

– WG 3 Governance & Membership Webinar

Thurs 4 Feb, 2016 14:00 GMT/ 09:00 EST

1) Introduction from co-facilitators

Overall process: a summary was provided of the joint policy and advocacy undertaken by civil society during 2015 to shape the SDGs and the wider 2030 Agenda. All the participants were reminded of the steps taken to bring together civil society groups for coordination on the delivery and monitoring of the 2030 agenda, including key meetings in: Tunis March 2015 at the World Social Forum, Addis Ababa July 2015 at the Financing for Development Conference, New York in September 2015 at the SDG summit & Paris in December 2015 during COP21.

The SDG process demonstrated how civil society can work together to shape policies and bring about real change, but there are also lessons to be learned and opportunities now to build on this experience.

Over 1000 individuals from around the world have been involved in discussions on how to continue to coordinate this effort to re-group in a broad coalition, initially named for the transition period as "So Now What".

Key facilitation is coming from CIVICUS, IFP, GCAP and CAN International at this stage, with collaboration of different groups, from different constituencies.

- As part of this collaborative process, the objective of this call was to continue looking into the needs of local partners around the world in order to bring their voices –, from local to national and global– and provide ideas on how better to shape the new structure.

2) Update on discussions Sep-Dec 2015

The Transitional Steering Group over Sep-Dec 2015 delivered its work, including Terms of Reference and an Options Paper. The guidance from these documents was discussed in a meeting in Paris alongside the COP21 to flesh out the options. Timeline for joint action going forward was agreed in New York and again in Paris:

- Feb-March: To agree on key framework for the new platform, through 3 working groups: Outreach & Communications; Resourcing & Projects; and Governance & Membership. The main options for the platform have been shared by email and are available on the Loomio page. Part of the work will be done virtually, but in-person meetings are also scheduled;

- Our **Governance WG** needs to set out a model for governance going forward through an open process ready for April.

- April: many of the key partners from civil society will come together in Bogota at International Civil Society Week to launch our coordination platform and plan ahead for coming years- including an open call for the Steering Group.

3) Model for governance: learning from previous initiatives

We invited key Campaigns who followed the post-2015 process to share their lessons learned in this call. Some common principles identified by the Transitional Steering Group were reaffirmed by the participants:

- * Coordination as a process to facilitate joint work, not to control it;
- * Radical inclusivity
- * Open approach
- * Transparent and accountable

Main features likely to include:

a) There was a suggestion of an Assembly- meeting in person once a year; plus online meetings each quarter?

To be defined: the scope of Assembly and the objectives of the online meetings

b) Steering Group- Global: guaranteeing geographic and north-south balance; diversity in the themes; capacity to bring the voices of people left behind.

Question opened about the regional structure. Do we need Regional steering groups or should the platform link and strengthen existing regional bodies? eg. ADA, SDG Watch Europe, La Mesa

c) Coordination/secretariat: a question to be resolved is if this should be organised through the existing networks? (ie. CAN, CIVICUS, IFP and GCAP) or should there be a new structure? Should it be a consortium or a separate legal entity?

d) Working Groups: Some options to be considered. Should these focus on cross-cutting themes, such as National implementation; global monitoring and review?; and/or on key areas, eg. Linked to particular Goals?; Or themes such as water, health?

e) Link to national coordination: Do we see a need for a close link with National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs)? Are there other ways for national networks to mobilise for accountability? How will the national action plans link to the HLPF etc.?

Notes of the discussion:

- Marie (A/2015):

- What made the strength of A/2015 was the work at national level. Action/2015 was made up of more than 2,200 organizations from 157 countries, with more than 80% of participating organizations in the Global South. Participating organizations came from diverse backgrounds, working on a range of issues including peace and development, environment, climate, education, civil rights, youth, rural development, social business, media development, elderly, health, renewable energy and more. They ranged from very

small CSOs working in rural areas with their communities and constituents, to major international NGOs.

- The core principles of the campaign were to be inclusive, enabling, participatory, light touch and open-source, drawing on the strengths and resources of its participating organisations. Building capacity and providing support was key to enable engagement in the national and local levels
- Governance structure:
 - National coalitions with coordinators facilitating and stimulating engagement between participating organizations; providing a link between local/national and global levels moments, events and activities.
 - Global action/teams (13 in total): delivered specific activities and tactics for the campaign on expert areas (outreach, communications), around key campaign moments (launch, May mobilizations, FFD, UNGA, COP), as well as thematic areas (youth, women, faith).
 - A small Global Hub and regional coordinators to coordinate and provide logistical support, facilitate information flow and support participating organizations and other governance bodies in the effective implementation and coordination of the campaign.
 - A Reference Group made up of 14 geographically representative elected members (one woman, one man per region), along with 3 advisors on key components of the campaign that were under-represented by current make-out (climate, civic space, mass mobilization). Their role was to advise the Global Hub and action/teams, providing a light touch steer to ensure strategies stay on track; and ensure decisions agreed by the Assembly are implemented to help ensure coherence, to seek opportunities for campaign engagement. Their role was to facilitate rather than control the campaign.
 - Campaign Assemblies open to all campaign participants. This was the main decision-making body of the campaign and agreed key components of the campaign (narrative, key messages and goals, etc.), reviewed the effectiveness of the campaign's communications and governance, and strengthened global civil society by facilitating exchange of best practices and linking regional/national organizations, linking national and international campaign activities.
- Key findings and lessons learned:
 - One of the biggest strengths of the campaign that was mentioned by almost all stakeholders was its opt-in structure. The flexibility of the campaign, enabling everyone to take out what most fits their cause and organization, worked extremely well and was appreciated by all participants (the "flotilla" structure). Being given high-level objectives, resources and guidelines while having the freedom to link it to issues, audiences or activities most relevant to their own organizations worked well and inspired enthusiasm and cooperation.
 - The feedback on the global action/teams was generally positive, with them playing an important role in the development of open-source and creative materials and engaging particular audiences, such as the campaign's youth ambassadors.
 - National coalition leads played a key role in the campaign, facilitating and stimulating engagement in the campaign, translating the global campaign into local & national needs and priorities. Participants overwhelmingly saw the role of national

coalition leads as an important in national campaigning, but highlighted the importance to clarify the selection of the national coalition leads as well as their responsibilities. In action/2015, the role of national coalition leads varied significantly per country and the most performing ones were usually colleagues who received support to work full-time on the initiative from an early stage, had benefited from support to leverage existing CSO networks in their countries (e.g. working as part of an existing CSO network), and received regular (and sufficient) financial support to lead and conduct the coalition's activities at local and national levels.

- Overall, the feedback regarding the global coordination platform (Global Hub) was very positive for its commitment, responsiveness, ability to translate everything in three languages and general ability to build a personal relationship with everyone and 'connect action/2015'.
- Coordination at a regional level was considered weaker. *Some stakeholders call for stronger regional coordination in the future, believing it could have had a big impact on outcomes and effectiveness.* One way might be to better leverage existing regional networks and ensure regional coordinators directly report back to the Global Hub structure for a good flow of information between global and regional levels.
- There was mixed feedback on the Reference Group. Some members played a very important role, but the group was not as active as it could have been. Still, overall, participants think that the idea of a Reference Group is good but in practice, it is important to organize elections/selections once a sufficient number of participating organizations is onboard so the group that is elected is the most representative of the campaign's participating organizations and the most committed to the initiative's goal and objectives, also enabling to ensure strong linked between global and regional levels, across sectors, and to be able to provide guidance to global & regional coordination platforms, as well as national coalitions.
- Campaign Assemblies were key to share best practices & lessons learned, and agree on key campaign decisions and processes. Action/2015 was able to organize several meetings to launch the campaign and then two planning meetings during the campaign. With hindsight, it would have been better to organize more Assemblies to give more opportunities to reflect on the campaign's achievements and ways forward throughout the year. Challenge: these meetings can be quite expenses, but they are so important.

- Shantal presented the activities planned for the new Platform to include: Policy Coordination, Implementation, Monitoring & Accountability and Public Mobilization

- Ingo (GCAP):

- Ingo stressed and reinforced the importance of regional and gender balance in the coordination structure
- Building capacity is important to overcome technological and representation challenges
- We have to make an extra effort to include marginalized populations, such as indigenous communities

- One of the main challenges is to ensure leadership from the global south is represented and supported.

- Wider inputs:

- Alessandra responded to a key question on how to ensure leadership comes from the global South, by highlighting that – as it is happening in Brazil, led by ABONG-GESTOS– there is already work being done at the national level in many Southern countries, therefore one possible good way forward was to identify and guarantee that these initiatives are linked and engaged in the process. It is important that this initiative builds from the ‘bottom-up’ rather than remaining disconnected on local-international strategies.
- In order to understand what is already happening at the national level, one suggestion was to map out existing initiatives and joint advocacy, including on national action plans.
- There was a strong call for a genuinely open process for the future steering group, including balanced geographic and gender representation. Especially considering the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that it must be implemented in the northern and in the southern countries.
- Criticism was raised regarding the low budget that the UN provides for civil society engagement and the risk that the SDGs will not be adequately supported.
- In terms of the logistical arrangements- there was a request to include other languages in future calls, and a recognition of the importance of meeting in person once a year, as well as hosting online conversations.

Actions & Next steps:

- The Working Group will share a draft outline of the proposed Governance of the platform by end of February.
- An open source approach to mapping activities at national level will be prepared and circulated to the entire mailing list in the coming week.
- Key organisations from the Transition Group and partner networks will meet in Istanbul in early March and a wider meeting will be hosted in Bogota on 29 April.