Analysis of proposals in the SDGs e-Inventory related to the themes of the Fifth Session of the Open Working Group on SDGs

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Introduction

The **Sustainable Development Goals e-Inventory** is an interactive online tool which enables stakeholders to outline their visions for new post-2015 global goals. This may be in the form of fully formed proposals, which include detailed targets and indicators, or simply principles and themes that should be applied to the goals. The e-Inventory also enables stakeholders to search existing proposals.

The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs was mandated by Member States at Rio+20 to propose a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) by September 2014. The Fifth Session of the OWG (November 25-27) will consider the thematic areas of: Sustained and inclusive economic growth, Macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development and industrialisation (all of which, for the purpose of this report, will be referred to collectively using the abbreviation, SIGMIDI); and Energy.

In order to inform the deliberations of the November OWG meeting, Stakeholder Forum has conducted an analysis of the proposals currently housed within the SDGs e-Inventory which relate to the thematic areas of the Fifth Session. For most of these topics, the SDG e-Inventory already contains a diverse range of proposals, from a wide variety of stakeholders from all global regions. It is hoped that this analysis will be a useful resource for the OWG members, as well other stakeholders involved in discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, whether working specifically on the themes of this OWG meeting or otherwise.

Methodology

Using the search function of the SDGs e-Inventory, relevant proposals were identified using the thematic labels applied to the proposals when they were uploaded, and by conducting a search of relevant keywords contained within proposals. For example, proposals which were categorised under the thematic areas of 'Trade' and 'Economic growth/development' have been analysed, along with those tagged with the themes of 'Energy access', 'Energy efficiency', and 'Renewable energy'. Searches using keywords such as 'industry' and 'infrastructure' were conducted and proposals were then checked to ensure their relevance to the respective topics.

Analysis

Sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy (including trade, financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development and industrialisation (SIGMIDI)

The breadth of this thematic cluster meant that a diverse range of proposals were considered in the analysis. Infrastructure development was the area with the highest number of relevant proposals (probably due to the broad array of interpretations of the term 'infrastructure'), followed by, in order, sustained and inclusive economic growth, industrialisation, trade, international financial system and finally, external debt sustainability. Although these thematic areas are being considered jointly by the OWG, there was less overlap than might have been expected among proposals in the e-Inventory (i.e. no proposals that addressed both industry *and* inclusive growth for example).

Undoubtedly, recent economic crises factored in the formulations of stakeholders' proposals. Thus, many proposals deal not just with increasing economic opportunities in 'developing' countries, but also with stabilising the economic and financial systems of 'developed' countries.

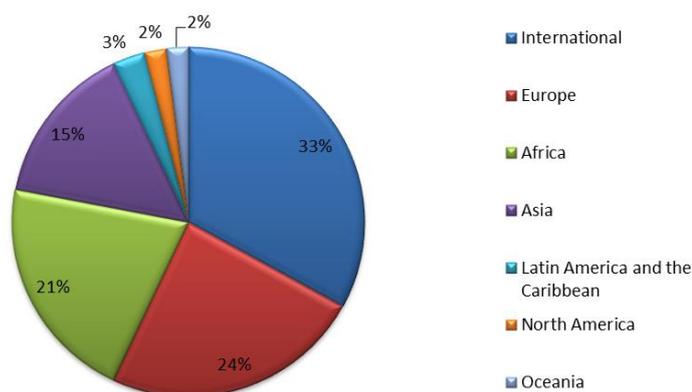**Figure 1:** *Geographic distribution of proposals relating to SIGMIDI*

Figure 1 reveals that overall there is relative parity between the Global North and South with respect to the current number of proposals in the e-Inventory relating to these thematic areas, however there have been very few submissions thus far from the Americas or Oceania. Nearly a third of the proposals came from stakeholders were identified as 'international', which can include intergovernmental bodies, international NGOs, coalitions comprised of partners in multiple countries, and international membership organisations. The region with the largest share of proposal submissions is Europe, accounting for nearly a quarter. There is good representation from Sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for 21 per cent of the proposals, (despite comprising roughly 15 per cent of the global population). Although Asia accounts for 15 per cent of proposals, the continent is still quite underrepresented, given that Asia accounts for 60 per cent of global population.

The relatively strong representation of Africa and Asia relates in part to the efforts of the Initiative for Equality (IfE), an e-Inventory project partner that continues to directly encourage its many Field Hearings Partners across these continents to submit proposals to the database. The low number of proposals on these themes from Oceania and the Americas is something that both civil society-led initiatives and official UN processes like the OWG will need to try and address if the large proportion of the global population that resides in these regions is to have its diverse interests and views on these topics heard.

Figure 2: *Distribution of stakeholder type for proposals relating to SIGMIDI*
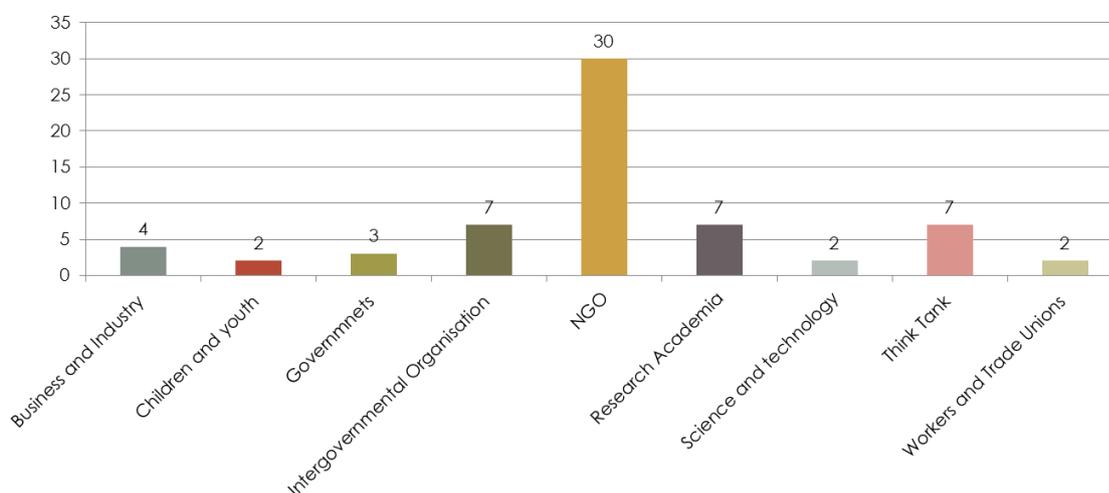
By far, the largest share of proposals relating to SIGMIDI come from NGOs. It is difficult to determine exactly why there is such a large gap between NGOs and all other stakeholders, however, we identify a few possible explanations: It may be that NGOs see the SDG e-Inventory as a platform where their proposals are likely to influence the SDG process, whilst other stakeholders may have access to other venues for advocacy. Additionally, the 'NGO' category arguably covers a broader spectrum of actors than any of the others: whilst 'Think Tank' and 'Workers and Trade Unions' can only apply to a very specific group of stakeholders.

Note that the sum of the stakeholder type totals displayed in Figure 2 will equal more than the total number of proposals relating to this thematic cluster, as several have been authored by coalitions that include more than one stakeholder-type, for example an intergovernmental organisation in partnership with academia.

Infrastructure

The UN Technical Support Team (TST) Issues Brief on SIGMIDI identifies a wide range of infrastructure that is critical to sustainable development, encompassing roads, dams, broadband, education infrastructure and health care infrastructure among others. For our analysis, we have used a similarly broad interpretation of infrastructure.

29 proposals contain the keyword 'Infrastructure', of which 16 contain specific goals, targets and indicators (GTIs).

Most proposals deal with infrastructure broadly (or even in the abstract), but a few focus only on a particular type of infrastructure, such as energy infrastructure or transport infrastructure.

Additionally, some proposals discuss different interpretations of infrastructure – e.g. 'green infrastructure' used in the context of both ecosystem services and climate change adaptation.

Whilst most proposals focus on the expansion of infrastructure, the World Federation of Engineering Organisations discusses the trans-boundary social and environmental consequences of large-scale infrastructure processes and proposes the implementation of mitigation measures to deal with those effects.

It is clear from the proposals that although 'infrastructure' is understood differently in different contexts, it is often identified as a **cross-cutting issue**. For example, the need for infrastructure is noted in goals ranging from 'Reinforcing community resilience to disasters and ability to adapt to climate change' to 'Health for all' to 'a decent, sustainable and connected living environment for all.'

Inclusive and Sustained Economic Growth

The TST Issues brief defines Inclusive Growth as 'growth that generates decent jobs, gives opportunities for all segments of society, especially socially excluded groups, and distributes the income and non-income gains from prosperity more equally across society.' In this context, we have considered proposals that relate to extending the benefits of economic growth to marginalised groups or more generally broadening the reach of these benefits.

24 proposals fall under the Economic Development/Growth thematic area, with 10 recommending goals that relate to inclusive growth.

Many of the proposals engage with the concept of inclusive growth by expressing that any development must reach the poorest and most marginalised segments of society. Three of the IfE

Field Hearings Partners in sub-Saharan Africa express that any development must reach poor and socially-excluded populations *first*, implying that these groups must not just be indirect beneficiaries of growth, but actually empowered to become the agents of inclusive development.

The majority of the proposals which advocate for inclusive economic growth do so by pairing a focus on economic growth with provisions for **social protection**. For example, a goal put forward in the 'Civil Society Demands for the Post-2015 Development Agenda' proposal links inclusive economic development to inequality, and suggests targets for the creation of equal employment opportunities. In other proposals, social protection focused on groups ranging from ethnic minorities to migrants to populations affected by climate change. Several proposals also highlight the need for disaggregated data.

Several stakeholders call for a **stand-alone goal** on inclusive economic growth, including the NGO Saferworld, and Field Hearing Partners in Uganda and Cameroon.

Industry

Whilst the TST issues brief mainly argues for the benefits of increasing industrialisation, many of the proposals in the e-Inventory focus on mitigating the negative consequences of that industrialisation.

13 proposals contain the keyword 'Industry', all but two of which propose concrete GTIs.

Of the 13 proposals related to industry, nine deal with water, highlighting the important linkages between water usage and industry. The majority of proposals related to industry focus on treatment of industrial wastewater. After wastewater treatment, the most addressed issue in the industry-water nexus is efficiency of water use by industry. This suggests that any GTIs framework will need to consider the effects of industrialisation on water availability and supply.

Three of the thirteen proposals related to industrialisation proposed a shift *away* from industrial agriculture toward ecologically-sustainable agriculture. These proposals suggest that a GTIs framework could address such issues through targets related to agricultural diversity (# of crop varieties for example) or protection for smallholder farmers.

Trade

The TST issues brief argues that: 'Trade liberalisation can contribute to increased growth through enhancing access to technology, intermediate and capital goods and increased competition, which in turn could reduce poverty through employment creation.' It acknowledges however that, 'the distribution of the gains (and losses) from trade remains a concern.'

Proposals in the e-Inventory deal with both the liberalisation of trade and with targets to reduce the imbalances created by the global trading system.

There is something of a North-South split regarding the language used to describe a desirable international trading system. Several stakeholders from the Global North use the language of 'free and open' trade relations, with the German Development Institute proposing a goal of 'Creating an open, rules-based and fair system of world trade,' and the Sisters of St Anne (SSA) Social Justice Office (Canada) proposing a target requiring that 'By 2025 Governments will develop and implement multilateral systems of trade and finance which are open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory.' Proposals from the South, on the other hand, tend to eschew the neoliberal language of 'open trade' systems. For example, the organisation Unnayan Onneshan (Bangladesh)

calls for '*Equitable* market and trading mechanisms' and the target set by the Campaign for Peoples Goals for Sustainable Development (CPGSD) – which is supported by a diverse range of developing country stakeholders - is to 'Reform trade relations to promote equality among trade partners.'

International Financial System

Proposals for GTIs relating to international finance within the e-Inventory can be roughly grouped into two categories: 1) Creating a financial system that supports sustainable development and 2) Regulations for macroeconomic stability.

Within the former, there are several different types of proposed GTIs. For example, the CONCORD-European Task Force proposes the goal: 'Financial System serves people and respects resource thresholds,' and the International Expert Group on Earth System Preservation (IESP) propose the target: 'Enhancement of the resilience of economic systems through development of incentives favouring small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).' Finally, the 'Asia-Pacific Aspirations' proposal, submitted jointly by ESCAP, ADB and the UNDP, argues that new financial services should supplement traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA).

There are varying levels of specificity on how a GTI framework could encourage financial stability. The International Poverty Reduction Center in China simply states the target: 'Stabilise developed nations' financial systems.' Others target particular kinds of financial activities that create macroeconomic instability. For example, the Arab NGO Network for Development calls for policies that support a non-speculative commodity market, and the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives calls for a target on a 'global currency mechanism to prevent volatile fluctuations and competitive devaluations.' The CPGSD calls for a target including 'improved regulation of banks, financial flows and financial activities such as derivatives trading.'

There are also a number of proposals related to the role of offshore tax-havens, tax evasion and illicit financial flows in hindering sustainable development.

Debt sustainability

The TST Issues Brief notes that: 'The inability of States with heavy debt burdens to access affordable credit during the current crisis has revealed problems with the existing debt framework.'

There are fewer concrete proposals that deal with debt sustainability than with the other macroeconomic issues being discussed at the fifth meeting of the OWG. Most that address debt just include a non-numeric target for ensuring debt sustainability. Research organisation Unnayan Onneshan proposed the novel indicator 'Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services.' One proposal that did go into greater detail was the CPGSD's goal for 'New Trade, Monetary and Financial Architecture.' Among other targets, the CPGSD calls for 'establishing a mechanism for sovereign debt renegotiation.'

Comparison with official Post-2015 Development Agenda Process inputs

As the post-2015 discourse has so far been primarily shaped by official UN process inputs, such as the High-Level Panel (HLP), the UN Global Compact, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and several UN Development Group (UNDG) consultations, a comparison between these official process inputs and proposals housed within the e-Inventory might be useful, especially, as the recommendations from these inputs have come to be viewed as a yardstick against which to measure other proposals.

- Many of the proposals related to inclusive and sustainable growth followed logic similar to the UNDG Thematic Consultation on Growth and Employment, which concluded that social protection was crucial to insure livelihoods security.

- In addition to the majority of proposals in the e-Inventory related to industry, the HLP, and the UNDG Thematic Consultation on Water also underscored the need to address industrial waste and usage of water. There seems to be widespread acceptance that the industry-water nexus must be addressed in the post-2015 framework.

- Just as the HLP calls for a target to 'Reduce illicit flows and tax evasion and increase stolen-asset recovery,' the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives calls for targets on 'Transparency of Financial Flows' and 'Harmful tax competition.'

- The HLP also calls for 'an open, fair and development-friendly trading system,' and the UN Global Compact adds 'non-discriminatory' to this. As noted above, the criterion of 'open' trade is echoed primarily by submissions from the North; proposals from the South tend to be closer to the language of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's 'Action Agenda for Sustainable Development,' which proposes that 'rules for international trade, finance, taxation, business accounting, and intellectual property are reformed to be consistent with and support achieving the SDGs.' This suggests that any goals or targets related to trade should more critically consider the compatibility of 'openness' and 'fairness' in trading systems.

- A few proposals build upon and expand the HLP's target of 'improving market access of developing country products.' Indeed, one indicator proposed by Unnayan Onneshan was 'Proportion of total developed country imports from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty'.
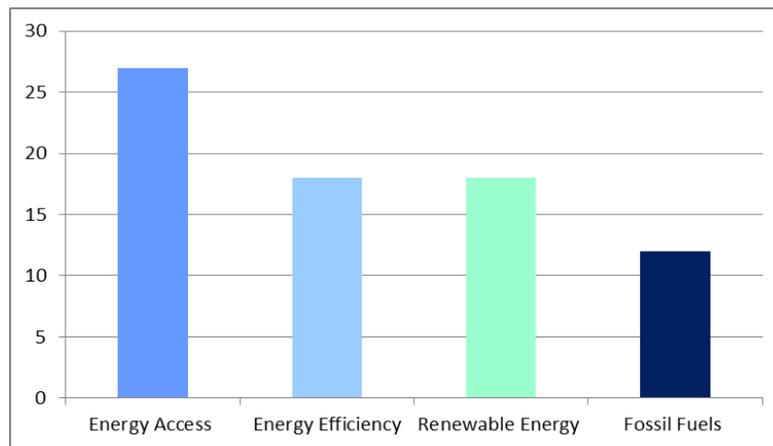
Energy

In November 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative, comprised of three interlinked goals:

- Universal access to modern energy services

- Doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency

- Doubling the share of renewable energy in the global mix.

In the preparations for Rio+20, energy was identified as one of seven thematic areas requiring priority attention and the Conference outcome document reaffirmed the importance of each of the SE4ALL objectives. Energy has also been the subject of one of the UNDG thematic consultations.

43 proposals relating to energy feature in the e-Inventory. This includes proposals which have been labelled with one or more of the following thematic areas: Energy access, Energy efficiency, Renewable energy, and Fossil fuels (including subsidies). The distribution of these thematic areas is displayed in Figure 3, with Energy access being the most commonly selected theme (27 proposals), parity between Efficiency and Renewables (18 proposals each), and a further 12 relating to fossil fuels. Once again, note that proposals can relate to more than one thematic area, so the sum of the three areas adds up to more than 43.

Figure 3: *Number of proposals related to energy, by thematic area*

A keyword search was also used to ensure that proposals which include the word 'energy' but were not labelled with any of the aforementioned thematic areas were also included in the analysis as appropriate.

Figure 4 reveals a relatively similar trend for geographical distribution of proposals on energy to those relating to SIGMIDI, with the International category by far the most strongly represented, but with slightly greater parity between Africa, Asia, and Europe. Oceania and the Americas lag behind once again, showing that the lack of proposals from this region is not limited to those which refer to SIGMIDI and likely represents a broader participation issue which the OWG and other actors must strive to address.

Figure 4: *Geographic distribution of proposals related to Energy access, Energy efficiency, Renewable energy and Fossil fuels (including subsidies)*
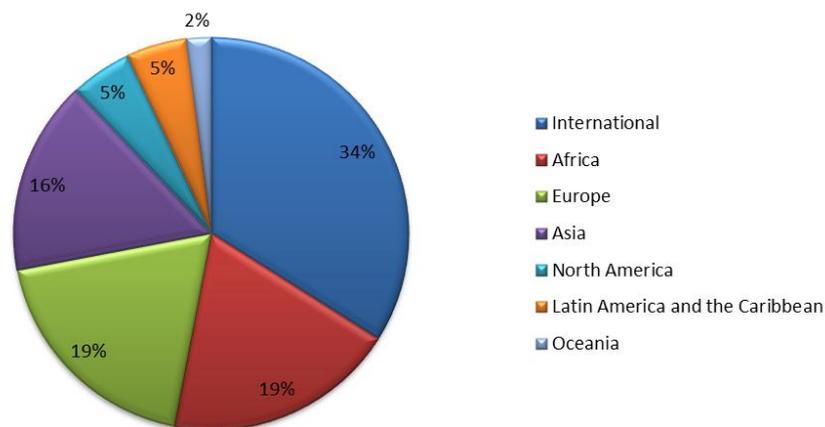
Once again, as with SIGMIDI, Figure 5 shows that NGOs account for the largest share of proposals on energy, which will likely be for similar reasons (and have similar implications) to those suggested in the SIGMIDI section. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the gap between the total number of proposals by NGOs and other stakeholder types is less pronounced for energy than it is for SIGMIDI.

Figure 5: *Distribution of proposals related to energy, by stakeholder type*
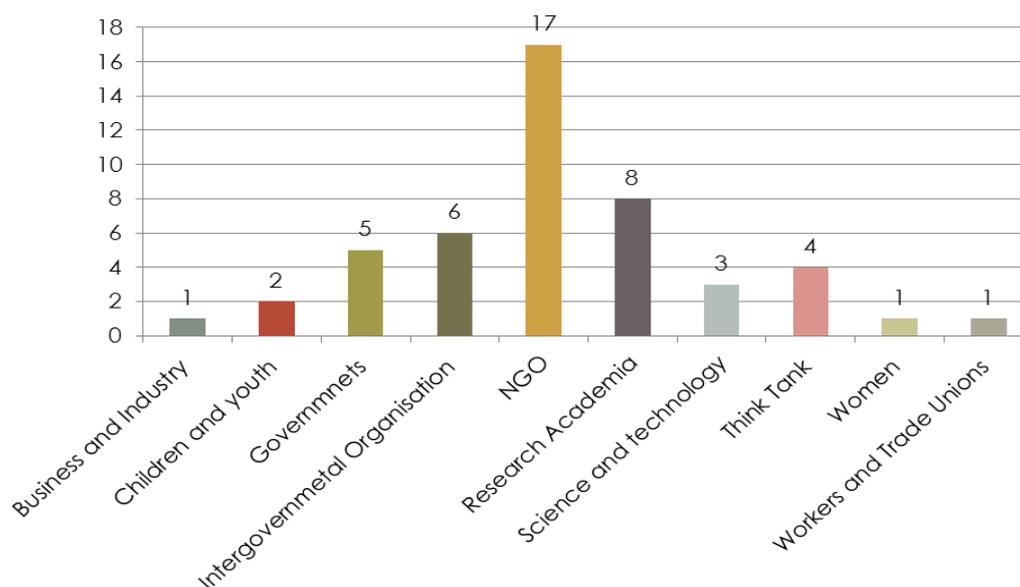
Again, note that the sum of the stakeholder type totals displayed in Figure 5 will equal more than the total number of proposals on this theme, as several have been authored by coalitions that include more than one stakeholder-type.

Of the 43 proposals relating to energy, 31 put forward at least one **specific goal** or goal area related to energy access, energy efficiency or renewable energy. In general, these tended to address each of these thematic areas through a single broad goal on energy. However most of these proposals separated sub-themes - such as energy access and proportion of renewables in the energy mix - at the target and indicator level.

A small number of stakeholders propose stand-alone goals on energy access (such as SSA Social Justice Office and Dr. Tom Mitchell (UK). Other such as 64th DPI/NGO Conference, put forward specific goals on renewable or clean energy. The UNCSD Major Group for Children and Youth suggest a specific goal to both 'promote energy access and efficiency'. The CONCORD - European Task Force (ETF) suggests a goal on 'Universal access to safe, renewable and reliable energy.'

Whilst many of the proposals seem to imply that access to energy is a goal unto itself, several suggest it is a means to another end. For example, two different IfE Field Hearings Partners (both in sub-Saharan Africa) were concerned with energy as one of 'the basic resources needed for life and a sustainable economy.'

The remainder of proposals identify energy access, energy efficiency or renewable energy as a **cross-cutting issue** that relates to GTIs proposed in a different thematic area (examples include sustainable agriculture, expanding telecom services and technological development, and green economic growth). For example, a number of other proposals included energy as part of broader infrastructure goals (such as German Development Institute (DIE), World Economic Forum (WEF), and Beyond 2015-GCAP-IFP).

More generally speaking, proposals have used a number of terms to describe desired energy outcomes, each with their own connotations. The most prominent terms used in proposals are 'sustainable energy', 'modern energy', 'clean energy', and 'renewable energy'. There is often overlap

amongst the terms, and in some cases they seem to be used interchangeably (it is notable that even the UN Secretary General's SE4ALL Vision Statement uses all four terms). On the other hand, some proposals have instead used one of these terms consistently. For example:

- o The WEF only suggest a 'Zero target for lack of access to modern energy sources.' Arguably, however, universal access to 'modern' fossil sources could fulfil this target.

- o Several proposals set specific targets and indicators for the share of 'renewable energy' in the global energy mix; this suggests a narrower range of desired energy sources, but also allows for a continued role for non-renewable sources.

- o A proposal from the Monash Sustainability Institute states: 'Improve universal, affordable access to clean energy that minimises local pollution and health impacts and mitigates global warming.' 'Clean energy', presumably in this context means low-carbon (i.e. 'mitigates global warming'), but could potentially rule out some sources in order to 'minimise local pollution' (eg hydro-electric dams that can create environmental hazards and risks).

Whilst the small number of proposals that discussed specific indicators generally put forward outcome indicators related to specific targets, Unnayan Onneshan (Bangladesh) also proposed a number of **process indicators**, including 'Expenditure for renewable energy, clean energy, energy efficiency and energy security.'

All of the proposals from Sub-Saharan Africa which include specific GTIs focus primarily on energy access, i.e. not on energy efficiency or renewable energy. This may be due to the fact that the region has the lowest electrification rates in the world, and thus increasing energy access is perceived as the most pressing issue. Despite the relatively strong support for a global goal on energy (in some form), therefore, specific targets and indicators on energy will likely need to be **differentiated at the national level** to ensure that they are compatible with domestic needs and priorities. In this regard, developed country targets and affiliated indicators on energy are likely to be more focused on efficiency and renewables than access.

Comparison with official Post-2015 Development Agenda Process inputs and SE4ALL

- Whilst a few e-Inventory proposals conflate energy sustainability with energy access, most separate the two, often setting one target for universal energy access and another for the share of renewables, taking the same approach as the UN Secretary General's SE4ALL initiative, the HLP and the UNGC reports (examples include ODI; Save the Children; UNCSD Major group for Children & Youth; Governments of Colombia, Peru and UAE; ESCAP/ADP/UNDP).

- In addition to the three SE4ALL goals, the HLP also added a fourth target for phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies. Although many proposals reiterated the first three targets, only the proposal from the 64th DPI/NGO Conference addresses the fourth target on subsidies. This may be due to the lack of clear quantification, or because the target on subsidies was only included in the HLP report, and not in the SE4ALL vision statement.

- A number of proposals from a range of different stakeholder groups use the specific phrase 'Sustainable Energy for/to All', with four of these stating that this should be a stand-alone goal (Save the Children, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Måns Nilsson and Paul Lucas,

and the French Government). At the target level, however, only one proposal is more ambitious than the SE4ALL initiative. The SSA Social Justice Office calls for 50 per cent of the world's energy supply to come from renewable resources by 2030, which would require a near tripling of the current share of renewable energy.

More information

Stakeholder Forum will be publishing briefing papers with an analysis of proposals in the SDGs e-Inventory related to the themes of each of the remaining three Open Working Group meetings (OWG 6 – Dec 13, OWG 7 Jan 14 and OWG 8 Feb 14).

Stakeholder Forum will also be undertaking a comprehensive analysis of all proposals housed within the e-Inventory to coincide with the second Intersessional Meeting between Major Groups and other stakeholders and the Open Working Group which is set to take place towards the end of the OWG's input phase of work in February 2014.

For further information, to search existing proposals, or to submit your vision for new global goals visit: www.sdgseinventory.org or contact Jack Cornforth – jcornforth@stakeholderforum.org.

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