



Uganda Civil Society Statement to the High Level Political Forum

CSO Rejoinder to the Review Report on Uganda's Readiness for Implementation of 2030 Agenda

Preamble

In 2015, leaders of the world signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, inequality and climate change. Together as citizens of the world, and civil society across the world, we committed ourselves to create change in the world. We therefore must challenge ourselves as citizens of the world and leaders in society to make sure the Sustainable Development Goals are met from the start. As civil society we are watching to ensure that our leaders live up to their commitments and that we continue to play our part in ensuring that the Goals are met.

On behalf of Civil Society Organizations under the 2030 Agenda Reference Group currently hosted by Uganda National NGO Forum, this statement is a rejoinder to the Review Report on Uganda's Readiness for Implementation of 2030 Agenda. Civil Society Organizations in Uganda welcome the efforts of the global development community and the Uganda Government in providing leadership to the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We Commend Uganda's Efforts

Uganda is one of the countries that have volunteered to be part of this first review process. Uganda chaired the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly that passed the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in September 2015. Uganda is therefore in a unique position because of the role it played in providing global

leadership for reaching consensus on the Agenda 2030.

We applaud the Government of Uganda for being one of the first countries to localize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also welcome Uganda's commitment to embrace the principles for sustainable development, namely; people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnerships,

to “Ensure that No One is Left Behind” – which is the theme of the 2016 High Level Political Forum.

We also commend Government of Uganda for volunteering to conduct a national review under the auspices of the first High Level Political Forum in July 2016. This is a gesture that demonstrates the commitment of Uganda to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also consistent with the progress that has been made over the last three decades in the areas of post war reconstruction (1986 – 1997); poverty eradication (1997 – 2009); and social economic transformation (2010 -2020); and efforts to attain the MDGs as articulated in the readiness report.

Further, we recognize the important achievements that have been realized over time including: improvements in development indicators that indicate that between 1991 and 2014, life expectancy rose from 48.1 to 63.3 years; infant and under-five mortality rates dropped from 122 and 203 deaths per 1,000 live births to 53 and 80 respectively; literacy levels rose from 54.0 to 72.2 per cent; income poverty declined from 56 to 19 per cent; and the proportion of the national budget that is funded from domestic sources has increased, from 64.7 percent (FY 1991/92) to 82 percent (FY 2014/15).

A. COMPLEMENTARY ISSUES CRITICAL TO ATTAINMENT OF SDGS

Against this background this CSO Rejoinder highlights and re-emphasizes complementary issues that are critical to the attainment of the SDG indicator targets. This Rejoinder is driven by the need to recognize that if the global community is going to solve the world’s toughest problems, we all need to make sure that leaders keep their promises and citizens play their part.

We therefore note the following:

1. Leadership and ownership should be comprehensive, diverse and inclusive

Implementing the SDGs requires that leaders at all levels actively engage with the 2030 agenda. Governments are in the driving seat, but the contribution of all sectors of society is essential to successful implementation.

We applaud the coordination mechanisms that Government of Uganda has put in place to steer implementation of the SDGs. However, we underscore the need for a more comprehensive coordination framework that promotes and supports autonomous and coordinated organizing and

includes Local Governments across the country, Parliament, Private sector and Civil Society Organizations.

2. Local Governments should be drivers of change

One of the lessons from the MDGs was the exclusion of local governments in the implementation of the MDGs. We are concerned that the Uganda Readiness Report does not comprehensively articulate Local Governments’ readiness for SDG implementation.

Local Governments have an important role to play in the implementation of the SDGs through providing leadership for the SDGs at local level, domestication of the agenda and alignment of local development plans to national plans. However, Local Governments need to be empowered to champion priority setting and allowed flexibility in mobilizing resources for financing their development priorities. It is also important to explore partnerships with existing local government structures such as Uganda Local Government Associations.

3. Parliament should play a stronger role

We recognize and appreciate the efforts of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on MDGs in the lead up processes to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the framework within which the forum works limits its reach and efficacy. There still exist problems of funding and it is also a highly voluntary initiative. We therefore implore Parliament to put in place formal structures that will provide oversight to the implementation and effective monitoring of SDGs as well as regular reporting to Parliament.

4. Bring media on board early

While the SDGs have been embraced in the political and development circles, the report is silent on the role of media. It is therefore important to articulate how government will engage media in building their knowledge base on the SDGs; their roles in communicating and popularizing the SDGs; and capacity of media practitioners in influencing the implementation, monitoring and reporting of SDGs. We are concerned that if the media is not brought on board early enough, the SDGs will remain an “elitist agenda”.

B. PROGRAMMING ISSUES

1. Mainstreaming of 2030 Agenda in Uganda’s Planning Framework

Though an assessment of the NDPII indicated that 76% of 2030 Agenda had been mainstreamed in the NDPII, it is important that Government moves beyond the general indicators to actual implementation and clear demonstration on how Government will undertake the mainstreaming of the SDGs in its plans and programmes. We therefore call for the development of an open and robust indicator level integration process that will ensure clear tracking of achievements and results at the implementation level.

2. Legal and Policy Frameworks

There is a lack of analysis on how legal and policy frameworks will facilitate the Agenda 2030. While we recognize the legal frameworks in place, the report does not provide analysis on how they will facilitate implementation of the agenda. We specifically call on Government to revisit the Public Order Management Act. It should be appreciated that the right and freedom to assemble is the aggregate of the individual liberty of speech which is one of the essential foundations of a democratic society. The

Public Order Management Act 2013 represents a reversal in the successes that Uganda has attained in protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ultimately, this law will lead to a further deterioration of the civic space in Uganda, and may hamper civil society actions that involve discussions related to governance and accountability and rule of law.

3. While we celebrate poverty reduction, let us pay attention to the ‘backsliders’ into poverty

Research evidence indicates that since the early 1990s, Uganda has experienced substantial reductions in poverty from 56 percent in 1992 to 19.7 percent in 2012/13. Economic growth, the end of conflict, and sound macroeconomic management have all contributed strongly to this success and we applaud Government’s efforts. However, as people have moved out of poverty, the number of people living at a level less than twice the poverty line - termed the ‘insecure non-poor’ - has risen. Analysis of Uganda National Panel Survey (UNPS) reveals that backsliding is a significant phenomenon in Uganda. Of those households that escaped poverty

between 2005 and 2009, around 40% were again living in poverty by 2011.¹

We appreciate the different Government programmes geared towards addressing poverty. But as we move towards ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’, there is need to institutionalize social protection approaches within the national development policies as an avenue to address chronic poverty, inequality and vulnerability that erodes Uganda’s poverty reduction efforts.

4. Domestic violence remains exceptionally high - implement the Domestic Violence Act 2010

Uganda has made great strides in strengthening gender equality and women’s empowerment. We would like to underscore that women have a right to equality in all areas. This equality must be embedded in both laws and legal practices. All life relates to gender equality and we must ensure that we cut all roots of gender discrimination. The persistence of domestic violence is unacceptable because domestic violence remains exceptionally high. A study by UN Women indicates that there is a 0.03% GDP loss from the reported domestic violence cases. On average only 10% of the cases are reported, it implies that the GDP loss to the country could be anywhere in the region of 3% of GDP.² This high economic and huge social cost may hamper Uganda’s effort to ensure that ‘no one is left behind’.

5. Disability is not inability – we call for full inclusion of PWDs in implementation of SDGs

We appreciate efforts of Government in implementing programmes on disability, enacting disability friendly legislation and policies to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities. However, inclusion of disability at all levels is not sufficient. In the spirit of ‘leave no

one behind’ there is need for adequate data on disability disaggregated by gender, age, nature and extent of disability. There is also need for the institutionalization of disability planning in all sectors so that the environment we live in is not disabling. We need to also include increase in funding to disability programs and scaling up of disability programmes that are rooted in the social model that recognizes that disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person’s impairment or difference. We therefore need to work in ways that will remove barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people so that they are not left behind.

6. Fast track job creation especially for the youth

Youth unemployment is recognized as a significant challenge to Uganda’s development, and the youth unemployment rate has been cited as high as 82%. Though the Government has implemented a number of strategies to boost youth employment such as the Youth Venture Fund and the Business Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme, the high national unemployment rate coupled with the annual population growth at 3.2% suggest that youth unemployment will continue to be a challenge in the years ahead. Thus a holistic approach to employment is required; one that encompasses rural development through agricultural transformation and value addition and skills development through enhanced Vocational Training.

7. Address demographic challenges like high fertility and dependency ratio

Uganda has one of the highest fertility rates and one of the fastest growing populations in Africa. According to the 2014 National Census, Uganda had a population of 34.6 million people. The current population growth rate is 3%, compared to the world’s average of 1.2%. The rapid growth of the population in such a short time has serious implications for Uganda’s aspiration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the next 15 years. This is exacerbated by the high fertility rate in

¹ Backsliding in Uganda: Ensuring escapes from poverty are sustained to end extreme poverty, LEO Report No. 27

² Ssewakiryanga Richard and Mubarak Mabuya (2013) REPORT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC COSTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: Uganda Country Study – 2013, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), Addis Ababa

the country. On average, a woman in Uganda has 5.8 children, higher than its neighboring countries. This compares unfavorably to a global average of 2.7 and an African average of 5.1.

Uganda also has the youngest population with over 70% below the age of 30 years. The 2014 census reveals that children below 18 years constitute 55% of the population. There is an increase in the number of Ugandans between 18-30 years from 21.3% in 2012 to 23% of the total population in 2014. The dependency ratio is 103%. The major implication of Uganda's young population is an increasing burden at the household level with a related increase in the demand for social services which are not keeping pace with population growth. To achieve the SDGs Uganda must recognize the impact of population dynamics on development and focus on interventions that will lower fertility rates and limit rapid population growth as well as take advantage of the youth bulge.

8. Managing Environmental Development

Uganda, as in many countries, the environment is facing threats from a range of human activities. Population growth and rapid urbanization have put pressure on the delicate balance of exploiting

today's natural resources at the expense of future generations. Uganda still struggles with loss in biodiversity with depletion of natural wealth estimated to cost the country 4 to 12% of national income each year. In 2005 Uganda had a total of 3.6 million hectares of forest land compared to 4.9 million hectares in 1990 (UBOS 2014). Reduced forest cover seriously threatens biodiversity and potentially lucrative economic activities such as ecotourism. In Uganda, climate change and increased weather variability has recently been observed and is manifested in the increase in frequency and intensity of weather extreme including high temperatures leading to prolonged drought, erratic rainfall patterns and lowering of the water table. Consequently this has led to an increase in disasters related to hydrometeorological hazards including floods, soil erosion, lightening and hailstorms among others.

Government should make investment in the recovery and restoration of degraded ecosystems, especially wetlands and the protected forest estate as a priority. Further, Uganda should also take advantage of the proposed climate change funding opportunities for climate resilience and low carbon initiatives.

C. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. Uganda should decisively deal with corruption

Uganda continues to lose millions of shillings through corruption. Corruption diverts public resources to private gain and escalates the cost of providing public services which undermines the progress of development initiatives and good governance to the detriment of the majority Ugandans. In 2012-2015, Uganda's Corruption Perception Index oscillated between 0.29 and 0.25, which implies that Uganda is perceived as highly corrupt.³ There is slow progress with the way

³ Transparency International 2015 - <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015>

corruption cases are investigated and prosecuted before the courts of law. In addition there is little or no money recovered despite the enormous amounts that were misappropriated.

Civil society calls for full adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability in the use of public resources and plugging the revenue leakages to curb corruption. Domestic accountability should form the core of governments' responsibility towards their citizens in the implementation of the SDGs.

2. Frontloading Infrastructure Development

We welcome Uganda's infrastructure development in key sectors such as Transport, Energy, ICT and Oil and Gas. We also appreciate the centrality of these investments to the economy. However, we urge the Government to pay attention to the feedback from many stakeholders on the need to ensure that the Uganda private sector plays

a prominent role in the sector. This will ensure that resources are retained in the economy. The focus on infrastructure maintenance especially in the roads sector is also an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of infrastructure. High cost of compensation to make way for infrastructure development is also an issue to pay attention to. We therefore ask government to pay particular attention to these areas.

D. CIVIL SOCIETY COMMITMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE SDGS

The focus of the SDGs that is encapsulated in the idea of serving-people and the planet is very compelling for civil society. Civil Society has put together the Agenda 2030 CSO Reference Group with over 60 core CSO members at national and local level that brings together women, youth, PWDs, faith organizations, cultural organizations and mainstream CSOs and links to global CSO processes like the Major Groups at the UN and Action for Sustainable Development. Civil society has built a coherent set of actions that will engage with the SDG process and highlight the integration process that is going on. The following key areas will be central for Civil Society work:

- SDG Awareness Building
- Advocacy for Country Level Prioritization

- Promoting domestication of SDGs at national and local level
- Participatory Citizen Monitoring of SDGs within the context of National Development Plan II
- Supporting Implementation through resource mobilization for SDGs

Agenda 2030 Reference Group will also work collaboratively to develop a coordination mechanism for the roll out of the SDG process locally. This process will entail working on specific aspects within the scope of the SDG to ensure that there is maximum impact through the use of shared resources and collective organizing.

About Agenda 2030 CSO Reference Group

Agenda 2030 CSO Reference Group brings together efforts of various civil society formations that include; the Post-2015 CSO Group, Global Call Against Poverty – Uganda Chapter, Beyond 2015, Action 2015, Youth and Women SDG Advocacy Groups. Agenda 2030 CSO Reference Group will be used to build public awareness, campaign and advocate, implement, and promote monitoring and accountability. This is an inclusive platform that will plan serve us over the next 15 years. Agenda 2030 CSO Reference Group aims is to connect civil society across the country and is an open platform that will work at the local, national, regional and global level.

MEMBERS OF THE AGENDA 2030 CSO REFERENCE GROUP

1. ACORD INTERNATIONAL
2. ACTION AID UGANDA
3. ACTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT
4. ACTION GROUP FOR HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS AND HIV/AIDS
5. ACTION ON DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT
6. AFRICA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LINK
7. AFRICAN MONITOR
8. AKINA MAMA WA AFRIKA
9. AMURIA CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION NETWORK
10. ARUA DISTRICT NGO NETWORK
11. BAHAI FAITH
12. BUGIRI NGO FORUM
13. BUGISU CSO NETWORK
14. CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE
15. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION UGANDA
16. DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES
17. DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND TRAINING
18. FOOD RIGHTS ALIANCE
19. FORUM FOR WOMEN IN DEMOCRACY
20. GENERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
21. GIRL UP INITIATIVE UGANDA
22. GULU DISTRICT NGO FORUM
23. HELP AGE
24. HOIMA NGO FORUM
25. JOY FOR CHILDREN
26. KABAROLE NGO FORUM
27. KABERAMAIDO DISTRICT NGO FORUM
28. KAMWENGE DISTRICT INDIGENOUS VOLUNTARY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION NETWORK
29. KALANGALA DISTRICT NGO FORUM
30. KAMULI DISTRICT NGO FORUM
31. KANUNGU NGO/CBO FORUM
32. KAPCHORWA CSO ASSOCIATION
33. KASESE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
34. KATAKWI DISTRICT NETWORK
35. KIBAALÉ NGO FORUM
36. KIBOGA NGO FORUM
37. KISORO DISTRICT NGO/CBOs FORUM
38. KITGUM NGO FORUM
39. KOTIDO DISTRICT NGO FORUM
40. KUMI NETWORK OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS
41. KYENJOJO NGO/CBOs FORUM
42. LAW AND ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN IN UGANDA
43. LIRA NGO FORUM
44. LUWERO DISTRICT NGO FORUM
45. MBARARA DISTRICT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FORUM
46. MOYO NGO FORUM
47. MUKONO DISTRICT NGO FORUM
48. NAMUTUMBA NGO FORUM
49. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF BLIND IN UGANDA
50. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA
51. NATIONAL COMMUNITY OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS IN UGANDA
52. NEBBI NGO FORUM
53. NATIONAL UNION OF DISABLED PERSONS OF UGANDA
54. OXFAM INTERNATIONAL
55. PADER NGO FORUM
56. PALLISA CSO NETWORK
57. PLAN INTERNATIONAL
58. RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT
59. RIAMIRIAM CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK
60. RESPONSE TO AFRICAN YOUTH DYNAMICS
61. SEATINI UGANDA
62. SIRONKO CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK
63. SUPPORT FOR INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE INITIATIVE
64. TORORO CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK
65. UGANDA CHILD RIGHTS NGO NETWORK
66. UGANDA COALITION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
67. UGANDA LAND ALLIANCE
68. UGANDA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF
69. UGANDA NATIONAL NGO FORUM
70. UGANDA NETWORK OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS
71. UGANDA WATER AND SANITATION NETWORK
72. UGANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK
73. UGANDA YOUTH AND ADOLESCENTS FORUM
74. UGANDA YOUTH COALITION ON ADOLESCENT SEXUAL REPRODUCTION HEALTH RIGHTS AND HIV/AIDS
75. UGANDA YOUTH NETWORK
76. VOLUNTARY SERVICES OVERSEAS
77. WATER AID
78. WESTERN ANKOLE CSO FORUM
79. WHITE RIBBON ALLIANCE
80. WORLD VISION
81. WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE
82. YOUTH PLUS POLICY NETWORK



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