

# **From Goal 16 to the Social Contract: Grassroots Options for Implementing SDG 16 at local and National Level**

**Summary Report of Training Programs for Activists in  
Kenya**

**23-25 November 2016**

**Africa Platform**

## **1. Introduction and Context**

The adoption of Transforming Our World by 2030: Action Agenda for Sustainable Development (popularly known as Agenda 2030) marked a new milestone for development around the world. Being the first universal agenda for development, Agenda 2030 goes beyond the Social and Economic considerations and sets out a series of structural transformation necessary at political levels to ensure equitable and inclusive development. Central to this is the agenda area that considers state society relations and the Social contract. Known as SDG Goal 16, it's based on the premise that there can be no sustainable development without the foundational building blocks of Peace, Good Governance, Accountability and society-led development. It is on these grounds that the Transparency, Accountability and Partnership (TAP) network was formed, not just to push for the recognition and inclusion of this specific element of development, but to ensure its implementation.

TAP, a coalition of organizations working in this area, begun an initiative to support selected citizen-led movements and NGOs to consider options for the implementation of a governance agenda that is founded on Peaceful societies, government accountability to its people and access to information that is timely and relevant for citizen decision-making. The support is in the form of Training of Trainers (ToT) program based on the Toolkit for Goal 16 developed by the network.

As a member of TAP Africa Platform, provided support to this process by bringing together leaders of grassroots activists from across Kenya to consider how SDG 16 could be used as both a tool and a vehicle for their daily struggles and advocacy at the local level, but with considerations on impact at the national level.

## **2. The objectives of the Session**

This dialogue sought to address these issues within the context of the SDG Agenda, with a focus on how Goal 16 could be a vehicle to bridging the divide and strengthening local actions that lead to national and global impact. Majority of the activists were drawn from various spheres of grassroots activism, social movements and community radio.

The engagement under Goal 16 was intended to help strengthen the work of local level activism in three ways:

1. Broaden their engagement by linking it to national struggles and constitutional issues.
2. Create a linkage between local level activism and national level work of formal organizations
3. Use Goal 16 and the 2030 Agenda as a strategic tool to their engagement, offering a vision and higher focus that would amplify local level activism.

### **3. Context of Grassroots activism in Kenya**

Like many countries, Kenya has very distinct layers of engagement with government. The national level is dominated by NGOs, while the local level is dominated by activists. Activism at the local level is primarily left to individuals and informal groups, often organized as a necessity rather as a strategy. They face bigger more personal challenges-these activists at the local level face the triple challenge of being delinked from national issues, inability to sustain a campaign and a personal struggle for survival and income.

### **4. Participants and Process**

For this Goal 16 Training, the activists were allowed to self mobilize, a strategy that has been found to be very effective in engaging with grassroots actors in Kenya. They also facilitated the entire session, enabling both training and collaboration. Participants were drawn from various parts of the country including the counties of Kwale, Mombasa, Taita Taveta (Coast), Migori, Homa Bay, Siaya, Busia, Kisumu (Western and Nyanza), Baringo (North Rift) and Nairobi (Central) ,representing various grassroots social movements. Among them were community radio hosts, Bunge la Wananchi (Peoples Parliament), Siaya County Accountability Network and Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani (Coast Women's voice). The session was organized to build on the ongoing work of these groups and their communities. It therefore took on a slightly different format from traditional NGO trainings. The session begun by a review of the local struggles and victories witnessed by activists. Based on this, participants were shown how to amplify their struggles and successes by linking it to larger issues in society before a final session that involved working with the participants to incorporate Goal 16 as strategies for their daily struggles.

### **5. Pillars of the Training**

Based on previous interactions and engagement with these activists, the main areas centered around the following areas

1. Justice and peace within communities
2. Accountability, especially within the current context of devolved government where development is primarily driven at devolved governance levels known as Counties
3. Protection of rights activists at the local level
4. 4. Translating constitutional gains at the national level to community change by changing the systems of governance and relations between the state and society.

Four key issues formed the pillars of the discussions based on their experiences

1. The primary area of engagement is with law enforcement actors, specifically the Police

2. The key concerns include harassments, arbitrary arrests, and in some cases extra judicial killings. Many of these are sometimes targeted at activists to try and silence those that are seen to be vocal and active

3. While many activists are knowledgeable on local issues they are disconnected with the national issues that have direct impact on their work and struggle. These include awareness on the roles and limitations of law enforcement officers, instruments of justice that exists and is accessible to them and constitutional protection mechanisms that are available to them.

4. Most of the activists do not engage with other actors on their own terms. In instances where they engage with NGOs and national/global Organizations, they are invited to undertake or participate in specific activities and programs, and then left to continue with their work. This disconnection has made them suspicious of any organized civil society, with concerns that they are used merely for campaign purposes, or as they put it directly, "to write project proposals and marketing tools." The result is that there is no linkage between local issues faced by activists, their struggles, and the national and global issues that in many cases influence and inform their struggles. They are also unable to scale up their struggles to national advocacy that can impact sustainable policy changes.

## **6. Key Emerging Issues**

### **Accountability, Mobilization, Partnership and Change Beyond NGOism**

Three sets of documentaries were used as part of the facilitation to help participants see the impact that their engagement at the local level can have on national and even Global issues-McLibel, Poverty Inc and an interview by Economist Dambisa Moyo. The Four themes that guided the Documentary selection were on Accountability, Mobilization and Sustainable Change beyond Projects.

#### **Mobilizing for action**

##### **Mobilization for Peace and Sustainable Development**

The groups discussed the need for the activists to mobilize the grassroots including the women groups, the Youth groups in the communities and other local leaders to understand and own the struggles they are engaged in to help sustain the struggle. Many communities do not see the link between their poverty, insecurity and the actions of activists who engage in challenging these struggles. They interpreted the work of activists as a quest for personal survival and ambition.

##### **Mobilization for collective citizen ownership of accountability**

Participants shared challenges with mobilization for citizen accountability. Citizens have not fully appreciated the impact of corruption in the county and its impact on their daily lives. The key concern, therefore, is persuading the local community to join what appears to be a collection of individual struggles by activists the local community. Concerns arise when grassroots movements are unable to mobilize victims and their families as part of the action group. Sometimes the key challenge is

mobilizing grassroots and plural support that guarantee security of the activists and contribute toward a more sustained change. Activists are an easy target when it comes to extra judicial killings.

#### Mobilization for Accountability

Citizens in areas such as Siaya have not fully appreciated the impact of corruption in the county and how the same affects their right to life of dignity. This therefore means that the people may not join them in the struggle for accountability. Its central that citizens are adequately mobilized for accountability struggles to bear fruits. Goal 16 can only be achieved if the citizens are fully mobilized to demand accountability and report cases of deviation. To ensure peace and sustainable development as identified by Goal 16, people should be mobilized fully to appreciate the need for peace and to understand that sustainable development is only possible in the environment of peace.

#### Mobilization for Partnership for action

It was observed that when activists work together they build synergy and can ensure their safety and security. Building networks, alliances and partnerships across the country is paramount to ensure greater achievements

But partnerships go beyond those among activists. Partnership was considered from two levels – horizontal-alliances with other activists and organizations in the same area of struggle- and vertical-alliances with the duty bearers and state actors. They agreed to partner with the community media such as Ghetto radio and Pamoja Fm to amplify the agenda. Community radios can help in the realization of Goal 16 that seeks to ensure accountability and reduce corruption by exposing those who engage in corrupt practices and following up the cases involving abuse and misuse at the local level. Community Radios also help in pushing the agenda of the social movements as these radios have wider coverage in the grassroots and are important in shaping the opinion on public issues.

#### Movements for Justice

The issue of complicated and sophisticated judicial processes makes it hard for activists to take up public interests litigation in courts required partnerships with legal experts. Judicial processes also need to be demystified to enable the activists engage in court processes without any need for legal assistance which is often costly. Peace that is targeted by Goal 16 can only be possible where there is justice.

#### Mobilization for Resourcing

It was observed that monitoring and demanding action on Goal 16 will definitely require considerable resources. Most of the activists expressed concerns that they do not have any means of financing their activities. Financing activities of grassroots activists who are not linked to big NGOs where they can receive finances to support their activities remained a key challenge. There should be ways of sourcing for resources for the individual activists who are working with social movements.

### **7. Action Areas beyond the SDG 16 Training**

- The idea of using community radios for exposing the evils in the society

- Mobilization methodologies differed from the urban and rural set ups. This calls for clear understanding on how to mobilize the citizens in various parts of the country to take part in the advocacy work.
- There is a need for the grassroots activists to engage in discussions on aid at the grassroots level to enable the citizens to appreciate the economic and political implications of foreign aid to the African countries.
- The idea by Africa Platform to support brilliant idea by the individual activists in their engagements is very creative way of supporting the activists in their day-to-day engagements since they do not have any access to donor funding. This must be scaled up to the highest levels to enable the activists have adequate support in their engagements. It is a challenging task of striking a balance between continuing with activism and also mobilizing resources by the activists.
- Activists should be trained on how to effectively engage and mobilize the public on whose behalf they act. They should have a clear understanding on how to develop appealing messages around the issues that affect the people.
- Monitoring the realization of Goal 16 by the state requires a critical understanding of the goal and the targets and the activists may have to develop a tool to help in this. The tool should focus on assessing the satisfaction levels of the citizens on the implementation levels and realization of this Goal.
- There is need for training on advocacy to help demystify the judicial process to enable the activists take up cases of Public Interests Litigations (PILs) in courts just like the activists in the documentary of McLibel.
- The activists and their organizations should be supported with further training to demonstrate understanding of and support for the three thematic areas of Peace and Sustainable Development; Justice for All; and Accountability as identified in Goal 16.
- There is need for more activities that bring the activists together to share their learning and experiences in their engagements wherever they are. Activists should cascade the session to their social movements where they should discuss Goal 16 with their colleagues at the grassroots level.
- There is need to partner with the state and its agencies since it is the government that has the mandate of implementing programs aimed to realizing the SDGs. Partnering with them in the monitoring of Goal 16 is very critical for meaningful success.
- Majority of the participants emphasized the need for securing support from all organizations and individuals to further their work as individual activists and social movements in a context like Kenya where conventional fund raising methodologies leave no room for activists to carry on with their work.

## List of participants

#	Name	County/Social Movement	Contact
1.	John Mulingwa Nzau	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0724421772
2.	Ruth Mumbi	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0713888736

3.	Vincent Kidaha	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0700177375
4.	Antony Kanare	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0728141801
5.	Nicholars Kimanzi	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0722467436
6.	Tom Oketch	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0722849120
7.	Collins O. Ochieng'	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0704294526
8.	Antony Kirika	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0723363632
9.	Musa Chekai	Nairobi/ Bunge La Wananchi	0714123258
10.	Philip Muhatia	Pamoja FM	0710678415
11.	Philip Samuel Ogwang	Kisumu	0716432232
12.	Isaiah Biwott	Baringo	0726110839
13.	Mwanahawa Salim	Kwale	0723453911
14.	James Okoba	Busia	0723335128
15.	Asha B. Chimweri	Kwale	0719368999
16.	Jane Akinyi	Siaya (SCAN)	0713839254
17.	Walter Opiyo	Homabay (Bunge la Wenyenchi)	0727000265
18.	Shadrack Oyugi	Migori	0726698001
19.	Moline Onyango	Taita Taveta	0727601682
20.	Thomas Mwadime	Mombasa	0735720520
21.	Paul Okumu	Africa Platform	0721636901
22.	Odeny Salim	Facilitator	0726133433