education; and gender and environment) based on the development context of Kenya were identified. The Position Paper formed part of the inputs to the Post-2015 development agenda.

Further, close to 20,000 Kenyans participated in the MY World Survey, which was commissioned by the United Nations to determine what matters most to people and the kind of future they would want for themselves and generations unborn.

After extensive global consultation through the MY World Survey, several national consultations in over 86 countries and thematic consultation on 11 topics including conflict, violence and disaster; education; energy; environmental sustainability; food security and nutrition; health; addressing inequalities; water and population dynamics, UN Member States on 25 September, 2015 endorsed 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Later, the UN Statistical Commission agreed on 230 SDG indicators proposed by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators in March 2016. The localization and implementation of the SDGs has already commenced in many countries including Kenya.

Localizing and Implementing the SDGs in Kenya

Kenya like many developing countries has established that local dimension of development is increasingly linked with global and national concerns, an enabling framework for promoting sustainable development. Therefore, agreed upon global development frameworks must be localized to fit within the national and local development contexts. Such would need to be the case with the SDGs. They would need to be localized and implemented at both national and county levels in Kenya.

Therefore, the achievement of the SDGs would depend highly on strong national and local actions and leadership, embedded in a coordinated and effective governance system at all levels. In other words, localization and mainstreaming is critical to the successful implementation of SDGs. This



entails the need to identify specific mechanisms, tools, and processes to effectively translate the SDGs at the national and local levels for effective implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Further, to ensure effective implementation of the SDGs, there is a need to forge strong strategic partnerships amongst all stakeholders to ensure synergies with other relevant programmes and interventions. The extent of “buy-in” by Government at both national and county levels and other stakeholders’ support and participation in SDG initiatives will be very important for the success of the SDGs.

To successfully implement the SDGs, the following factors must therefore be considered:

- i. The institutional delivery mechanism must be established and should reflect the diversity, scope and cross-sectoral linkages of the SDGs;
- ii. A clear vision and roadmap as well as SDGs Acceleration Framework must be developed, led by strong national and local ownership, built on partnership to exploit the complementarities of other on-going and planned initiatives between Government, development partners, private sector, UNDS, foundations and philanthropic organizations, youth, People with Disabilities and civil society among others;
- iii. Contextualization of the SDGs to make them appropriate to national and county contexts. This will require prioritizing the SDGs for implementation, with focus on specific challenges facing each county/region in Kenya; and
- iv. Mobilizing resources for the implementation of the SDGs will be quite important to their success.

Key to financing the SDGs, there is need to consider a departure from donor-dependent support in favour of mobilizing domestic resources, anchored on inclusive and sustained economic growth and supported by an enabling macroeconomic environment. This was one of the key messages coming from the Addis Ababa 2015 Development Finance Conference. In this regard, Government of Kenya would need to prioritize resource mobilization and effective utilization of domestic resources. This should include:

- i. Broadening the tax base to increase fiscal space and make tax collection and utilization more efficient;
- ii. Domestic and international private business and finance. This will entail creating the enabling environment for the private sector to grow the economy, hence contributing



substantially to employment creation for youth and women and other vulnerable groups in society;

- iii. International public finance. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) continues to remain a major source of development finance. Hence forging strategic multilateral and bilateral development cooperation will continue to be important for funding the SDGs;
- iv. International trade. This will entail developing the export capacity of the Kenyan economy through economic diversification;
- v. Debt and debt sustainability. The Government at both national and county levels should ensure that funds borrowed from domestic and international partners are utilized on projects that will support economic growth and development; and
- vi. A focus on generating timely and reliable sex-disaggregated data will be critical for the successful implementation, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. In so doing, it will be important to ensure that the next generation of Medium Term Plan (MTP) and County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP) are aligned to the SDGs with well-defined indicators.

Role of the UNDS in the Implementation of the SDGs

At the global level, the role of the United Nations was more facilitative in the regional and global consultations on the Post-2015 development agenda. Now that Member States have endorsed 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 230 indicators, the UNDS has the responsibility of supporting Member States to localize and mainstream the SDGs in their national and sub-national development plans, strategies and policies.

To this effect, the UNDG has developed an interim reference guide for UN Country Teams (UNCTs). The Interim Reference Guide is referred to as Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support (MAPS). This is the tool available to all UNCTs to support Member States in the implementation of the SDGs.

With the available tool, the UNCT in Kenya through its UN SDGs Technical Working Group² is supporting the Government of Kenya at both national and county levels in the localization and implementation of the SDGs by focusing on five fundamental areas: its convening role, capacity

² UN SDGs Technical Working Group (TWG) was established by the UNCT in Kenya in 2015 to support the Government of Kenya at both national and county levels in the localization and implementation of the SDGs in a coordinated manner. The Group operates under the technical leadership of UNDP, which presently chairs the Group with UNICEF serving as Deputy.



development role, normative role, communications and advocacy role and principles of engagement focus.

Convening Role-Participation and inclusion

The UNCT should continue to support enhanced broad-based engagement on the localization of the SDGs. This should be done by facilitating a participatory approach to national and sub-national planning processes, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting on development results. Some of the required actions should include:

- Supporting the participation of key stakeholders in the planning of the third Medium Term Plan and County Integrated Development Plans, particularly ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders including CSOs, PWDs, the private sector, grassroots-level communities; development partners, etc.;
- Supporting enhanced engagement of parliamentarians in the localization and implementation of the SDGs. This will help in ensuring that the voices of the people are heard.

Capacity development role— Data and evidence

The UNCT should continue to support national and county governments as they invest in data generation and effective monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Statistical evidence, most particularly at the grassroots level, can highlight existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, which can help to empower rights-holders to claim their rights. In addition, it can also enable them to recognize their circumstances and encourage their participation in national and local development planning processes. When a marginalized group of rights-holders is sensitized, they are empowered to demand decentralized decision-making and more equitable allocation of domestic resources. Some specific actions that must be undertaken by the UNCT in Kenya to support this endeavor are:

- Supporting the strengthening of national statistical system;
- Promoting localization of national development indicators through a framework of accountability based on clear goals and operational time-bound targets that can be measured at sub-national level, with the participation of marginalized groups;
- Supporting capacity building of all relevant actors at national and county levels; and
- Supporting advocacy relative to alignment of national development plans with the SDGs, to ensure harmonization of monitoring systems.



Normative role

The UN Country Team in Kenya has an important role to play in the normative work across the issues, objectives and policies that underpin sustainable development. Most national governments and even the UNDS work in silos, trying to tackle development challenges by themselves. Building on the lessons learned from the MDGs, this had negative impact on addressing the mutually reinforcing factors required to address MDGs, and would likewise hinder progress towards the SDGs if similar path is pursued. Development is everybody's business, hence forging collective action and building strategic partnerships can help to achieve tremendous development results.

Therefore, the following actions will need to be adopted by the UNCT to provide quality technical and programme support to the Government of Kenya in achieving the SDGs at both national and county levels:

- Fostering innovation and development of independent thought and policy options in line with international conventions and treaties;
- Model how to move away from the sectoral (silo) approach of planning towards a goal-based approach.

Communication and advocacy role

Communication and advocacy will be key in the implementation of the SDGs to ensure that all relevant stakeholders play their part in the implementation of the global agenda. Lessons learned from the MDGs is that about 10 years were used for advocacy and sensitization on the MDGs. Even at that, not many Kenyans are familiar with the MDGs. In this regard, the support of the UNCT in this area must be short-term but very strategic and impactful, making sure all Kenyans know what the SDGs are all about and are aware of their role in the implementation of the SDGs. In so doing, support should be provided to the Government of Kenya to formulate an elaborate communication and advocacy strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are knowledgeable about the SDGs.

Principles of engagement focus

The support of the UNCT in Kenya on the SDGs should be guided by the following principles of engagement:

- i. National and local ownership and leadership;



- ii. Inclusive and participatory development approach;
- iii. Leaving no one behind;
- iv. Human rights based approach; and
- v. Integrated and conflict-sensitive approach.

Conclusion

Indeed, much can be learned from the era of MDGs implementation in Kenya, which the Government of Kenya formally adopted in 2002. The lessons, which have been articulated in this policy brief, could be very helpful in informing the localization and effective implementation of the SDGs in Kenya. The UNDS in collaboration with other development partners does have an important role to play in the process. Using the interim guide developed by the UNDG, the MAPS, coupled with the formation of the UN SDGs TWG, the UNCT is strategically positioned to support Government at both national and county levels to successfully localize and mainstream the SDGs in its third MTP and 47 CIDPs, respectively. However, it would need to be guided by the five areas of focus and five principles of engagement outlined in this policy brief.

This policy brief is an output of the Strategic Policy Advisory Unit (SPAU) in the UNDP Kenya Country Office.

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