

Sustainable Development Goals Refining Millennium Development Goals

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17 March 2015, Universal Peace Federation UK, 43 Lancaster Gate W2 3NA

Hosted by James Tang, SDG-UPF Project Manager and Robin Marsh, Secretary General UPF-UK

Chaired by Aliu Bello, SDG-UPF Special Advisor

Speakers

Eleanor Kennedy, Campaigns Coordinator at Bond International

Henri-Pierre Koubaka, Journalist and Project Manager at The Children's Radio Foundation

Ceciliah Chigwada, Founder of Breaking Haven Prayer Ministry and Women Today Worldwide

Nathaniel Peat, Co-Founder of GeNNex



Humphrey Hawksley,
BBC World Affairs
Correspondent

25-27 September 2015 will be the day the UN Summit meets regarding the 17 post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference. The objective set for the evening was to raise awareness of the launch of the SDGs and to build a strong community of supporters to unite and make progress beyond the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in 2000. The SDGs set in the agenda are all compliant with the principles of the

Rio20+ Conference, international law, and build upon current commitments amongst other requirements agreed by the members of state. Furthermore, the SDGs are categorised as action-oriented, global, and

most importantly “universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.” The link provided below is to encourage the general public to raise awareness of the importance of the agreement of the 17 SDGs for the upcoming UN Summit.



<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

“Living for the sake of others” is the UPF motto that empowered the formation of SDG UPF. As Robin Marsh remarked, “supporting the Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals is a natural part of UPF.” James Tang encouraged those in attendance to consider how SDGs can refine the MDGs that have failed to make progress, he emphasised the importance of society, corporations and governments “to take ownership.” The intention is to mobilise people, a wide network of supporters, essentially united in addressing the concerns of the general public. The speakers were selected and the itinerary set on the basis of TED style talks that adhere to their respective slogan of “ideas worth spreading,” to encourage the consideration that the SDGs are agreed to be a refinement and progression of the 8 MDGs set 15 years prior.



William Russell Easterly quoted in “The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good,” “The setting of utopian goals means aid workers will focus efforts on infeasible tasks, instead of the feasible tasks that will do some good.” This quote is the strong focal point of Eleanor Kennedy, Campaigns Coordinator at Bond International, as she called attention to public financing and the negative effects it has when there becomes a dependency on financial aid, which in turn provides resources but lacks a long term trajectory that utilises a sustainable process. Private companies have been left out in calling for social and corporate responsibility and there will be an impending discussion in July that will ensure “there will be a robust framework” to empower countries and organisations to be self-sufficient. These SDGs were made compliant with the UN regulations and expectations and were created by

having conducted an online survey directly with the UN as well as consulting over 83 countries conducting door to door surveys. There is a call for responsibility from civil society and corporations to ensure that public financing will not be seen as the only source of funding to apply SDGs.



A majority of those in attendance have not read the UN report on post-2015 SDGs and as such raises the issue of the role of media. Henri-Pierre Koubaka, journalist and Project Manager at The Children's Radio Foundation, unabashedly showed his daunting feelings towards the question that was imposed on him for his talk. How will the media play its role about the launch of SDGs, Koubaka summed up that it was a dangerous question in which most people respond that "the media needs to do its job," but it is not a simple answer.

Some say the "media's role is to inform"; some say the "media's role is to investigate"; and some say the "media's role is advocacy." There is no one correct answer but an emphasis around the common topic to focus is the effect as to how these SDGs have on the people at ground base.

"The media needs to help people understand. Our job is to hold governments and corporations accountable." To break down elections, coverage on tax evasions, to be the "gatekeeper and focus on transparency" to push for corporate and social responsibility that will empower the youth to have the public not feel short changed, to feel that these SDGs are action oriented and that despite there being 169 targets to be discussed at the UN Summit that it will end with success.



There are 17 SDGs and one of the primary ones focus on gender equality. Celciliah Chigwada, founder of Breaking Haven Prayer Ministry and Women Today Worldwide, discussed in depth the issue of gender equality with the focus being on the trials and tribulations women in the African diaspora face. Genital mutilation, denial of ownership, violence against women, the restriction of women working in trade, these are amongst of many other issues that women come face to face with on a daily basis. This issue has stemmed Chigwada from an early age as she shared an anecdote that her "dad died when she was 12 years old and helped bring up 19 children," this experience in itself gave her first-hand experience with challenges. This is the opportunity

for women to speak up and when public awareness is raised this is when more attention can be brought to gender equality and women's rights.

Nathaniel Peat is the Co-Founder of GeNNex and a 2013 Youth Achievement Award from UPF. He is an accomplished social entrepreneur who at the age of 25 founded the organisation, The Safety Box, which uses grassroots methods to deter violent behaviour and build entrepreneurship as the rates of youth unemployment have been on the rise. He strongly advocates against the systematic education system of



British schools as he believes “it narrows their creativity which creates innovators and without innovators there will be no forwards steps towards a sustainable society.” This is where he advocates the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education incorporating gender equality alongside entrepreneurship to lower youth unemployment. He believes this will push the real meaning of social enterprise as it being a “profit for good,” which prevents the rise of dead aid. Dead aid is a concept focused on a book of the same name that revolved around charities about how it has become systematic that financial aid is given and the resources, but there is no education as to how to upkeep the products and a sustainable long term plan. For example, handing solar lanterns and when they become dim there should be a guide in place that the procedure needed is just to clean the lantern itself. “There needs to be

sustainability through renewable solutions.” SDGs need to include plans for basic knowledge to the countries that will be receiving aid to encourage forward progress.

Humphrey Hawksley, BBC World Affairs Correspondent, brings to light about the need for “social justice.” There was a lot of focus on Africa including an anecdote of a previous investigation Hawksley conducted in the Ivory Coast and the use of child labour in the cocoa trade. He was appalled by the working conditions and of the large conglomerates in the candy industries that were aware of the situation yet did nothing to diffuse the social and human rights injustice. The focus then turned onto India’s tea industry. How in India the tea plantation workers were treated nearly the worst. The industry is highly lucrative yet the trade and the running of the plantations are inhumane. With the SDGs there needs to be attention to social justice and the urgent call for it. “The real issue is to create the wealth and then share it” as there is a need for corporate and social responsibility. If everyone was to contribute a bit then it can accumulate to so much that can aid global communities. The media holds the responsibility to inform and advocate and the event was an example of taking action.

Aliu Bello chaired the panel that followed after the last speaker. There were a great number of questions and thoughts shared from the suggestion that teaching culture and spiritual studies will help create a bond within communities to the call of African celebrities and their lack of involvement in SDGs discussions. Nathaniel succinctly addressed that young people want to know and have more and that the greatest challenge often times is culture. However, there is always a way and one example is his involvement gather Jamaica’s great reggae artists to endorse his solar lanterns. There needs to be a solution to find how to get corporate sponsors apart from government aid. Eleanor Kennedy sadly informed that there can be no global police force to ensure that aid and basic knowledge are applied, but that this is when raising public awareness is crucial as there can only be hope that civil societies will unite in agreement with the importance of SDGs. Many questions and topics were asked yet time was limited. The evening awakened the minds of many of those in attendance that spurred a great deal of networking.