

# The role of civil society in accelerating global actions for a world free of poverty through partnerships<sup>1</sup> *[final draft]*

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## 1.0 The context and issues

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by UN General Assembly in September 2015 for transforming our world are very pertinent but at the same time highly ambitious. The 17 Sustainable Goals (SDGs) along with 169 targets are understandably built and expanded further on the results of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended the same year of SDGs' adoption. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is very comprehensive call and all inclusive – the people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. These are meant for the **prosperity** and **peace** of **people** and the **planet** which is believed to be materialized through collective actions of **partnership**. People and planet are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda.

Poverty is a stark reality of the world. Nearly half of the world's population —i.e., more than 3 billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day. Of them, more than 1.3 billion are forced to live in extreme poverty — less than \$1.25 a day<sup>2</sup>. A vast majority of the poor people live in rural areas. They are poorly educated and mostly employed in the agricultural sector. Nearly half of the extremely poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>3</sup>.

The major development challenges facing people around the world for decades are poverty, food insecurity (hunger and malnutrition), over consumption (causing obesity) and wastage of food, discrimination, violation, loss and/or degradation of natural resources and environment, problems created and perpetuated by climate change, and marginalization in different pretexts. As highlighted in the global shapers annual survey of 2017, following are the ten most pressing issues facing the world today,<sup>4</sup> each of them responsible for creating and perpetuating poverty either directly or indirectly.

- Climate change and destruction of natural resources/environment
- Large scale conflicts and wars
- Inequality (income, discrimination)
- Poverty
- Religious conflicts
- Government accountability and transparency, and corruption
- Food and water insecurity
- Lack of education
- Lack of safety, security and well being

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-global-poverty>, downloaded Apr 01, 2018

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>, downloaded 01 Apr 2018

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/world-economic-forum-world-biggest-problems-concerning-millennials-2016-8>, downloaded 25 Mar 2018.

- Lack of employment and economic opportunities

As reflected as one of the major challenges in the above example, poverty is a single large issue to be resolved with urgency, and hence, the very first goal of the SDGs is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.<sup>5</sup> The leaders and state representatives had univocally lauded their determination for mobilizing the means required to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development through a revitalized global partnership. The spirit of this very important declaration for Sustainable Development is to further strengthen global solidarity and partnership of all countries, all stakeholders including civil society and all people (ibid). Eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 for all people everywhere is a crucial task which is impossible to materialize through isolated actions of any actors, but through revitalized global partnership of all actors. Thus, the revitalized partnerships at all levels (i.e., global, national and local) and shared responsibilities of the governments, civil societies, intergovernmental agencies and the private sectors are must making extreme poverty a history.

The all encompassing Goal 17 of SDGs that focuses on strengthening means of implementation and revitalizing global partnership for sustainable development is self evident of the importance and urgency of all inclusive partnership for achieving the SDGs.

Since SDGs are the shared agenda for all of us, including the civil societies, there is utmost need for meaningful cooperation and inclusion to implement the SDGs. The High Level Political Forum, 2017 has emphasized for the effective engagement of civil society, local authorities, indigenous peoples, local communities, academia and all other relevant actors in order to promote collective work in shared responsibility and partnership (UN, 2017<sup>6</sup>). So, it is imperative to engage civil society in all processes and mechanisms of SDGs implementation at all levels of operations.

## **2.0 The major constituencies of poverty**

Poverty is one of the most serious violations of human rights and stigma on human dignity. Poverty is rampant in areas and societies that are deprived of their fundamental rights. Hence, the pockets of poverty are mainly located in LDCs, SIDS, countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Population wise, women, children, old age people and other marginalized indigenous and minority groups are very much impacted by poverty because they are systematically deprived of their rights accessing to and controlling over the productive resources, opportunities and political powers for decades.

## **3.0 Civil society engagement for accelerating global actions for a world free of poverty through partnerships**

The 2030 Agenda calls for a “revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” that is based on “a spirit of global solidarity, in particular solidarity with the poorest and with people in

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E), downloaded Apr 01, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, 2017. High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Economic and Social Council. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2017/3&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2017/3&Lang=E), accessed on 02 Apr 2018.

vulnerable situations.” The SDG 17 urges governments and other stakeholders to revitalize global partnership through development cooperation, mobilizing finances, technology cooperation, capacity building, open trade and policy coherence (United Nations, 2015<sup>7</sup>).

SDG 17 also calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships between governments, business, civil society, the UN and other actors to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources in support of the SDGs’ achievement in all countries, particularly in developing countries of the global south. Indeed, in the context of fiscal restraint among the developed countries, most observers expect that governments will be relying more on “non-traditional” means of implementation including South-South cooperation as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships (ibid.).

The General Assembly of United Nations had already implemented two decades of the poverty eradication (1996-2007 and 2008-2017) and now it is in the process of entering into the third decade of poverty eradication (2018-2027), and necessary preparations are taking place recently. In this scenario, civil society partnership can be instrumental in sharing knowledge and expertise, capacity development, transfer of technology, trade facilitation and financial resource generation, among others. As discussed earlier, civil society engagements and actions around the world are mainly focused on the followings, however, their engagement can be further expanded and strengthened in other areas, too.

- Civil societies (CSs) are partnering with and complementing to development actors for effectively addressing development needs around SDGs, particularly in the countries and societies of the south. CS partnership for development include generating and sharing of knowledge, capacities, resources, skills and technology focusing on development needs and priorities of the people such as poverty eradication, health, education, food security, social protection, sustainable energy, climate change and related infrastructures.
- CSs around the world act as catalysts for critical national and global agenda, and assist in bringing citizens’ voices to national and international debates and the development of national and global strategies.
- Most of the nine major groups that are engaged in sustainable development process represent civil society or come from civil society background (e.g., women, youth and children, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations, workers and trade unions and farmers, etc.). Thus, civil society groups and their networks are engaged in the SDG agenda at both the national and international levels, with many groups and networks focusing on efforts to pressure their governments and international players to implement the SDGs in a planned way, adhering to the fundamental principles and values of human rights and social justice.
- CSs operate in a large constituency with large number of members covering the whole country and/or specific regions. Creating a strong national network (of networks) is conducive to implement or partner in different programmes and activities under the SDGs. This situation easily facilitates raising awareness and educating citizens in SDGs. CSs are instrumental in the innovation, developing alternatives and localization process of SDGs and creating and expanding partnership base at grassroots.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E), downloaded Apr 01, 2018.

- CSs are engaged monitoring progress around SDGs implementation. They run citizen-based monitoring of SDGs and provide feedback to the responsible government and other agencies on SDGs implementation.
- CSs generate additional data to track progress on SDG implementation. They collect data on progress around SDGs and provide an opportunity to cross check the status of the progress made.
- CSs are engaged in advocating, lobbying and networking for SDGs, especially on people friendly policies, laws and programmes at international, regional and national levels. In this front, they use the strategy of partnership with and pressure to responsible actors such as national governments, multi-lateral agencies, and intergovernmental bodies, etc.
- CSs partner with state and non-state actors for emergency humanitarian response around the world, so that disaster shocks and impending impacts are minimized and SDGs implementation is put back on track.
- CSs always keep urging the world leaders and respective governments to 'Walk the talks', and "not the business as usual".

#### **4.0 What needs to be done for accelerating meaningful global partnership of civil society in eradicating poverty in the context of Third UN Decade for Poverty Eradication?**

Civil society partnership for poverty eradication is imperative in policy, planning, implementation, monitoring and exchange learning. There is a need of collective and/or shared ideas and actions for the eradication of poverty and making the humanity free from hunger as soon as possible but no later than 2030 as proclaimed by 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The partnership platform allows sharing knowledge, expertise and resources and working towards a common objective of eradication of extreme poverty from everywhere.

For this to happen, there are numerous avenues for meaningful engagement by civil society - from consultations and defining new policies and programmes, to implementing specific goals, to monitoring the process and results, and scaling the impacts in a larger population and territory.

At the national level, civil societies play a crucial role in translating 2030 Agenda into national priorities, working through themselves, their networks and members working at the grassroots. They play a triggering role ensuring inclusion of local needs and priorities into national priorities and strategies. Thus, civil societies act as catalysts for critical global and national agenda, and assist in bringing people's voices to national debates and the development of national as well as global strategies and development agenda. Civil societies also play a critical role working with state apparatus in implementing their agenda, delivering services, generating information and evidences, holding governments accountable to their commitments, and advocating for socio-economic transformation. However, the working environment for civil society in different countries and societies varies, imposing severe limitations for independent as well as collective actions in many ways. Therefore, positive assertion on the following points is necessary for accelerating global partnership of civil society in eradicating poverty.

- Create/promote enabling environment (e.g., political, policy, legal) at all levels for encouraging and engaging civil society in addressing the structural causes of poverty. But

the trend seems opposite – the space for civil society is being shrunked in different countries and also globally.

- Strengthen and align civil society programmes at national level in accordance with the SDGs.
- Establish all inclusive monitoring system in order to facilitate civil society for effective results of SDGs implementation.
- Spearhead meaningful and sincere participation of civil society and their networks at national and international levels. However, there exists a lack of or inadequacy of meaningful participation of civil society in multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) and the dearth of effective redress mechanisms to ensure the accountability of duty bearers to rights holders remains a gap in existing development partnerships<sup>8</sup>.
- Reinforce rights-based partnerships for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Empower rights-holders, especially women and the most marginalized, by fully respecting their rights to organize and mobilise.
- Create institutionalised mechanisms for participation of rights holders at all levels of governance.
- Implement the Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment of 0.7% of GNI in overall development assistance and 0.20% of GNI for LDCs development.
- While providing development cooperation, fully respect the country system and processes allowing and encouraging local actors to take the lead in defining priorities and strategies for their development agenda.
- Build the capacity of duty-bearers to respect, protect and fulfill human rights obligations.
- Enhance transparency of development partnership.
- Improve the accountability of duty-bearers by strengthening a range of effective mechanisms.
- End land grabbing and displacement of farmers and indigenous peoples under any pretexts, mainly transnational corporations and private operators.
- Stop deforestation and environmental destruction by extractive industries (harmful partnership in some cases around the world).
- Stop violation of workers and peasants' rights.
- Stop corruption, impunity, criminalization of politics and politicization of criminal activities.
- Respect and promote the basic principles of climate justice for all people. Work for drastically reducing green house gas emissions and provide adequate support for adaptation activities in the countries of global south.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.csopartnership.org/edc-resources-hrba>, downloaded 25 Mar 2018