



UN Major Group for Children and Youth's vision & priorities for delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda

An Updated Position Paper for the SD 2015 Programme: "Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process"

March 2015

Introduction

This position paper details the UN Major Group for Children and Youth's vision and priorities--including themes, goals, targets and indicators--for addressing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the wider post-2015 development agenda and the growing role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The vision of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) is a world that upholds human rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and monitors progress toward sustainable development. Already, children and youth are designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating sustainable development policies. **We strongly advocate for the meaningful participation of children, adolescents and youth at all levels--locally to internationally--in decision-making on sustainable development policies.**

In order to achieve this, the MGCY aims to ensure effective coordination of children, adolescents and youth participation in United Nations processes related to sustainable development and other allied processes. We strive to ensure diversity and inclusion of as many children, adolescents and youth as possible, keeping the process open and taking into account their representative demographic factors including, but not limited to: region, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, marginalised groups and type of organisation.

Summary

As we move into the final phases of the post-2015 negotiations and discussions on the means of implementation, financing for development, global and national level indicators, and accountability frameworks for the Sustainable Development Goals, these are the MGCY updated priorities.

Overall, the MGCY categorises its priorities for the new development agenda - and specifically the SDGs - into "process" and "themes". **In terms of "process," this new agenda can only have legitimacy if it gives renewed agency to young people at all stages of the development process. This includes policy design, implementation, monitoring and reviewing.**

In addition, the content of the agenda will have to operationalise a new paradigm that rebalances the three dimensions of sustainable development and reorients the economy to: (1) serve the interests of people and the planet by moving beyond



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the blind growth model, (2) foster global cooperation in development, (3) commit to normalizing equality among gender identities and sexual orientations in society. These three dimensions reinforce our responsibility as youth advocates to create sustainable development policies that are universal, feasible, and rights-based.

In terms of “themes,” this position paper covers the MGCY’s priority issues, very briefly:

- Youth empowerment, participation, capacity building, education, employment and entrepreneurship;
- Gender equality, gender equity and sexual and reproductive health & rights;
- Climate change, planetary boundaries and sustainable consumption & production;
- Health and wellbeing, poverty, food sovereignty and the human right to water;
- Means of implementation and financing sustainable development

Our position *(also see section on Goals and Targets)*

MGCY’s ambitions & recommendations for the post-2015 framework on these themes, based on consultations, participation, and consensus are as follows:

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, PARTICIPATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **Mechanisms for youth participation in policy design, implementation, monitoring, review and accountability, at all levels, local to global.** This should be reflected in the goals, namely goal 16 and in particular maintaining target 16.7 “Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”. Youth participation also needs to be ensured in the modalities of the High Level Political Forum, (HLPF) and national level accountability frameworks for post-2015.
- **Recognition and promotion of quality formal, informal and non-formal education along with peer learning and indigenous knowledge - through a right to education.** For the new agenda to be effectively implemented, young people will need to possess the relevant skills, knowledge and support regarding climate change & human rights, maintaining Goal 4 and in particular target 4.7.
- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for all young people in and out of school.** Any framework will be incomplete without ensuring comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for young people. Over 50 governments spoke up in support of CSE during OWG 8. Governments have committed to providing “evidence-based comprehensive education on human sexuality” as recently at CSW 58 and CPD 47.
- **Universal access to education. A person’s ability to seek any type of education, in environments free of violence, cannot be linked to any aspect of their demography.** These criteria include primarily: socioeconomic position, gender identity, or any other status including race, ethnicity, religious or sectarian affiliation, ability, or sexual orientation and so must be delivered free of cost to all. We need to increase the equitable access to tertiary education and tackle the huge challenges for youth created by the increase of tuition fees and exponential increase of student debt, that is blocking the ability for students to access this level of education without fear of insurmountable debts to individuals and their families.
- **Reduce youth unemployment and its adverse effects through youth guarantees, paid internships, entrepreneurship ecosystems and robust social protection.** Focus should also be placed on encouraging high growth entrepreneurial firms and young entrepreneurs, to employ more youth, women & minority groups.



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- **Success should be measured with regards to the number of NEETS (youth not in education, employment and training) amongst the youth population.** During this period young people must also be safeguarded through robust social protection schemes that enable them to be productive members of society and afford them sustainable livelihoods.

GENDER EQUALITY, GENDER EQUITY, AND SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS

- **Every woman, throughout her life, must have access to a comprehensive, accessible, and integrated package of sexual and reproductive health services that are of high quality and age appropriate, that fully respect and protect her sexual and reproductive rights.** It is imperative that a stand alone target on achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights is included in a goal on health as for young people (in particular young women) it is one of our largest health issues.
- **The agenda must be inclusive of young diverse people of sexual orientation and gender identities and expressions.** Young people with minority gender identities are more than just objects of a new development agenda – they are a source of potential and an untapped asset. They are innovators, agents of change, leaders, and above all subject of rights.
- **Religion, culture or tradition should never be accepted as a justification for the denial of a human right or for violent practices, especially those committed against women and girls.** These include restrictions to physical, sexual, and psychological violence, and harmful practices both in private and public spaces including acid attacks, FGM, female infanticide and child, early and forced marriage and street harassment.
- **Women and girls must have physical and mental autonomy over decisions regarding their own body in all aspects of their life course.** To achieve equality, women and girls must be free to decide all matters related to their sexuality and reproduction free from coercion, discrimination, or violence. Without this, women cannot fully exercise their human rights, nor can they take equal advantage of opportunities for education, employment, entrepreneurship and participation in social and political spheres.
- **This shift towards gender equality and equity must be facilitated by ensuring both a stand-alone goal on gender equality which looks to transform the root causes of discrimination, and by mainstreaming gender throughout the new framework.** A stand-alone goal on gender equality should have specific targets on gender-based violence in both public and private domain, economic empowerment, equality in decision-making, as well as mainstreaming gender throughout the framework.

CLIMATE CHANGE, PLANETARY BOUNDARIES & SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Children and young people demand we take action to prevent and mitigate climate change and strengthen adaptation measures, notably by improving disaster risk reduction mechanisms. Strengthen volunteer schemes at the national level with youth as partners in implementing all climate change and biodiversity activities from inception to conclusion. Eliminating harmful fossil fuel subsidies and ensuring all development finance is made climate proof are further steps along this path.

- **Staying within planetary boundaries is a central component of reorienting the economy.** The goal is social sustainability and development within our planetary boundaries. An investment regime needs to reallocate these stranded resources to sustainable and regenerative avenues, along with the full implementation of the “polluter pays” principle.



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- **Decouple economic activity from environmental degradation, ecological footprint and exploitation of natural resources.** We call for a new paradigm that views the economy as a subset of the environment, not the other way around. In addition to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), we highlight SASB (Sustainability Accounting Standards Boards), and EP&L (Environmental Profit and Loss) methodology that takes a “cradle to grave” approach in studying the supply chain of a business to articulate its environmental impact and ecological footprint. The re-use of resources is essential and the implementation of recycling policies and campaigns is essential to achieve this goal.
- **Include young people in the creation of new green technologies and jobs.** The agenda needs to enable the take-up and diffusion of green technology. This should include the strengthening of national policymakers’ capacity with the inclusion of indigenous and youth to design effective innovative policy for green technology.
- **Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns will be crucial to the realisation of sustainable development.** Implementation of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes in support of national and regional programmes is needed, through strong intersectoral partnerships to accelerate the shift towards SCP.

HEALTH & WELLBEING, POVERTY, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY & HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

The effective provision of health care to populations cannot be achieved without sustainable and adapted systems in place. The SDGs need to ensure that a substantial effort is made to achieve quality Universal Health Coverage across all and within nations, giving extra support to those health systems most underdeveloped, to achieve health equity and to reduce health inequalities, and giving attention to the social determinants of health.

- **Ending extreme poverty alone is not enough. Instead the focus should be to end ‘Multidimensional Poverty’ for all people of all ages and abilities everywhere.** The international community should specifically monitor and set targets for reducing inequalities of economic, social and environmental outcomes within and between countries - maintaining Goal 10.
- **It is important to recognize and realize the ‘Human Right to Water and Sanitation’ as agreed in General Assembly Resolution 64/292.** Restriction of access to clean water and sanitation represents a clear infringement on the dignity and rights of people across the world.
- **The international community needs to recognise and implement communities’ right to ‘Food Sovereignty.’** This should be achieved through sustainable agriculture and responsible trade policies that take into account the needs and rights of the farmers. We also need to promote actions that would allow the reduction of food waste by communities and industries.
- **Healthcare systems must be patient centered and policies must be created in order to empower the communities in decisions related to their health.** In order to achieve goal 3, it is essential to improve health literacy and interconnect education programs (early childhood, primary and secondary education level) with the health needs of the population. It is also fundamental to recognize the role of prevention and health promotion in order to reduce the prevalence and the burden of disease and to prioritize in the investment of Primary Health Care and coverage. Healthcare professionals must be educated taking this as a core concept and to be educated in interdisciplinary scenarios in order to improve the efficiency of their healthcare and improve patient safety.



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- **Funding to tackle non-communicable diseases (in addition to Mental Health) are important determinants of population wellbeing.** These are problems for high and low income countries alike and should be afforded appropriate funds to tackle from a primary and secondary prevention perspective through effective public health campaigns and ensuring appropriate funding in national health budgets.
- **Although progress has been made, a substantial effort must be made to stop the spread of HIV, Malaria, Tuberculosis and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).** In support of proposed Target 3.b, access to drugs and medications for communicable diseases (especially NTD's) should not be impeded by exploitative patent laws but instead encouraged through responsible licensing policies. Work towards financing innovation and drug development should be further expanded at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015.
- **Establish an Intergovernmental body to fight antimicrobial resistance and encourage new innovations in antibiotic development.** We need a new independent body that will not only monitor the spread of antimicrobial resistance, but also drive and direct efforts to contain it.
- **Surgical interventions and strategies should become an integrated part of health programs and present in all primary health care strategies.** Work towards this should be included in Member States National Action Plans for the SDGs and involve the education of surgical officers and research into appropriate equipment provision.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION & FINANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- **The focus for free trade agreement stakeholders should be to promote a universal, rules-based, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system.** International Investor state dispute mechanisms must be condemned as they violate national sovereignty and threaten environmental and social protection. Free trade agreements require targets within the development agenda for fair market access for populations most lagging in the proposed targets of the SDGs (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, Small hold farmers, pastoralists, indigenous people). For financing to be sustainable, there is also a need for the implementation and effective coordination of partnerships that breach the North-South and South-South divide.
- **Work must be done to close International Tax Havens and thus reduce the existence of illicit financial flows.** Closing tax havens can generate additional trillions of dollars currently unaccounted for. Ignoring this element of the picture while talking about a comprehensive financing strategy will be a disservice to the mandate of the FFD process and a disservice to its beneficiaries. Furthermore, investment regimes must be equipped to identify and disinvest from stranded assets (most notably fossil fuels).
- **A Debt Jubilee should be considered and acted upon for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).** The regulation and implementation of development programs specific to finance require capital investments that place developing countries at a distinct disadvantage when compared to their peers.
- **Environmental Externalities represent a huge barrier to sustainable development and so should be taxed and discouraged.** These costs erode the natural resource base of the global economy (something that paragraph 3 of the Chapeau of the OWG report talks about protecting). Accounting for this not only creates necessary liquidity for re-allocation, but will also establish the basis for allocation of resources towards investing in initiatives. Initiatives such as Ecological Risk Integration to Sovereign Credit need to be mainstreamed.
- **It is absolutely necessary that developed countries implement fully agreed ODA targets of .7% of GNI on an agreed timeline, of which 50% to least-developed countries on an agreed timeline, ensuring transparency and accountability. We also encourage BRIC countries to allocate .3% of GNI as ODA.** A portion of ODA flows should focus on building capacity for greater domestic resource mobilization alongside an impact assessment of the entire ODA portfolio that takes into account its impact on the three pillars of sustainable development



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- **Countries should work towards reducing military spending and reallocating the saved funds to the SDGs.** Given the necessity of a peaceful environment in enabling sustainable development and the recommendation of the UN Secretary General to "use innovative ways to raise additional resources to fund SDGs", military budgets should be reassessed and reduced
- **Ecological tax reform should be combined with progressive taxation to ensure equity.** The realistic implementation of the long talked about Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) is also important. A way to achieve this could be to make the UN Committee of Experts on International Tax Cooperation an Intergovernmental Body.

Goals and Targets

The following section compares the priorities of UN MGCY to the text in the OWG report. [Additions](#) and [Deletions](#) represent what changes to the current wording of the SDGs would be needed to reflect our priorities and ambitions. (Sections in brackets indicate either the rationale or the implication of this alteration has on the corresponding indicator):

- **Amend 1.1:** by 2030, eradicate extreme [multidimensional](#) poverty for all people everywhere ~~currently estimated at less than \$1.25 a day in low income countries.~~ (Indicator should use the Multidimensional poverty index).
- **Amend 2.1:** By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round, [through the universal recognition of the right to food and reduction of food waste, the recognition of food sovereignty as central to the efforts to end hunger globally.](#)
- **Add 3.7:** [By 2030, achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health information, education, services and commodities, particularly for adolescents and youth.](#) (There is currently no target on SRHR)
- **Add under Goal 4:** [Increased support for alternative forms of education, like non-formal and informal education, experiential entrepreneurship education, online resources, and peer teaching, including youth-led initiatives and indigenous knowledge that promote community based grassroots learning.](#) (Currently no mention of informal and non-formal education in Goal)
- **Add under Goal 4:** [Achieve universal access to comprehensive sexuality education \(CSE\) for all young people, in and out of school](#) (currently no mention of comprehensive sex education in Goal 4)
- **Amend 5.6:** Ensure the [respect, promotion and protection](#) of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and ~~reproductive rights for all, specially young women and girls as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences~~
- **Amend Goal 6-** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all [and realise the human right to water and sanitation](#) (There is no mention of human right to water and sanitation despite this had previously been agreed by the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292)
- **Add under Goal 7:** [By 2030 phase out all existing fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption and undermine sustainable development](#) (There is currently no mention of fossil fuel subsidies despite being mentioned in the Secretary General SE4ALL initiative)



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- **Amend Goal 8 Title:** Ensure full and productive employment, entrepreneurship and decent work for all, promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic, social and human growth-development, within planetary boundaries full and productive employment and decent work for all *(There is no mention of planetary boundaries despite being mentioned in the SG Synthesis Report)*
- **Amend 8.1:** Sustain ~~per capita economic growth~~ a Human Development (HDI) increase of at least x% per annum in accordance with national circumstances and promote in particular strong ~~economic growth-HDI increase~~ in the least-developed countries, and aggregate it against ecological footprint- (happy planet index). *(The concept of planetary boundaries is measured by ecological footprint)*.
- **Amend 8.4:** Improve progressively through 2030 global resource efficiency through sustainable consumption and production, and ~~endeavour to~~ decouple economic growth activity from environmental degradation and ecological footprint. ~~In accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production with developed countries taking the lead~~
- **Add under Goal 10-** Monitor the trends in and report on, the Gini coefficient of countries with an aim to reduce it significantly.
- **Amend 11.1-** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums through fully implementing the human right to adequate housing
- **Amend 11.3:** By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and ~~capacity~~ ensure mechanisms for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning, budgeting, governance and management in all countries
- **Amend 11.5:** By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and decrease by [x] per cent the economic, social and environmental losses ~~relative to gross domestic product~~ caused by disasters, including water- related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- **Amend 11.6:** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita and absolute environmental impact of cities and make urbanization neutral to ecosystem degradation, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- **Bring back 12.2 from Rev 1:** By 2030 achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources to enhance human welfare within the carrying capacity of ecosystems
- **Amend 16.7:** by 2030 increase inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels, enabling participation of all, especially young people and the most marginalized
- **With regards to Target 11.2-** We also feel that any indicators need to be sensitive to definitions of “Affordable” and “accessible” in line with MGCY consensus

Cross-cutting Issues

- We call for child & youth participation in decision making and policy design, implementation and accountability frameworks for the SDGs. Half the world is under 25 years old - for the SDGs to be effective, children & young people must be meaningfully involved in all stages of policy and decision-making that affects them and their communities. This will require capacity building and training for young people and duty-bearers and appropriate funding.
- Gender equality & gender equity need to be mainstreamed throughout all elements of the SDGs, the Goals and Targets, Indicators, the Means of Implementation, financing, and accountability mechanisms.



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- We call for the SDGs and post-2015 framework to be compared and made consistent with existing human rights agreements & commitments.
- Health is a cross cutting issue in human wellbeing and sustainable development. Social determinants of health should be considered across the SDGs.
- Gender & Data disaggregation. We call for data disaggregation by gender, and by age in five-year intervals, which is crucial to understand key demographics such as adolescent girls and early childhood. Investing in resources and capacity building for disaggregating data is essential to ensure we have the right data to make informed decisions for a sustainable future.

Finally, the post 2015 framework must promote synergy with the MDGs, allowing work on them to be completed alongside achieving the SDGs. Consideration must therefore be taken in finding areas of overlap between trying to accomplish both sets of goals.

Indicators, Monitoring and Evaluation

- **First and foremost, MGCY advocates that participation, implementation and accountability are at the core of HLPF implemented through the adoption of a hybrid “AMR-UPR+” mechanism.**¹ We also welcome the implementation of a High Commissioner for Future Generations to work alongside and support the HLPF with a strong mandate for the HLPF to directly report to the General Assembly which would add further legitimacy, trust and transparency to the HLPF.
- **Monitoring mechanisms must be implemented by all relevant stakeholders to be effective and have youth-led involvement at its core.** At the moment it is all too easy for girls and young women to slip through the cracks of information monitoring, and for nations to meet targets even whilst ignoring their needs. This can be addressed by institutionalised avenues for youth led shadow reporting- monitoring, evaluation and data collection throughout the year and not just the specific HLPF days in New York.
- **Financing mechanisms used for the SDGs must have fair and robust processes for reporting and monitoring.** More commercial activity will have to be brought under comprehensive integrated reporting, that is not just voluntary but mandatory, both for investment and trade to help ensure proper accountability. We also ask that any framework that is appropriating ODA allocation and effectiveness must include community and specifically youth participation mechanisms. In our view participatory budgeting and allocation, along with monitoring and evaluation will improve outcomes.
- **Indicators selected should qualify and be sensitive to the priorities that were not directly reflected in the goals and targets.** In data monitoring, both **direct** and **indirect** references to children and youth will need to be elaborated by disaggregated data by detailed age ranges and by gender. The following targets are the ones that this applies to (colour coded for clarity):
 - Goal 1- **Target 1.2**
 - Goal 2- **Target 2.2**
 - **Goal 3- Target 3.3**
 - Goal 4- **Target 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6. Target 4.3, 4.7**

¹ AMR-UPR denotes a combination of two separate mechanisms by which member states can be held to account for action towards the SDGs. AMR- Annual ministerial review (the mechanism used for the MDGs). UPR- Universal Periodic Review (a mechanism relating to upholding human rights obligations by UN member states).



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- Goal 5- Target 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.c. Target 5.3, 5.6
- Goal 6- Target 6.2
- Goal 8- Target 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.b
- Goal 10- Target 10.2
- Goal 11- Target 11.1, 11.2, Target 11.2, 11.7
- Goal 13- Target 13.b
- Goal 16- Target 16.2, Target 16.7
- Goal 17- Target 17.18

- **Finally, the indicator framework must build on existing data but also go beyond just statistics to increase capacity building across stakeholders.** The indicators should not be politically negotiated and remain open after the UN statistical commission meeting in 2016. The indicator framework should have strong civil society contribution to build capacity in data generation and analysis: at a global level towards the work of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG-SDGs); and at a national level to work with Government and National Statistical offices. The framework will need to also go beyond data, using perception-based indicators to truly capture progress being made. See recent [MGCY position on Indicators](#) for more detail.

Next Steps

The MGCY, alongside other international youth organisations, deserves to have a position and voice at key decision making mechanisms with regards to the SDGs and their governance, implementation and review. We should be able to hold member states and UN agencies to account with regards to the messages we have outlined here as well as provide mechanisms for young people to be involved.

The MGCY is a strong network of committed young people across the world who are ready to take on the challenges and opportunities that the SDGs will present. All position papers and statements presented to UN stakeholder meetings and negotiations by MGCY are the summation of work carried out by young people of various gender identities, ages and races reflecting our core message of empowerment and participation in this global process. We will continue to do this at every available opportunity.



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Conclusion

The post-2015 process has been through a long series of negotiations that has allowed us to arrive at a set of SDGs that encompass a wide variety of issues relevant for children and youth. This work must now be built upon by continuing to involve children and young people at all stages of the process and all aspects of implementation and accountability. Frameworks still to be decided regarding indicators, implementation (including financing) and evaluation of the SDGs must ensure children and youth are fairly represented.

The MGCY is keen to be as involved as possible in the post-2015 process long after the final declaration is decided at the post-2015 summit in September. We hope this position paper communicates effectively our priorities moving forward and we welcome all individuals wishing to work with us in the future.