

A Place for Peaceful Societies in Post-2015: State of the Debate

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As the Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) nears its conclusion, the question of whether and how to include governance and peace-related goals and targets in the post-2015 framework continues to be debated. This very short note briefly analyzes how and why governance and peace-related objectives are reflected in the first revision of the OWG's zero draft (dated June 30), and suggests some key considerations as the negotiations enter their final month. Table 1 summarizes the relevant goals and targets.

All countries acknowledge the universal interdependence of peace and development – one cannot happen without the other. The Rio +20 outcome document, which mandated the OWG, reiterates “the importance of freedom, peace and security and respect for all human rights” for development.¹ To this end, countries do support the inclusion of governance and peace-related international objectives in the SDG framework *somehow*.

There is agreed international normative ground on eliminating all forms of violence against women and children and on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable members of all societies who are vulnerable to discrimination, to marginalization from development and to violence. It is not especially controversial either that countries and people affected by violence are being left behind on poverty eradication. The international community has existing commitments, such as those in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries,² to build institutions and inclusive development processes that can prevent and resolve violent conflict and instability and that can pursue sustainable poverty eradication.³

As such, negotiators have attempted to adopt a comprehensive approach to **integrating targets related to inclusion, social protection and social justice, and institutional development throughout the framework, including them in some form in all but five of the goals**. Many have been integrated with little controversy: targets like ending all forms of violence, discrimination and exploitation against women and children; building inclusive and safe human settlements; ensuring the safety of refugees and IDPs; enforcing rights like legal identity; building the resilience of societies to shocks and disasters; and job creation all contribute to building peaceful societies, and to tackling the symptoms of conflict and instability that constrain development. This emphasis on inclusive development might also suggest a need for a more explicit commitment somewhere in the framework to eliminating discrimination against all marginalized and vulnerable people (such as indigenous peoples, minorities, older persons, those with disabilities and others).

More controversial remain issues of **individual safety and security, accountability and transparency, and building justice, security and political institutions**. These governance and peace-related issues are clubbed together under goal area 16 of the OWG's draft, framed to “achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and effective and capable institutions.”

We know from the available evidence that achievement of other development goals and of reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people will be constrained without specific measures to build strong, effective, inclusive and resilient justice, security and political institutions.⁴ Emphasis on these areas was lacking in the MDG era, leaving conflict-affected countries and marginalized communities behind others in the fight against poverty.

However, countries retain reservations about reflecting the areas listed in goal area 16. This is not because countries dispute the significance of peace, security and governance for development, but because they are fearful that a goal area could lead donors to both allocate a growing percentage of aid to their national security objectives in conflict-affected countries rather than development objectives (thereby “militarizing” aid), and to impose new external aid conditions on national political, security and justice systems, which would fundamentally undermine state sovereignty.

Other countries question why both governance and peace-related issues would be clubbed together under one such ambitious goal area. Targets are broad and complex and currently defined across a wide range of state institutions and obligations, from financial transparency and accountability, to the development of political, security and justice institutions, to holding consultations on natural resources management, to tackling organized crime and to reducing all violent deaths. Meanwhile, domestic priorities that might be associated with building peaceful societies are not mentioned in the framework, such as support for the victims of violence, or support for national capacities in conflict resolution or in confidence-building.

Further clarity on what and how the goal will be achieved on a universal level might help to make the goal area an easier political sell. The drivers *and* solutions to crime, corruption, conflict and weak institutions are increasingly driven by transnational factors, and as such countries could helpfully clarify what they will put on the table to meet this goal and to address the concerns of actors who fear the door will open to more aid conditionalities and to a growing concentration of “militarized” aid in conflict-affected countries. Where consensus is not achieved on the package, all countries may be very selective in the aspects they want to implement, or want support for, into 2030.

As negotiations on the OWG document come to a head this month, the following points could be considered by negotiators:

- Keep in mind all the major dimensions of peace and development as targets are whittled down - inclusion, social justice and protection, safety, political, security and justice institutions and resilience. A partial approach to peaceful societies (for example just focused on crime or on reducing violent deaths) will not necessarily lead to better support for countries and communities affected by conflict, instability and weak institutions. A more thorough discussion of how peace and development is mutually reinforcing and what countries' commitments to one another should look like may help build a stronger common political narrative.
- Consider incorporating the omitted issues identified above. Eliminating discrimination and building social capacities for peace and conflict resolution are important for development – strong state institutions alone are neither always developmental institutions, nor are they always empowering of people.
- Address the concerns about the “militarization” of aid and about aid conditionality. A lack of common understanding between all countries on this area now will perpetuate itself into 2030.
- Continue the inclusive dialogue initiated at the OWG into the 2014 General Assembly, and ensure the participation of countries and representatives of communities affected by conflict in the debate.

Table 1: Where and How Governance and Peace-Related Issues are Included in the Zero Draft, Revision 1

Governance and Peace Related Issues	Where It's Included	How It's Included
Access to infrastructure and basic services	Goal 1 Target 4	Secure equal access for all men and women, particularly those in need, to basic services
Resilient societies and institutions in response to shocks and natural disasters	Goal 1 Target 5	Build the resilience of the poor and those vulnerable to disasters, shocks and climate-related extreme events
Right to own and inherit land	Goal 1 Target 4	Secure equal access for all men and women to the right to own land and property
	Goal 5 Mol a	Ensure women's equal right to own and control assets and productive resources
Institutions that are effective, accountable, transparent, and fair	Goal 2 Mol a	Increase investment in rural infrastructure and capable institutions
	Goal 4 Target 6	Promote a culture of peace and non-violence
Equality of opportunity	Goal 4 Target 5	Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for people in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities
	Goal 10 Target 3	Reduce inequalities of opportunity and outcome
Ending discrimination, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized	Goal 5 Target 1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls
Eliminating violence against women, children, and vulnerable groups	Goal 5 Targets 2 & 3	-Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls -Eliminate all harmful practices
Social, political, economic inclusion	Goal 8 Target 4	Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities
	Goal 10 Target 2	Empower and promote the social and economic inclusion of all irrespective of race, ethnicity or economic status
Sustainable cities and human settlements	Goal 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable
Safety for refugees and IDPs	Goal 10 Target 6	Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration

Governance and Peace Related Issues	Where It's Included	How It's Included
Peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, effective and capable institutions	<p>Goal 16</p> <p>Targets</p> <p>1-8</p> <p>Mol a & b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduce levels of violence and halve related death rates everywhere -End abuse, exploitation, and violence against children -Reduce illicit financial flows, fight all forms of organized crime, reduce corruption and bribery, ensure accountability and transparency -Increase inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels and ensure prior informed consent of indigenous and local communities in decision-making and natural resources management -Equal access for all to independent, effective, and responsive justice systems and promote the rule of law -Provide legal identity for all, including free birth registrations -Promote free and easy access to information, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly -Strengthen participation of developing nations in international economic and financial decision making and norm setting -Develop effective, accountable and transparent public institutions including security and police forces -Strengthen national institutions to combat crimes

Endnotes

¹United Nations General Assembly (2012), "The Future we Want", A/res/66/288- Rio+20 Outcome Document http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E

²Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020", A/Conf.219/3

³David Steven's Memo to the President of the General Assembly on Peaceful Societies (May 2014) http://cic.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/un_general_assembly_debate_ensuring_stable_and_peaceful_societies_memo.pdf

⁴CIC produced a synthesis of what is known and not known in Bruce D. Jones et al, "Development in the Shadow of Violence; A Knowledge Agenda for Policy", CIC NYU, 2011 http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/jones_cossart_shadow.pdf ; The World Bank World Development Report (2011) on *Conflict, Security and Development* synthesized the findings of academic research on the connections between development, poverty reduction and conflict.