



Beyond2015



Event Summary

Civil Society Engagement and Citizen's Participation in the Sustainable Development Era 26 June 2015, New York

Introduction

On Friday, 26 June 2015, Amnesty International, Beyond 2015 Campaign, International Disability and Development Consortium, Forum, International Disability Alliance, SOS Children's Villages, and World Vision joined together to host a side event during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) with the objective of advancing the discussion on enhanced Civil Society (CSO) engagement and participation at the national, regional and global level within the sustainable development era. At this event the preliminary views on the contribution of CSO and citizens to the implementation and monitoring of sustainable development agenda were shared as well as ideas on how to continue to advance this discussion.



As moderator, **Ms. Lotta Tahtinen** – *Coordinator, Stakeholder Engagement Programme Division for Sustainable Development, UNDESA* – smoothly facilitated a lively discussion by panelists as well as the audience of Members States, CSO and other stakeholders. The discussion was enriched by the experts who constituted the panel such as: **Mr. Jordi Llopart**– *Chief, UN Volunteers office in New York*; **Mr. Vladimir Cuk** – *Executive Director, International Disability Alliance*; **Ms. Shannon O'Shea** – *Post 2015 Development Agenda Programme Specialist, UNICEF*; and **Mr. Mwangi Waituru** – *Post 2015 Africa Regional Advisor, VSO & Beyond 2015*.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen began the discussion by alluding to the need for all sectors of society are engaged in order to achieve success in the next 15 years. She also highlighted that the Post-2015 process has produced a greater sense of ownership by all. To begin the discussion by panelists, **Ms. Lotta Tahtinen** asked the panel how openness and inclusion can be mirrored at the national, regional and global level and how spaces for CSO engagement can be expanded.

Key highlights from the panel discussion

Mr. Jordi Llopart – *Chief, UN Volunteers office in New York*

- Bottom-up engagement is the best way to achieving sustainable development with the UN supporting and responding to the needs. A top down approach will not create the spaces necessary for inclusive engagement.

- There is a need to redefine the way to engage with stakeholders different from how it has been in the past and get rid of the silos the UN promotes when it comes to engagement.
- Space to dialogue with Member States needs to be provided.
- UN Volunteers has supported the national level of conversation and has deployed volunteers in over 40 countries to help support capacities and inform people how these conversations should take place. They have also made resources available in regional offices and try to engage with groups that have not gotten the most attention.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen supported Mr. Jordi Llopart's statement by reiterating the need to break silos at the national and global levels and added that the 3 pillars of development need to be brought together.

Mr. Vladimir Cuk – Executive Director, International Disability Alliance

- Discrimination happens when people are not in the room because then those people's voices are not heard. That is why getting all sectors in the room and in the conversations in order for everyone's voice to be heard is a starting point as well providing means for participation.
- Need to invest in capacity building for people with disabilities – people with disabilities are not only beneficiaries but partners in this process therefore it is necessary to work together in order to truly establish partnerships.



Ms. Lotta Tahtinen emphasized the importance of ensuring that participation continues at the national level.

Mr. Mwangi Waituru - Post 2015 Africa Regional Advisor, VSO & Beyond 2015

- Consultations are very important but it is necessary to also be translated into action – consultations are good for listening to the views of people but they have no say in the decision-making processes. When people are given the space to participate in conversations, they have more capacity to affect change. People should not solely be seen as recipients of development but also as participants in the process.
- For people to engage – a structure must be built that facilitates and helps bring people to engage in the process. How do we bring someone from the outside to be able to raise their voice on the inside?
- Not only is it necessary to bring people in, but also make sure they are enabled to bring substance to the table.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen affirmed Mr. Mwangi Waituru's statement and continued the conversation by asking Ms. Shannon O'Shea about how children can best be engaged in the process of sustainable development.



Ms. Shannon O'Shea – Post 2015 Development Agenda Programme Specialist, UNICEF

- The World We Want 2015 survey responses represent the views of 1000s of children around the world – Children & Youth are some of the most active participants in this process. They ask that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be a platform for their participation and engagement.
 - There needs to be an Equity Building approach in order to ensure that not only the people who are immediately interested in SDGs are the only people engaged in the process.
 - Developing ways to engage children in the process in ways that speak to them rather than above them is important.
- Participatory monitoring mechanisms are vital in order to achieve success of the agenda

Mr. Chris Eaton, Forum Chairperson and Executive director of World University of Canada, as a respondent shared a few remarks of which some key points were:

- The SDGs need broad base participation but also need a means of promoting inclusion.
- We see volunteerism at all levels is at the heart and center of a base of action.

- Both the mechanisms for allowing participation and the self-organization of communities as a whole need to be addressed.

Question and Answer Session/Closing Remarks

Ireland - Moving forward, it is important to have that sense of ownership, and it's obvious that we need to work together on this, how can we best craft these ideas?

Mr. Chris D. - At the UN, we often forget to reach out to our constituencies so when we talk about partnerships, we have to talk about the policy nature of this. We need to finance these ideas and recognize the people active in this process already. It comes down to money so we aren't seeing what we need to see.

Civil Society, Russia – One of the biggest challenges in inclusive participation is language - we need to have things translated, there should be investments made for translations. How can we bring UN country offices into mainstream? - This will be important for implementation.

Ms. Naiara Costa expressed the need for a call for participation. How can CSO and other major stakeholders ensure inclusion at the HLPF?

Mr. Mwangi Waituru – Follow-up and review is the weakest part of the document.

Mr. Vladimir Cuk– Capacity building is extremely important. We need to bring information down.

Mr. Jordi Llopart – We need to think of a simple clear mechanism at the national level for translation and providing accessibility and participation of the process.

Ms. Shannon O'Shea – Children are very good at picking up information. We need to engage children in creative and interesting ways. It's not important if a child knows what Goal 10 is, they need to understand what the principle of the goals mean for them.