

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AROUND THE SDGS IN THE BAHAMAS



MATT AUBRY, LMSW -EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ORGANIZATION FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SDGS - A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

- CSOs serve as catalysts for critical global and national agendas, and assist in bringing citizens' voices to national debates and the development of national strategies.
- CSO networks are coming together around the SDG agenda (at both the national and regional level), with many groups focusing on efforts to pressure their governments to implement the SDGs, and to monitor progress around its implementation.

NECESSITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT

- High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the United Nations (HLPF) in 2017 underscored the need for Civil Society cooperation and inclusion to implement the SDGs,
 - Spoke to the importance of early and informed collaboration and cooperation during the planning and implementation phase,
 - “to ensure that the voices of stakeholders are adequately heard in the intergovernmental processes, (Para 27)
 - A common complaint among civil society is that very few governments have done this to date.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES FOR EFFECTIVE CSO ENGAGEMENT ON THE SDGS

- Strengthen the alignment of CSO programming at the national level with the SDGs, and build in the integration of different (but related) goals and targets across their respective programming.
- A national platform could help facilitate mutual knowledge sharing and learning across sectors.
- Foster potential collaboration between groups that don't typically interact
- Engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue with the government and advocate collectively to the government around SDG implementation.
- Provide additional data to track progress on SDG implementation.
- Create networks to reach citizens and share tools and experiences.
 - (From National Conversation on Canada and the SDGs)

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE BAHAMAS

- Over 300 Civil Society Organizations
 - Minimal Coordination and Collaboration
 - Wide range of focus, no consistent standards
 - Largely volunteer driven
 - Common struggle for Funding and resources
 - Little familiarity with the SDGs
- No standardized and regularized Public Consultation for policy development
- Culture of Citizen Engagement building and CSO Impact on policy growing
 - FOIA, Anti-Corruption Legislation, We March, Interception of Communication, etc.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY DICHOTOMY

- Civil Society Capacity is recognized at Global, Regional, National and Local levels as essential for Development.
- Majority of support in The Bahamas is technical and training.
- Engagement is largely driven by International Partners and Government.
- Direct funding would facilitate growth toward sustainability.

CIVIL SOCIETY CONCLAVE 2018

- 160 attendees representing 87 distinct civil society organizations
- Event split between Sector Development and Capacity Building
 - CSO Standards, NDP, Collaboration, Fundraising, Technology & Communication
- Post Event Evaluation
 - 60% identified plugging into the NDP as the most valuable topic of the Conclave
 - 80% reported feeling better equipped or more inclined to use the National Development Plan as a tool or resource

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT WITH SDG POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Civil Society, Private Sector and Academia can Adopt The Nation Development Plan as a tool for coordination
- Create ongoing funding and forums for Civil Society, Citizen Engagement and Coalition building
- “Find your place” in the NDP & SDG’s and set organizational goals
- Build a comprehensive public registry of Civil Society groups
- Map existing CSO’s against the NDP/SDGs and develop annual reports
- Join Open Government Partnership & Global Institute for Fiscal Transparency
- Formalize a quarterly National Participation Council
 - To participate in policy-making through providing expert opinions on draft policies and strategic documents and conducting and presenting independent assessments of policies’ impacts
 - To contribute to establishing the institutional framework for increased public consultation.
 - To prepare annual strategies and reports on citizen engagement in the process of development, implementation and evaluation of policies.



THANK YOU



-
- Contact: Maubry@orgbahamas.com or (242) 477-3134