Starting Strong
The first 1000 days of the SDGs

An integrated programme of research and dialogue across national, regional and global levels
ODI, Southern Voice, KIPPRA, CEPA, Cepei and other partners
April – September 2016

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), establishing a new round of development targets for the world to meet by 2030. Much of the focus to date has been on what the goals should be. But how they are implemented – what policies and actions will drive progress – is just as, and perhaps ultimately more, important.

The SDGs are an ambitious agenda. Its first days are critical, with initial actions taken by government, civil society and the private sector setting the foundation for success or failure in the years to come. Achieving these goals will require a wide range of actors to be involved; it is therefore important that different voices weigh in on key priorities moving forward.

To this end, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals, along with other partners, will work together on a set of research and events focused on identifying priority early actions on the SDGs – a 1000-day agenda of sorts. A series of in-country consultations will lead up to regional dialogues across Africa, Asia and Latin America, taking place between April and June 2016, and be followed by a global flagship event in September 2016.

Accompanying these events, regional think pieces will be commissioned and a broad citizen survey conducted via MyWorld2030 to gather perspectives on what is needed to drive forward the goals. In addition, research to build a better understanding on the unfinished business of the MDGs and reaching those who are furthest behind in relation to the new goals will be central to informing proposed priority actions.

Why 1000 days?

The first years of the MDGs are often seen as a missed opportunity. Very little concerted action was taken during this time toward accelerating action. This lack of early action ultimately impacted on achievement of the goals, and by their conclusion this year results will have fallen short across a number of targets.

The initial period of the SDG agenda is therefore central in determining their ultimate success, with a key opportunity to build on the momentum of setting the SDGs in September 2015. Politicians often set out a 100-day agenda when they first come to office, with the news media subsequently reporting on what has or has not been achieved during this crucial time. While unlikely that the broad range of priority actions needed to advance the SDGs would see progress in just 100 days, a somewhat longer period of say 1000 days covers the first three of the SDG’s fifteen year timeframe and still creates a defined window for action.

Moreover, multiple actors ultimately need to take responsibility for SDG implementation, unlike a 100-day agenda usually set by a particular politician and his/her administration. A conversation
around priority actions for these first years can maintain and build on the widespread engagement of a range of players who have been involved in setting the goals. These many voices should continue to have a say in both identifying and carrying out vital early actions.

Using evidence to inform priority actions for this 1000-day agenda is key. This initiative – organised by institutions from across the globe with interest in the SDGs – will draw heavily on analysis of evidence of MDG progress and how gains were made. We will seek to involve a wide range of groups planning for implementation – member states, UN agencies and civil society groups – as well as those mobilising for widespread SDG action, such as Global Citizen.

**What is planned?**

**Lead up**

ODI and global partners will work in each of the regions to engage a variety of policy-makers and practitioners prior to each event, to ensure national priorities and action plans inform the regional dialogues.

This pre-dialogue information sharing and gathering will serve to encourage participants to think about and familiarise themselves with specific national-level challenges in SDG implementation in order to foster fruitful discussions with regional counterparts on shared challenges and ways in which solutions can be tailored to take back to the national level. Participants will receive information and be asked to provide country specific feedback through a pre-event resource pack which will feature the following:

- **Short survey questions:** To gather information on who the key stakeholders and influencers are in each country working on the implementation agenda and to identify priority actions to include in a ‘1000 day agenda’ in advance of the dialogues, a short survey will be included in the pack.
- **Bitesized engaging information pieces:** Through a tailored communications strategy in the lead up to each event, participants will receive a series of bitesize teasers where key findings from research pieces will be shared using infographics, data and blogs to help foster thinking and exploration around critical issues in advance of the events.
- **Country specific MyWorld data:** As part of the pre-event information, the top 3-5 priorities identified for each country through the citizen-generated MyWorld survey will be shared with participants to kick-start thinking around priority actions for national plans.
- **Conference agenda:** A detailed agenda will inform participants about session information and participant groups in advance of the dialogue.
- **Logistical note:** This will include travel and accommodation as well as local logistical details.

A relatively short think piece on ideas for early action stressing the urgency of implementing the SDG agenda and explaining key processes will be developed to feed into the dialogues – a selection of leading ideas and opportunities gleaned from each event in the series will then be incorporated into the paper to be disseminated as an output from the events.

**Regional dialogues**

A set of four regional dialogues will seek to bring together researchers and policy makers to identify and discuss priority actions that can drive SDG implementation in a variety of national contexts, as
well as across regions and globally. Taking place across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe (focused on developed countries) each of the regional dialogues will bring together approximately 60 development thinkers and decision-makers for two days in an interactive setting. The events will each be hosted by a different Southern Voice think tank member and will involve government officials, UN and NGO staff and other researchers as participants. The dialogues will:

- Convene a select group of actors who can build a platform to champion SDG implementation and maintain momentum and a sense of urgency within their respective countries and across the region
- Generate a small series of concrete actions that will act as catalysts for early action and help avoid the lag between conceptualising and implementing goals that plagued the MDGs
- Pool knowledge and substantive evidence on integrated approaches to SDG implementation – ideas/actions that take into account the sustainable and economic dimensions of the goals – and what the principle of ‘leave no one behind’ means in practice for the region

Through Southern Voice, a series of think-pieces will be commissioned for each regional event. These will be framed around actions needed to accelerate action on the goals and targets for each of the three pillars of sustainable development, with one paper focused on the social, a second on the economic and a third on the environmental. For each paper, authors will be asked to identify priority actions for the first ‘1000 days’ of the SDGs. This will be in the form of a forward looking think-piece, drawing on key literature for each region, including that dealing with contextual concerns as well as analysis of past drivers of progress. It is expected that each paper may also cover cross-thematic topics crucial to the Post-2015 era, such as measurement, financing and accountability.

In addition, ODI will contribute further regionally focused research centred on the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda, providing an analysis of key issues of poverty and inequality for the region. Discussions can draw on an on-going piece of work on ‘Assessing the ambition of the SDGs’, which includes a database of existing national targets on areas relevant to the SDGs. Case studies from the region prepared as a part of its Development Progress project will be shared.

**Research outputs commissioned through Southern Voice:**

1. Priority actions for SDG implementation: Social goals and targets (x4)
2. Priority actions for SDG implementation: Economic goals and targets (x4)
3. Priority actions for SDG implementation: Environmental goals and targets (x4)

**Research outputs completed by ODI:**

4. Leave no one behind: Addressing poverty and inequality for [X] region (x4)

**Global flagship event**

A global flagship event will take place following the regional dialogues to bring together a high-level group of actors and further define and debate a global SDG 1000-day agenda. It will take place in September 2016, a year on from the formal adoption of the SDGs by UN member states. It will provide an opportunity to take stock of achievements and learnings in the first year of the SDGs but also provide a reality-check on progress to date and reaffirm the need for timely and substantive action. The flagship event will take place in a developing country in the global south in order to readily bring
together key southern-based actors along with high profile public and private figures and development thinkers from around the world. Hosted by the ODI, Southern Voice and other partners, this global event will be larger in scale than the regional ones, bringing together between 300-400 participants.

The event will share the findings and outcomes of the regional dialogues, ensuring messages for priority actions are widely shared with stakeholders taking a lead role in SDG delivery. A paper will be prepared focused on this 1000-day agenda, identifying actions and recommendations that will take SDG implementation from ‘business as usual’ toward accelerating progress. A further research paper will specifically focus on actions needed to ‘leave no one behind’ and ensure progress happens across all groups, particularly those facing barriers due to poverty and inequality.

**Research outputs completed by ODI in collaboration with Southern Voice:**
1. A strong start: An 1000-day agenda for SDG implementation (x1)

**Research outputs completed by ODI:**
2. Leaving no one behind in the SDGs (x1)

Various partnerships are being explored for both the regional dialogues and this global flagship event, including UNDP, SDSN and others.

**Follow-up**

Following the final implementation flagship event, there will be a need to feedback discussions and actions to regional and national-level stakeholders and put in place mechanisms to follow up on implementation commitments. Follow up work may include:

- Hosting a small strategic retreat in autumn 2016 to reflect and take stock, convene an honest conversation, bring together strategic individuals to take the agenda forward; this could either be relatively high level or a group that helps us to move beyond the usual suspects
- Work towards the development of a high level political statement to keep up the pressure on governments to produce tailored plans for SDG implementation
- Implement a broader follow-up system of review to document progress at 1 year, 3 years and 5 years after the launch of the SDGs including a stock-take report after the first 1000 days in September 2018

**Communications and outreach**

Together with partners, ODI will mount a major communications effort over social media throughout the dialogues and in the lead up to the global flagship event which will give an opportunity for people around the world to feed into the proposed 1000-day agenda.

**Communication and outreach outputs:**
- Pre-event resource packs
- Multi-media, animation and/or infographics around the 1000-day agenda

**Who will be involved?**

Across the three regional dialogues and the global flagship event, more than 500 people from all regions of the world will directly engage face-to-face in debating priority actions for SDG
implementation. This is expected to include a mix of government officials, UN and INGO representatives, researchers and academics, and members of civil society from across each region.

Through work with partners and a strong communications and outreach effort, we estimate that a further 5000 will contribute in some way – noting that this number could go up dramatically if a strong partnership is developed with other groups focused on mobilisation and outreach. Lead organisations to date include:

**Overseas Development Institute (ODI):** ODI has a long history of working on a breadth of key development issues. For the past five years, it has housed Development Progress, a research project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which has aimed to measure, understand and communicate where and how development progress has happened. By the time of the regional dialogues, the Development Progress project will have completed 50 case studies, exploring examples of countries around the world that have seen improved development outcomes across a range of dimensions of well-being (health, education, environment, political voice & women’s empowerment, security, employment, urban poverty and extreme poverty). These case studies build on and complement other ODI areas of research, such as work focused on assessing SDG ambitions, doing development differently, chronic poverty and financing for development.

**Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals:** Southern Voice is a collection of 48 ‘South’-based think tanks brought together to exchange views on the post-2015 global development agenda and beyond. The group works to showcase research and other outputs from its members and other Southern researchers. It is particularly focused on assessments of implementation challenges for global development. In its two year lifespan, Southern Voice has produced a body of relevant work, including a series focused on MDG lessons learned for SDG implementation and the Post-2015 Data Test on country level experiences.

**Where and when?**

One regional dialogue will take place in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America, respectively, and will involve a hosting partner based in-country. Locations and host institutes include:

**Sub-Saharan Africa**
12 - 13th April
Nairobi, Kenya
Host institute: **The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)**
The Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) is a Think Tank that was established through an Act of Parliament with a mandate to provide evidence-based quality public policy advice to the Government of Kenya by conducting objective research and analysis and through capacity building. KIPPRA works with both the government and non-governmental agencies in achieving both national and international development goals.

**Asia**
18-19th May
Colombo, Sri Lanka
Host institute: **The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)**
CEPA is an independent, Sri Lankan think-tank promoting a better understanding of poverty-related development issues. CEPA believes that poverty is an injustice that should be overcome and that overcoming poverty involves changing policies and practices nationally and internationally, as well as working with people in poverty. CEPA strives to contribute to influencing poverty-related development policy, at national, regional, sectoral, programme and project levels.

**Latin America**

14 -15th June  
Bogota, Colombia  

Host institute: **Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (Cepei)**  
Cepei is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental think tank, working through field based analysis and high-level advocacy to scale up the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean within the global development agendas. Cepei works closely with decision takers and those who influence them, by analyzing, promoting ideas, generating capacities and providing demand-driven information about development processes throughout the region.

Its aim is to increase regional dialogue and sharing of information, policy solutions and insights in critical strategic areas so as to optimize the engagement on open data, governance, knowledge and innovation.

**Global flagship event**  
TBC, September – October 2015