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The MDGs and beyond: Pro-poor policy in a changing world

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Poverty In Focus

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International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth
Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP



The MDGs and Beyond: Pro-Poor Policy in a Changing World

GUEST EDITORS

Poverty in Focus is a regular publication of the **International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)**. Its purpose is to present the results of research on poverty and inequality in the developing world. Support is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Guest Editors

Andy Sumner and Claire Melamed

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Front page: "I want to read" - Sakina, 10 years old, illiterate, and mostly unaware life's basic principles, with the education initiative of a development network, she joined the school with hundreds of other kids who for several reasons were deprived of being inside the walls of a school. After intensive sessions for illiteracy they now can read, write and do the basic math... Sakina is joining regular education and definitely looking forwards for a brighter future. Photograph taken in Syria and sent by Nayiri Dikranian - Humanizing Development Global Photography Campaign/2009.

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This *Poverty in Focus* reviews the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to date and asks what we can do to accelerate MDG progress in the years 2010–2015 and beyond. Longer versions of each article herein are available in *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1) from the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom.

These debates acquire greater significance as we enter 2010 and embark on the discussions leading up to and beyond the UN review of the MDGs. The global economic crisis has changed the context within which MDG debates will happen.

Unsurprisingly, there have been numerous calls for a new development narrative/paradigm from developing countries, international civil society organisations and development agencies. This changing context will affect the debate on the MDGs, past and future, in ways that perhaps only now are starting to become clear.

The Washington Consensus has been declared dead (again), but the nature of the shift to a new model and the nature of the policy space remain unclear. Certainly, the discussion is opening up to a wider range of policy instruments for development.

There are immediate concerns for policy-makers in the coming years. The impact of the crisis is likely to continue to frame debates over the next five years, and will be critical in determining the economic and social environment.

It is not clear when growth rates in the poorest countries will start to pick up, nor whether the poorest people will benefit in time to prevent permanent damage to livelihoods and erosion of assets. Economic uncertainty in donor countries is also leading to declining public support for aid budgets.

In short, the times are different from those of the Millennium Declaration and the inception of the MDGs. The late 1990s and 2000 were a fairly benign period for international development, a period of relatively buoyant aid budgets and strong commitments to public expenditures on social sectors, reasonable economic growth in many developing countries, relative stability, and a consensus on what we are trying to achieve: the MDGs.

The coming period is likely to be much less certain as developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, face several interconnected crises to which climate change is central. Such uncertainties not only have the potential to have an adverse impact on poverty levels, but they also change the context for achieving the MDGs.

I look forward to the 2010 MDG review and hope that the articles presented here contribute to a fruitful discussion on maintaining MDG momentum as we move to 2015 and, in time, ending global poverty.

Lord Mark Malloch-Brown

This *Poverty in Focus* is based on articles published simultaneously in the *IDS Bulletin*, the journal from the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom. It was funded, together with MDG Policy Forums in Brussels and New York, by the UK Department for International Development, the Development Studies Association, and the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes, in collaboration with ActionAid. Weblink: www.ids.ac.uk/go/idspublication/mdgs-and-beyond

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The MDGs and Beyond: Pro-Poor Policy in a Changing World

by Andy Sumner,
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Sussex and Claire Melamed, ActionAid

The **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) were an approach born of a benign era of relative stability, strong economic growth, and fairly buoyant aid budgets. We now face a very different world. The crisis/post-crisis context is, of course, central to many MDG questions, not only in terms of crisis impacts on the MDGs and poverty, but also as regards the impact on development commitments internationally and nationally.

What Are the MDGs for?

The MDGs are a set of indicators, but they are also an idea or “global norm” for poverty reduction, an incentive structure for pro-poor development, and a view of “development” in themselves. Perhaps the defining question is how global agreements and conventions change poor people’s lives. For example, Manning (this edition, *page 4*) argues that the MDGs should be taken “to encourage sustainable pro-poor development progress and donor support of domestic efforts in this direction”.

In this collection, Hulme (*page 6*) argues that the MDGs are a “global norm” institutionalising poverty reduction, but the need now is for “strategies to shift international norms so that the citizens of the present rich countries and future rich countries ... find the existence of extreme poverty in an affluent world morally unacceptable.”

The MDG “paradigm” itself can be seen as a broader “human development meets results-based management” (see again Hulme), consisting of the quantitative targets of the MDGs but extended to the much broader Millennium Declaration.

MDG Impacts So Far

The recent emergence of an “MDG impacts” literature (in this collection, for example,

see Fukuda-Parr, *page 7*; Hulme; Manning) has asked what the MDG impacts have been to date—in terms of adoption (in policy), allocation (of resources) and adaptation (to locally defined goals, indicators and targets)—and what the impacts mean looking forward. As Manning notes here, the impact of the MDGs on international development discourse has been immense. Manning goes on to discuss, for example with reference to actual spending patterns, that it is possible that the MDGs have pushed donor spending towards the social sectors, since social indicators provided the bulk of the targets. In contrast, Fukuda-Parr, reviewing donor priorities and measuring them against the MDGs, finds weaker links between the stated priorities of donors and the MDGs.

A second impact issue concerning influence is how far the MDGs have affected policy-making and policy dialogues in developing countries themselves. Here too the definitive evidence is hard to come by. Fukuda-Parr’s review of how far Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) have incorporated the MDGs shows that MDGs are only partially integrated into national-level planning. Manning suggests that the MDGs have helped some civil society groups to hold governments in developing countries accountable for their decisions.

In contrast, the UNDP’s 2009 study of 30 countries is important and revealing in this regard. Twenty-five of those 30 countries had added, expanded or modified indicators and 10 had added local goals.

An important question is why it is that some countries have clear evidence of national ownership of the MDGs and others have little or none.

The crisis/post-crisis context is central to many MDG questions not only in terms of crisis impacts on the MDGs and poverty but also as regards the impact on development commitments internationally and nationally.

The MDGs are a set of indicators, but they are also an idea or ‘global norm’ for poverty reduction, an incentive structure for pro-poor development and a view of ‘development’ in themselves.

There are a number of cross-cutting issues that have risen in prominence since 2000 as a result of changing policy discourses such as climate, gender, and equity.

The debate around what, if anything can and should succeed the MDGs after 2015 is still in its very early stages and many fear talking about this will derail the momentum for the MDGs.

MDG Momentum to 2015 and Beyond

A number of cross-cutting issues have become more prominent since 2000 as a result of changing policy discourses such as climate, gender, and equity (in this collection see respectively Urban, *page 21*; Jones et al, *page 28*; Jahan, *page 13*; Fukuda-Parr, Vandemoortele and Delamonica, *page 14*). These issues were present in 2000 but they were less prominent and less integrated into the MDGs.

A related question concerns “paradigms”. Do the MDGs still reflect our knowledge of what is important about how “development” happens and how policy can influence that process? New and emerging “paradigmatic” lenses for thinking about development and what development is about include those that were well established in 2000, such as rights (see Robinson, *page 18* and Langford, *page 19*), and those that have since come to the fore or are “bubbling under”, such as wellbeing,

(see McGregor, and Sumner, *page 26*) social protection (see Jones et al.) and universalism (see Fischer, *page 8*).

Though the academic and policy debates about how to measure development are important, Wickstead (*page 29*) reminds us here that the central question is whether the MDGs still have political resonance. He argues convincingly that “far from losing their political resonance, in fact, the MDGs have retained their ability to act as a rallying point for development progress”.

The debate about what, if anything, can and should succeed the MDGs after 2015 is still in its very early stages, and many fear that talking about the matter will derail the momentum for the MDGs. It is also a debate that may prove to be purely theoretical unless strong political momentum develops behind the assertion that there is a need for any successor agreement to the MDGs.

The good news is what we can do, which we could not do in 2000, which is to have a genuinely global, coordinated process of roundtables, voices of the poor, blogging, and uploaded videos. Think of the UN conferences of the 1990s or Ravi Kanbur’s *World Development Report 2000/1* pre-process + Voices of the Poor + Web 2.0. Think of “tweeting” the UN Secretary General.

Such a global process might culminate in a “new development consensus” that would build on the key achievements of the current MDG consensus.

■
Manning, R. (2009). *Using Indicators to Encourage Development: Learning Lessons from the MDGs*. Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies.

Sumner, A. and C. Melamed (2010). ‘The MDGs and Beyond: Pro-Poor Policy in a Changing World’, *IDS Bulletin 41* (1): 1-6.

by Richard Manning,
Vice chair of the Replenishment of the
Global Fund to Fight Aids, tb and Malaria

The Impact and Design of the MDGs: Some Reflections

There can be no doubt that the MDGs have become highly influential at least at the level of international discourse about development.

The Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria is a particularly clear example of a funding agency where the MDGs (specifically MDGs 4, 5 and 6) are central to the agency’s DNA.

There can be no doubt that the MDGs have become highly influential, at least at the level of international discourse about development. Significant resources are allocated to tracking them; the UN leads the production of annual reports about them, convenes regular summit sessions about them, and sponsors an ongoing “Millennium Campaign”; the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prepare an annual “Global Monitoring Report” about them; and no G8 summit is complete without some reference to them.

In 2010 there will be a special summit session of the UN General Assembly to review the advances to date, and there will be much discussion of a “big push” to secure the maximum progress on the various MDGs by 2015.

How Have the MDGs Affected Policy?

Most individual donor governments, and the European Union (EU) collectively, have made specific and regular use of the MDGs in domestic dialogue about the purpose and effectiveness of development spending. Most international agencies have also paid much attention to progress or the lack of it relative to the MDGs, particularly where the agency has a mandate closely related to one or more of them. The Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria is a particularly clear example of a funding agency to which the MDGs (specifically MDGs 4, 5 and 6) are central.

A study of 21 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (2008), however, points out that donors’ policy

documents typically pay much attention to issues not explicitly covered in the MDGs, notably in the areas of promoting peace, security and human rights. These matters are covered by the Millennium Declaration, but they are not specifically addressed by the MDGs as such. Nonetheless, there is still a great deal of coherence between donor policy statements and the MDGs.

As to whether the existence of the MDGs has affected resource allocation by donors, for the reasons given above it is not possible to give an unambiguous answer. Undoubtedly the proportion of aid going to the productive sector (not directly covered by the MDGs) has fallen, and the proportion to social sectors (well covered by the MDGs) has risen.

Perhaps the MDGs' most far-reaching and positive influence on donors—though one that is hard to measure—has been in strengthening the view that if support for aid is to be sustained, measurable progress must be shown in areas that the public in donor countries views as desirable. This shift in perception is by no means universal, and knowledge of the MDGs in donor countries is still not widespread, but arguably it has made it harder for governments to “sell” development aid that does not contribute to real development progress.

Sakiko Fukuda Parr's study also examined 22 Poverty Reduction Strategies, covering 17 less developed countries, two other low-income countries and three lower middle-income countries. She found that almost all stated a commitment to the MDGs, but that the focus was quite selective. In some respects, this mirrored the approach of the donors (e.g., serious attention to social sector spending but little attention to hunger and nutrition, decent work, or technology transfer). In other respects it differed significantly (a greater focus on economic growth, little attention to democracy, freedom of the media or human rights).

The UNDP conducted its own survey of progress towards the MDGs in 30 countries in 2009. This revealed a wide variety of situations: some countries (generally the better off, such as Bahrain) made virtually no use of the MDGs as a

way of measuring or motivating progress, but a large number had integrated the MDGs (or often a locally-adapted version) into their own development planning.

Indeed, the “customisation” of the MDGs is a notable feature brought out by the study. Of the 30 countries, 10 had added or modified goals. Thus, for example, Albania, Iraq and Mongolia had added a goal on good governance and/or fighting corruption. Armenia, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had included eight or nine years education for all children as a modification of Goal 2. And Colombia and Mongolia had added relevant national infectious diseases to Goal 6. Fifteen countries had added, expanded or modified targets, and no fewer than 25 had added, expanded or modified indicators, for example to reflect national poverty lines. Such steps imply at least a measure of local ownership of the MDGs among a wide variety of countries.

What Lessons Might Be Drawn?

The MDGs appear to have been more influential than most other attempts at international target-setting in the field of development, at least at the level of international discourse. After 2015, any similar set of indicators should address issues such as rights, inequality and connectivity—and perhaps wider global public goods. Sets of indicators such as the MDGs should not be oversold as some sort of magic bullet to accelerate the achievement of desirable targets. All such achievements require hard work, commitment, and financial and human resources. But they can affect how people think, and over time that influence may affect how people and institutions behave.



Fukuda-Parr, S. (2008). 'Are the MDGs Priority in Development Strategies and Aid Programmes? Only Few Are!' *IPC-IG Working Paper 48*. Brasilia. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

Manning, R. (2010). 'The Impact and Design of the MDGs: Some Reflections,' *IDS Bulletin 41* (1): 7-14.

UNDP (2009). *Beyond the Midpoint: Accelerating Support for MDG Achievements*. New York, United Nations Development Programme.

The Millennium Development Goals appear to have been more influential than most other attempts at international target-setting in the field of development, at least at the level of international discourse.

by David Hulme,
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Lessons from the Making of the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's biggest promise.

Could human development be honed down and politicised in a way that would foster the emergence of a social movement?

Perhaps the biggest question looking forward for the poverty eradication agenda is 'what is that idea?'

Is it human development *à la* the MDGs; or is it a revised and re-packaged version of human development (promoting human rights or reducing global inequality); or, has human development passed its 'sell by' date ... do we need a new idea?

The MDGs are the world's biggest promise—a global agreement to reduce poverty and human deprivation at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative multilateral action. They differ from all other global promises for poverty reduction in their comprehensive nature and the systematic efforts made to specify, finance, implement, monitor and advocate them. While many different ideas have influenced the “final” form and content of the MDGs, two ideas are central: human development and results-based management. What are the lessons from the MDG experience?

Lessons from the MDGs

Three main lessons can be drawn from the MDGs. First, while the idea of human development made great progress during the 1990s, this was the result of shifting networks and coalitions of actors and it did not produce a robust institutional support for the promotion of the idea.

Human development did well, but it fell between two stools. It did not lead to the emergence of a self-fuelling social movement that could consistently place human development on the political agenda when decisions were being taken.

The closest it came to this was with time-limited campaigns mounted by coalitions of non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations such as Jubilee 2000, Make Poverty History and ONE. Nor did it stimulate the emergence of an elite epistemic community (in academia, the professions and the media) that agreed on a narrowly defined analytical framework and that could dominate decision-making in key organisations—as had the neoliberal epistemic community in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the US Treasury and finance ministries around the world.

Those who wish to see the idea of human development genuinely shape policies and resource allocations in the future may have to put less time and effort into refining the minutiae of the concept and more time and effort into how to institutionalise the idea more fully. Could human development be honed down and politicised in a way that would foster the emergence of a social movement?

Alternatively, could the idea's leading proponents chart a route for the creation of a tight-knit epistemic community that might wrest control of technical advice on public policy in the most powerful organisations, away from neoclassical economists with a neoliberal orientation?

A second lesson is that if the post-2015 agenda pursues a global goal-setting approach, then the mechanisms through which the goals relate to national policies and politics in poorer countries—plans, budget allocations, medium-term expenditure frameworks, activities, approval and accountability—must be reformed. In the last decade this linkage has been forged through national poverty reduction strategies that have been closely overseen by the IMF and the World Bank, and that have made the notion of “country ownership” a joke in developing countries (Hulme, 2010a). As soon as possible, these mechanisms should be designed in a way that genuinely shifts authority and responsibility for such plans to country governments. A corresponding cultural change will be needed at the Bretton Woods Institutions, especially the IMF.

Finally, those pushing for pro-poor policies will have to distinguish between the dramatic changes in the context for development between 2000 and 2010 (or 2015) and the lack of change in the

“rules of the game” that determine global public policies and actions. The context has changed dramatically: markets are more volatile and are reconfiguring with the rise of China and India; populations are ageing; climate change is under way; technological advance continues at unprecedented rates; and patterns of global governance are shifting as the G8 morphs towards a G20 (Sumner and Tiwari, 2009). But the rules of the game have not changed: countries that are more economically and militarily powerful, as well as business interests, will continue to play a dominant role in determining global public policies and in delimiting the degree to which these policies are actioned (or not actioned).

Proponents of poverty eradication can tackle this directly by protesting about

aid, trade and debt. But in the long term more subtle strategies will engineer pro-poor global policies and actions. What are needed are strategies to shift international norms so that the citizens of the present rich countries—North America, Europe and other members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—and future rich countries—China, India, Brazil and others—find the existence of extreme poverty in an affluent world morally unacceptable (see Fukuda-Parr and Hulme, 2009, for an elaboration).

Conclusions

Perhaps the biggest question for the future of the poverty eradication agenda is: “what is that idea?” Is it human development *à la* the MDGs; or is it a revised and re-packaged version of

human development (promoting human rights or reducing global inequality); or has human development passed its “sell-by” date ... do we need a new idea?

■
Fukuda-Parr, S. and D. Hulme (2009). ‘International Norm Dynamics and “the End of Poverty”’: Understanding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); *BWPI Working Paper 96*. Manchester, University of Manchester.

Hulme, D. (forthcoming, 2010a). *Global Poverty*. London, Routledge.

Hulme, D. (forthcoming, 2010b). ‘Lessons from the Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results-Based Management in an Unfair World’; *IDS Bulletin 41* (1): 15-25.

Sumner, A. and M. Tiwari (2009). *After 2015: International Development at the Crossroads*. London, Palgrave.

Reducing Inequality: The Missing MDG

by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr,
The New School, New York

The MDGs have received unprecedented political commitment and forged a strong consensus on poverty eradication. But implementation lags, raising questions about weak commitment and sense of ownership. A content analysis of current Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and donor policy statements found that these documents reflect a high degree of commitment to the MDGs as a whole, but are selective in which of the 34 goals and 60 indicators are adopted as priority objectives.

The key issue is not whether there is ownership of the MDGs as such, but how they are being used (which of the MDG priorities are being implemented, what poverty reduction strategies are being adopted, and how the MDGs are being used as a policy tool) and whether they reflect the objectives that world leaders adopted in the Millennium Declaration at the 2000 UN Summit.

Which of the MDGs?

PRSPs and donor policy statements consistently emphasise income poverty and social investments for education, health and water, but not other targets related to the empowerment and inclusion of the most vulnerable, such as gender violence or women’s political representation. Neither the PRSPs nor donor policy statements explore the partnership efforts required to remove the constraints on poverty reduction posed by the global market environment, nor the initiatives needed to move the trade and aid agendas forward.

What Strategy for Poverty Reduction?

In most of the PRSPs, the strategy focuses on economic growth and investment in the social sectors, and reflects an assumption that a “trickle-down” effect would achieve the poverty reduction objectives of the MDG agenda. Most of them lack a strategy for pro-poor growth

The strategy in the majority of the PRSPs focus on economic growth and investment in the social sectors and reflect an assumption that ‘trickle-down’ would achieve the poverty reduction objectives of the MDG agenda.

Yet almost all PRSPs reviewed apply the MDGs as planning targets in a mechanistic fashion by applying selected quantitative targets without adaptation to national realities.

and pro-poor social investments. Nor do they contain strategies for building democratic governance—creating an environment to empower the poor and addressing institutionalised obstacles to their participation in economic, social and political life.

The growth and social investment approach, reminiscent of the 1980s, ignores much that was learned during the 1990s about the multidimensional nature of poverty and about the important role of empowerment and participation as strategies for poverty reduction. The 2000 *World Development Report*, for example, notes that while labour-intensive growth, social protection and social investments are necessary for poverty reduction, they are not sufficient. The report expands the strategy by proposing opportunity, empowerment and security as pillars of an effective poverty reduction strategy.

MDGs as a Tool

Global goals such as the MDGs can be used as planning tools, benchmarks for evaluating progress, or as normative aspirations that command global consensus. Because they are concrete,

global goals with quantitative and time-bound targets can be powerful in mobilising consensus around an objective and in serving as benchmarks. But applying global goals and targets as national planning targets makes little sense, since at a given point in time each country has a unique set of constraints, opportunities and priorities. Yet almost all the PRSPs reviewed apply the MDGs as planning targets in a mechanistic fashion, by applying selected quantitative targets without adapting them to national circumstances.

Post-2015 Agenda

The MDGs were created to serve as “indicators” of progress in implementing the objectives of the Millennium Declaration. While aligned mechanistically with the MDGs, the policy strategies in the PRSPs do not reflect the Declaration’s core objective of making globalisation a more inclusive process in which the benefits would be more widely shared, one rooted in the ethical values of global solidarity and equality. The agenda was therefore to redress the increasing inequality between and within countries resulting from liberalisation and economic globalisation. Just as the

empowerment of poor people is a core strategy in removing obstacles to equal opportunities, so reform of global economic institutions in order to create a more level playing field was central to integrating marginalised countries into the global economy.

To align international development more closely to the core objective of the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs should be refocused so as to take a human rights-based approach. First, as an instrument, local adaptation of targets and processes should be promoted so that the MDGs can be effective not only as long-term objectives but also as planning instruments. Second, as policy agendas, they should focus on pro-poor growth and democratic governance at the national level, and on systemic reforms in global governance.

Finally, as indicators of the complex objectives of the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs should include a goal on reducing inequality within and between countries. ■

Fukuda-Parr, S. (2010). ‘Reducing Inequality: The Missing MDG, *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 26-35.

by Andrew M. Fischer,
Institute of Social Studies, Rotterdam

Towards Genuine Universalism

The fundamental ‘Achilles Heel’ of income poverty approaches is that education and health costs are mostly not included in the calculation of poverty lines.

What is the impact of the MDG agenda on poverty reduction and what should replace that agenda after 2015? The poverty reduction impact is very difficult to evaluate because poverty is very hard to measure, and also because the mechanisms by which the MDG agenda might have effected poverty reduction are not at all clear. In this light, the post-MDG agenda should move beyond its focus on absolute measures and its implicit bias towards targeting, and towards a re-politicisation of the mainstream

development agenda, together with a genuine revival of emphasis on universalistic modes of social policy.

On the first point, despite the facade of precise estimates, we simply do not know what has been happening to global poverty (here referring to income poverty as per Goal 1 of the MDGs). This refers not only to the widespread debates about the World Bank’s purchasing power parity poverty line; even national poverty estimates require a wide variety of fairly arbitrary

assumptions and choices in order first to select a line and then to apply it in ways that are broadly consistent and comparable across time and space. Critically, our ability to track poverty trends over time is based on our presumption that we can accurately measure all of the changing cost factors faced by poor households, together with their changing patterns of livelihood and consumption, in contexts of often rapid structural change. Such accuracy can rarely if ever be guaranteed.

Moreover, the fundamental Achilles Heel of income poverty approaches is that education and health costs are mostly not included in the calculation of poverty lines. But because they are included in the expenditures of surveyed households, it is very difficult to compare poverty rates across households, let alone across regions with different provisioning systems, or across time when the costing and supply of education or health care change. In particular, rising education or health care costs would be invisible to most conventional poverty measures, and thus there is a significant underestimation of poverty rates in such contexts. In this sense the exclusive focus on conventional absolute income poverty measures in Goal 1 of the MDGs can be said to be biased against universalistic modes of social policy.

Second, the mechanisms by which the MDG agenda might have effected poverty reduction are not at all clear. The major episodes that account for much of the commonly cited absolute decline in income poverty over the last several decades had little to do with the MDGs. On the other hand, the recent literature on the impact of aid on growth and poverty offers little useful insight. In particular, the literature rarely gives any serious consideration to the major global structural processes conditioning the impact of aid flows and development more generally, making much of its arguments trivial.

Crucial in this regard is the difference between the epoch of developmentalism up to the 1970s, when most Southern countries experienced decent economic performance, and the current period that

started in the early 1980s. Since then the performance of countries in the South has been much worse outside of East and South Asia, and aid flows have become a trickle in comparison to successive waves of capital flows from poor to rich countries. Aid has since been futile in producing any significant degree of net global redistribution.

This leads to the final point as to what should replace the MDG agenda after 2015. It is important to recognise that the MDGs' emphasis on absolute measures (including multidimensional measures) and the implicit bias towards targeting quite possibly undermine poverty reduction in many contexts. Moreover, these social policy modes are fundamentally political; they cannot nor should not be deliberated upon as if they were technocratic solutions. Nonetheless, choices are being made in any case under the depoliticising guise of the MDGs, which reinforce tendencies towards targeting and segmentation in the name of urgency and expediency.

These choices need to be re-politicised as a matter of urgency, ideally within the domestic sphere of developing countries themselves, and there should be a genuine revival of emphasis on universalistic modes of social policy as viable means of dealing simultaneously with poverty and inequality.

Serious consideration of the erosion of decent employment and wages, as well as the increasing segmentation of social security systems throughout the developing world, is particularly needed if we are truly to embrace a pro-poor agenda—that is, not one that merely reduces absolute poverty regardless of inequality, but one that actually promotes equitable sharing without double standards. Hence the challenge of the post-MDG agenda does not lie in measuring poverty reduction, but in seriously re-engaging with development debates about how to create genuinely redistributive structures and institutions at local, national and global levels.



Fischer, A. (forthcoming, 2010).
'Towards Genuine Universalism within Contemporary Development Policy',
IDS Bulletin 41 (1): 36-44.

Choices need to be urgently re-politicised, ideally within the domestic sphere of developing countries themselves, along with a genuine revival of emphasis on universalistic modes of social policy as viable means of dealing simultaneously with poverty and inequality.

by Yehualashet Mekonen,
African Child Policy Forum

A 2015 Agenda for Africa

Whilst the share of the population of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) living on less than \$1.25 a day (2005 PPP) has fallen the number of people has risen from under 300 million in 1990 to over 380 million in 2005.

Human development initiative in Africa before the Millennium Declaration can fairly be categorized into two sets: the ones that were initiated by Africa and those which were initiated for Africa.

Furthermore, the focus of the MDGs on quantity is misleading, and has perhaps led to negative consequences.

It is well established that human development is about expanding people's choices and the substantive freedoms—the capabilities—that enable them to lead lives that they value. Development is also about ensuring people's civil and political rights, and enabling them to participate and influence decisions that affect their lives. A number of initiatives sought to bring about development in Africa before the Millennium Development Declaration. Despite all these initiatives, poverty, particularly at the beginning of the millennium, was still high in Africa and access to basic needs was at the lowest level.

What makes the Millennium Declaration different from others is that it clearly recognises that Africa has special needs, and pledges were made to provide full support in its quest for poverty eradication and sustainable development. Despite these rhetorical commitments and a decline in the proportion of people living below the poverty line, that share is still very high in Africa. Further, while

the share of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) living on less than US\$1.25 a day (2005 PPP) has fallen, the number of people rose from under 300 million in 1990 to over 380 million in 2005 (ACPF, 2008a: 14). This is largely a result of high fertility (the new poor are children), and thus child poverty is a very serious concern for Africa.

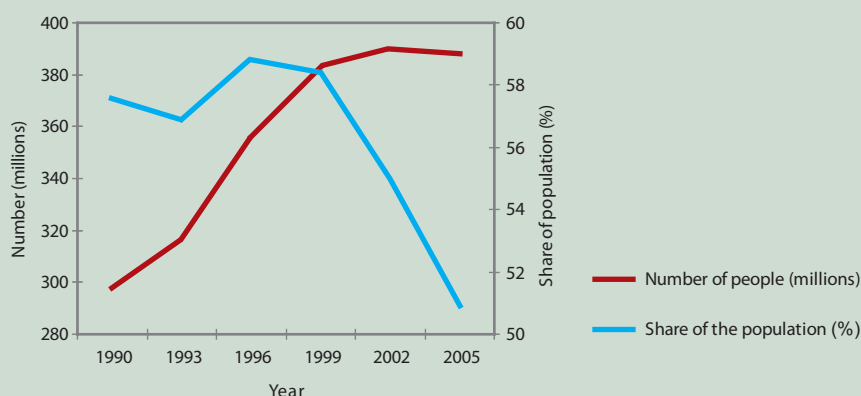
In Ethiopia, for instance, the incidence of poverty was three percentage points higher than the total incidence in 2004/2005 (ACPF, 2008b). High population growth, largely due to high fertility, is one agenda that needs to be factored into the development discussion.

Human Development Initiatives by and for Africa

Human development initiatives in Africa before the Millennium Declaration can fairly be grouped into two categories: those that were initiated *by Africa* and those that were initiated *for Africa*. Most of the initiatives *by Africa* were unfortunately opposed, undermined and failed largely because of a lack of support. But at the heart of these initiatives lie the fundamental principles: self-reliance, self-sustainment and socioeconomic transformation.

On the other hand, the initiatives undertaken *for Africa* include, for example, the prescriptions of global financial institutions, such as the earlier structural adjustment programmes that did little to alleviate poverty. The MDGs can be seen as comprising an initiative that is both *for* and *by Africa*. It is an initiative that also plays a key role in monitoring development in Africa, and it provides a framework for international development cooperation. But greater emphasis on localising the MDGs, as well as African ownership and adaptation, are needed in order to obviate the danger that universal targets will be meaningless in Africa.

People in Sub-Saharan Africa Living on Less than US\$1.25 a Day (2005 PPP), 1990 - 2005



Source: Based on data from World Bank, World Development Indicators 2008.

Furthermore, the MDGs' focus on quantity is misleading, and perhaps has had negative consequences. Many SSA countries will reach or come close to reaching the primary school enrolment MDG: net enrolment was 66 per cent overall across SSA in 2005 (ACPF, 2008b: 28). But it is the quality, not just the quantity, of education that is an issue, and low-quality education negatively affects the poor. In SSA countries, the pupil-teacher ratio has deteriorated significantly at the same time as net enrolment ratios have improved. For the world as a whole the ratio of students to teachers is 25:1, but in SSA it is 43:1 and in some countries it is much higher—Congo (83:1) and Chad (69:1) (ACPF, 2008b: 29).

This is partly because it is relatively easier to increase school enrolment; it is much harder to raise the quality of schooling. Many SSA countries lack the basic infrastructure needed to deliver quality

education. Education increases human capital, which is crucial for economic growth and poverty reduction. It is also worth noting that the emphasis on primary education has arguably reduced secondary education standards. Indeed, the cost of focusing on primary education has been the almost total neglect of secondary education. Focusing on short-term targets such as primary enrolment may lead to neglect of a country's medium-term needs, such as secondary enrolment. Hence the need to move away from a preoccupation with primary education and to place more emphasis on secondary and tertiary education.

A 2015 Agenda for Africa: Adapting the MDGs

A 2015 agenda for Africa, meaning from 2010 to 2015 and after, should have five principles that entail adapting the MDGs. First, it should not be based on

“universal” targets but on local adaptation of the MDGs. Second, it should have a qualitative as well as a quantitative basis. Third, it should take account of population dynamics and child poverty. Fourth, it should emphasise long-term capacity building programmes in science and technology.

Finally, it should emphasise flexibility and provide policy space for African governments, with no conditions that would undermine their legitimate power to take key decisions. ■

ACPF (2008a). *Child Poverty in Africa: An Overview*. Addis Ababa, African Child Policy Forum.

ACPF (2008b). *The African Report on Child Wellbeing: How Child-Friendly Are African Governments?* Addis Ababa, African Child Policy Forum.

Mekonen, Y. (2010). 'A "2015" Agenda for Africa: Development from a Human Perspective', *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 45-47.

*by Richard Jolly,
Institute of Development Studies, Sussex*

The MDGs in Historical Perspective

Some 50 goals have been set over the UN's life, from goals for education in 1960 to the MDGs agreed at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. Cynics have charged that UN goals have been proposed and agreed with little thought, and have rarely been achieved. The facts are otherwise.

Every goal has been subject to considerable debate before approval, often for lengthy periods and with opposition from various governments, mainly donor governments.

Though the record of achievement is mixed and far from perfect, most of the goals have had significant influence, and substantial progress has been made towards meeting them in a considerable number of countries.

A Brief History of UN Goals

The first goals were in the field of education and arose from three regional conferences organised by UNESCO around 1960. The goals emerging from the conferences covered the expansion of primary education over the two decades until 1980 and the expansion of secondary and tertiary levels, mostly with regional differences. The goals were set at the start of many countries' independence, and they had great political relevance in nations aware of how their education systems had been held back in the colonial era.

Soon afterwards, the UN General Assembly set goals for economic growth during the 1960s as part of what was declared to be the Development Decade. Economic growth in developing

The experience shows the value of goals: for mobilizing political commitment and generating popular awareness around consensus development objectives, and as guidelines for coordinated action.

There has been an excessive simplicity in the way the MDGs have been promoted, running the risk of popular disillusion when it becomes clear that many of the goals will not be achieved in many countries by 2015.

This can be avoided if more attention is paid to other indicators of progress—for instance, to the rates of advance against the baseline situation in different countries, and with less focus on whether countries are or are not on track to meet the goals.

countries was to be accelerated to reach a target rate of 5 per cent a year by the end of the 1960s. Flows of public capital were to reach 1 per cent of developed country GNP by 1970. Economic growth did indeed accelerate: a rate of 5.5 per cent was achieved by all developing countries together and by some 50 individual countries. Total transfers to developing countries reached 0.79 per cent of developed countries' GNP, and aid reached 0.34 per cent. This led to a certain optimism for goal-setting in the Second Development Decade, when a target of 6 per cent growth a year was set for the 1970s and the aid target focused solely on concessional transfers for which the famous 0.7 per cent target was established. Though the average rate of economic growth among developing countries was marginally higher in the 1970s, the target was missed. But never again were the decadal rates for developing countries as a whole so high.

In 1966, the UN's most dramatic and successful goal was set: to eradicate smallpox within 10 years. A scourge of mankind for millennia, by 1966 smallpox was thought to be killing some 2 million people a year and was endemic in some 50 countries, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil and much of Africa. Many thought eradication impossible, including Marcelino Candau, Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO). But with determined leadership from within the smallpox programme, remarkable progress was made and the final case of smallpox was tracked down in Somalia in 1977, only 11 years after the goal had been set. The total cost of the programme was US\$100 million from international sources and US\$200 million from national ones—a total of US\$300 million, which at the time was the cost of three fighter bombers. In contrast, the benefits of the campaign have been estimated at a minimum of US\$2 billion a year in averting the need for vaccination and border controls, in addition to avoiding millions of deaths and much pock-marking illness.

UNICEF, working with others, showed how goals could be used to mobilise political commitment, popular awareness and local action for what it called a Child Survival and Development Revolution.

Though the 1980s were a lost decade for economic development, with cutbacks in public expenditures and stagnation or declines in per capita income in much of Latin America and Africa, immunisation rates rose from 10–15 per cent in 1980 to an average of 80 per cent of the child population in developing countries. Child deaths fell from 15 million to 12 million over the decade, and have fallen further to under 9 million today. Actions towards meeting the goals for the reduction of infant and child mortality have also been impressive: only 13 countries now have infant mortality rates above 100 per 1,000 live births, a level reached by no developed country until the twentieth century.

The Value of Goals

These experiences show the value of goals in mobilising political commitment and generating popular awareness around consensus development objectives, and as guidelines for coordinated action. The MDGs have achieved some of these. To date, however, there has been excessive simplicity in the way the MDGs have been promoted, and hence there is a risk of popular disillusion when it becomes clear that many of the goals will not be met in many countries by 2015. This can be avoided if more attention is paid to other indicators of progress—for instance, to the rates of advance against the baseline situation in different countries, and with less focus on whether countries are or are not on track to meet the goals.

More attention to comparative progress within each regional grouping would also help by identifying the more successful countries in each region relative to the less successful, thereby prompting a more realistic understanding of the challenges and progress, as well as introducing a sense of interregional competition. ■

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The Millennium Development Goals Beyond 2015

by Selim Jahan,
United Nations Development Programme

As we move towards 2015,

the critical question is not necessarily whether countries will achieve the MDGs by that year, but rather whether they are on track. The picture has become more blurred because of a series of crises—food and energy crises, financial and economic shocks. Achievement of the MDGs seems to be more difficult in most countries; countries that were on track now seem to be off. Resource flows from the developed to the developing world are shrinking and market access is not expanding. Many countries will achieve some of the MDGs but not all of them, and some countries may achieve none of them. In that context, it will be immensely important whether the MDGs are adequately tailored to the country context, whether they are localised.

It will also be crucial to determine whether they are part of a country's long-term development plan or its poverty reduction strategies; whether the resource and capacity needs to stay on track have been assessed; whether strategies have been linked to a resource framework; and whether the necessary resources have been mobilised and the required capacities developed. One key element is whether there is a well defined implementation plan.

What Works?

We are all aware that the experiences with the MDGs have been quite diversified in terms of outcomes and achievements. The same level of resources has produced impressive results in one context but not in others.

The same set of policies has worked in some countries but not in others. As we move forward, therefore, it is important to learn from the lessons of earlier initiatives. In that context, it will be useful to assess the MDG interventions

in different contexts in order to determine what worked and why, and what did not work and why not.

Capacity Gaps

The pre-2015 period paid much attention to the formulation of MDG plans and strategies, but less to implementation. Only in these later years are we stressing implementation and actually working on various aspects of it. One of the areas to emerge as a major constraint on implementation is the capacity gap at the country level. The gap can take different forms: lack of capacity in devising strategies, in issues such as procurement, and in monitoring.

Alliance Gap

In most countries, the MDGs have been driven by governments. In some cases civil society actors were involved in broad-based dialogues on the MDGs, but in most countries they were excluded when policies and strategies were devised. Most countries failed to include the private sector in the process even though, as a crucial development actor, it has much to contribute. The partnership between national and external actors was also less than optimal in many cases. In these contexts it is imperative to assess the alliance nexus for the MDGs in various situations, so as to identify the constraints and make concrete suggestions on how to develop an optimal nexus.

Moving Forward

The 2010 MDG review could be used to: assess MDG progress and gaps, taking account of recent crises—food price volatility, the energy crisis, the financial and economic crisis; review what has worked and what has not in terms of policies and strategies, processes and coordination; and evaluate global support.

As we move towards 2015, the critical question is not necessarily whether countries will achieve the MDGs by 2015, rather whether they are on track.

In most countries, the MDGs have been driven by governments.

Even though in some cases, civil society has been involved in broad-based dialogues on the MDGs, in most cases, they were excluded when policies and strategies were formulated.

In these contexts, it is imperative that we assess the alliance-nexus for the MDGs in various situations, identify the constraints and come up with concrete suggestions as to how an optimal nexus can be developed.

On the basis of the 2010 MDG review, the issues for beyond 2015 are: a dialogue on goals and targets, as well as monitoring and reporting frameworks; a discussion of innovative policies and strategies, including those that can help countries remain on track during shocks and vulnerabilities, and aligning these with the MDGs; and a dialogue on resource levels.

Finally, for the post-2015 period we need to identify: coherence mechanisms for the UN system in furthering the MDG agenda and working globally and at country levels; concrete

mechanisms for collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions; and a road map for MDG achievement beyond 2015.

After that date, the present MDG goals and targets will have to be re-evaluated; needs assessments will have to be reoriented; policies and strategies will have to be revitalised; resources, institutions and coordination will have to be renewed; and monitoring and reporting will have to be revamped.

All of these require discussions within and among development partners,

making use of all available fora and modalities, as well as the creation and use of new space for consensus building.

The 2010 review provides the whole world with a unique opportunity not only to accelerate MDG efforts for 2010–2015 but also to start a discussion on these issues, so that we are prepared for the-2015 period.

■
Jahan, S. (2010). 'The Millennium Development Goals Beyond 2015', *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 51-59.

*by Jan Vandemoortele,
 former official of several UN agencies and
 Enrique Delamonica,
 United Nations Children's Fund*

Taking the MDGs Beyond 2015: Hasten Slowly

The MDGs have been misinterpreted as national targets; misused as a donor-centric view of development; and misappropriated as a call for faster growth or for more aid.

The MDGs are global targets; they do not need to be achieved in each and every country.

The world will not meet the MDGs largely because disparities within the majority of countries have grown to the point of slowing down national progress. Monitoring must bring this to the fore.

The MDGs have been tremendously successful in galvanising political leaders, civil society organisations, private sector actors, the media and donors in pursuit of human development. But they have been misinterpreted as national targets, misused as a donor-centric view of development, and misappropriated as a call for faster growth or for more aid.

Indeed, the MDGs have been misconstrued and distorted by different groups to suit their own purposes. There is a widespread perception that unless all countries achieve the same global targets, the world will not meet them. This view is incorrect. The MDGs are to be achieved collectively, not necessarily individually.

They are global targets; they do not need to be achieved in each and every country.

Reflections on the MDGs Looking Forward

The review of MDG progress in 2010 should not be intermingled with the intergovernmental discussions about the post-2015 framework. The latter should not start until a UN Panel of Eminent

Persons has prepared a set of thoughtful options and suggestions on the following topics.

Structure

The current set of MDGs has three health-related goals (child mortality, maternal health, infectious diseases).

They could be collapsed into one overall health goal, thereby making space for other areas of concern. The current MDGs also include two overlapping targets: countries that achieve universal primary education automatically comply with the target on gender equality in basic education. Such overlaps are unnecessary and ultimately unfair. Several observers have also criticised the poor coverage of gender equality and of environmental sustainability in the current MDGs.

Targets

The natural tendency is to add more goals and new targets. Candidates range from climate change to secondary education, quality of education, human rights, infrastructure, economic growth, good governance, security and others. But the addition of more targets

diminishes the capacity of the MDGs to be understood intuitively and communicated easily to the general public. The number of goals and targets must be kept to a minimum.

Whatever their number, a set of targets can never cover the many dimensions of human development adequately. The successor arrangement to the MDG initiative must offer a version of it that can readily be understood by a general audience. Most stakeholders value this branding and agree that it deserves to be protected.

Collective nature of global targets

Global targets apply at the global level. Unfortunately, the global MDG canon has turned them into yardsticks for measuring and judging performance at the national level. Hence the MDG debate suffers from misplaced concreteness.

Interpretation of the MDGs as one-size-fits-all targets neglects the historical background of each country as well as its political system, natural endowment, geography, internal divisions and other challenges.

Type of benchmarks

Performance can be measured by absolute or relative benchmarks. Both are valid but neither gives a complete picture. Most MDGs are expressed in relative terms, such as reducing poverty by half, cutting infant mortality by two-thirds, or slashing maternal mortality by three-quarters. Since proportional changes tend to be inversely related to the initial situation, the misinterpretation of the MDGs as one-size-fits-all targets puts the least developed and the low-income countries at a disadvantage.

Global goals and targets were earlier expressed in either absolute terms or as combined relative and absolute benchmarks.

Time horizon

An important detail that has been overlooked by many observers is that the Millennium Declaration does not stipulate the period in which the numerical targets have to be met. It mentions the deadline year (mostly 2015), but relative benchmarks also need a base

year. Since the world leaders could not agree on this, they concealed their disagreement by remaining silent about the period. The architects of the MDGs decided to take 1990 as the baseline year on the basis of historical trends at the global level. But as the MDGs came into being in 2001, there has been confusion as to whether they are to be achieved between 2000 and 2015 or over the period 1990–2015. The post-2015 targets will have to be clear about the baseline year and the period over which they are to be achieved.

A Proposal for Equity-Adjusted National Statistics

The world will not meet the MDGs, largely because disparities within most countries have grown to the point of slowing down national progress. Monitoring must bring this to the fore.

The MDG indicator for measuring equity (the “share of the poorest quintile in national consumption”) only partially covers it. Moreover, it is seldom mentioned in the many MDG monitoring reports. The growing availability of disaggregated data, especially from demographic and health surveys, makes it possible to adjust key national statistics for equity.

This can be done by weighing the quintile-specific values in a way that accords priority to progress for the lower quintiles. By using equity-adjusted weights, the national statistic will indicate whether progress is distributed equitably; the more equitable the pattern of progress, the better the national statistic will be.

League tables based on national statistics that embed equity are likely to trigger a much needed focus on disparities.



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Vandemoortele, J. (2009). ‘The MDG Conundrum: Meeting the Targets without Missing the Point’, *Development Policy Review* 27 (4). London, Overseas Development Institute.

Vandemoortele, J. and E. Delamonica (2010). ‘Taking the MDGs Beyond 2015: Hasten Slowly’, *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 60-69.

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This can be done by weighing the quintile-specific values in a way that accords priority to progress for the lower quintiles.

by Charles Gore,
United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development

The MDG Paradigm and Productive Capacities

The MDGs have provided the basis for a new international development consensus during the present decade.

Unfortunately, however, this consensus is a “Faustian bargain” in which the agreement of a common set of global goals has been achieved through the elimination of the old idea of promoting national economic development.

The significant negative economic and social consequences of the global financial crisis in most developing countries may actually reinforce the importance of the MDGs.

The Nature of the MDG Paradigm

The MDGs are part of the emergence of a global consciousness in which people all over the world are seen as living in a single social space and the nature of their wellbeing is compared. Beyond this, the MDGs provided the basis for a new international development consensus during the first decade of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, however, this consensus is a Faustian bargain in which agreement on a common set of global goals has been achieved through the elimination of the old idea of promoting national economic development.

The MDGs have also been embedded within a particular approach to national policy which assumes that global integration, through the Washington Consensus policy package, together with good governance and more social spending, will lead to substantial poverty reduction and improved human development. But these policies have not been able to generate sufficient productive employment opportunities and livelihoods in poor countries, and they have been unable to build up those countries’ productive base and thus allow them to become less dependent on aid.

The MDGs have also been embedded with a partnership approach to development cooperation, which is characterised by major lacunae in relation to the development of productive capacities, as well as imbalances rooted in weak country ownership.

The significant negative economic and social consequences of the global financial crisis in most developing countries may actually reinforce the importance of the MDGs. Progress towards their achievement will be used as a litmus test of social protection measures that are

put in place to mitigate the impact of the crisis on poor people. But business as usual is no longer a viable option. The MDGs should be embedded in a new international development consensus, a new analytical narrative about how development occurs, and a new approach to international development cooperation.

The Nature of a New International Development Consensus

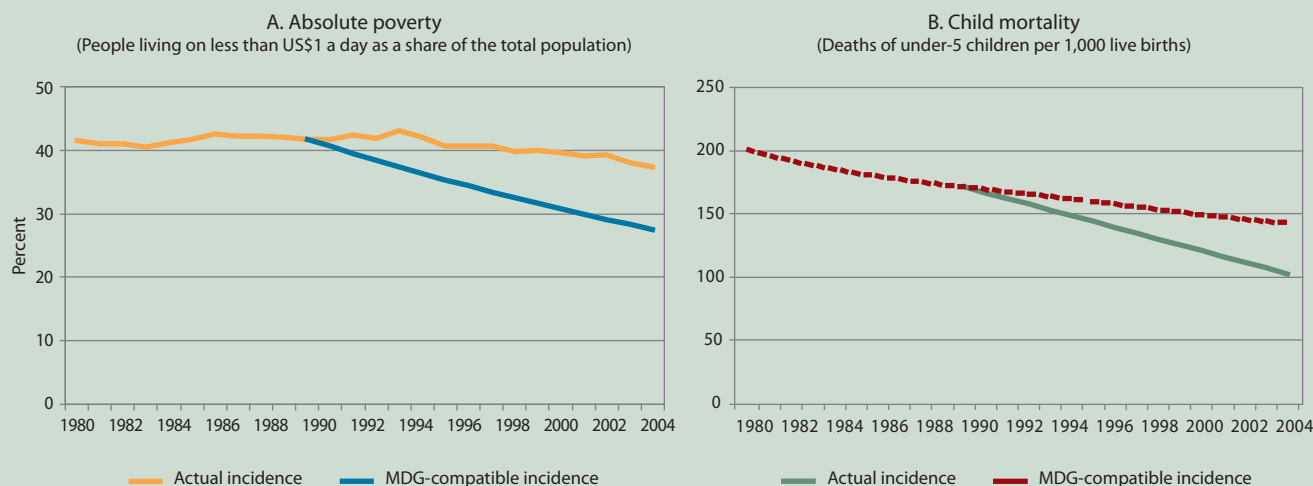
The new international development consensus should build on the key achievement of the current MDG consensus, which is to initiate a purposive conception of international society that recognises that global developmental outcomes matter. But it is necessary to go much further in terms of which outcomes matter.

The most critical challenge now is to find effective and fair ways of mitigating and adapting to climate change while at the same time reducing global income inequalities and facilitating realisation of the development aspirations of billions of people in developing countries. The scientific evidence increasingly shows that major public action is required now to mitigate climate change if we are to avoid catastrophic and irreversible shifts. Putting climate change and global inequality together, a new international development consensus should be forged around the notion of *global sustainable development*. If this replaced global integration as a central organising principle, it would provide the vision for a new long wave of technological innovation and rising prosperity.

Developing Productive Capacities as a New Analytical and Policy Narrative

In terms of the narrative about how development can be promoted, the idea

Trends in Poverty and Child Mortality in LDCs: Actual and MDG-Compatible Incidence, 1980-2005



Note: The MDG-compatible incidence is the hypothetical path that poverty and child mortality incidence would need to follow if the LDCs were to achieve the respective MDG targets by 2015.

Source: UNCTAD (2008), chart 17.

that national and international policy should focus on developing productive capacities and the associated expansion of productive employment is particularly promising. This approach has been elaborated and advocated in recent years in UNCTAD's Least Developed Countries Reports. In this context, productive capacities are defined as "the productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages which together determine the capacity of a country to produce goods and services and enable it to grow and develop" (UNCTAD, 2006: 61). Economic growth, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability are "emergent properties" of the way in which productive capacities are developed.

A New Approach to International Development Cooperation

Finally, there is a need for a new approach to international development cooperation. In this regard, the partnership approach based on country ownership of national development strategies is certainly the right one. It recognises that development aid—and development cooperation more broadly—is a relationship whose effectiveness depends on the practices of both parties. But the new paradigm must address more seriously the terms of development partnership, seeking to make them more balanced and equal.

The Paris Declaration process has not adequately been able to address this issue thus far. It has become bogged down in the technical details of monitoring and evaluation, and the constant auditing of indicators has had a counter-productive effect on outcomes. A new departure is therefore required.

An important insight of the current partnership approach is the realisation that development and poverty reduction are not simply a matter of aid but are also influenced by the nature of international regimes for trade, technology, finance and investment.

A critical challenge for the coming era will be to inject a development dimension into the design of these international architectures. ■

Gore C. (2000). 'The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries, *World Development* 28 (5), 789–804.

Gore C. (2007). 'Which Growth Theory is Good for the Poor?' *European Journal of Development Research* 19 (1), 30–48.

Gore, C. (2010). 'The MDG Paradigm, Productive Capacities and the Future of Poverty Reduction', *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 70–79.

UNCTAD (various years). *The Least Developed Countries Report*. Geneva and New York, United Nations.

However, business as usual is not a viable option now.

The MDGs should be embedded in a new international development consensus, a new analytical narrative about how development occurs and a new approach to international development cooperation.

by Mary Robinson,
Realizing Rights:
The Ethical Globalization Initiative

The MDG-Human Rights Nexus to 2015 and Beyond

The MDGs have generated commitment across governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector.

Despite the signs of progress, there remains an urgent need to ensure that the planned 2010 UN Development Summit acknowledges the added value of a human rights and justice framework, and calls for incorporating human rights commitments more squarely into future development strategies.

We are now well past the halfway mark on the timetable for achieving the MDGs by 2015. Progress has been made in some areas. The MDGs have generated commitment across governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. They have focused attention on key human dimensions of development that more economic frameworks miss, and have mobilised many stakeholders around a shared set of objectives that are measurable. But in some regions and in many target areas, progress is overshadowed by the numbers of those left behind and by rising inequalities within and between nations.

The MDGs from a Human Rights Perspective

Critiques of the MDGs from a human rights perspective often point to the lack of focus on the most vulnerable; limited consideration of goals relating to equality and non-discrimination; and an absence of accountability mechanisms for governments in fulfilling obligations they have made to meeting related rights such as health and education.

Equally important, the MDGs have been criticised for under-emphasising people's own agency—the participation of impoverished people in claiming their rights, and related issues such as freedom of information, transparency and access to justice. The insufficient attention to women's rights, or to important human rights standards more broadly, has also been highlighted as a significant weakness in the MDG framework.

Fortunately, there now seems to be growing recognition of these shortcomings and greater willingness to look for new ways forward. The efforts of the UN system have been key to this change. The work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

such as its publication *Claiming the MDGs*, along with important advances by UN agencies and other stakeholders in bridging the gap between the MDGs and human rights, are encouraging signs that greater coherence can support national efforts to achieve the MDGs and meet international human rights obligations.

Despite the signs of progress, however, there remains an urgent need to ensure that the planned 2010 UN Development Summit acknowledges the added value of a human rights and justice framework, and calls for incorporating human rights commitments more squarely into future development strategies.

Integrating Human Rights and Development

What would greater integration of human rights and development look like in practice? Some specific ways forward are clear. First and foremost, it is essential to address the problem of social exclusion. In too many cases the worse off and members of disadvantaged groups are not making progress, even where aggregate data show overall improvement. More attention to issues of discrimination and a greater focus on the rights of those most excluded would help address this problem.

There is an opportunity, for example, to address the maternal mortality targets using a more comprehensive approach. The causes of high maternal mortality rates lie not only in weaknesses in government health systems or insufficient donor funding, but also in social factors such as discrimination against women and early marriage.

Redoubled efforts to address maternal mortality, with human rights principles and standards at the forefront, will undoubtedly increase impact in this area.

Second, the success of development efforts depends a great deal on the active involvement of civil society, working with governments to find solutions. How can a stronger focus on human rights offer greater scope for such cooperation, moving away from a focus on “name and blame” to a relationship that is constructive and embeds accountability? And we cannot forget the role of civil society in mobilising for change. Can we create greater demand for fulfilment of human rights, and enable greater government capacity to meet those obligations? There are examples of successful partnerships and countries where civil society has mobilised around MDG targets. For this to happen, it is essential that independent action and rights to organise be protected.

Third, the forces that affect development are often beyond the power of individual governments acting alone to shape or

influence. Issues such as climate change, international trade and investment, and infectious diseases, among others, require collective action. We know that the human rights framework, which all governments have agreed to, provides a benchmark for judging the appropriateness of policies to address such challenges.

It also brings a stronger focus on the problem of accountability where the policies of one country negatively affect others. The challenge is to find innovative ways of bringing that potential to life in different global policy settings.

Finally, as we look ahead to 2015 and beyond, we should be giving serious consideration to important goals and targets that are currently missing from the MDG framework but which are undeniably important for achieving development and realising fundamental rights, such as increasing efforts to empower women and combat

discrimination of all kinds. There should also be greater attention to other issues left aside in 2000, for example improving access to justice and strengthening the legal empowerment of the poor.

The work to make human rights principles and standards a key part of international development efforts is an ongoing process that must continue in the years ahead.

Making these connections is not only the right thing to do but, if undertaken with real commitment and attention to broader learning from the 2000–2010 period, will contribute significantly to the aim of achieving sustainable and equitable development for people around the world.

■
Robinson, M. (2010). ‘The MDG-Human Rights Nexus to 2015 and Beyond’, *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 80-82.

*by Malcolm Langford,
Norwegian Centre for Human Rights,
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A Poverty of Rights: Six Ways to Fix the MDGs

The reactions of the human rights community to the MDGs have been diverse and contradictory. The goals have given a clear, communicable and quantitative focus to development, and there is some evidence that they have had positive impact on social and economic rights.

Others argue that the MDGs were a betrayal of the Millennium Declaration, have distracted attention from more nuanced human rights commitments, are structurally flawed, and have even resulted in human rights violations. In the emerging discussions on a post-2015 development agenda, it is interesting to observe the increased weight given to human rights.

This article looks more at the practical consequences of integrating them if we, for present purposes, accept the MDG-style targeting approach.

1. Participation

Before we begin to dream up new post-2015 roads, we have to stop at the participation sign. In 2001, there was a partial technocratic takeover and some targets in the Millennium Declaration were abandoned, including the targets for affordable water, special assistance to those orphaned by HIV/AIDS, equitable trade, and gender equality beyond education.

But some of the flaws lie in the selection of the targets in the Declaration, and thus broader participation could

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Others argue that the MDGs were a betrayal of the Millennium Declaration, have distracted attention from more nuanced human rights commitments, are structurally flawed and have even resulted in human rights violations.

have improved the precision and focus of the targets.

In finding a road to 2015, grassroots and human rights groups and ministries in Southern governments need be properly involved. Temptations to create high-level commissions to decide the agenda must be resisted until we have a proper bottom-up process.

2. Ensure the Targets Reflect Human Rights

Creating a manageable list of targets is more art than science. But the current list of targets raises too many questions and seems too driven by data availability from 1990. If we confine ourselves only to socioeconomic rights, many targets are in desperate need of adjustment.

For instance, a social protection target should have been included under Goal 1; the target for primary education should have included free education; and the targets for maternal mortality could have been built on the 1997 UN Guidelines for Monitoring the Availability and Use of Obstetric Services.

The embarrassing target on slum upgrading should have focused on *basic* security of tenure and services for the world's 1.6 billion slum-dwellers, not greater improvement for a mere 9 per cent.

Developed countries should have been prevented from wriggling out of any quantitative commitment, and this time we need a greater focus on inequality, persons with disabilities, minorities, and some relevant civil and political rights.

3. From Cherry-Picking to Equality

The targets are problematic in that largely they do not focus on the poorest of the poor or on reducing inequality.

This can make it tempting for countries to cherry-pick the relatively well-off among those living in poverty and ignore long-suffering and excluded minorities.

Some countries have sought to overcome the equality problem during national tailoring and contextualisation—for example, they added specific targets for disadvantaged regions in the country as part of their “MDG-plus” approach.

Another approach is to make MDG progress conditional on meeting targets in all regions of a country, or for all ethnic groups, both genders and so on. Targets could also be made for income poverty indicators such as severity and depth.

4. From MDG-Plus to MDG-Adjust

The MDG-plus approach is garnering international favour and would avoid the spectacle of middle-income countries prematurely trumpeting their achievement of the MDGs.

Some countries and regions have created new and more ambitious targets. The Latin American/Caribbean region amended Target 2A to include secondary education for 75 per cent of children.

But is MDG-plus simply a band-aid to cover a flawed model? Is it the best way to deal with countries when rates of income poverty can vary from 6 to 70 per cent among them? In the area of human rights we find a more nuanced approach whereby states are expected to *progressively realise* socioeconomic rights within their *maximum available resources*.

Thus targets could be adjusted for different resource levels (i.e., greater proportional progress is expected from Vietnam than Kenya); a second approach would be regional targets, given neighbourly homogeneity and competition; and a third would be to use emerging quantitative assessment models in the field of socioeconomic rights.

5. Trade-Offs with Rights

Arguably, the MDGs' divorce from the Millennium Declaration has led to a value-free policy space for them.

If massive human rights violations are the method of achieving them, no one is the wiser as the figures show “progress”.

One country reports slum clearance as part of its efforts to achieve the MDGs, despite its being internationally prohibited except under certain circumstances. Similarly, the MDGs have coincided with renewed interest in dams and an obsessive focus on commercial agriculture, yet development-based displacement continues apace and the MDGs risk being added as

another “public interest” to justify gross human rights violations.

Red lines must therefore be drawn around what policies are permissible, and under what normative framework trade-offs and choice-making will occur.

6. From Words to Enforcement

For a bunch of words with a simple monitoring system, the MDGs have had considerable success. But most commentators acknowledge that other forms of accountability are needed, including for donor countries.

One approach is to look to the international human rights system, which is slightly stronger but suffers from some of the same weaknesses as the MDG monitoring system. Some other possibilities could be to:

- (1) articulate targets that require states to ensure that domestic accountability systems are in place, including the judicial enforcement of socioeconomic rights;
- (2) provide goals that prompt states to ensure there is domestic space for participation around poverty issues;

- (3) introduce some inducements, whereby improvement on domestic targets could be rewarded with automatic progress on MDG 8 targets; and
- (4) put the idea of global social citizenship at the core of a range of international processes in order to mainstream accountability for addressing poverty. ■

Langford, M. (2010). ‘A Poverty of Rights: Six Ways to Fix the MDGs’, *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 83-91.

by Frauke Urban,
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Can Low-Carbon Development Be Pro-Poor?

Climate change poses a serious threat to international development undertakings. Climate change adaptation and mitigation need to cut across all poverty reduction efforts, including any post-2015 architecture.

To date, low-carbon development (LCD) debates have been mainly about high- and middle-income countries. LCD, however, can be an opportunity for low-income countries to pursue pro-poor development in a carbon-constrained world.

This article argues that we need to link pro-poor policy debates with low-carbon debates as part of a post-MDG agenda. It explores several policy responses to LCD and analyses how pro-poor they are.

The Millennium Development Goals and Climate Change

Though the MDGs include a goal dedicated to environmental sustainability, some of the fundamental criticisms of them have been based on issues of sustainability and the lack of attention to tackling climate

change—the impact of which is likely to affect poor people more than others. Climate change is directly related to the poverty concerns of the MDGs. Development pathways that aim to tackle climate change while simultaneously seeking social and economic development and achieving the MDGs are urgently needed. LCD can be one way of achieving this.

What is Low-Carbon Development?

The recent White Paper by Britain’s Department For international Development (DFID, 2009: 58) defines LCD in the following way.

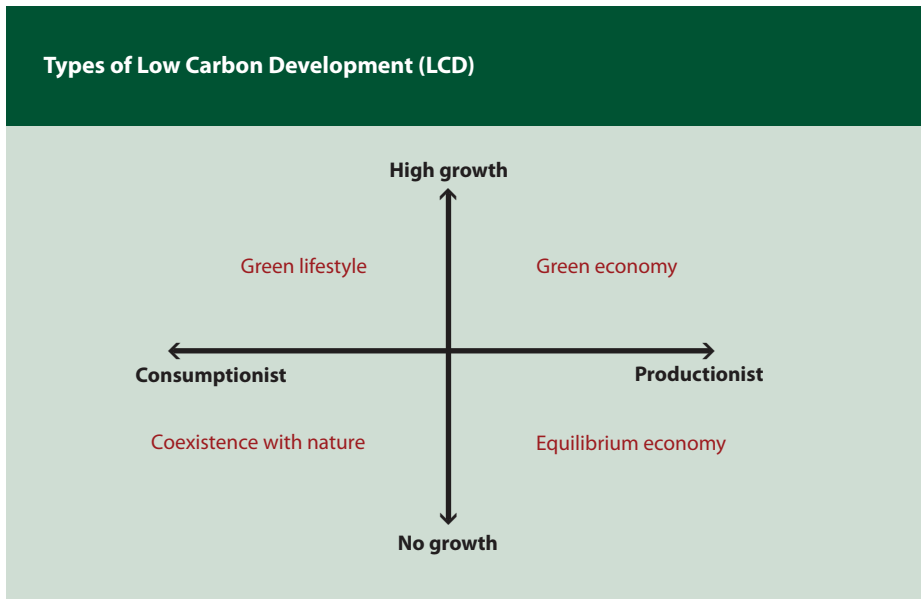
Low-carbon development means using less carbon for growth:

- (1) Using less energy, improving the efficiency with which energy is used and moving to low- or zero-carbon energy sources.
- (2) Protecting and promoting natural resources that store carbon (such as forests and land).
- (3) Designing, disseminating and deploying low- or zero-carbon technologies and business models.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation need to cut across all poverty reduction efforts, including any post-2015 architecture.

Low carbon development (LCD) can be an opportunity for low income countries to pursue pro-poor development in a carbon-constrained world.

Low income countries have contributed least to climate change. For them LCD is not about cutting emissions, but about the benefits and opportunities LCD can bring for achieving a higher development status.



The development model of ‘pollute first, clean up later’ is not viable any longer. New development pathways are needed in times of climate change.

LCD is a development pathway which can achieve economic and social development whilst tackling global climate change.

(4) Policies and incentives that discourage carbon-intensive practices and behaviours.

This definition emphasises economic growth. Other definitions have a different emphasis, (for example, Skea and Nishioka, 2008). LCD can be achieved through technological, sectoral and behavioural changes.

How Can LCD Be Pro-Poor?

Low-income countries have contributed least to climate change. For them, LCD is not about cutting emissions, but about the benefits and opportunities it can offer to achieve a higher development status. Currently there are mechanisms for LCD under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), such as the Clean Development Mechanism which is accessible by developing countries.

Apart from the UNFCCC mechanisms there are many other means of achieving LCD, depending on each country’s national and local priorities and plans, and on the available funding and technologies. It is important to have policies and practices that are suited to national circumstances and local needs.

Key policies for pro-poor LCD can be devised by linking pro-poor growth debates (see the discussion in McKay and Sumner, 2007; Sumner and Tiwari, 2009) and LCD debates (Barrett et al., 2008; NIES, 2006; Ockwell, 2008; Urban, 2009).

The following examples indicate policies for pro-poor LCD.

- Redistributive policies and public expenditure: government revenues made by “green” industries could be distributed to pro-poor sectors such as health and education.

- Support for specific sectors that are crucial for the poor, such as agriculture and forestry.

This requires specific sectoral investments, market development and infrastructure for pro-poor productive sectors.

Table 1 Types of Low-Carbon Development	
Type of LCD	Focus and approach
Green economy. Focuses on the production side of an economy and on how goods and services can be produced with lower emissions. It aims to decouple economic growth from carbon emissions (e.g., halving emissions but doubling GDP).	Focus mainly on mitigation, though adaptation also plays a role. Approach: technological and sectoral change.
Green lifestyles. Focuses on the consumption side of a growing economy and on the consumer’s ability to reduce emissions by consuming climate-friendly products. It implies lifestyle and behavioural changes, and leads to a decoupling of carbon emissions (e.g., halving emissions but doubling GDP).	Focus equally on mitigation and adaptation. Approach: behavioural, sectoral and technological change.
Equilibrium economy. Focuses on the production side of an economy and aims at social development rather than growth. No decoupling is necessary as growth is neutral (e.g., halving emissions but keeping GDP stable).	Focus mainly on mitigation, though adaptation also plays a role. Approach: technological and sectoral change.
Coexistence with Nature: Focuses on the consumption-side of an economy and aims at social development rather than growth. No decoupling is necessary as growth is neutral (e.g. halving emissions, but keeping GDP stable).	Focus equally on mitigation and adaptation. Approach: Behavioural change, sectoral change, technological change.

Table 2
Low-Carbon Development Mechanisms

LCD mechanisms	What is it?
Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)	Developed countries implement projects leading to emission reductions in developing countries. Developing countries gain access to climate-friendly technology; developed countries gain emission-reduction credits to offset their emissions.
Emission Trading (EM)	Mechanism that sets a cap on greenhouse gas emissions and introduces a trading system. Once emission allowances are exceeded, emission credits must be bought from those who have emitted less. Emission trading is currently in place for developed countries only, but might be extended to a global level in the future.
Joint Implementation (JI)	Developed countries can invest in emission-reduction projects in other developed countries as an alternative to reducing emissions domestically. JI is currently in place for developed countries only.
Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)	Currently under discussion in relation to a future climate change agreement. Developing countries could be paid for climate-friendly forest and land use management; developed countries could gain emission-reduction credits to offset their emission obligations.
Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAS)	The purpose of NAMAS is to outline national mitigation options that are in line with domestic policies and are developed in "the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner" (IEA/OECD 2009).

- Social protection for adaptation and combining the synergies between mitigation and adaptation: for example, social protection measures to reduce vulnerability to climate change.
- Community participation: LCD provides opportunities to involve communities and share profits on a small-scale local level, such as through rural electrification with renewable energy.
- Development to foster capacity for the legislative, economic and technical frameworks needed to achieve low-carbon pathways.
- Increasing the rate of "green" job creation.
- Pro-poor biofuel policies should be introduced to promote the production of biofuels by the poor, create local employment opportunities, and enable the investments to go to low-income countries (Peskett and Prowse, 2008).
- Pro-poor forest and land use policies: climate-friendly forest and land use management—for example, through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry

(LULUCF)—could benefit the poor by ensuring that smaller farmers and foresters can engage in the carbon market (Peskett and Prowse, 2008).

Conclusions

The development model of "pollute first, clean up later" is no longer viable.

New development pathways are needed in times of climate change. LCD is a one such pathway that can achieve economic and social development while tackling global climate change.

LCD needs to be pro-poor. Hence it should be accompanied by mechanisms, incentives and institutions to support a pro-poor low-carbon economy, such as improved access to low-carbon technology for the poor, and targeting support to those groups that are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

■ **Barrett, M. et al, (2008).** 'How to Support Growth with Less Energy', *Energy Policy* 36 (12), 4592–9.

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McKay, A. and A. Sumner (2008). 'Economic Growth, Inequality and Poverty Reduction: Does Pro-Poor Growth Matter?' *IDS in Focus* 3 (2). Brighton, UK, Institute of Development Studies.

NIES (2006). *Developing Visions for a Low Carbon Society (LCS) through Sustainable Development. Executive Summary*. Ibaraki, National Institute for Environmental Studies.

Ockwell, D. G. (2008). 'Energy and Economic Growth: Grounding Our Understanding in Physical Reality', *Energy Policy* 36 (12), 4600–4.

Peskett, M. and L. Prowse (2008). 'Mitigating Climate Change: What Impact on the Poor?' *ODI Opinion* 97. London, Overseas Development Institute.

Skea, J. and S. Nishioka (2008). 'Policies and Practices for a Low-Carbon Society', *Climate Policy* 8, Supplement: Modelling Long-Term Scenarios for Low-Carbon Societies, 5–16.

Sumner, A. and M. Tiwari (2009). *After 2015*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Urban, F. (2009). *Enabling Environments for Low Carbon Economies in Low Income Countries*. London, CAFOD.

Urban, F. (2010). 'The MDGs and Beyond: Can Low-Carbon Development Be Pro-Poor?' *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 92–99.

*by Erik Solheim,
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Climate, Conflict and Capital

For the years to come, focus must be shifted towards more critical political issues.

World poverty is a result of international power structures, of poor leadership, oppression and discrimination.

It needs a political solution, not a technical one.

Climate, conflict and capital are the three main challenges for a development policy that will ensure a sustainable and just growth for poor countries—and a safer world for all of us. They call for global cooperation and leadership.

The biggest disadvantage with the concept of the MDGs is that we are made to believe that fighting poverty is a technical challenge that can be solved by increasing global development aid. For the years to come, the focus must be shifted towards more critical political issues.

World poverty is a result of international power structures, of poor leadership, oppression and discrimination. It needs a political solution, not a technical one.

Climate, conflict and capital are the three main challenges for a development policy that will ensure a sustainable and just growth for poor countries—and a safer world for all of us. These challenges call for global cooperation and leadership.

Climate

Climate change reduces human security as a result of drought, flooding, storms, disease, and food and water shortages. Additionally, the political and institutional capacity to deal with these impacts is often weakened.

Addressing poverty reduction must go hand in hand with tackling climate change. A sharp rise in the consumption of fossil fuels is incompatible with limiting climate change. The only way forward is to facilitate a development path based on new technology.

In general, however, clean forms of energy are too expensive and access to them is too difficult in comparison with energy from biomass, coal and kerosene.

Hence many poor and middle-income countries will continue to concentrate on oil- and coal-based power supplies rather than on energy efficiency or renewable energy sources such as hydropower or solar and wind power.

Moreover, emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries account for about 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Conservation of natural forests is thus a cost-effective way of addressing CO₂ emissions, but the costs of preserving forests cannot be borne by the poor countries alone. Large-scale international transfers of capital will be needed as compensation for reducing deforestation.

We also need to ensure that mitigation and adaptation measures are incorporated into development policy. Norway has proposed a system that could release large-scale funding for adaptation in poor, vulnerable countries.

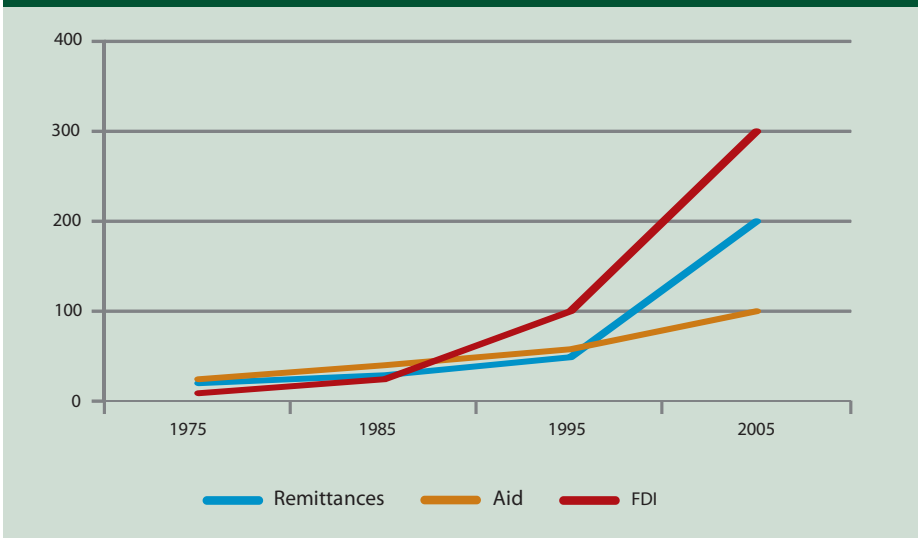
The proposal is that a certain proportion of the total quantity of emission allowances should be auctioned internationally. The revenues should be used, among other things, to fund adaptation measures in the most vulnerable countries and regions. This model could provide a predictable and significant flow of income.

Conflict

Meeting the MDGs is particularly hard in conflict areas. The absolute majority of the 75 million children out of school live in war-torn areas. Even if funds are available for health and schooling, violence often prevents people from attending hospitals and schools if they can be built at all. In fragile states, ending armed conflict and peace building must be the first priority.

At the same time, development in terms of increased income and welfare is a prerequisite for peace to endure. Again, the two come together.

Figure 1
Remittances, Aid and FDI – US\$ billion



The MDGs will likely remain important development indicators but the means of achieving them is no longer aid alone.

We need a huge global effort to effectively deal with the most critical factors to development - climate, conflict and capital.

National conflicts may have consequences for entire regions as insurgents cross national borders to acquire weapons and ammunition, and to win support in neighbouring countries. People are forced to flee their homes in civil wars and tend to seek refuge in other parts of their country, or in neighbouring countries in the region.

Conflict can also have more far-reaching, international consequences. Recognition of these repercussions means that issues that previously belonged to separate spheres of foreign, security and development policy now must be treated as interlinked. In short, security is a precondition for political, social and economic development, which is in turn a precondition for lasting peace and stability. Meeting the MDGs in conflict areas is not a matter of increased funding alone, but of solving complex political issues.

Capital

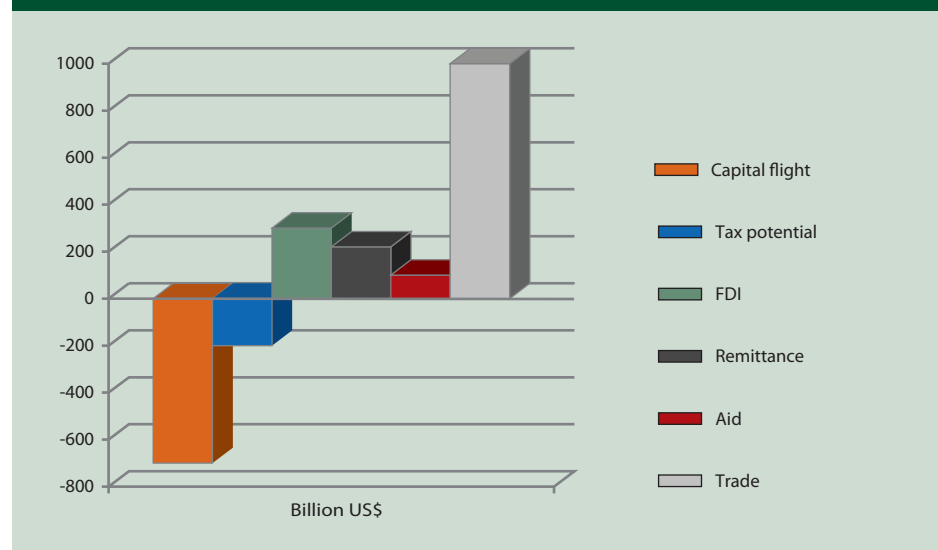
Aid is an important source of funding for development. It is unique in that it is a source of funding over which both donors and recipients have control, and thus it can be administered strategically. Other capital flows, however, have a much greater impact on economic growth and development than aid.

China's investment in Africa is huge compared to western aid. Remittances

amount to two to three times as much as global aid to poor countries. Illicit capital flows from developing countries are estimated to be 8–10 times the aid coming in.

Large sums of money disappear through various types of fraud, corruption, bribery, smuggling and money laundering. But the largest share of illicit financial flows is related to commercial transactions, often within multinational companies, for the purpose of tax evasion. Poverty reduction is thus about action on tax havens. There is an

Figure 2
Funding Economic Growth



urgent need to strengthen international rules so as to prevent assets that are illegally appropriated from developing countries from being concealed or laundered in tax havens.

Conclusions

The MDGs will probably remain important development indicators,

but aid alone is no longer the means of achieving them. We need a huge global effort to deal effectively with the most critical factors to development: climate, conflict and capital. ■

Solheim, E. (2010). 'Climate, Conflict and Capital: Critical Issues for the MDGs and Beyond 2015'; *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 100-103.

by Allister McGregor and Andy Sumner, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex

What Might 3-D Wellbeing Contribute to MDG Momentum?

There has been over the last few years an emergence of a broad range of initiatives on a global scale which are focusing on rediscovering the significance of the concept of wellbeing for how we think about, measure and do 'development'.

The Millennium Declaration

provided considerable impetus to refocusing the efforts of development agents around the world on the major ethical challenge of eradicating global poverty. The MDGs that followed from it have become an important mechanism for pursuing the agenda of the Millennium Declaration.

Over the last few years a broad range of initiatives have emerged on a global scale that focus on rediscovering the

significance of the concept of wellbeing for how we think about, measure and do "development", such as the Measuring Progress Project of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Sarkozy Commission.

What Is "3-D Human Wellbeing"?

The study of human wellbeing has a long history, and the social approach to human wellbeing outlined here draws on and synthesises various traditions.

It builds on Amartya Sen's focus on "beings" and "doings" in the human development approach. Human wellbeing, we argue, can be conceived of in terms of the interplay of three dimensions: the material, the relational, and the subjective (also referred to as cognitive).

If we reverse the notion of wellbeing to explore the problem of how poverty is generated and reproduced, we find that conventionally it has been understood in terms of material deprivation; and latterly the social exclusion and capital literatures have emphasised the importance of relationships. Here, a third dimension of subjective experiences and feelings is integrated into the framework.

Table 1 outlines the three dimensions. A 3-D human wellbeing approach requires

Table 1
3-D Wellbeing: Dimensions, Areas of Study and Indicators

Dimensions of wellbeing	Material	Relational	Subjective
What is to be studied	The objectively observable outcomes that people are able to achieve.	The resources that individuals are able to command and the extent to which they are able to engage with others in order to achieve their particular needs and goals.	The meanings that people give to the goals they achieve and the processes in which they engage.
Indicators	Needs satisfaction indicators. Material asset indicators. (Take, for example, the target for MDG 1 on child malnutrition).	Multidimensional resource indicators. Human agency indicators. (Take, for example, the gender empowerment target of MDG 3).	Quality of life indicators.

Table 2
Wellbeing, Capabilities and Conditions: Policy Interventions for 3-D Human Wellbeing

Dimensions of wellbeing/Types of intervention	Material	Relational	Subjective
Capabilities interventions	Asset transfer schemes. Credit and savings schemes (e.g., MDG 1).	Human and skills development schemes. Empowerment programmes (e.g., MDG 2).	The social and cultural dimensions of education programmes (e.g., MDGs 2, 3, 5, 6).
Conditions interventions	Land reform. The regulation of markets (e.g., monopoly regulation, money lending, trading weights and measures).	Legal reform. Rights-based approaches. Governance reforms.	Societal campaigns for social and cultural reform (e.g., dowry campaign, anti-discrimination policies).

the already widely accepted shift of focus beyond incomes but also goes further, beyond the position advocated by the human development framework, to adopt a more rounded perspective of what people can do and be, and how they evaluate what they can do and be.

This implies that policy that is intended to stimulate meaningful development progress is not realistic if it focuses on just one or two of the dimensions to the exclusion of the other(s).

What Does Human Wellbeing Offer for the Specifics of MDG Policy and Practice?

The 3-D approach also offers us a way to consider what types of policies and interventions might be pursued.

Analysis using this approach suggests that wellbeing arises from the interaction of the capabilities of the person and the societal conditions in which that person struggles to escape persistent ill-being outcomes.

In Table 2 we use the 3-D wellbeing framework to construct a simple matrix illustrating the types of analysis and policy choice for each of the three dimensions when considering the “capabilities” and “conditions” dimensions of possible interventions.

Thus, for example, when we consider how to improve the material wellbeing

of dimensions of the population, it is important not only to consider establishing credit programmes but also whether market reform policy is also necessary to ensure that any credit received is not immediately eroded by unfair market conditions in which poor people might operate.

Conclusions

The Millennium Declaration has provided considerable impetus to refocusing the efforts of development agents around the world on the major moral challenge of eradicating global poverty.

The MDGs that followed from it have become an important mechanism.

A concept of 3-dimensional human wellbeing can contribute to a revived MDG momentum if development policy complements its emphasis on material wellbeing by placing it in relation to relational and subjective dimensions of human wellbeing.

This will entail paying more attention to how these three dimensions relate in the spheres of human values, relationships, norms and behaviours.



McGregor, A. and A. Sumner (2010).
**‘Beyond Business as Usual:
What Might 3-D Wellbeing
Contribute to MDG Momentum?’**
IDS Bulletin 41 (1): 104-112.

The Millennium Declaration has provided considerable impetus to refocus the efforts of development agents around the world on the major moral challenge of eradicating global poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that followed from it then have become an important mechanism.

by Nicola Jones,
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Progress in Gender Equality Post-2015

At present only two MDGs explicitly consider gender (MDGs 3 and 5).

In isolation from a gender-responsive approach to the other Goals this focus is unlikely to lead to women's empowerment and equality; undermining efforts to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and contribute to equitable growth.

The promotion of gender-sensitive social protection is an increasingly recognised means to tackle gender-specific experiences of poverty and vulnerability.

Social protection has the potential to maximise synergies across the MDGs by reducing poverty and inequality through strengthening access to and demand for quality basic and social services, supporting economic productivity, and facilitating a better balance between care-giving and productive work responsibilities.

International efforts to progress gender equality now and post-2015 need to build on the achievements of the MDGs and other international frameworks, but simultaneously address the gender dynamics that underpin the root causes of poverty.

Currently only two MDGs (3 and 5) explicitly consider gender. In isolation from a gender-responsive approach to the other goals, this focus is unlikely to lead to women's empowerment and equality, thereby undermining efforts to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and contribute to equitable growth. We argue that a useful way to think about gender and the MDGs is to cluster the goals in the following way.

Poverty and Sustainable Development

Up to 443 million people live in chronic poverty, most of them rural-dwellers who are highly dependent on agriculture. In many parts of the world women comprise a large and growing proportion of the agricultural workforce, and in most countries women are responsible for household food production and consumption. Hence links between women's empowerment, natural resource management and food security are vital.

Women's ownership of and control over productive resources such as land, and higher education levels, lead to greater productivity. But many women across the world face significant barriers to owning productive assets, and to securing equal access to extension services and educational opportunities, because of prevailing sociocultural attitudes and discriminatory laws.

Access to Services

Gender dynamics are also intrinsic to service access. Men and women face

very different challenges in accessing quality services. Biological differences may affect their susceptibility to disease; social factors can affect their disease burden (e.g., the growing feminisation of HIV/AIDS); and socially constructed gender roles can affect their time availability and mobility to access services.

Care and Care-Giving

Although there is a growing recognition of the value of care and the importance of promoting the joint responsibility of society and the state for care work, there have been only limited discussions linking MDG attainment to the need for better and more gender-sensitive care systems.

UNICEF's 2008 *State of the World's Children* report warns that failing to improve maternal and reproductive health (MDG 5) threatens the chances of achieving MDG 4 on child mortality because of the unrealised double dividend between women's empowerment and improved child health, nutritional and educational outcomes.

Voice and Agency

Promoting women's abilities to articulate their views in a meaningful way, and to become agents of their own empowerment, is vital to overcoming engrained sociocultural conditioning and gender roles. MDG 3 deals with two important tools for empowerment—education and national political representation—but we need a more comprehensive approach.

This should include improving women's access to resources (including credit, entrepreneurial training, inheritance and land rights) and their capacity to make use of them—for example, through anti-discrimination and gender-based violence legislation, gender-aware justice

systems and adequately resourced government machineries mandated to improve gender equality.

International Partnerships and Accountability

MDG 8, which focuses on improved international aid and cooperation, could also offer an important window of opportunity to support gender equality. Only by recognising the ways in which global macroeconomic and political issues are gendered are we likely to find effective and sustainable means of achieving the other goals.

On the aid front, for example, the recognition of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in the Paris Declaration and the Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) gender marker for official development assistance are important first steps.

In short, tackling MDG gender gaps requires a fundamental reworking of international aid modalities so that future development efforts will not repeat past mistakes. But post-2015 initiatives to promote gender equality do not require the reinvention of the wheel. Instead, we identify actions to consolidate and advance progress in four areas.

First, it is essential to build on the (albeit limited) MDG achievements to date, and to harness momentum from other global rights-based initiatives such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to promote more fundamental change across the policy and programme cycle.

Second, given the institutional weaknesses of UNIFEM and its partner UN agencies, the UN General Assembly's September 2009 approval of the new gender "super-agency" is a welcome advance. The challenge now is to ensure that this agency is well-resourced and independent, with operational and oversight capacity not only to promote effective gender mainstreaming across the UN system, but also to monitor the effective implementation of gender goals and commitments within broader development efforts.

Third, institutionalising gender budgeting and gender-responsive aid effectiveness approaches will be an important tool to help minimise policy evaporation. We also have to strengthen accountability mechanisms, as well as the development of gender-sensitive indicators, data collection and reporting

more generally, so as to hold both donors and partner governments accountable for their responsibilities to reduce gender inequalities and empower women.

Finally, there is growing awareness that promoting gender-sensitive social protection is a means of tackling gender-specific experiences of poverty and vulnerability. Social protection has the potential to maximise synergies across the MDGs by reducing poverty and inequality through strengthening access to and demand for quality basic and social services, supporting economic productivity, and facilitating a better balance between care-giving and productive work responsibilities.

Taking a gender-sensitive approach to social protection will require re-focusing programme design and encouraging the agencies responsible for livelihood promotion and protection, basic and social services, and the enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation to work together to achieve the MDGs and long-term gender equality. ■

Jones, N., R. Holmes and J. Espey (2010). 'Progressing Gender Equality Post-2015: Harnessing the Multiplier Effects of Existing Achievements', *IDS Bulletin* 41 (1): 113-122.

Holding on to the MDGs (For Now)

At the Millennium Summit

in 2000, the MDGs were adopted as an expression of joint political will, a declaration of intent around specific and measurable goals that reflected a commitment to the right to development and the creation of an environment in which there could be progress towards the elimination of poverty.

That commitment was reinforced by other conferences in later

years, including the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the G8 Kananaskis Summit, and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (all in 2002), as well as the G8 Evian Summit in 2003.

The political momentum was boosted in 2005 by a combination of the work of the Commission for Africa, the Gleneagles Summit and the UN General Assembly Summit.

*by Myles A. Wickstead,
Former Head of Secretariat to the
Commission for Africa*

The truth is not only that the MDGs are realistic, but that they are well on the way to being achieved.

Do the MDGs Still Have Political Resonance?

There are reasons for optimism. In Britain this includes the very welcome cross-party consensus that has developed among the political leadership around the commitment to reach the aid target of 0.7 per cent of GNI, and there are signs that the new US administration is ready to take a lead role that the United States has been unwilling to play hitherto.

Ownership of the MDGs must rest with developing countries; the role of the international community is to support them in their efforts. Political will is—as it has always been—the key to progress. And recognition that there has already been progress is the key to further progress.

At his first address to the UN General Assembly in September 2009, President Obama eloquently made the case for a stronger focus on development: “Far too many people in far too many places live through the daily crises that challenge our common humanity—the despair of an empty stomach; the thirst brought on by dwindling water; the injustice of a child dying from a treatable disease or a mother losing her life as she gives birth”. He made a specific commitment to support the MDGs.

Far from losing their political resonance, in fact, the MDGs have retained their ability to act as a rallying point for development progress.

Are the MDGs Still Realistic?

The MDGs are often described as “aspirational”, which conveys a sense of an objective that is worthy but too far in the distance to be realistic. The truth is not only that the MDGs are realistic, but that they are well on the way to being achieved.

The goals—particularly the overarching goal of halving the proportion of people living in absolute poverty by 2015—were not plucked out of the air in New York in the Millennium Year. They are based on outcomes from some of the major UN Conferences and Summits of the 1990s.

That was a decade when, for the first time in 50 years, issues such as education and health, opportunities and empowerment, could be discussed for the first time free from the shadow of the Cold War, which had so distorted the development landscape.

The MDGs were the result of careful thought and consideration not just in the UN but also in other bodies such as the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Indeed, the goals have a pre-history as the “International Development Targets”.

Progress has not been uniform, and it is largely the performances of China and India (and other South and East Asian countries that have been through the Green Revolution and have enjoyed relative political stability) that have ensured such significant steps forward—though interestingly the countries that have made the best progress towards the MDGs rarely refer to them specifically.

The picture elsewhere has been more mixed, and in Africa particularly there are risks of a significant shortfall against a number of the goals. But even here there are many successes to record, and significant health and education indicators have improved in many countries. There is still a huge hill to climb in many places in the years to 2015, but significant progress remains possible.

The Commission for Africa (2005) report sought to develop the argument about the links between the various elements required to make progress towards the MDGs and the need to address them holistically. Briefly, at the heart of that integrated package lie governance, peace and security.

Few people would believe that economic growth has been at well over 6 per cent in recent years or that there are currently no wars between States in Africa, a Continent that is so often portrayed in a negative light.

It is vital to build on this progress, particularly at a time when the global economic and financial crisis threatens to put it into reverse.

Progress in those areas makes it possible to rebuild broken education and health systems, which are essential for making progress towards the MDGs. External assistance can play an important role in any or all of these areas, but only if it supports internal developments.

What To Do Differently?

Ownership of the MDGs must rest with developing countries; the role of the international community is to support them in their efforts. Political will is and always has been the key to progress. And recognition that progress has already been made is the key to further progress.

Few people would believe that economic growth has exceeded 6 per cent in recent years, or that currently there are no wars between countries in Africa, a continent that is so often portrayed in a negative light. It is vital to build on this progress, particularly at a time when the global economic and financial crisis threatens to reverse it.

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An MDG-Plus Agenda for Africa

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The MDGs have given African governments the incentive to implement poverty reduction strategies. In July 2005 the Fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) in Sirte, Libya, adopted a common position on the review of the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration.

The AU, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) all emphasise the achievement of the MDGs.

The AU Commission has been mandated, in collaboration with the ECA, AfDB, NEPAD and the regional economic communities (RECs) to monitor the implementation of the MDGs, and reflections are expected to be presented at annual AU Assembly meetings. Further, at the G8 Summit on 11 September 2007, the UN Secretary General established the MDG Africa Steering and Working Groups to support the implementation of commitments geared to achieving the MDGs.

MDG Impacts in Africa

The MDG targets have galvanised developing countries into action, and generally countries have improved and increased monitoring processes aimed at meeting the MDGs. While making governments more focused, the MDGs have also given weight to, and led to positive responses in the implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

They have helped strengthen a commitment to poverty reduction and have provided an impetus to a more acceptable universal definition of "development" as human development.

African governments have managed to develop standardised responses in evaluating the effectiveness of their MDG development strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Important linkages between environmental concerns and their effect on good governance have played an important role to date in forging common ground.

The challenge to Africa, however, is greater than anywhere else in the world. While Africa as a continent still faces the dual challenges of high poverty levels and political instability (Nhema, 2004), there have been improvements in both the economic and political environments over the last decade (Nhema and Zeleza, 2007).

These developments are crucial preconditions for achieving the MDGs. Hence the need to maintain this impetus if Africa's hopes of meeting some of the MDG goals are to be realised in the future.

In this light there is a need to combine the MDGs with local initiatives that take account of realistic measures and indicators based on national economic, political and social dictates. Any initiatives that are not home-grown and lack input from the people they are designed to serve are bound to face mixed reactions from the intended beneficiaries and stakeholders.

An MDG-Plus Agenda

In terms of an "MDG-plus" agenda from now to 2015 and beyond, it would be ideal to combine the current MDGs with more locally defined, specific measures and indicators. Universal indicators will remain important, but only if they are strengthened by inputs from locally defined measures.

Timelines are important; they should be maintained and supported by concrete international monitoring and evaluation measures. Implementing countries should also be encouraged to put a strong emphasis on the creation of sound economic, political and social environments that provide a solid basis for the attainment of MDGs.

Such an approach will entail holistically addressing the issues of inequality, poverty, social justice, basic human rights, wellbeing and citizen welfare.

African countries can learn from the experiences of other regions in the South, and indeed the North. To start with, there is a need to explore the appropriate policy framework and conditions conducive to democratic governance and sustainable development in the economic, social and cultural spheres, on the basis of actual circumstances in the continent.

An "MDG-plus" agenda for Africa, therefore, must have four key components. First, it should take account of local, regional and international dimensions. Second, it should entail African countries learning from other parts of the world. Third, it should promote a "bottom-up" approach. Finally, it should seek and encourage greater public involvement.

■

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