

## **Informal comments to Members of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on the Working Document for its 11th Session**

**April 2014**

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*This document offers informal comments from Saferworld on the Working Document circulated by the co-Chairs of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals in advance of its 11<sup>th</sup> session. While the OWG should be congratulated for its continued pursuit of consensus on inclusion of commitments related to peace and governance, this document offers a number of suggestions for refining the content proposed, drawing on the available evidence.*

Saferworld welcomes the inclusion of Focus Area 16 on ‘Peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions’. While we recognise that Member States are carefully working towards consensus on the treatment of the sensitive issues related to this focus area, we reiterate that addressing issues of peace, rule of law and governance in the post-2015 framework is essential. Indeed, covering these issues under a single focus area among sixteen does not fully reflect the high priority attached to these issues by societies around the world – nor the outcomes of previous expert consultations and official reports (see box).

Many of the priorities listed under Focus Area 16 are relevant and essential for peace based on the available evidence. However, more work is needed to translate these priorities into targets that articulate clear, specific, measurable outcomes that will be understood and welcomed by the world’s people as an ambitious agenda for ensuring sustainable peace and good governance.

- The UN General Assembly unanimously agreed in September 2013 that any new development framework should promote peace, governance and the rule of law.
- Groups of member states have called for peace to be a priority: for example, the 54 member states of the African Union agreed that peace should be one of six core pillars for the new development framework, stating that it “is essential for the achievement of the continent’s development aspirations”.
- 1.5 million people, through the *My World* survey, consistently placed protection against crime and violence and honest and responsive government among their top seven development priorities.
- The High Level Panel of Eminent Persons identified building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions as one of five transformative shifts – in fact all the major expert report inputs into the September 2013 report of the UN Secretary-General called for a significant focus on issues of peace and governance.

Generally, the OWG working document priorities for Focus Area 16 focus on mechanisms, policies and actions – many of them broad and cross-cutting – that are expected to contribute to sustainable peace and good governance. It is hard to disagree with the overall directions articulated in most cases. However, these directions need to be translated into targets articulated as specific outcomes that matter to people and that will motivate and guide action. As currently formulated, there is a risk of skewing future development efforts on peace and governance towards the implementation of processes and the development of capacities, without a clear sense of *purpose as to what these processes and capacities are intended to achieve*. In other words, we need to move beyond output-oriented targets towards outcome-oriented targets. Saferworld’s specific comments on the

working document are provided in more detail in the table below, together with suggestions on how to move forward on the themes identified for inclusion in each case.

Because many of the suggestions under Focus Area 16 amount to cross-cutting suggestions best reflected in the overall design of the framework and under other focus areas, the space to focus on targets that are vital to peace and good governance seems overly crowded in the working document. This could be remedied by identifying the key targets that fit only under Focus Area 16 as a separate list from the cross-cutting points that should form a checklist for judging the 'peace and governance sensitivity' of all other parts of the framework.

The core targets that are retained – and prioritised – under Focus Area 16 should be cross-checked carefully against three questions:

- Do they define *outcomes* that respond to the key drivers of conflict and violence in today's world?
- Do they have the potential – even where applied with flexibility – to do harm?
- Do they reflect the best evidence as to what works – and does not work – in peace and development efforts to date?

These three questions underpin the following detailed comments:

Working document target	Saferworld comment	Suggestion of improved target formulations building on OWG working document
<b>Creating peaceful and inclusive societies:</b>		
<p>a) by 2030 reduce by x% crime, violence and exploitation especially of children and women including by reducing organized crime and human trafficking</p>	<p>It is important that crime, violence and organised crime have been included – but it is not practicable to address them all under a single target. Organised crime in particular is a multifaceted problem in which strategic and transformative outcomes should be more specifically defined. A more detailed analysis of how to do this is provided <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>We would also support the inclusion of targets related to violence under other parts of the framework to support this target, such as in Focus Area 5.b on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.</p> <p>Whether in this target, in a separate target, or at indicator level, the issue of public confidence in security and security provision should also be an explicit focus of the peaceful societies agenda.</p> <p>We would also observe that human trafficking – an abhorrent problem that must be addressed – could be considered more as a symptom of problems that should be addressed through other targets (on gender equality, access to justice and security provision) than as a key driver of conflict, violence and underdevelopment in its own right. We would therefore urge further careful consideration of the evidence on how far this issue acts as a driver of other problems (in comparison to issues such as drugs trafficking) and how its root causes can most strategically be addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2030 reduce by x% crime, violence and exploitation especially of children and women</li> <li>• People from all social groups feel safe and have confidence in security provision</li> <li>• Significantly reduce the irresponsible trade in arms and conflict commodities, and reduce violence and other negative impacts associated with trade in illicit drugs</li> </ul>
<p>b) by 2030 eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices, empower marginalized groups, in the social, political and economic fields</p>	<p>The overall idea conveyed here is positive and one that we strongly support. But the language is too broad to determine practical actions (What does ‘empower’ mean, and how will success be measured? Who defines who is and is not a ‘marginalised group’? What specific actions are motivated by the reference to the social, economic and political fields?) Therefore in order to galvanise tangible outcomes, it will be necessary to translate this broad aspiration into specific targets.</p> <p>The current wording of the target illustrates the tendency to focus on processes (‘discriminatory laws, policies’) rather than outcomes. Better laws and policies are an important aspect as they are generally essential if we are to achieve effective and sustained outcomes; however, experience clearly shows that in</p>	<p>[Cross-cutting] Practical suggestions for taking this idea forward in the framework: (1) Ensure that the wording of targets across the framework promotes, wherever possible, access to resources, services and livelihoods for ‘people from all social groups’ (2) Measure progress on all such targets with the maximum disaggregation possible. This will make it possible to identify ‘discriminatory practices’ and to consider that targets are met only when they are met for all social groups.</p>

	<p>themselves they do not necessarily translate into the elimination of discrimination in practice. Therefore we suggest that targets would be better defined in terms of outcomes that demonstrate the elimination of discrimination in practice: i.e. all social groups having equal opportunities to attain healthy lives, learning outcomes, decent livelihoods, etc.</p>	<p>Include wording on increasing ‘civic participation’ (which can more readily be measured than ‘empowerment’) in targets below on freedoms of speech and association and participation in decision-making.</p>
<p>c) by 2030 establish inclusive, participatory decision-making, including at local governments, taking into consideration the interests of future generations</p>	<p>We consider the wording ‘including at local governments’ to be useful in some contexts but insufficiently universal. Therefore the target should instead encourage participatory decision-making at all levels.</p> <p>We acknowledge the value of the idea of ‘taking into consideration the interests of future generations’, but it would help to clarify how this would work in practice. For example, who would be able impartially to represent the interests of future generations? If this responsibility is to be vested in any particular group or authority, this may diminish the principle of all social groups having an equal stake in decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure people from all social groups can participate in and affect political processes and decision making without fear, at national, sub-national and local levels</li> </ul>
<p>d) by 2020 provide information and education on a culture of non-violence</p>	<p>We are not opposed to the inclusion of this issue area. However, we are concerned: (1) That there is an insufficient evidence base affirming the kind of education received as a key driver of conflict and violence around the world – or on the effectiveness of education on non-violence as a peacebuilding approach. With limited space in the framework, we would urge OWG members to consider carefully, with reference to the available evidence, whether other better-evidenced peace priorities should take precedence before this issue is included. (2) That a ‘culture of non-violence’ is less of a specific outcome that can be tangibly measured than the alternative target we suggest. For tangible indicator options see <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tensions, grievances and disputes within society are being resolved peacefully, inclusively and constructively</li> </ul>
<p>e) by 2030 implement planned and managed migration policies</p>	<p>Again, the focus here is on the implementation of a process – the implementation of planned and managed migration policies – without clear enough identification of the outcome that this would achieve for people. We are not aware of any existing option for a universal, quantifiable global public policy commitment on migration that could be included as a target in the framework.</p>	<p>[Levels of displacement due to violence should be included as an indicator under a target on violence]</p>
<b>Rule of law, capable institutions:</b>		
<p>a) by 2030 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels</p>	<p>Effective, accountable and transparent institutions are of course crucial to all peace and development outcomes, but they do not represent an outcome in and of themselves. Furthermore, the target at present is far too broad to galvanise any specific action. Therefore it will be necessary to translate this broad aspiration into specific targets in a range of focal areas across the framework.</p>	<p>[Cross-cutting] Ensure that targets and indicators are included across the framework that define and measure the specific outcomes that effective institutions bring about: the ability of people to access effective remedies to injustice; public safety and</p>

		feelings of confidence in security institutions; reduced corruption; public satisfaction with the inclusiveness of decision-making and the fairness of public procurement processes; ability to generate tax revenue and administer public spending fairly and accountably.
b) by 2030 provide equal access to independent and responsive justice systems including related to property and tenure rights, employment, business, taxation, trade and finance	The inclusion of this target is very important. Again, it is important to note that, just as having access to a clinic is not the same as having a healthy life, having access to justice systems is not the same as having effective remedies to injustice. Therefore we would refer again to the wording suggested in the right hand column, which draws on the legal terminology widely accepted among Member States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People from all social groups have effective remedies to injustice, and access to and confidence in effective, accountable and impartial justice provision</li> </ul>
c) by 2020 provide public services for all, including legal identity	Again, this idea is absolutely central to fostering lasting peace and is in many ways the core outcome of good governance. However, it is best understood not as a single target but as a cross-cutting objective.	[Cross-cutting] Targets for people from all social groups to be able to access services, resources, livelihoods, etc. fairly should be integrated across the other focus areas.
d) improve access to information on public finance management, public procurement and on the implementation of national development plans	'Improve' and 'information on public finance management' are vague terms, and therefore may not amount to very strong commitments. Terms like 'guarantee full access to' a range of specific key documents, such as national budgets and expenditure reports, would make the commitment more meaningful and measurable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guarantee full access to information on public finance management, public procurement and on the implementation of national development plans</li> </ul>
e) by 2030 decrease by x% corruption in all its forms and illicit financial flows	The space that is recovered by recognising the cross-cutting nature of some of the listed targets, and their incorporation elsewhere in the framework, should ensure that corruption and illicit financial flows are given due attention through two related but ultimately distinct targets. Corruption is one of the most significant drivers of conflict, violence and underdevelopment. It is closely connected to illicit financial flows – however, focus may be lost if they are lumped together as a single target. Two targets are therefore suggested here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce by X% bribery and corruption and ensure that all those involved are held accountable</li> <li>• Reduce illicit financial flows, including money laundering, tax evasion, trade mispricing transnational corruption and bribery by x%, and recover at least y% of illicit financial flows, by 2030</li> </ul>
f) remove unnecessary restrictions of freedom of media, association and speech	The word 'unnecessary' needs to be qualified. Any authority that imposes restrictions on freedom of media, association and speech would presumably contend that such restrictions were 'necessary'. The current wording leaves too much room for interpretation, which carries obvious risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that people from all social groups enjoy freedoms of speech, association, peaceful protest, civic engagement and access to information</li> </ul>