

Migration and the Sustainable Development Goals

Position Paper¹

February 2015



This project is funded by the European Union.

Introduction

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly will replace the expiring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a new set of goals and targets: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are an ambitious attempt to tackle the root causes of poverty, deprivation, and inequality worldwide. The project aims to establish a policy framework with universal goals that will cover all countries and all people. UN member states will be expected to use the SDGs to frame their policy agendas for the next 15 years.

The eight MDGs (see Fig. 1) form a blueprint agreed to in 2000 by all governments and leading development institutions, signifying an effort to eradicate poverty in the poorest countries of the world. In Asia, the MDGs led to successful projects in a number of areas, including improved food security and nutrition, increased access to reproductive and maternal health services, and improved access to primary education, among other positive outcomes.²

Despite gains in some areas, poverty, inequality, and deprivation remain at crisis levels across Asia and globally. Notably, the MDGs failed to include consideration of migrants and the links between development, human rights, and migration—a significant omission, particularly in the Asian context, as the Asia and Pacific region is home to more than 30 million migrant workers,³ too many of whom endure the struggles of poverty and inequality daily.

From MDGs to SDGs

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012, governments and other stakeholders decided to establish an Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations General Assembly to organize a process to propose a new set of goals to replace the MDGs. In July 2014, the OWG presented 17 goals with 169 targets to measure progress (see Fig. 2). Specific indicators to accompany the goals and targets will also be developed.

Fig 1. Millennium Development Goals



1

Eradicate extreme poverty hunger

2

Achieve universal primary education

3

Promote gender equality & empower women

4

Reduce child mortality

5

Improve maternal health

6

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

7

Ensure environmental sustainability

8

Global partnerships for development

Between January and July 2015, governments will continue to deliberate on the proposed goals and targets, determining how they will be implemented and financed and what indicators will be used to determine progress. The UN General Assembly will adopt the final goals and targets for the SDGs at

the Special Summit on Sustainable Development in New York, 25-27 September 2015. Thus, it is important for us to act now, as civil society only has until July to influence these deliberations and to encourage a strong human rights focus for the SDGs.

Fig 2. OWG Draft SDGs

-
- 1 • End poverty in all its forms everywhere
 - 2 • End hunger, achieve food security & improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
 - 3 • Ensure healthy lives & promote well-being for all at all ages
 - 4 • Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
 - 5 • Achieve gender equality & empower all women and girls
 - 6 • Ensure availability & sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
 - 7 • Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
 - 8 • Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
 - 9 • Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
 - 10 • Reduce inequality within and among countries
 - 11 • Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
 - 12 • Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
 - 13 • Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
 - 14 • Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development

15

- Protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, & halt/reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16

- Promote peaceful & inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

17

- Strengthen the means of implementation & revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Including Migrants in the SDGs: The Stockholm Agenda

Since June 2014, 309 civil society organizations and networks around the world have signed the “Stockholm Agenda on the Inclusion of Migrants and Migration in Post-2015 Global and National Development Agendas” (see Fig. 3)⁴. The Stockholm Agenda emerged from civil society meetings at the Global Forum on Migration and Development and parallel civil society processes in Sweden in May 2014. The agenda is a set of 9 migration-related goals and 21 related targets that contribute to the development of migrant countries of origin and destination.

Realizing Human Rights through the SDGs

While the MDGs focused almost entirely on developing countries, the draft SDGs recognize that there is a role for all countries in bringing about sustainable development. States have acknowledged that poverty and inequality are not only problems of the developing countries of the Global South; they are universal phenomena, and international solidarity and collaboration are necessary for sustainable solutions.

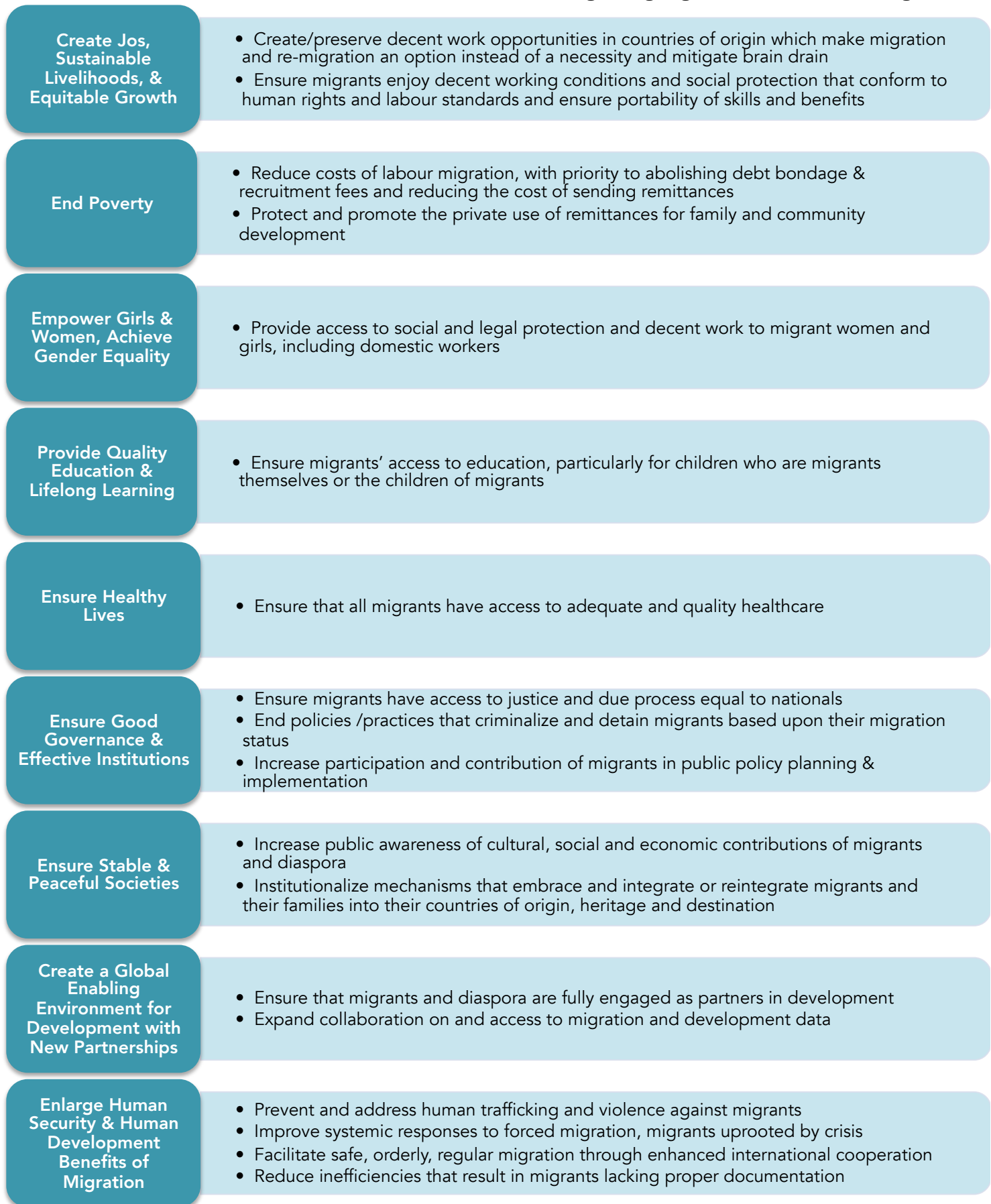
The SDGs mark an important moment for a deeper realization of what human rights are about. Many of the draft goals are aligned with human rights obligations and key elements of the human rights-based approach to development, including attention to root causes, gender equality, non-discrimination, and accountability,

among others. However, civil society remains concerned that the OWG proposal looks to the private sector to finance development, affirming a neoliberal model that commodifies people and nature. The SDGs may, in the end, reinforce an economic model by which very often migration becomes a necessity rather than a choice.

It is imperative that the SDGs include explicit human rights language to ensure that they live up to their potential of being truly transformative and human rights-centred. The SDGs must:

- Be people-centred, upholding the human rights commitments of all governments
- Address the root causes of labour migration and the oppression of migrant communities
- Uphold the ILO’s labour standards, affirming decent work for all without discrimination
- Guarantee the right to social protection, including basic services such as healthcare, housing, and social security irrespective of country of origin or immigration status
- Ensure that labour migration is a choice rather than a necessity brought about by a lack of opportunity at home.

Fig 3. Highlights of the Stockholm Agenda



The SDGs mark an important opportunity for the world to move towards a genuine realization of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*”

As civil society, when we discuss development we emphasize the need for *people-centred* development, not just *economic* development—which is too often the primary focus of states.

As the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) states:

Article 1

1. The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.

2. The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, which includes ... the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.

Article 2

1. The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.

The Declaration places people at the centre. It emphasizes that development requires guarantees of equal opportunity without discrimination and “access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income”

(Art. 8). To achieve sustainable, people-centred development, the root causes of injustice and inequality must be understood and addressed, and the right to self-determination must be upheld.

Why Migration Matters

The need for meaningful progress towards sustainable, people-centred development is exemplified in the experiences of many migrant workers. Migrants’ remittances are often seen as drivers of economic development, but the social and personal costs associated with migration are often sidelined from development discussions. As stated in the civil society reactions to the Post-2015 Development Agenda discussions as articulated at the People’s Global Action on Migration, Development, & Human Rights, “Migrants’ remittances are neither an answer to development nor an appropriate policy for poverty reduction.”⁵

As the SDG discussions move forward, migrants and migration must be specifically included and referenced (see Fig. 4). So far, civil society has actively advanced the Stockholm Agenda during the OWG processes and with other regional and intergovernmental agencies and leaders. These efforts have resulted in a number of references in the final document of the OWG, presented on 19 July 2014 (see Fig 5).⁵ In addition, on 4 December 2014, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon presented a synthesis report entitled “The Road to Dignity by 2030,” which highlights migration in several places. Despite this recognition of the importance of migrants and migration, much work remains to be done between now and July to advance our advocacy on the SDGs.

Fig 4. Reasons to include migration in the SDGs

Demographics

- There are 232 million international migrants in the world, and one billion people live and work outside of their place of birth. Migrants in a mobile world are everywhere, move everywhere, and contribute in manifold ways to development everywhere.

Economics

- Migrants work and create jobs. For example, migrants start 1 in 7 companies in the US and the UK. They send half a trillion dollars annually in remittances to their families and communities in their countries of origin—more than three times official development assistance. Migrants spend and save another four times that amount in their countries of destination.

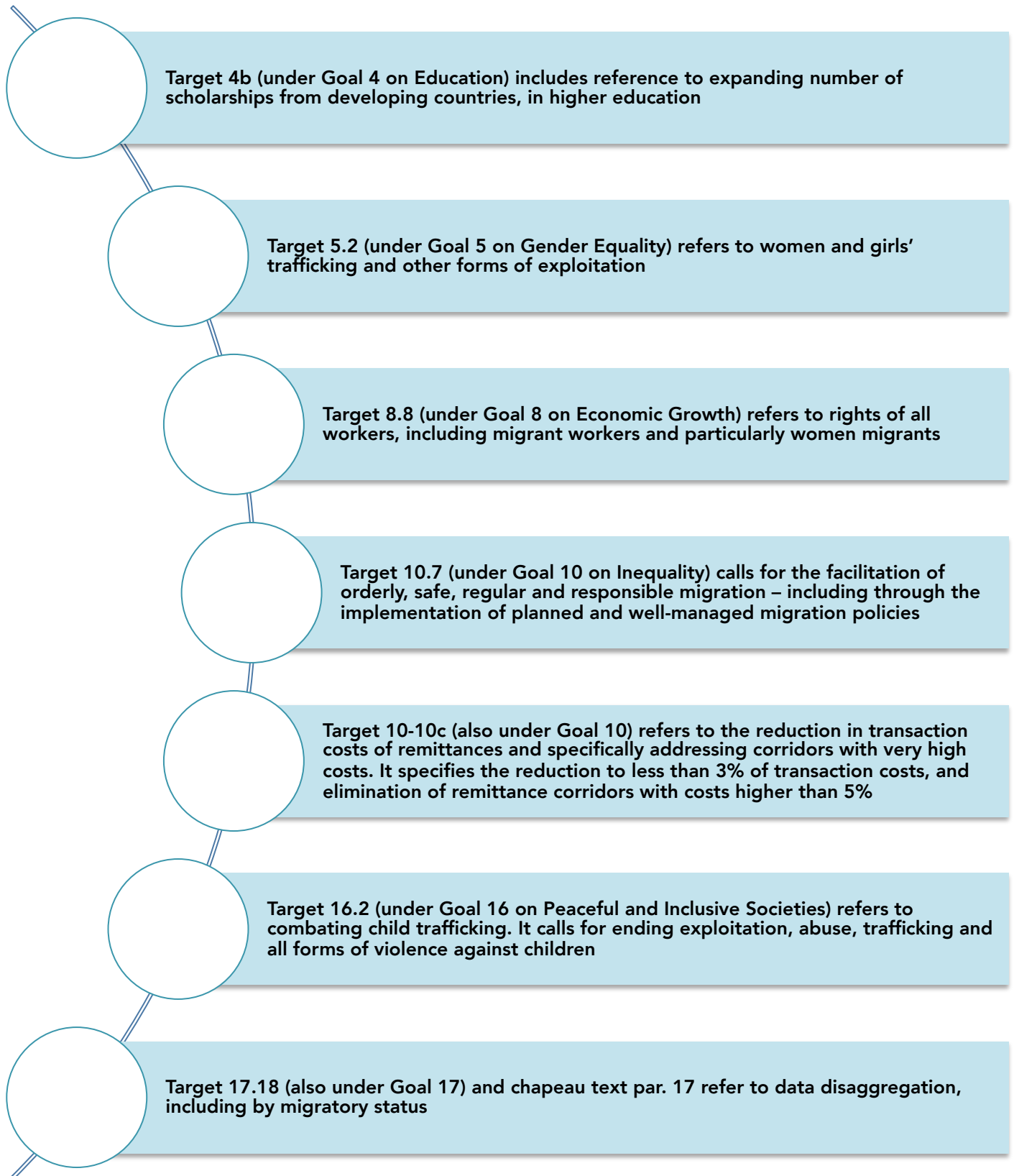
Human Rights

- Human rights and diversity are not only positive social goods, but also contribute considerably to sustainable development. The SDG negotiations present an opportunity to examine the role of development in realizing the civil and political and economic, social, and cultural rights of all people, including migrants and their families, as enshrined in the UDHR, the ICCPR, the ICESCR, and the full body of international human rights law and ILO standards.

Universality

- Whereas the MDGs predominantly targeted developing countries, the SDGs concern all countries. They mark a common effort to ensure global well-being for current and future generations. If the SDGs are to be truly universal, then migrants should be included in the considerations of each goal—e.g., access to education, healthcare, decent work, human security, etc.

Fig 5. OWG Goals & Targets Including Migrants & Migration



Time to Act!

This year will be crucial for our continued efforts to integrate migrants and migration into the post-2015 SDG framework. Every month, post-2015 negotiation sessions are held at the UN in New York:

- February 17-20
- March 23-27
- April 20-24
- May 18-22
- June 22-25
- July 20-24 and 27-31
- September 28-30, UNGA meeting

In addition, the President of the UNGA is organizing thematic events on Means of Implementation (February), Gender (March), Peace (April-May), and Climate Change (June).

These negotiations will coincide with the final stages of the ongoing negotiations on development finance, culminating in the Addis Ababa Summit, 13-16 July 2015. This summit will discuss the Means of Implementation and funding for SDG policies and programs. In addition, the ongoing climate change

negotiations will impact the outcome and implementation of the new SDG framework.

Talk to Governments. Find out who is representing your government in the SDG negotiations. Approach them to find out their priorities and make the link with migrants, migration, and human rights. Also, contact your Member of Parliament to discuss how parliamentarians can monitor and influence the negotiations. Ask your parliamentary contacts how your government intends to implement the SDGs at the national level.

Work on Indicators to Measure Progress. The SDG goals and targets will be accompanied by indicators to measure progress in implementation. Recommend indicators for the goals and targets related to migration.

Work in Partnership and Solidarity with other Civil Society Groups. Many civil society groups are advocating for a human rights focus for the SDGs. Reach out to others committed to working on this to share ideas and analysis and to strengthen our calls for people-centred development.

Notes

¹This paper is the result of global civil society consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda during the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration & Development (2013), the Global Forum on Migration & Development (Stockholm, 2014), and a position paper produced by *Cordaid* for the Migration and Development Civil Society Network (MADE).

² MDGs Success Stories in Asia and the Pacific: Accelerating Achievement of the MDGs. Retrieved from: http://endpoverty2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/MDG-Success-Stories-AP_web.pdf

³ Labour Migration in Asia & the Pacific. Retrieved from: <http://ilo.org/asia/areas/labour-migration/lang-en/index.htm>

⁴ Key Messages from PGA 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.PeoplesGlobalAction.org>

⁵ Civil Society “Stockholm Agenda” on Migrant & Migration-Related Goals and Targets in Post-2015 Global and National Development Agendas. Retrieved from: <http://gfmdcivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Civil-Society-Migration-Stockholm-Agenda-June-2014.pdf>