**Post-2015 Millennium Development Goals**

**MDGs**

The Millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals, signed in 2000 by all 191 UN member states. Their aim is by mobilizing national and collective efforts on critical development issues to eliminate poverty in its many dimensions. The goals that should be achieved for year 2015:

* eradicating extreme poverty and hunger,
* achieving universal primary education,
* promoting gender equality and empowering women
* reducing child mortality rates,
* improving maternal health,
* combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
* ensuring environmental sustainability, and
* developing a global partnership for development.

The 2015 deadline for the MDGs is fast approaching and debates are beginning to flare up about a change in either the time frame or aim of the goals.

**Achieved Progress**

Progress towards reaching the goals has been uneven. Some countries have achieved many of the goals, while others are not on track to realize any. The major countries that have been achieving their goals include China and India. However, areas needing the most reduction, such as the Sub-Saharan Africa regions have yet to make any drastic changes in improving their quality of life. Sub-Saharan Africa reduced their poverty about one percent, and are facing a major risk of not meeting the MDGs by 2015. However, even though the poverty rates in sub-Saharan Africa decreased in a small percent, there are some successes regarding millennium development goals in sub-Saharan Africa.

The main profit of MDGs is the rise of public awareness and help in mobilizing action in support of poverty eradication efforts across the world. MDGs have provided a framework for monitoring progress and highlighting areas of achievement. It has brought global attention to some of the most pressing development challenges of our time. It rallied the donor community around these goals. In many countries, MDGs have helped to guide national development strategies.

But the world has seen new challenges in recent years, as well as a worsening of the old ones. From climate change to the loss of biodiversity; from rising land degradation to increasing scarcity of freshwater; from growing social inequity and insecurity to rising unemployment, especially among the youth; from high population growth to unsustainable urbanization and marine degradation. These are among the many complex challenges that are interconnected, planetary in scope and need to be taken into account while formulating post-2015 developments.

There are three main options:

1. simply to extend the MDG deadline to 2020 or 2025, or alternatively no timeline,

2. to build on the existing goals, making improvements based on existing research and consultation, or

3. try to do something completely different. Some argue that dispensing with time-bound targets however, could fatally weaken the incentivizing power and influence of the MDG. Post-2015 discussions must provide an opportunity to respond to some of the criticisms of the MDGs. Any post-2015 agreement needs to maintain popular momentum. Perhaps as important as the goals themselves for mobilizing civil society organizations in developing countries is the process through which a post-2015 agreement is drawn-up. The MDGs have the political and popular power that they have in part because they are clear and concise. Any post-2015 settlement will have to balance the need for clarity with the desire to adequately reflect the complexity of development.

**Criticism**

The experience of the MDGs has provided lessons about where and how global agreements can be a catalyst for change, and where they are less relevant. The main criticisms of the MDG approach and therefore the main lessons to learn:

* MDGs are donor-led:

A major criticism of the MDGs is that they are a donor-led agenda and pay little attention to local context. As such, they penalize and stigmatize the poorest countries where achieving the goals is a greater challenge. Instead, it is argued that goals should be tailored to national circumstances and priorities, treating countries differently. A second important principle is the need for citizens to participate. And any new agreement must go with, not against, the grain of politics and policy in developing countries. However, there is a risk that focusing in too much on the national level will reduce the global reach and relevance that were such defining features of the MDGs.

* MDGs miss out on crucial dimensions of development:

Critics identify many ‘missing dimensions’ of the MDGs. These include climate change, the quality of education, human rights, economic growth, infrastructure, good governance and security. One response could be to enlarge the scope and number of MDGs, an ‘MDG plus’ option. However, there is a danger that over burdening the MDGs would weaken their influence. An alternative could be to simplify the existing MDGs while adding additional dimensions of development; an ‘MDG compact’ view.

* MDGs neglect the poorest and most vulnerable:

The MDGs are based on average progress at a national or global level. In measuring progress, there is a risk that some people will fall through the net. In some countries MDG progress looks impressive, while the situation for the very poorest is actually getting worse. One way to address this criticism would be to adopt a human rights approach post-2015. A second would be to focus more directly on inequality and to have targets or indicators that require progress to be more equitably shared, including between men and women.

**Future – beyond 2015**

How exactly the development program is going to be after 2015 is still under discussion. Right now, in 2012, the objective is not to provide the answer to post-2015 MDGs, but to filter through some of the challenging questions and issues involved in designing a new set of global development goals leading to the best policy choices. But, regardless of the changes to come, what is clearly needed is a focus on transparency and information sharing.

A global strategy for development in 2015 will have to confront different challenges to those of the 1990s. In particular, the MDGs emerged in a relatively stable period, while the post-2015 world is likely to be characterized by multiple crises and sources of instability, including finance and climate. Inequality within nations already poses a threat to the achievement of the MDGs with many poor people now living in middle income countries. What are the biggest current poverty problems, and how could a post-2015 agreement mobilize the necessary solutions?

Some key changes to be addressed in a post-2015 agreement include:

• Urbanization

Most of the world’s population now lives in cities – growing migrations to cities, and the relationships between city and countryside, are a key part of the realities of poor people’s lives. The move to the city can be a catalyst for increased wealth and opportunity, or can trap people into a life of poverty and insecurity. The current MDG framework has been poor at driving the kind of policy and politics that would most effectively reduce urban poverty.

• Climate change

A fundamental criticism of the MDGs is their lack of attention to climate change, both in terms of the environmental sustainability of development pathways and in terms of the threats posed by climate change to development success. For the post-2015 era two questions are crucial. First, global agreements have to work together so that responses to climate change also accelerate poverty reduction, rather diverting aid and weakening the focus on poverty. Second, climate change has provoked a new interest in risk and vulnerability as key aspects of poverty. A post-2015 agreement should increase the resilience of poor people to shocks, if it is to properly address current poverty problems.

• Chronic poverty and the rise of inequality

Poverty reduction is highly uneven, and social, cultural and economic factors act together to trap some people in poverty even if average incomes are increasing. The MDGs are criticized for being weak on equity. Proposals for post-2015 include introducing targets to reduce the severity and depth of poverty or making MDG progress conditional on targets being reached in all regions of the country or among all population groups. Another proposal concerns social protection, an issue that has risen in the policy agenda since 2000. Universal social protection could contribute to meeting many of the MDGs and reduce poverty and vulnerability.

• Jobs and equitable growth

Rising unemployment, with its human cost, its link to political instability, and its waste of productive resources, is shaping up to be one of the biggest economic and political issues of all in many developing countries. One criticism of the MDGs is that their focus on poverty and social indicators, at the expense of employment creation, makes them a form of ‘welfare colonialism’. A new set of goals could focus on decent work and labor standards, and maximize the transmission mechanisms between growth and poverty reduction through job creation, but also redistribution through government fiscal policy. The question is what governments and donors can actually do to create jobs and foster equitable growth, and how could an international agreement contribute?

**Possible Future Goals**

Future goals must reach beyond traditional development thinking to become higher sustainable one-world goals that apply to poor and rich countries alike. The potential indicators for 12 future potential goals are divided into three categories.

The first four goals are about the essential endowments necessary for individuals to achieve their fuller potential:

* Adequate livelihoods and income levels for dignified human existence;
* Sufficient food and water for active living;
* Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in society; and
* Good health for the best possible physical and mental well-being.

The second set of four goals is concerned with protecting and promoting collective human capital:

* Security for ensuring freedom from violence;
* Gender equality for enabling males and females to participate and benefit equally in society;
* Resilient communities and nations for reduced disaster impact from natural and technological hazards; and
* Connectivity for access to essential information, services, and opportunities.

The third set deals with the effective provision of global public goods:

* Empowerment of people for realizing their civil and political rights;
* Sustainable management of the biosphere for enabling people and planet to thrive together;
* Rules on running the world economy for the fairly shared benefit of all nations; and
* Good global governance for transparent and accountable international institutions and partnerships.

**Conclusion**

A post-2015 agreement does not need to encapsulate everything that is known about how to reduce poverty. Instead, it needs to focus on those aspects of development that can be addressed through coordinated global action. The quest should not be for the perfect agreement, but for the one that seems most likely to work. The post-2015 debate is about questioning the value of an MDG-type, target-based approach to international development, about progress so far on poverty reduction, about looking to an uncertain future and exploring what kind of system is needed after the MDG deadline has passed.

Whatever the practicalities of a post-2015 agreement, it is essential that it learns the right lessons from the past and has the right analysis of the future, if it is to be both politically acceptable and useful in reducing poverty.

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