
Saferworld submission to the International Development Committee's Inquiry on the Sustainable Development Goals

September 2015

Saferworld welcomes the International Development Committee's inquiry into "*Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" (The 2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As an independent organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives, Saferworld has been working on the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) since 2011 in order to ensure an inclusion of peace in the new development framework. As such our submission will focus on (1) the need to prioritise peace given its critical role in promoting sustainable development, (2) our vision for effective implementation of the framework and (3) our recommendations for robust measurement of progress. Saferworld has published multiple reports and briefings throughout the SDG process, including [Measuring Peace from 2015: An Indicator Framework at Work](#) and [From the Sustainable Development Goals to the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Building a Consensus for Peace](#).

DfID should prioritise an overarching strategy for SDG implementation for all partner countries with particular emphasis on Goal 16 on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

1. The 2030 Agenda that will shortly replace the MDGs is global in nature, universally applicable, and is no longer geared exclusively towards progress in 'developing countries'. With the inclusion of peace in this new framework, The 2030 Agenda represents a commitment to prevent conflict and promote peace **everywhere**. As such the targets and indicators under Goal 16 will enshrine a global agreement to define and measure human progress in a new way – shining light on the deep structural problems that have made conflict and poverty intertwined and intractable problems in too many countries for too long.
2. Given the transformative potential of an agenda that creates momentum on these vital issues, DfID should prioritise creating an overarching strategy for SDG implementation for all partner countries, particularly emphasising Goal 16 (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*). Peace is critical for sustainable development. Taking any MDG as a yardstick, people are poorer where conflict, violence and their underlying drivers have been allowed to fester.ⁱ Strikingly, all seven of the countries that are unlikely to meet a single MDG by the end of 2015 have been affected by high levels of violence.ⁱⁱ Indeed, poverty eradication and development gains cannot be sustained under conditions of violence or insecurity, and are placed at serious risk when the known drivers of conflict are allowed to fester.
3. With 30% of DfID's budget already committed to work in conflict-affected states, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies is well aligned with the UK's existing development priorities, and the UK has significant expertise and experience to mobilise in support of wider global efforts which are already a crucial component of its work – this should be capitalised upon in order to implement Goal 16.
4. Successful development and poverty eradication requires more than the absence of violence. The High Level Panel on Post-2015 chaired by the Prime Minister identified peace as one of five transformative shifts needed to make development effective and sustainable;ⁱⁱⁱ and peace has now taken its place as one of five cross-cutting priorities in The 2030 Agenda. This recognition - that sustainable development depends on fostering peace by working to address the drivers of conflict within violent contexts and beyond – has at last gone global. Many of the most critical drivers of conflict, on which just and lasting peace depends, are addressed in Goal 16. They include reducing violence, ensuring fair access to justice, supporting political freedoms and participation in decision making and eradicating corruption. The need to tackle transnational problems such as flows of

arms, drugs and illicit financial flows is also rightly emphasised. In addition, other SDGs that support fair access to livelihoods, social services and resources and promote gender equality (Goal 5) also take aim at important drivers of conflict and will be reinforced by promotion of Goal 16. Indeed, inequalities between men and women and indeed all social groups are known to drive and perpetuate conflict.^{iv}

5. The prioritisation of these issues in the SDGs is therefore very positive. Goal 16 issues are already core components of existing DfID commitments and strategies alongside the wider priorities of the UK government. Key initiatives related to peaceful, just and inclusive societies include the *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS) and DfID's commitment to spend 30% of its funds in conflict-affected and fragile states. The current spike in global levels of conflict and displacement due to violence underline the fact that success in preventing conflict and building peace will increasingly determine the broader success or failure not only of DFID's work, but of the UK's foreign and defence policy more broadly. With this in mind, global consensus on the new SDGs is a crucial basis for DfID and other relevant parts of HMG to connect their existing efforts and commitments on conflict prevention, human rights and good governance with new levels of effort and coherence on these issues across international institutions and the community of nations.

The 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to implement more coherent, people-focused development

6. The implementation of the SDGs is an opportunity to shift beyond reaction to existing conflict and instability towards upstream prevention as envisaged under HMG's BSOS. As the world faces ever more interlinked development, humanitarian, security and migration crises, there is a need to leverage the momentum of the SDG process to incite concrete action before crises become acute. The universal nature of the SDGs provides opportunity to work on conflict prevention with a wider range of actors across government, the private sector, and also include global powers that have at times remained suspicious of international peace efforts.
7. Concrete strategies and methods for implementing Goal 16 will need to be based on a thorough understanding of the context in question and will only work if owned and sustained by a range of local and national actors across society, the state and the private sector. Specific priorities and activities to promote peace will vary widely between contexts. The SDG targets are universal commitments, but it is up to each country (or even local area) to decide on appropriate approaches and sequencing for achieving them. DfID can play an important role in stimulating dialogue between governments, opposition parties, civil society, the media, academia, the private sector and the public on what the key priorities are at the national level and assist relevant ministries and bodies in developing strategies for implementation.
8. The common vision provided by The 2030 Agenda should translate into stronger global leadership of more coherent development efforts. The 2030 Agenda is universal, people-focused and was developed through inclusive global dialogue. In implementation, the focus must remain on outcomes for people. Coordination and reporting structures need to remain inclusive and accountable to people and civil society, and the UK should exert its influence to ensure that people's views on progress are the yardstick, and civil society around the world plays a role in accountability and monitoring structures, while excessive bureaucracy and domination by states and multilaterals of these structures is avoided.
9. Leaders across HMG should maintain a strong interest in progress on delivering SDG commitments, and encourage strong commitment and multistakeholder partnerships with others to take them forward. DfID has the opportunity to play a key coordination role across different sectors. When building a narrative around a common agenda for conflict prevention, conversations will need to include the peace, justice, human rights, governance and inequality constituencies alongside official and non-official actors. DfID should be developing a vision for joint partnerships, agreements on shared principles, sharing lessons learned and finding synergies between efforts. DfID also has a crucial role to play across HMG, ensuring that all departments offer support to the framework and that cross-government efforts do not contradict one another, whether in terms of trade, aid, immigration or any other areas of foreign engagement.

DfID's work with partners of all kinds should emphasise the multilateral nature of The 2030 Agenda, building local ownership, political will and buy-in

10. At country level, DfID's bilateral country offices are already engaging locally with national implementation. They have an important role to play in a number of respects, listed below.
11. The 2030 Agenda will only be transformative if local and national champions demonstrate the courage and leadership necessary to unite people and institutions behind a progressive vision. This may be politically challenging, but where leaders, ministers, politicians and civil society recognise and affirm the relevance of Goal 16 (and other key targets) in their own countries, this agenda can translate into huge benefits for public well-being, social cohesion and confidence in the future. In implementation, The 2030 Agenda must be adapted to the realities of a wide variety of national and local contexts. It should be integrated with existing national and local plans, but should also be an opportunity to stimulate debate about what the real priorities are. It is an

opportunity to reassess priority needs proactively, in consultation with the public, to link these priorities to existing plans, and to develop strategies for a range of different ministries and bodies, all underpinned by a common vision of development.

12. The high-level political will needed to achieve The 2030 Agenda cannot be imposed, but must be fostered internally. HMG and other donor governments should therefore support inclusive assessments and dialogue processes that enable societies and states to set their own priorities for implementation – building on existing and indigenous capacities and processes rather than imposing or creating artificial ones. With this in mind, DfID should identify and support local champions (whether they be private individuals, ambitious ministers, philanthropists or drawn from civil society or the private sector) and reinforce their commitment to champion The 2030 Agenda at local and national levels.
13. DfID and other government ministries should be ensuring that the implementation of Agenda 2030 has built-in accountability mechanisms. Quantifying targets and setting appropriate global- and country-level indicators for Goal 16 will be challenging, and the risks of focusing on changes that do not matter to people thereby creating perverse incentives must be avoided. For example, one of the proposed indicators for Goal 16, '*unsentenced detainees as percentage of overall prison population*', risks incentivising speedy (but unjust) trails, as opposed to robust due process in the justice system.
14. Development of baseline data for many indicators will be crucial, and DfID should support relevant national statistics offices, multilateral, and civil society organisations to provide the data needed to monitor the new agenda in credible, impartial and conflict-sensitive ways.
15. If parliaments, civil society, activists, the media and the wider public are not engaged on SDGs, then leaders will feel little pressure to act. DfID can support this process from multiple angles: engaging with civil society, supporting data creation, distribution and capacity building, and encouraging planning implementation and monitoring processes that are inclusive at every step.

Peace requires a whole-of-government effort, with DfID playing a leading role in coordination, facilitation and dissemination of best practice

16. Other UK government departments have a vital role to play in the achievement of the SDGs. This universal framework is about more than aid – the UK government should reorient its support beyond 0.7% of GNI that makes up the aid budget to include the other 99.3% of government spending. As a universal agenda, all government departments should begin to analyse how the UK meets the SDGs domestically, how progress on all targets is being measured and if additional capacities to do this are necessary.
17. Specifically, target 16.4 (*by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime*) will require leadership from a range of UK government departments and should be approached as a domestic policy issue involving banking regulations amongst other things. However, it is also a foreign policy issue on which collective action is required if it is to be addressed. The UK must urge international action, support other states to adopt effective banking regulations, share information and coordinate. This involves multiple government ministries within the UK alongside global joint efforts. DfID and the UK government must develop structures to ensure that all relevant departments are kept informed.
18. The UK government's own implementation of the SDG framework is an important contribution to global public goods: we need an international environment conducive to all countries meeting the SDGs. At their heart, the SDGs are about achieving key outcomes beneficial to all, including a stable and open global economy, healthy multilateralism, and global governance reform. This means that the DfID will need to engage with a diverse range of ministries on issues as varied as peacekeeping, trade, investment etc. to ensure that they all align with the objectives within The 2030 Agenda.

Peace is already being measured but more needs to be done in order to improve measurement and develop indicators for Goal 16 targets – DfID should support these efforts

19. In terms of measurement of progress on The 2030 Agenda and the development of indicators, Saferworld has published a briefing "[Measuring Peace from 2015: An Indicator Framework at Work](#)" which outlines in detail how SDG targets on peace should be measured, what data and initiatives already exist in this area, how the global accountability framework should be designed, as well as modelling some of the best available peace-related indicators in action. Below we summarise key points, but further details can be provided on request.

20. Our assessment of the available data strongly indicates the overall feasibility of measuring commitments under Goal 16 in a reliable way. However, innovation, resources and political will are required to build on the wide array of currently available data and to extend its coverage. As well as continuing to advocate for inclusive, multi-stakeholder monitoring processes, the UK government should directly support those working to improve measurement and develop indicators for Goal 16 targets. These include the Praia Group on Governance, Peace and Security Statistics which is leading on the development of globally accepted indicators. A full list of existing data sets that can be used to measure progress on Goal 16 can be supplied.
21. The relevance of these indicators goes beyond the SDGs. The development of peace, justice and governance indicators that will allow global comprehensive and universal monitoring of these issues by 2030 could help catalyse momentum and enhance progress on these issues all around the world, and is thus a development outcome in and of itself.
22. Saferworld has advocated a three-sided indicator approach for measuring progress towards addressing conflict and violence. These measure simultaneously changes in **capacity** (for example improved police performance or judicial development), alongside '**objective situation**' indications (such as levels of violent death) and finally **public perceptions** (such as data on whether the public feels safe).
23. This combination is critical for several reasons. No single indicator (whether capacity, objective-situation or perceptions based) offers a full and reliable picture on its own. Only when combined do individual indicators combine to form a reliable picture – helping to avoid misleading results and perverse incentives. It is therefore crucially important that peacebuilding indicators in the post-2015 framework are not reduced to one or two 'catch-all' proxies that are supposed to show progress in addressing conflict and violence. Perception-based measures are particularly important for peacebuilding purposes. They can support governments in particular in developing peacebuilding strategies and measures that build confidence by focusing on what the public wants delivered. Accordingly, the UK should continue to emphasise the need to monitor public perceptions and experience as a central element of the SDG accountability framework.
24. The UK should also work to develop official and unofficial capacities in measurement and statistics. The current data revolution means a wide range of actors have the potential to play a role in producing, analysing and dissemination of data and should be supported to do so. The UK National Statistics Office will play an important role in demonstrating the value of involving unofficial capacities in producing, analysing and disseminating data. For more information on this, see the Saferworld article "[Who Should Measure the SDGs?](#)"

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

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ⁱ Saferworld, 'Addressing conflict and violence from 2015 - Issue Paper 1: The impact of conflict and violence on achieving development', (November 2012).

ⁱⁱ OECD (2014), 'Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States', p 17

ⁱⁱⁱ www.post2015hlp.org/the-report

^{iv} See Wright, H (2014), 'Masculinities, Conflict and Peacebuilding', Saferworld and Attree L, Brinkman H-J, Hezir S (2013), 'Addressing horizontal inequalities as drivers of conflict in the post-2015 development agenda', Saferworld & PBSO