



THE SENATE
SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
Public Hearing –Friday, 2 November 2018
Questions Taken on Notice
Mr Cox, Peacifica

1 HANSARD, p. 40

Senator MOORE: You may want to take this on notice. One of the elements the SDG program has been promoting is the fact that it is an international language, that if you are within the SDG framework you are more able then to have conversations across the board which people would be able to respond to. You have identified a number of key areas in which Peacifica is interested in working. We have got East Timor and the Solomons here.

Mr Cox: Fiji is here. Solomons is where we are looking at doing some work.

Senator MOORE: When you are speaking with people from those communities, are you aware that their governments are working within a similar framework? Are they working within the SDG framework? I have been told that each of those governments do have a plan. How are they operating? And do people use the terminology around 16? So when you are talking with the Solomon Islands about this issue, are you finding people relating to SDG 16 and referring to that in those discussions, and the same with East Timor and Fiji?

Mr Cox: I will give you some answers later but, for the time being, I would focus on Timor. Timor is a member of the g7+ group of fragile and conflict affected states. In fact, the prime mover in that network has been involved in peace-building and state-building dialogue for a number of years now. With the advent of these Sustainable Development Goals, the focus has moved very much to working out how the SDG framework can be used for advancing their peace-building and state-building requirements. There is also a set of peace-building and state-building goals, which provide some useful detail for how the more general SDGs can be realised. One of the tensions common to a number of these countries in the region is that all of that dialogue and discussion happens in the capital between the government institutions, their donors and the UNDP, and there is a perpetual challenge to bridge the information gap between government and society in those things, even though civil society is also talking about the SDGs.

27 November 2018

Dear Senators,

Please find below and attached comments in answer to your questions on notice following our appearance before the Senate Inquiry into the SDGs on 2 November.

Our comments are brief. Unfortunately we haven't heard back from our Fijian counterparts, who have had to focus on the election there. We do commend to you to the attached statement from our colleagues at Belun, Timor Leste. Although Timor is in some ways an exceptional case, due to work they have done in promoting the SDGs for fragile states through their role in the g7+, this statement illustrates a number of points which from our experience are true in most developing and fragile countries:

- Government, civil society groups and the general public are all interested in learning more about and making use of the SDGs.
- Due to the complexity, most such countries work with the active support of UN agencies (typically UNDP) in their efforts to apply them to the local context.
- Prioritisation among the 17 goals, 169 targets and even more indicators is critical. But it is very difficult. Special interest civil society groups will inevitably focus on only one part of the SDG framework and may miss synergies. Governments, which are responsible for the whole thing, may find difficulty in articulating a coherent and prioritised SDG agenda.
- Communication and socialisation is an ongoing challenge. Even in cases where there has been a good consultation process in developing an implementation strategy, this may not be followed through to implementation. CSOs often play a lead role in consultation processes (and in the case of Timor's fragility assessments, be the owners of the project) but find themselves locked out of what happens next.

Measurement is a central concern for all countries engaged with the SDGs. In Pacific region and in Timor, this is a particular problem. A casual glance at any UN or World Bank publication will show that for the Pacific, data gaps are the norm. A report by the Institute for Economics and Peace on measuring goal 16 in the Pacific region proposed that for this region, a set of qualitative proxy data gathering techniques may be a better approach than traditional quantitative measurement. They are not the first to make this point, but their focus on Goal 16 and the Pacific is a particularly relevant perspective.

We are happy to follow up to discuss this further.

James Cox
Executive Director, Peacifica

1. How is the government in your country working within the Sustainable Development Goals framework? Has the government prepared an SDG plan, and how well is it working?

The government is working within the SDGs through the engagement of government institutes, civil society and private sector. The national mechanism is a working group led by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Strategic Investment and the g7+ Secretariat. However, this working group still needs to do more socializing of the SDGs framework so that there is a sense of ownership for each organization or Institution and responsibility to contribute and achieve the SDGs's goals as expected.

Peacifica comment: The g7+ is the global coalition of fragile and conflict affected states that works in dialogue with donors and civil society through the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). Australia is a member of the donor group, INCAF. The International Dialogue has been working to link the SDGs to an existing set of [Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals](#), which the IDPS has implemented through the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*. The IDPS, led by g7+, has also attempted to articulate a subset of the SDG targets that are of most value – and are able to be measured – in fragile and conflict affected settings. However this work appears to have stalled.

The Timorese government also launched a [Roadmap for the SDGs](#) at the Global Conference on the 2030 Agenda in Dili in May 2017, which is aligned with the National Strategic Plan. This appears to have been not well socialized since

2. Do people in government use terminology from Goal 16 – or other goals?

Yes, they do.

The government Timor-Leste has managed the framework of SDGs, for an example for SDG #16 peace building in society has been implemented by the National Direction for Community Conflict Prevention under the Ministry of Interior. This department is engaged with civil society to offer conflict prevention activities and the sharing of conflict data.

There are still challenges such as the Timor-Leste Fragility Assessment Report for 2012 and 2015 conducted by CEPAD (in independent research NGO) and managed by g7+ secretariat, there is still a “gap” for the implementation of those recommendations. However, Belun has recently signed a MOU with the g7+ secretariat for sharing conflict data and the Government has commitment to consider implementation through each of the Ministries programs in the future and to integrate the SDGs to state's National Development Strategic Plan 2030.

There is also a national direction under the Prime Minister's Office called UPMA (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) and the National Statistic Department have been providing regular updates to manage the progress and challenges of the SDGs framework implementation and provide information to the UN for their report update. For instance, the government in collaboration with UN just implemented a national conference of SDGs and national voluntary report to see the progress and challenges of SDGs framework implementation in Timor-Leste. This meeting engaged CSOs, private sector, academic and representative of Ministries.

3. How do civil society organisations use and refer to the SDGs?

The civil society organizations are committed to integrating each SDG goal when developing their strategic plan, for example is Belun's Early Warning, Early Response system for SDGs #16 (peace, justice and strong Institutions) by the monitoring of incidents and security changes at a community level and manage conflict potential analysis and advocacy action to support the development of good policy by the government and CEPAD. In addition, other NGOs partners are working on SDG #4 for education and were involved as a member in the global partnership education and other specialized sectors by other NGOs.

Moreover, CSOs have been involved as a focal point of CSPSP led by the ONG Forum Timor-Leste (FONGTL) and also member of Asian People Forum in south east Asia, members of CSO for CPLP (Countries where people speak the Portuguese language), members of the Asia Pacific for Atrocity Prevention, included other regional and International network were engaging CSOs.

4. What about the general public?

The public are interested in getting more information about SDGs and National Strategic Plan 2030 agenda through public information awareness and updates of the implementation TL's fragility assessment report 2012 and 2015 as led by g7+ to collaborate with the government to implement those recommendations. For example, unemployment of youth can be considered as a priority, there is a need to develop a good policy so youth can better access opportunities and jobs, including capacity development to enhance skills of young people.

Also, people need to know how they can implement the recommendations on Chega report in partnership with all Institute and development partners as well.

<http://www.chegareport.net/chega-10/>

Most important is how government, organizations and other Institutes can keep up to date with the SDGs framework so they can help UN to review the report on July 2019.

Luis Ximenes

Director,
NGO, Belun