

# 1. Executive Summary

After fifteen years of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the world has agreed to implement a new agenda, dubbed Agenda 2030, to shape development policy at the national, regional and global levels. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are to be implemented between 2016 and 2030, will require active participation and commitment of key development stakeholders, including government agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Local Authorities (LAs) and citizens. This report explores the initial steps for the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Ghana as well as the role of CSOs and LAs in that process.

This research, initiated by the Policy Forum on Development (PFD), contributes to the effort of exploring which national approaches support an inclusive implementation of the goals in Ghana. The methodology for the research involved a comprehensive literature review, a survey and in-depth interviews. Initially, related literature on the subject was reviewed to set the context for subsequent discussions. A sample of 100 respondents, including representatives from CSOs, LAs, government agencies, the private sector as well as multi-stakeholder groups were engaged in a survey to gather opinions on critical issues of the SDGs. Finally, experts were engaged to clarify issues that came out of the survey.

One of the first findings is that the country's economic and political environment is conducive for the implementation of the SDGs. Ghana's current democratic credentials are among the best in Africa. Besides, the country has drawn up and implemented various development plans since 1957 when it became politically independent. Even though it has been confronted with numerous economic challenges, the economy achieved lower middle income status in 2007, and it still remains one of the best performing economies in Africa.

In parallel, apart from being actively involved in the various engagements at the international level to deliberate on the formulation of the SDGs, Ghana has realigned some targets of its national development agenda to be in line with the focus of the SDGs. As the current development plan phases out

in 2017, Ghana will begin the implementation of a 40-year development plan in 2018. An effort has also been made to synchronise the objectives of this plan with the targets of the SDGs<sup>1</sup>.

However, the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Ghana faces a number of initial overall challenges that need to be taken into consideration:

1. Ghana needs to live up to its lower middle income status by stimulating the productive sectors of the economy to generate the required revenue. It must take on robust and ambitious growth and development strategies which will attract the expected foreign direct investments (FDIs).
2. The economic development, social inclusion and environmental management of the SDGs' expanded scope are put on an equal and equitable footing and this will require additional efforts, given the needed human and financial resources to achieve them.
3. Government needs to show leadership and commitment to the implementation of the SDGs by playing an active role, including adequate coordination of the implementation and mobilisation of the needed financial resources for effective implementation of the SDGs.
4. Inclusive partnerships involving, among others, CSOs, LAs and the private sector need to be developed and properly coordinated to ensure that all actors effectively participate and contribute in their respective niches in a complementary and reinforcing manner instead of at cross purposes.

<sup>1</sup> NDPC, (2015b),

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The study devotes particular attention to the role played by CSOs and LAs during the implementation of the MDGs and, particularly, at present time, during these first months of implementation of the SDGs.

Despite a number of relevant challenges, such as inadequate funding and lack of appropriate human capital, CSOs played very important roles during the implementation of the MDGs in Ghana. While the strong CSOs with better credentials to attract donor funding were more visible, the predominant weaker CSOs also contributed their share in making sure Ghana was successful in achieving the MDGs. Currently it is seen as a step in right direction that the national Government, through the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), has already set up a CSO platform for the SDGs with the main intention of creating opportunity for effective collaboration with the latter in order to ensure their active participation in the implementation of the SDGs.

The situation is somewhat different in the case of LAs, which have different mandates and niches and do not usually work together in a coordinated manner. Local authorities have been active in MDG implementation and the NALAG has already launched several coordination and training efforts to raise awareness about the SDGs and facilitate multi-stakeholder engagements at local level. While they regard themselves as a group and work together to achieve a common set of objectives, there seems to be a lack of incentives to develop more cohesive approaches to act together. So far, that has also been the case in these first months of debate about the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Finally, while twelve months into implementation of the SDGs appears too early to expect tangible outputs, a road map indicating how to achieve the desired results needs to be put in place by the lead state institutions to whip up the interest of the general public. The study proposes a number of recommendations to the different stakeholders that have an influence in the implementation of Agenda 2030, from the national government to development partners. They include a wide array of issues, including: a) promoting strong leadership

and commitment to SDG implementation by sticking to policies and plans developed and timely resource allocation, b) enacting coherent new laws/policies/plans which are needed to align Ghana's development plans with the SDGs and Agenda 2063, c) acting together to encourage inclusive partnerships with CSOs and LAs for the implementation and monitoring of SDGs, d) strengthening the capacity of different stakeholders to participate effectively in SDG implementation and advocacy, and e) seeking out and empowering the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in SDG implementation.