



PEOPLE’S VOICES – ISSUE BRIEF to the SDG OPEN WORKING GROUP...

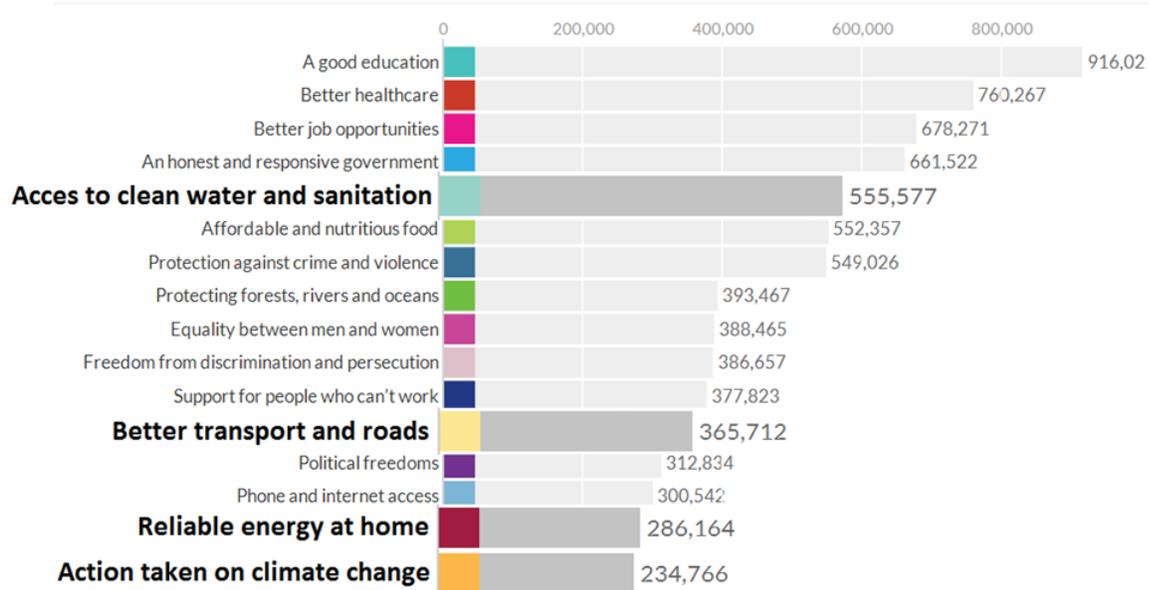
... to convey the views of experts of all walks of life that contributed to the Global Post-2015 Conversation so far via national, regional, thematic consultations and the MY World survey¹

7th session (6-10 January 2014): sustainable cities & human settlements; sustainable transport; sustainable consumption & production (incl. chemicals & waste); climate change; disaster risk reduction

People in the UNDG post-2015 consultations say emphatically that the challenges – and indeed opportunities – they face are complex and interlinked. They underscore the difficulties posed by increasing urbanisation, the deterioration of natural environments and consequences for economic activity and social cohesion. They are concerned about unsustainable consumption and production patterns that fuel climate change and associated increases in vulnerability to disasters. This points to the need to go beyond the divide between traditional poverty reduction and environmental management approaches to arrive at a sustainable development agenda that is more integrated and holistic.

MY World total votes as of 20 December 2013

1,307,775 votes for All Countries & Country Groups / All Genders / All Education Levels / Age Group (All Age Groups)



Participants in the global conversation call for a **review of the existing economic growth model**, particularly in view of meeting the increasing needs and expectations of a growing population within the context of a world that is fast approaching, and has in some cases already breached, important planetary boundaries.

¹ The UNDG comprises 32 UN funds, programmes, agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in development. For over a year, it has been facilitating a global conversation to help realise the Secretary-General’s vision that the discussions on the future development agenda be open and inclusive. This initiative aims to provide a space for people’s voices, with a particular view to reaching out to poor and marginalised people. So far, the process has involved over 1.6 million people in 88 national dialogues, 11 thematic consultations, regional discussion fora, via a web platform (www.worldwewant2015.org) and global survey (www.myworld2015.org).

“In the current economic model... an entrepreneur will grow carrots rather than potatoes if the same energy use... will produce twice the return, regardless of whether people need potatoes.”

- Participant, thematic consultation on environmental sustainability

agricultural products, better quality, diverse and nutritious diets, local availability of food, efficient food distribution systems, crisis planning, and reduced food waste and losses. The discussants also recommend a diversification away from commodity production toward higher value-added production, upgrading to higher-skill production, and incentivising industries with more energy-efficient

technologies. There are calls for education — inside and outside schools — to play a more prominent role in raising awareness of the urgency of addressing environmental degradation and social inequalities.

Changing how economic growth is measured is identified as a key driver for transformation. Participants in the consultations see the need to go **beyond GDP** as the sole measure of progress and to take environmental and social implications into consideration. One of the core problems is that natural capital is traditionally unaccounted for and thus not incorporated into economic decision-making. As a result, it is greatly undervalued and consequently used unsustainably. Discussants noted that methods, tools and examples already exist to integrate the environment more fully into decision-making, such as through natural capital accounting, green accounting, and payments for ecosystem services. They argue that attaching a price to the use of global commons would increase incentives to introduce innovative processes and technologies, since the savings of such measures will not only state a clear business case to transform corporate production, but also support policymakers in justifying the required investments.

“The private sector is getting increasingly aware of its role for long term growth that is green and inclusive for sustainable development. It is providing new ideas in the fight to end global poverty by partnering with traditional development players...leveraging supply chains to create economic opportunity for the world’s poorest people, and incorporating social responsibility into their business practices.”

- Samer Khan, Mewar University & Keynovations Inc., India & Oman

The consultations point to the benefits of participation by communities in managing local ecosystems and natural resources. A particular emphasis is put on the centrality of integrating a gender perspective into decision-making at all levels and empowering women through economic and educational opportunities. Discussants call for **legal empowerment of local communities** by establishing environmental courts where companies or individuals can be brought to trial over the negative environmental impacts of their actions.

“The expanding population and high density has increased demand for agricultural production and requires the cultivation of lands previously seen as unsuitable for agricultural production. In turn, climate change affects food availability and access, but also consumption and diversity of diet. Climate change serves as a hunger risk multiplier...”

- National consultation, Bangladesh

The **international community** also needs to change the way it does business and accounts for global environmental goods. Participants in the global consultation argue that rich countries should be taking the lead in transforming to more sustainable consumption and production patterns, and showing how existing knowledge and technology can be harnessed to achieve this without threats to peace and social stability. The envisaged solidarity is also intergenerational: people ask that all the decision-making processes in the economic and production spheres take into account the

need to guarantee that the coming generations have the same opportunities as the preceding ones.

"I want more new schools, multi-storey buildings, stadiums and kindergartens to be built, not only in the capital city, but in all parts of our country."

- National consultation, Turkmenistan

The rapidly increasing dominance of cities places the process of **urbanisation** among the most significant global social transformations of this century. It can be a powerful driver of sustainable development. And indeed, it will have to be: people across the globe echo the imperative of creating healthy urban environments that provide clean air and water, green spaces, as well as efficient and affordable services for all.

Comparative Analysis (below, top 7 out of 16 options): In the MY World survey, people accord a high priority to 'access to clean water and sanitation' regardless of their education level, which is commonly used as a proxy for income.

Some Primary	Finished Primary	Finished Secondary	Beyond Secondary
1 A good education	1 A good education	1 A good education	1 A good education
2 Better healthcare	2 Better healthcare	2 Better healthcare	2 Better healthcare
3 Better job opportunities	3 Better job opportunities	3 Better job opportunities	3 An honest and responsive government
4 Affordable and nutritious food	4 An honest and responsive government	4 An honest and responsive government	4 Better Job Opportunities
5 Access to clean water and sanitation	5 Access to clean water and sanitation	5 Protection against crime and violence	5 Protection against crime and violence
6 An honest and responsive government	6 Affordable and nutritious food	6 Access to clean water and sanitation	6 Access to clean water and sanitation
7 Support for people who can't work	7 Protection against crime and violence	7 Affordable and nutritious food	7 Affordable and nutritious food

Incomplete or partial decentralisation processes, not backed up with budgetary flexibility and strong accountability mechanisms, are seen as contributing to growing disparities between rural and urban areas, or between the capital cities and the rest of the country. Thus, the debates draw attention to the interconnected topics of rural-to-urban migration, the growth of slums, the working poor, and declining investment in the rural and agricultural sector. Poverty, migration and insecurity from crime and violence, often exacerbated by inequalities, are frequently mentioned. Many national consultations for example in Africa point to increased crime rates in cities and homes, as well as the ever-present threat of violence against women and children.

"The lack of transportation infrastructure and mismanagement of transportation services leads to overwhelming traffic jams in major cities in Indonesia, Jakarta chief among them. Poor planning schemes here lead to traffic, floods, untended garbage and water crises, as well as a rise in poverty levels, environmental pollution and road accidents. Government policies here are often contradictory with cities' needs, emphasizing more on building inner city highways and land reclamation of coastal areas, which systematically reduces livable areas."

- Indonesia Post-2015 Country Consultation Report

“Every city should have its own centralized decision-making power along with its self-funded support systems. As long as power is centralized in one political body, the political factions will keep competing to take a piece of the pie.”

- National consultation, Lebanon

Though the prospect of megacities is perceived as daunting, the higher population density gives governments the opportunity to more easily deliver essential infrastructure and services in urban areas at a lower cost per capita. Discussants also note that liveable and sustainable cities can have knock-on effects in terms of providing rural populations with greater access to services such as education and health care, while also empowering them economically. Furthermore,

urbanisation can produce energy savings, particularly in the housing and transportation sectors. However, the benefits do not materialise automatically but largely depend on central governments and local authorities managing urban growth as part of their respective development strategies.

Climate change is seen as a growing threat to development.

Though it ranks lower than other topics in the MY World survey that are of more immediate individual concern, people see climate change impacting on their highest priorities, such as health, water and food. Many people identify it as a source of instability that will lead to resource scarcity, mass migration, disruption of livelihoods and production, requiring action to shift towards low-emission development including through education and economic transformation. Certain countries and areas are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Strong concerns are raised in the consultations in Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Developing States, for example, where climate change is seen as a threat to the very existence of people and the countries themselves due to rising sea levels. The perception that climate change is contributing to a deteriorating environment is prominent across different constituencies around the world. In national consultations in Africa, for example, people observe that local weather patterns are changes, which is leading to land degradation and desertification.

“A place like Tanzania, which over the years has been known as [an] oasis of peace, is starting to experience clashes over land and resources. Clashes between peasants and farmers have started to evolve, threatening the peace and security... in areas where there is scarcity of water resource [attributed to climate change].”

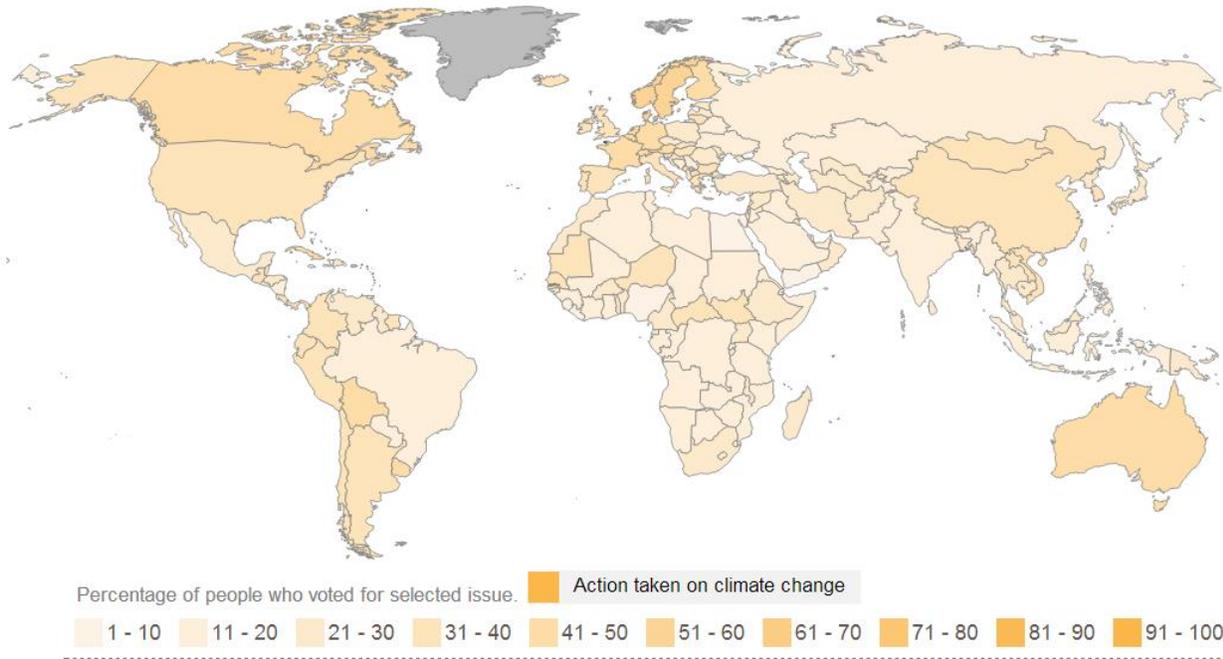
- Participant, thematic consultation on environmental sustainability

Civil society organisations engaged in the global conversation demand that climate change is mainstreamed throughout the post-2015 agenda in the form of climate-smart targets in different goals. They suggest targets on: global emissions; strengthening the capacity to withstand climate disruption; climate-smart infrastructure; climate-resilient small-holder agriculture; reducing food waste; sustainable water

“The rapid progress of the desert, the deterioration of fish stocks and marine environment, destruction of biodiversity (deforestation, degradation of wetlands and parks) accelerated and uncontrolled urbanization and the non-existence of reliable collective systems of sanitation and waste treatment and household waste are the challenges our country has to face.”

- Dialogue with CSO networks, Mauritania

management practices; universal access to sustainable energy; and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies. In addition, many in civil society call for a stand-alone goal on climate change or one that explicitly encompasses climate change and other closely related issues. Many representatives of civil society fear that if such a goal were not adopted, this might signal that climate change is not a priority for the international community and thus jeopardise an agreement under the process of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.



Heat Map (above): This is where MY World voters prioritise ‘climate change’ around the globe. (The darker the colour, the higher the proportion of votes for this specific issue.)

A strong message from the global conversation is that climate change-related **disasters** disproportionately affect the poorest people, especially in rural areas. Participants in Asia criticised the limited number of early warning systems, and the lack of a comprehensive policy and response mechanism at the local level. It is well understood that environmental degradation increases disaster risks by magnifying the hazards, increasing exposure of people and their assets, and reducing their capacity to cope with extreme events.

Disaster-insensitive development has made many communities more vulnerable and put development gains at risk. Conversely, investments in disaster risk reduction contribute to the achievement of some development goals, including the continued provision of education and health services. Therefore, discussants call for a new development approach that integrates disaster risk reduction into all interventions.

“Disasters are universal and know no boundaries... We cannot work alone in dealing with disaster that requires the involvement of people from all branches of science and expertise...”

- Dr. Syamsul Maarif, National Agency for Disaster Management, Indonesia

The consultations propose the establishment of a goal to address the interface between sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, climate change and conflict. Alternatively, disaster risk reduction efforts could be mainstreamed into other goals, particularly in poverty reduction, health, environment, governance, food security, gender equality, education and water.



**A MILLION VOICES:
THE WORLD WE WANT**

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH DIGNITY FOR ALL

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