

WORKING TOGETHER: AFGHANISTAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The **Working Together: Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals** paper is done in partnership with CAID as part of joint learning of CAID partners in Afghanistan to improve Localization of Sustainable Development Goals agenda and to strengthen partnership between NGOs and private sector and government in order to contribute for a better and more sustainable future for all.

Afghan Women's Educational Center

AWEC
مرکز تعلیمی زنان افغان



2019

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	1
1. The objective of the Paper	2
2. Setting the context/Background	2
3. Current Status of the SDGs in Afghanistan	3
A-SDGs Localization and the role Stakeholders	6
Private Sector and A-SDGs	7
Non-Governmental Organizations and the A-SDGs	8
Consulting communities SDGs	10
4. Challenges and Policy Recommendations	11
Recommendations	12

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ASDGs	Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NPPs	National Priority Programmes
ANPDF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
MoEc	Ministry of Economy
MoF	Ministry of Finance
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
CC	Citizens' Charter
CDC	Community Development Councils
CSO	Civil Society Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
WCCI	Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (WCCI)
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AWEC	Afghanistan Women Educational Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SCR	Social Corporate Responsibility

1. The objective of the Paper

The overarching objective of the paper is to promote localization of the 2030 [agenda](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals by further exploring the role of various stakeholders involved, including the role of civil society organizations, government, the private sector and people in Afghanistan. The paper also aims at reflecting the current standing of Afghanistan in terms of the implementation and actions of the above-mentioned stakeholders on national, and local levels. Additionally, it also focuses to enhance awareness and understanding of key challenges and opportunities regarding Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDG). Similarly, it also focuses on fostering cooperation between the local Non-Governmental Organizations, the government and private sector regarding A-SDG frame works for poverty reduction and in particular gender parity.

2. Background

On September 25, 2015 leaders from 193 countries including Afghanistan backed the 2030 agenda which is also known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a fifteen years agenda that is designed to address core global issues the world is facing. On behalf of Afghanistan, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah [pledged](#) to work towards these goals along with national and international partners. According to UNITED Nations, replacing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embodies a strategic vision and aspiration of all countries which offers a global [roadmap](#) for “dignity, peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and in the future”. The SDGs opened new fronts of partnerships, stimulating public opinion and indicated a higher value of setting ambitious goals. It reshaped the decision-making around the world by putting the immediate needs of the ordinary people at the forefront.

Throughout the MDGs’ fifteen years lifetime, the MDGs did [help](#) to eradicate poverty across the world by elevating the lives of more than one billion people, supported more girls to attend school and by the same token launch various programs to protect the planet. But a large number of people across the world were still facing challenges such as poverty, hunger, inequalities, disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced, quality education, and the progress of development continue to bypass women and those who are less privileged or disadvantaged given their age, disability, or ethnicity.

Thus, to overcome all these differences and uplift people's lives, provide quality education and promote equality across the world, a new, people-oriented development agenda of 2030

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was launched in 2015. Unlike MDGs which were designed through a top-down approach, the new approach was bottom-up and the process pragmatically [involved](#) civil society organizations, ordinary people, intellectuals, the private sector, academics and scientists from around the world, both online and offline and face to face consultation in more than 100 countries.

The agenda is the strategic vision of 169 countries for future development that requires actions at the global, regional, sub-regional and local levels. Overall the SDGs can be divided into three main categories: The 1st category is in fact an extension of the MDGs that is comprised of seven SDGs components. The 2nd category is more about inclusiveness (jobs, infrastructure, industrialization, and distribution) that brings goals number 8, 9, and 10 under its canopy. While the 3rd category is brings the last seven [goals](#) under its umbrella that are sustainable cities and communities, life below water “consumption and production; climate action; resources and environment; peace and justice; and the means of implementation and global partnership for it”.

Afghanistan has been one of those 169 countries that have signed up to implementing the SDGs. In order to tackle pressing issues of the country and link local development with the global development process, the government of Afghanistan has tailored a comprehensive strategy that covers all SDGs except SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources) given that Afghanistan is a landlocked country.

Afghanistan started the process nationalization A-SDGs that lasted for two years from March 2016 until March 2018 to complete. According to the reports of MoEc the government was supposed at localizing and aligning A-SDGs with their development programs by November 2018 and pragmatically begin and move into the implementation phase of the A-SDGs by January 2019. However, existing data shows that the process had been exposed to various challenges including insecurity across the country, lack of technical capacity, financial constraints and by the same token absence of realistic and accurate data.

3. Current Status of the SDGs in Afghanistan

In order to know the status of A-SDGs progress, it is imperative to explore and analyze government development programmes and by the same token fathom whether and how these are aligned with the A-SDGs.

More than half of Afghanistan's population [lives](#) below the poverty line, the economy is dwindling, insecurity is on the rise, and wide range of corruption across government institution, SDGs appears to be blueprint for tackling many of the aforementioned.

But for Afghanistan to become a peaceful, vibrant democratic society with robust political and economic systems that uphold its rich religious and cultural values and at the same time ensure people's role in the decision making, SDGs seem to be one of the viable options. Mainstreaming SDGs into the development programs will ensure that the country is on the trajectory of peace, prosperity, growing economy with a booming private sector.

On 7th October 2015, the council of Ministers. MoEc to lead the process of mainstreaming, nationalizing the SDGs by tailoring technical guidelines, coordinating among relevant stakeholders and prepare robust mechanism to track and monitor its progress. The ministry is also responsible to develop the capacity of diverse stakeholders such as civil society organizations, academia, the private sector and others in the domain of and nationalization of SDGs and mobilize and deploy needed resources.

According to Hafizullah Hasif, who is communication and advocacy officer of the SDGs project at the MoEc "the institutional setup has been laid out, global targets and indicators have been nationalized and beside that a national indicator framework--measuring Afghanistan's progress towards the 2030 Agenda--has been adopted." Responding to a question regarding the alignment status of the SDGs with Afghanistan development programmes, he added that the "A-SDGs targets are assessed for the alignment of ASDGs with ten national priority programs (NPPs) which are the main development frameworks for the country. MoEc is currently working to align on-budget and off-budget programs with the A-SDGs to reflect all SDGs national targets in the national budget document, developing an integrated M&E framework and a dashboard to measure and report progress across the government".

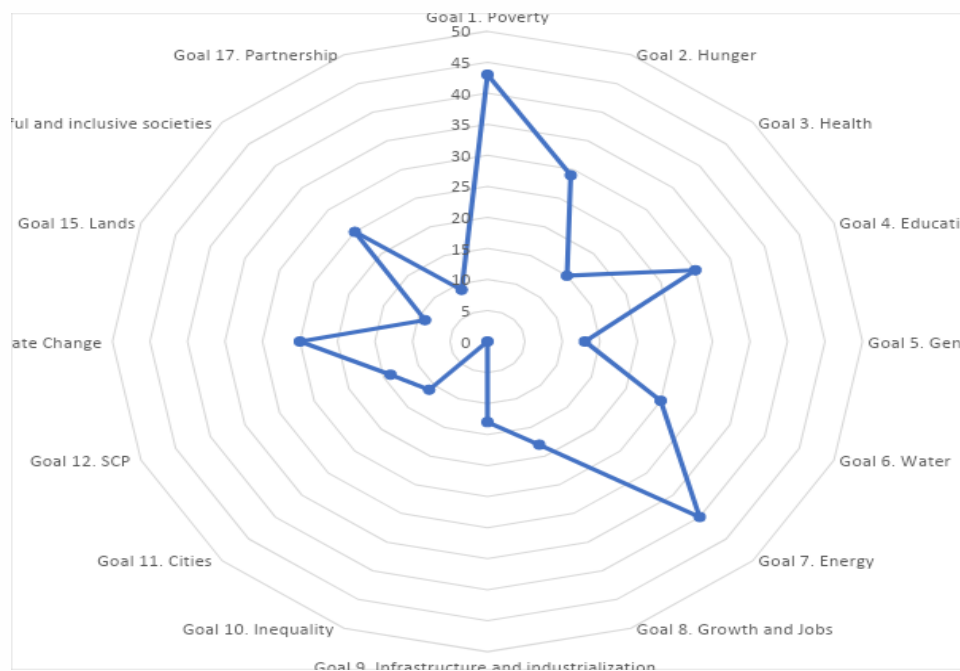
The data provided by MoEc reveals that the process of nationalization of the SDGs started in 2016 after the MoEc conducted informative seminars and consultative meetings with relevant government institutions that have implemented some goals of the SDGs, with private sector, civic groups, national and international organizations, people and academic institutions. In the next stage MoEc devised structural and executive mechanisms to translate A-SDGs from nationalization to aligning it with national development programmes such as National Priority Programmes (NPP) and Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF).

Hasif’s notion is backed by the recently released document titled “Aligning National Priority Programs (NPPs) with Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs)” by the MoEc. The document reveals the government efforts to [integrate](#) A-SDGs into NPPs and one of them is the Citizens’ Charter (CC) which is the government’s “primary vehicle for extending basic social services and empowering communities in urban and rural settings to set and achieve their own development goals”. This development project allows local Community Development Councils (CDCs) to actively participate in the design, delivery and monitoring of social services, ranging from health, education, and support to the local agriculture sector.

Citizen’s Charter [aims](#) at “eradicating poverty, eliminating hunger, creating decent work and unleashing the local communities’ long-term economic growth potential, increasing the engagement of local communities through the CDCs and bridging the gaps that exist between the center and the periphery”. According to the document, the span of the project is 10 years which will be completed in three phases and has so far disbursed \$100 million of community grants, and nearly 4,000 projects are currently being implemented across the country. The program brings a total of 27 A-SDG targets, primarily contributing to ASDG goals 1, 2, 4, 7, and 13 under its umbrella as shown in Figure 1.

Citizens’ Charter’s alignment

Figure 1. Source: Aligning National Priority Programs (NPPs) with Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs), Ministry of Economy



According to MoEc, ministry is almost halfway through with the alignment of the A-SDG targets for which they have prepared a draft concept-note for financing the SDGs. He notes that the current in

Afghanistan, lack of awareness, instability and contentious politics as the key impediments for attaining the 2030 Agenda.

The MoEC data further indicate, the implementation process of the A-SDGs is divided into two phases, where phase 1 is from 2018-2020 and phase 2 is from 2021-2030. The first phase is comprised of major activities such as, mainstreaming and alignment of A-SDGs into national plans and policies; prioritization, costing, localization, deploying awareness campaigns and building the technical capacity of various stakeholders. He says that the MoEc has outlined a draft concept for a Strategic Vision-going beyond the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and NPPs--for sustainable development This 10-year strategy will lead and guide the achievement of the A-SDGs in Afghanistan.



Figure 2. Source: Ministry of Economy

A-SDGs Localization and the role Stakeholders

The localization of Afghanistan SDGs is more than “landing” the international goals at the local level but it is also more about “linking” the global development with the local one. Having said that, it is more about transforming the lives of local people, communities, individuals and households that are in desperate need. The support and involvement of local people is critical in translating SDGs as a [global dream](#) to a local reality which is “*leaving no one behind*” as they are the key stakeholders of its implementation process.

Another reason is that the local people are well aware of the needs of local communities, social and economic conditions thus, engaging the local actors can prove to be a great source of help in the process particularly in countries like Afghanistan that is a conflict ridden. Without involving the local communities and taking them onboard in the implementation of SDGs, it will expose the **government** agencies, **NGOs**, **civil society** and the **private sector** to numerous challenges.

The existing literature shows that there is no specific actor (private sector, organization, people) except the government has been directly involved in the implementation of the A-SDGs either on national or local level however, all these actors are engaged in one way or another.



Private Sector and A-SDGs

According to Manizha Wafiq, who is chairperson of Women’s Chamber of Commerce and Industries, so far both the government and private sector have not been formally partnering on the implementation of the A-SDGs. She said that “there is no systematic approach that engage us with the government on many fronts such as localization, awareness programs and implementation of A-SDGs. But many of the private sector firms are implementing projects in the area of green energy, established factories that helped in creating jobs and other small firms work in other different areas”.

Ziaulhaq Wazirzai who is the deputy of Commerce of International Chamber of Commerce in Afghanistan (ICC Afghanistan) viewpoint stands no different to the Wafiq one’s as he is of the opinion that the government does not give the due value to private sector as it should. According to Wazirzai despite their attempts of cooperation, the government has not involved the private sector in the ASDGs consultation. He further stated that “government cannot alone implement all ASDGs therefore, it is vital to involve private sector from the early stages to the localization”.

But responding to coordination with stakeholders of A-SDGs, Mr Hasif at MoEc stated that “The A-SDGs Executive Committee and the MoEc has extensively engaged the CSOs, the private sector, and media to strengthen the means of national and local implementation, He furthered that “these

sessions have always included CSOs with relatively stronger social capital and the leadership of the business and private sector in the country". The views of Wafiq and Hasif lack of clarity about coordination, consultation and information sharing as different actors try to shift responsibility.

Wafiq furthers that in the absence of formal and systematic partnership between the government and the private sector, it is recommended that the MoEc to collect data of the projects carried out by the said actor and put it under relevant A-SDGs. both Wazirzai and Wafiq agree and insist that one of the keys to the successful implementation of the A-SDGs is awareness program. They both emphasized on the need for a robust public campaign awareness. Existing literature indicates that the government has not been able to arrange information sessions or launch a wide range of awareness campaigns that target the private sector. As the role of the private sector is critical in the localization of the A-SDGs, Manizha suggests the government to establish an incentive fund for the private sector.

Viewed this way, according to Wafiq, the incentive fund generate responsibility and the fund will be used by the private sector for awareness and other relevant programmes at the local level as she pointed out that the private sector lacks resources to perform their corporate social responsibility as "it has already been spending millions of dollars and resources on ensuring their security, waste management, and cleaning which is in fact the job of the government". The private sector expects the government to resolve a number of their problems that hinders their way in their daily operation and by the same token enhance the technical capacity of the private sector regarding A-SDGs which will be resourceful during the phase of implementation and localization.

Non-Governmental Organizations and the A-SDGs

The failure of involving and mainstreaming key actors in the A-SDGs process depicts the inability of the Afghan government that has been unsuccessful to rollout an inclusive plan so far. According to Javid Ahmadi who works for Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), civil society organizations and NGOs are involved with the MoEc however, their role is limited to consultation and feedback.

Discussing the modality of CSOs and NGOs engagement with the government, Mr. Javid stated that there are four technical groups that are Security & Governance, Agriculture & Rural Development, Health, Education, Environment & Social Protection, and Economic Growth & Infrastructure. Each group has a number of NGOs and CSOs that are elected through a transparent election.

As stated earlier, the role of CSOs, the private sector and NGOs is quite critical to the success of the SDGs in Afghanistan. And according to Javid, as of now, CSOs and NGOs are not the formal

implementing partners, but they do monitor, take part in awareness raising programs on local level and oversee the government progress of A-SDGs and provide necessary feedback.

Negina Yari, country director of Afghanistan for Tomorrow organization echoes similar concerns and states that “there is a dire need for coordination between the government and other actors such as NGOs but as of now there is no coordination, exchange, and follow up between the government and NGOs”. Yari suggested that “SDGs is the responsibility of every Afghan at all levels”, however, she voiced her concerns about a group of NGOs which manipulates this entire process and hindered the mainstreaming of other NGOs.

On the other hand, according to NGO representative and private sector interviewed in this research there is strong need of improvement in communication at the relevant department of CEO office and Minister of Economic they also emphasized that should be more. the government efforts to involve civil society in the ASDGs is not more than “symbolic”. According to there is the NGOs role is limited and they are just monitoring the process but he stressed that the “government must take concrete steps involving civil society and other actors if they are serious about ASDGs”.

However, Mr. Hasif states that the [A-SDGs Executive Committee](#) and the MoEc has extensively engaged NGOs, CSOs, the private sector, and media to strengthen the means of national and local implementation as shown in figure 3. These sessions have always included CSOs with relatively stronger social capital and the leadership of the business and private sector in the country, however, he does not point at any specific local partner.

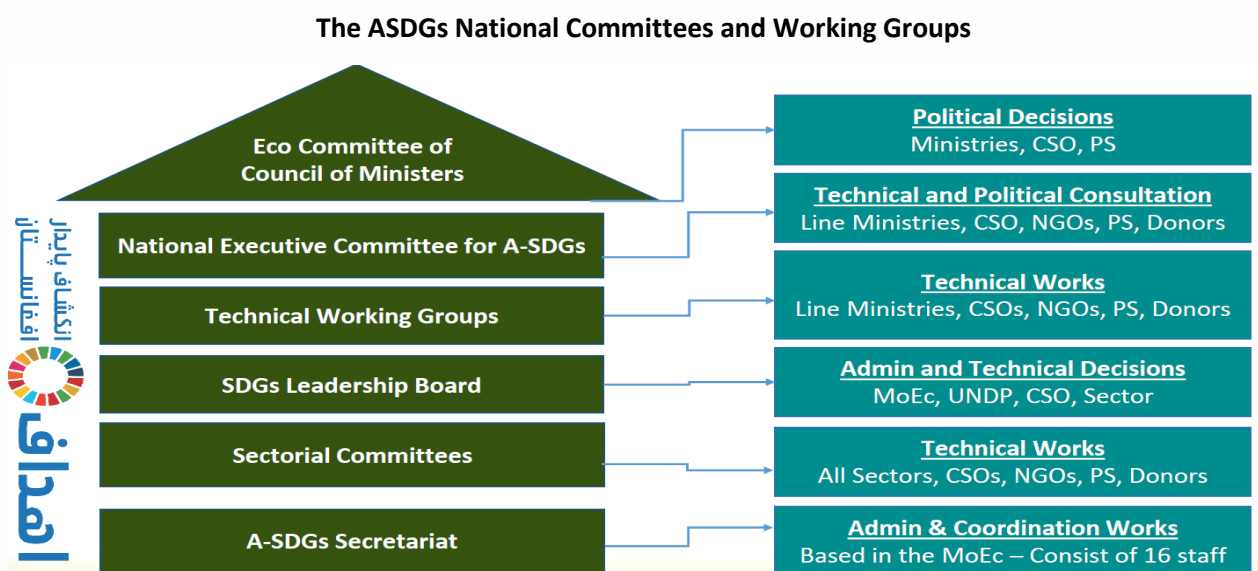


Figure 3. Source: Ministry of Economy.

Contrary to Javid and Yari statement about NGO’s role, according to Abdul Bari Ahmadzai who is the operation director of Citizen charter program at the Deputy of Municipalities of Independent

Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), “in the first phase, the deputy of municipality at IDLG has recently announced requesting NGOs to submit their Request of Interest (REOI) for the implementation of various projects (discussed above) at a local level”. Ahmadzai furthered that the role of NGOs is instrumental in the implementation of the Citizen Charter’s program at the local level.

Consulting communities SDGs

One of the key differences of SDGs with MDGs is its designing approach. Unlike the MDGs that were designed through a top-down approach, SDGs were created through a bottom-up, inclusive and participatory approach by engaging and taking the [input](#) of millions of people in more than 100 [countries](#). Above all, the local people understand the needs of their community and can help the policy makers to prioritize issues that needs urgent response.

With the support of CAID, the Afghan Women’s Educational Center arranged a workshop titled “Strengthening local impact in realization of Sustainable Development Goals in Afghanistan” on 14 February 2019. The workshop was attended by seven program managers (including three women) of seven NGO’s from various backgrounds and provinces including a representative from ACBAR.

The attendees were exposed to learn about overall SDGs with a particular focus on the current standing of Afghanistan-SDGs nationalization, alignment and implementation. The workshop also focused on the importance and impact of how and why the NGO should formulate its strategic plan according to the A-SDG(s). Prior to the commencement of the workshop a pre-test was taken and once the workshop was over a post-test was also taken to assess how much the participant gained from the workshop. The post workshop findings showed that the workshop helped the participants by 75% about the very basics of SDGs in comparison to their knowledge during the pre-test.

Given the need of better understanding and the importance of the programme AWEC undertook a community-based research in order to identify the relevance and need of community as part of alignment and learning exercise of (CAID) local partners with A-ASDG to effectively land ASDGs in their regions.

After careful deliberation, the research questions were developed in consultation with CAID local partner NGOs’ programming priority. All the questions revolved around SDGs goal 1, goal 4 and goal 5.

Though the research was not carried out through a very defined and scientific sampling rather accessibility where NGOs were already operating. A guideline questions were developed and the

data was collected through community dialogue approach from all strata including youth, elders and women, beside that key informants were interviewed to enrich the progress and status update of ASDG in Afghanistan. The research paper collected the responses of around one people in Western, South Eastern, Northern and central Afghanistan. The overarching goal of research was more of practice of engaging local communities and people oriented program by NGO in line with SDG goals and to identify and highlight the significant role NGOs can play in the localization of the ASDGs.

Another important element of this research exercise and data collection was to make sure that the CAID local partners NGOs create programmes and projects that are aligned with the ASDGs and informed by local realities. As the local NGOs undertook a comprehensive one-day training at the AWEC central office Kabul, the research findings helped them on how to engage their work into the ASDGs through their organizations roadmap.

Although this paper is not purely based on the finding of this research, however the pattern of the research and at the same time the views of local people indicated that in order to tackle various pressing issues ranging from poverty reduction to women empowerment, and education on local level, both the government and other partners such as NGOs, civil society, and the private sector can play a significant role. In areas where the government does not have access, other actors such as NGOs and the private sector can be very useful in terms of providing them services. Thus, the findings can help local NGOs and the government who are operating in far flung areas to involve people and design projects and programmes align with ASDGs that help the local people's needs. It also helps the government and NGOs to critically analyse the input of the local community. View this way, the localization of the ASDGs will be much pragmatic and so the government will be able to link local development with global one.

4. Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Given the paper limited research and interviews there might be more challenges in the existing structure of the ASDGs. However, studying existing materials regarding ASDGs and conducting interviews and discussion with officials from the government, civil society, the private sector and people the paper notes the following challenges:

- 1- ASDGs is still a new phenomenon to many Afghans including the government officials. Based on the answers to the research questions, ordinary people do not have sufficient knowledge about the 2030 agenda or SDGs;

- 2- The implementation of ASDGs require a multi-stakeholder engagement or partnership (government, people, academia, the private sector and the civil society or NGOs). Therefore, the majority of these stakeholders lack technical capacity and knowledge about ASDGs;
- 3- Private sector and NGOs play a significant role in the ASDGs processes but they note insecurity across the country and lack of resources as the key challenges to their operation;
- 4- Financing ASDGs and providing security to all government and non-government agencies is a key challenge ahead of the government;
- 5- Apart from the technical capacity, the lack of technological resources, skills and communication infrastructure are the other major challenges that can malign all phases of ASDGs;
- 6- Limited information about ASDGs and the absence of realistic and accurate data consolidation platform;
- 7- Localization of ASDGs is still a challenge and as of now no concrete steps have been taken so far by the government;
- 8- No clear strategy about the localization of the ASDGs;
- 9- Lack of proper coordination between the stakeholders;

Recommendations

1. The government shall come up with a clear and a compressive awareness strategy that tackle can address the issue of poor awareness on ASDGs and its main purpose i.e. "leaving no one behind." Viewed this way the government can involve relevant government institutions such as ministry of religious affairs, IDLGs etc.
 - a. For instance, the ministry of religious affairs can issue instructions to their religious scholars to apprise people about the importance of ASDGs at village and district level.
 - b. Involving civil society, academic institutions, carrying out robust public campaigns such as hanging billboards in urban centers, highways can be of a great help.
 - c. Making short informative video clips, ads, and images that signify the importance of ASDGs in a very local language and promoting them through mainstream media and social media.

- d. Majority of the Afghans in rural areas listen to radios thus, designing radio programs and talks shows stating the importance of ASDGs and people involvement in a very common language;
 - e. Involving NGOs or civil society activists to raise awareness of ASDGs through graffiti. Art lord and alike can be a better option;
2. In order to achieve its ends, the MoEc needs to come up with a plan that involves all stakeholders (government, the private sector, NGOs, academia, people, and CSOs) at all phases of the ASDGs. This plan can strengthen the partnership between these stakeholders and development partners both on national and regional level in policy formulation and M&E;
3. Rolling out a capacity building programs plan that can build and enhance the capacity of the government employees, private sectors, NGOs and other involved people;
4. Localization of the ASDGs require a participatory approach that involve people and local actors such as NGOs and civil society and the private sector at the very local level. For instance, in areas where the government is not able to reach masses it shall involve these local actors to provide services the local communities and make sure that no one is left behind from any of the ASDGs.
5. Improving communication and physical infrastructure across the country;
6. The MoEc and Ministry of Finance shall seek financial and technical support from the international development partners and at the same time exploring new ways of financing the ASDGs;
7. The implementation and localization of ASDGs require strong political will both at highest and lower level;
8. MoEc shall establish a consolidated platform for data sharing that aims at enhancing the production, quality, dissemination and usage of data;
9. MoEc shall devise a working mechanism that promote a strong collaboration on ASDGs between the central and the periphery (provincial and district level);
10. The government shall establish an incentive fund for private sector, NGOs and other involved actors to carry out intensive public awareness program. Without the government incentives the private sector cannot carry out its Social Corporate Responsibility (SCR).



WORKING TOGETHER
AFGHANISTAN
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GOALS

PUBLISHED IN :2019