

Introduction:

Post-2015 Dialogues on Partnerships with the Civil Society

With less than 500 days remaining before the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the process of defining the Post-2015 Development Agenda has now reached a critical stage. Several discussions are taking place at the global, regional and national levels to provide input for the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations. This process included Dialogues on Partnerships with the Civil Society which the UN Country Team in Jordan organized between May and August 2014, enabling civil society to contribute substantively to the shaping of key policies related to the implementation of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

The dialogues were articulated through a multidimensional approach which encompassed dedicated focus group discussions, e-consultations and interviews. Sixteen events were completed between May to August 2014, directly consulting nearly 3,000 people including Line Ministries, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women's and social movements, youth, persons living with disabilities, media and private sector representatives. The online strategy included the continued promotion of the e-consultation on the WorldWeWant2015 platform, and of the MY World survey.

The outcomes of the dialogues in Jordan fed into a United Nations Development Group (UNDG) report "Delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda – opportunities at the national and local levels" that collects results from the other 49 countries carrying out dialogues on the means of implementation.

This global UNDG report was presented to Heads of State during a side event of the 69th UN General Assembly in September 2014 in the presence of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Helen Clark, Chair of the UNDG. The objective is to kick-start partnerships and implementation mechanisms to form the foundation of the new development agenda, so that citizens across the world are mobilized to begin implementation once the new Development Agenda is in place.



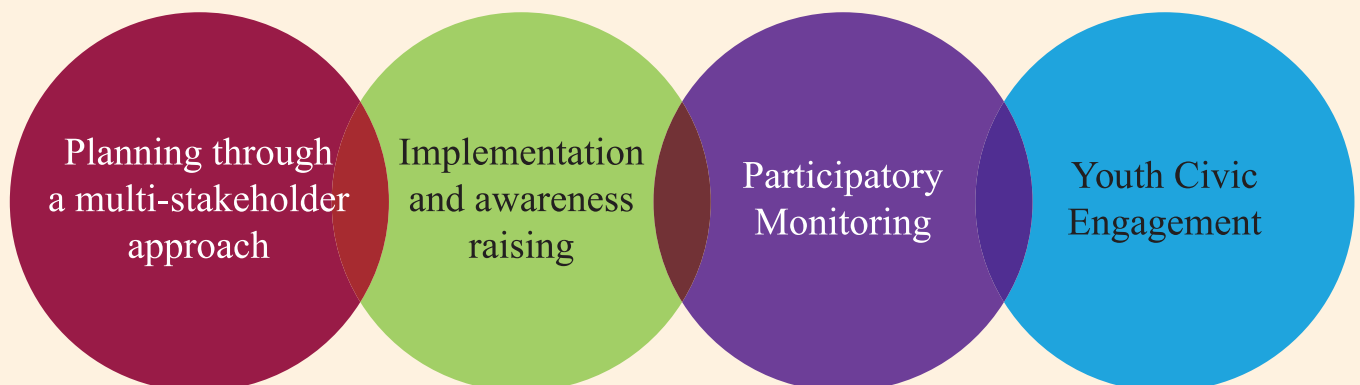
"I am pleased to see that civil society is recognized at the international level through this exercise, and I hope that it will also be recognized locally as an important actor in development, as a key in shaping policies and broadening implementation of the development agenda"

(CSO representative, Amman, July 2014)



Messages from the Dialogues

In order to provide meaningful recommendations to contribute to a more effective civil society-government partnership, the messages emerging from the dialogues have been thematically re-grouped and are presented according to the following chart:



1. Planning through a multi-stakeholder approach

1.1 Genuine participation

Participation is the cornerstone of the Post-2015 process; engaging all stakeholders, government, media, civil society organizations, youth, women as well as local communities is fundamental in realizing the Post-2015 Agenda. Notably, participants expressed the importance of utilizing the participatory and bottom-up approach to implement the Post-2015 framework as a principle for decision making at the local and national levels.

1.2 NGO coordination platform

The majority of participants emphasized the importance of strengthened, effective coordination among CSOs and between CSOs and the Government of Jordan. A recurrent message that emerged from the dialogues was the urgency of institutionalizing a coordination platform for local NGOs. It was envisaged that this platform would have several aims: it would serve as a credible interlocutor for the Government; it would help avoid overlap between CSOs projects and work; it would act as a united, credible advocacy body vis-à-vis donors.

1.3 Localization of the Post-2015 Agenda

One can anticipate the emergence of numerous goals and related targets from the Post 2015 Agenda. However, it must be asked which of these goals and targets are more relevant to Jordan from next year onward? CSOs can be instrumental in advocating and highlighting the most critical development priorities to the Government based on their profound knowledge of challenges existing within local communities. Many discussions surrounded the notion that policies made by the central government do not always correctly tackle the challenges at play at the local level. A constant dialogue should exist between the civil society and national institutions, wherein the former is able to suggest practical solutions and highlight day-to-day challenges that might render policies ineffective at the community level.

1.4 Online information sharing and feedback platforms

Throughout the dialogues, much was shared surrounding the importance of media's role within the Post-2015 agenda. Suggestions were made to create public media platforms that provide the public with unbiased information, whilst also offering citizens opportunities to engage and convey feedback. It was reiterated that freedom of expression is a precondition for good governance and an integral part of sustainable development. There is a clear need to rebuild the trust of citizens in order to facilitate their access to information and share their views in a safe online environment, while at the same time ensuring that the information shared is credible and trustworthy.

1.5 CSOs to advise through studies and reports

Within the consultations, representatives from the Government and the civil society agreed on the importance of research studies and assessment reports to inform and guide policy making. However, the challenge within this lies in the way these documents are submitted for the consideration of national institutions. Participants suggested the development of periodical analysis reports that shed light on lessons learnt and suggestions to move forward on issues of particular relevance at the national or local level.



Participant summarizing the key outcomes and recommendations of the discussions



The bottom-up and inclusive approach of the Post-2015 should be replicated for the decision-making process at the national level

(NGO representative, Amman, June 2014)



2. Implementation and awareness raising

2.1 The added value of CSOs in the implementation of development projects

CSOs are at the heart of local communities; the majority have established strong trusting relations with these communities and have proven the credibility of their actions. Implementation of projects and initiatives is a key strength of CSOs as they deal directly with people. They have been successful in making things happen on the ground, and their light bureaucracy allows a faster, more targeted response than that of national institutions.



NGO representatives highlighting the important role of social media in the implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda

2.2 Leverage of CSOs' hands-on experience

The majority of participants emphasized the importance of limiting duplication amongst the work of CSOs on the ground. While many participants reported that a number of CSOs do specialize and have a specific mandate and vision, un-focused CSOs that lack strategic orientation are also in operation. CSOs should be leveraged and capitalized upon by the government, amplifying their capacities and efforts to maximize outreach and impact, and the optimal use of limited resources.

2.3 Support of the private sector

Throughout the dialogues, civil society have called upon the private sector to become involved via taking part in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships with both CSOs and Governments. The partnerships with the private sector are not solely based on financial aspects, but should be conceived of as a vehicle to pool diverse resources in an effort to achieve a shared vision and common results.

2.4 Awareness raising and knowledge sharing

A multi stakeholder partnership is pivotal in raising awareness surrounding the Post-2015 goals and targets. Government must effectively coordinate with CSOs and CBOs in order to reach out to marginalized groups and geographical areas. Civil society should take a leadership role in raising the awareness at the community level regarding new legislation, policies, or important development initiatives, such as those on healthier living, environmental protection or access to the labor market. Complementary to the awareness raising is knowledge and innovation sharing through meetings and online platforms. Civil society organizations can be an active repository of lessons learnt and best practices and act to facilitate cross-learning initiatives at the national level in partnership alongside national institutions.



Our problem is not with depicting the problems, but with implementing the solutions. Civil Society's engagement in implementing solutions must be leveraged

(NGO Representative, Irbid, July 2014)



3. Participatory Monitoring

3.1 Post-2015 targets and indicators as first participatory monitoring framework

In light of the “Arab Spring” and the recent sub-regional events, participants emphasized that accountability and transparency are of growing importance in Jordan and in the Arab Region. The Post-2015 Development Agenda was, therefore, considered as an opportunity to kick-off a more systematic and regular participatory monitoring of government’s strategies and action.

CSOs have the ability to take a pro-active role in monitoring the quality of services in their respective areas, can convene dialogues to jointly evaluate progress on certain priority issues, and can advocate holding authorities accountable for resources spent at the local level. Their partnership with the government is crucial in adding value to these kind of activities.

According to participants, media can play a key role in monitoring the future Development Agenda. A free press can act as a “watchdog”, providing tools for scrutiny of strategic decisions taken by both the public and private sectors. Jordanian media can contribute far more effective governance by raising awareness surrounding social issues, and creating a civic forum for debate. Media has the ability to amplify youth voices and those of people living in governorates outside Amman, especially in underprivileged villages and desert regions.



We are on the threshold of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and we cannot miss the chance to use it as a framework for accountability of our government

(CSO representative, Amman, June 2014)



3.2 Creation of an online public space with progress on Post-2015 goals

An interesting solution presented during the dialogues was the suggestion of the creation of an online public space documenting Jordan’s progress during the implementation, and towards the achievement, of the Post-2015 goals.

This idea was triggered by the presentation delivered by the representative of the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation at the beginning of many consultations, focusing upon Jordan’s progress towards the realization of the MDGs. Visualizing the achievements of Jordan in the field of health, education and poverty alleviation through data and charts, triggered participants’ to conceive of replicating this in a public space.

This suggestion envisages the creation of an online platform/ website by the Government of Jordan with regular (e.g. quarterly) updates provided on the progress towards the achievements of the Post-2015 targets. The website would also have a space for citizens’ comments and suggestions.



NGO representatives interactively presenting their ideas for a more participatory approach to monitoring development progress

4. Youth civic engagement

Volunteerism was highlighted in most of the dialogues. There was consensus on the added value of awareness and engagement at a young age, which leads to a more dynamic civil society in the sustainable future. Participants, therefore, referred to volunteerism as ‘positive civic engagement’.



Group discussing the importance of building alliances between the different civil society organizations

One of the current challenges is the existing bureaucratic procedures that discourage young people from taking action in effective civic engagement. In particular, participants mentioned the very long and complex journey necessary to register a volunteer organization. The facilitation of registration was suggested, laying the foundation for a more meaningful and long-term partnership between national institutions and youth.



Youth empowerment is an important objective of our society since it gives the young person the capacity to actually make the change

(NGO representative, Amman, June 2014)



As highlighted during the discussions, national institutions should harness the benefits of youth engagement in the implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda, and should therefore invest more in this valuable group. Through civic engagement, young people can direct their energy and creativity towards discovering innovative solutions to critical development issues. Investing in youth and volunteerism encompasses strengthening youth skills, encouraging them to engage in meaningful activities and supporting them in having their voices heard.



Participants debating education and employability in the Northern Governorate of Irbid

Disclaimer:

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