



Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD) Asia Development Alliance (ADA)

Bangkok, 24 to 25 Feb. 2017

Statement on the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development / Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia

1. We, over 30 participants of the regional workshop on CSO Engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Voluntary National Reporting (VNR), held in Bangkok from 24 to 25 of February 2017, jointly organized by the Asia Development Alliance (ADA) and Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD);
2. Having discussed the global and regional processes of SDG implementation by the UN and CSOs, and assessed the CSO engagement with the government on SDG implementation in 11 countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, in particular the preparation for the VNR of the HLPF;
3. Having observed the following major findings on CSO engagements on SDG implementation at the national level:

Good CSO Practices

- 1) Various types of CSOs such as human rights groups, social movements, development NGOs, environmental groups, grassroots organizations and others are using the SDGs as a framework to come together in a national platform to pursue the SDGs and monitor and review its implementation, such as the CSO-SDG Alliance in Malaysia as initiated by the Society for the Promotion of Human Rights and the CSO Coalition on SDGs in Indonesia. In others, CSOs even lead the formation of loose coalitions working on the SDGs to include business, government, academic and media organizations, such as the ZeroExtremePoverty2030 Movement in the Philippines.
- 2) CSOs are able to participate in the government's national processes and committees on the SDGs, providing researches and improving government data, such as in Malaysia and Indonesia. Another example is that of the Japan NPO Center, which provided technical assistance to the national government in facilitating its SDG Promotion Roundtable Discussions that involved representatives from various stakeholders.
- 3) It is more effective to engage with the bureaucracy and local governments on the SDGs, especially if the national government is indifferent to CSOs, such as in the Philippines.

- 4) Regional CSO mechanisms have been established for CSO participation such as the ADA, APSD, Asia Pacific CSO Regional Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA) and others.
- 5) Asian CSOs have participated in the creation of global CSO platforms such as Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network on SDG 16 and Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD). There are helpful platforms for learning exchange and policy advocacy at the national, regional and global levels.

Gaps in the implementation of the SDGs at the national level :

- 1) Civic space is increasingly shrinking. The situation is particularly difficult for CSOs working on human rights, justice and peace, and environmental issues in many countries, particularly in Pakistan, but also in international organizations both at the regional and global levels. Transparency and access to information, data and timelines are essential to ensure the active, inclusive and meaningful participation of CSOs and other stakeholders to the implementation of the SDGs, including national reporting.
- 2) National efforts for implementation should match the level of ambition of the 2030 Agenda. The governments' SDG targets are not ambitious enough and prioritize only those which can be easily reached or where data is available. The 2030 Agenda is indivisible and integrated and cannot be delivered without recognizing the interdependence of the goals.
- 3) Availability of government data for the indicators is generally poor, particularly for the environmental dimension. The country cases cited that there are either no mechanisms to collect relevant SDG data, or that government data is either interpreted selectively, not disaggregated by age, sex, and disabilities, or - such as in the case of Pakistan - manipulated to report situations positively. There should be mechanisms for CSOs' data and researches, particularly for thematic areas, to inform government data.
- 4) The governments' voluntary reports the HLPF to UN are often not rigorous enough. They should not replace national and local accountabilities. Since Asia and Pacific countries are diverse, it is important to also encourage local SDG reports using additional indicators that are more relevant to their local context and interests. National governments must invest in building and adapting the institutional capacity required for national reporting systematically and not just during the years they will be presenting their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the global level.
- 5) At the grassroots where the monitoring and review of the SDGs matter most, awareness and participation are very limited. SDG materials are either mostly in English, too technical or not localized to their contexts. The national level reviews and consultations should be made accessible to the contribution of every citizen; governments should promote the development and distribution of accessible information to increase opportunities of participation.
- 6) Implementation of the SDGs will require significant resources; it is important to ensure that national policies, legislations and budgets, as well as the priorities of development finance institutions align with the SDGs.
- 7) Governments' processes for the SDG implementation, particularly on targets prioritization, monitoring and financing, are not inclusive, leaving behind the needs of the most vulnerable sectors.

4. Agree on the following recommendations and actions:

Recommendations to Governments and International Organizations in Asia and beyond

- 1) Ensure free, inclusive active and meaningful participation of CSOs and grassroots organizations directly representing marginalized and vulnerable sectors in the preparation of VNR at HLPF at the national, regional and international level,
- 2) Address shrinking civic space and enabling environment for CSO engagement for SDGs as top priority at the national, regional and international level such as UN HLPF,
- 3) Identify clear mechanisms within the HLPF and the UN Regional Commission for CSOs and other stakeholders reporting and support the creation of an online depository of CSO alternative reports and outcomes of CSO side events for public communication and outreach, to enable their meaningful contribution,
- 4) Recognize the universal, integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs and that they can be achieved only through an integrated approach. Governments must translate the integration principle into concrete actions, addressing the issue of policy integration and coherence.
- 5) Consider SDG 10 on equality as a cross-cutting issue which need to be included in all VNR report to the UN HLPF,
- 6) Consider SDG 16 as a means of implementation which need to be reviewed annually together with thematic priorities at UN HLPF like SDG 17,
- 7) Support and ensure corporate accountability in promoting public, public-private and civil society partnerships (Target 17.17) at the national and international level taking into account the para. 67 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC),
- 8) Develop concrete human rights-based accountability mechanism by linking SDG monitoring to the existing UN human rights monitoring bodies such as human rights treaty monitoring bodies and special procedures and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council.
- 9) Ensure that national development cooperation agencies in Asia such as Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) work in partnership with national, regional and international CSOs for effective implementation of SDGs specially goal 10, 16 and 17,
- 10) Linking SDG monitoring to regional organizations in Asia such as ASEAN and SAARC to ensure policy and institutional coherence at all levels (Target 17.13-15),
- 11) Engage with other international organizations, processes and multilateral institutions such as G7, G20, ASEAN, APEC, BRICS, ADB, New Development Bank (NDB), Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Green Climate Fund (GCF), etc. to ensure their contribution to the full implementation of SDGs.

Call to Action and Strategic Guidelines for CSOs engagement on SDGs in Asia and beyond

- 1) Highlight shrinking civic space and enabling environment for CSO engagement for SDGs in CSO policy advocacy and campaign,
- 2) Continue to improve collaboration coordination among CSOs to overcome silos and fragmentation, and ensure an integrated approach
- 3) Engage with national development cooperation agencies in Asia such as JICA and KOICA for effective implementation of SDGs especially goal 10, 16 and 17,
- 4) Initiate an independent monitoring report on SDGs, especially SDG 10 and 16 with relevant indicators,
- 5) Highlight Target 4.7 on global citizenship education as a means of public awareness-building and outreach,
- 6) Continue to build capacities of CSOs especially among youth on policy engagement and monitoring within and among the countries,
- 7) Continue to maintain independence and autonomy as CSO while engaging meaningfully critically and constructively with other stake-holders, governments and international organizations like the UN
- 8) Engage more strategically with sub-national governments in implementation and monitoring of SDG to promote bottom-up approach in SDG implementation within the country,
- 9) Engage with governments and international organizations and processes or multi-lateral institutions such as G7, G20, ASEAN, APEC, ADB, World Bank, NDB, AIIB, etc. to ensure policy and institutional coherence for SDGs,
- 10) Engage with relevant CSOs and their networks to ensure the effective mainstreaming of SDGs in regional organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC, etc.

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1. ACT Alliance Asia
2. Asia Democracy Alliance (ADA)
3. Asia Democracy Network (ADN)
4. Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)
5. Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) Asia
6. World Vision East Asia