



‘Post-2015’ international development goals

Who wants what and why

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2015 will be a watershed year for international development, when the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework will be revised, extended or replaced. With less than 1,000 days to go until the MDGs 'expire', dialogue among governments and civil society is gathering energy. Is inequality a pivotal issue for global development goals? Can the 'post 2015 agenda' simultaneously support action on poverty reduction, environmental health and economic growth? How can the next set of goals replicate the simplicity of the MDGs, yet be more flexible to national conditions and to emerging issues? This paper identifies some of the players, their propositions and the emerging 'fault lines'.

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In brief

In 2000, governments signed the Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, and setting out a series of time-bound targets — with a deadline of 2015 — that have come to be known as the Millennium Development Goals. Since then, our world has undergone some 'seismic' changes. Many countries have experienced remarkable growth rates; scientific and technological advances have begun to transform lives; and social movements such as the Arab Spring have prompted political change. But inequality within many developed and developing countries, particularly between the extremes of income distribution, has worsened;¹ we have stretched our natural systems to their limits; and our economies have suffered one of the worst financial crises in over a century.

In less than 1,000 days the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework 'expires'. Despite progress on some issues, such as on eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring access to water, and tackling HIV/AIDS, the international community will fail to reach most of the goals. In the face of climate change, greater competition for resources and uncertain economic times, the scale of the challenge now calls for a different approach — one that tackles the structural causes of poverty and environmental degradation rather than merely the symptoms; one that reflects a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape; and one that can respond to an uncertain future.

Dialogue on the 'post-2015 agenda'² is gathering pace. The UN High Level Panel (HLP) established by the UN Secretary General has published a set of recommendations³ for the next iteration of international goals, which will provide the foundation for negotiations between governments over the coming months (see Chapter 1, Box 2). At the same time, the inter-governmental UN Open Working Group (OWG), tasked with generating recommendations for a set of Sustainable Development Goals as agreed at Rio+20, is now underway. Meanwhile, non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, academics, businesses and other stakeholders have immersed themselves in local, national and regional debates.

As a result, the post 2015 agenda is a packed 'global stage' on which lobbyists and governments are touting a dizzying number of proposals. Diverse 'solutions' are being advocated ranging from tax policy to disability rights and from intellectual property rights to job creation targets. The array of proposals spans macro-level goals to sector-specific action plans, and adopts tones that range from grand visions to detailed pragmatism.

This paper takes a short tour of the 'post-2015' stage, viewing it through a wide lens — beyond the recommendations of the HLP (Chapter 1, Box 2) — to capture the breadth of the debates, describe the major propositions and cast a spotlight on emerging 'fault lines' that separate different approaches. First, it sketches out some of the many ways that organisations are interpreting the problems facing people and planet (see Box 1). We see how the structural causes of poverty are being attributed simultaneously to deteriorating natural systems, rising inequality, faltering economic growth rates and inadequate institutions, and how these varying views are prompting a vast 'dashboard' of different solutions in the shape of proposed goals and targets.

Second, this paper casts a spotlight on some of the tensions or 'fault-lines' between different approaches, particularly around the practical application of different propositions. For example, while there is consensus that inequality is undermining development, opinion is divided over the dimensions of inequality, the best way to measure it, and the role that a global framework can have in tackling it. Similarly, while most organisations recognise the connections between healthy natural systems and poverty reduction, they disagree on how to tackle the connections in a single, universal framework. Finally, the paper highlights some of the new models and ways of thinking being developed by non-governmental groups trying to make sense of the kaleidoscope of conflicting opinion and evidence.

BOX 1. THE ISSUES

It's about meeting basic needs...

We still haven't got the basics right. And since we can't fix everything some say we should concentrate on helping the poorest and most marginalised groups.

It's about projecting human rights...

But surely human rights entitle people to more than just basic needs — what about political participation, justice, peace and good governance?

It's about restoring our natural systems...

The MDGs didn't place enough value on our natural systems, yet the poor suffer most from bad natural resource management. Isn't it time to focus on our natural systems and ecological limits?

It's about tackling inequality...

That means income inequality, but also gender and spatial inequalities as well as trade inequalities between countries and unequal access to natural resources and environmental services.

It's about growth, but this time green and inclusive...

In tough economic times, and as development aid becomes less relevant in some countries, many say that we should support entrepreneurship, job creation and growth. But can growth be green? And does it reach the poorest groups?

It's about better institutions...

Should a post-2015 agenda focus on stronger institutions, good governance, transparency and accountability, and better, fairer business climates? Would fixing institutions help the problems resolve themselves?

1

What is the problem we are trying to tackle?

1.1 It's about meeting basic needs

As most players on the post-2015 stage emphasise, the MDG project is far from complete. We still see unacceptable levels of poverty around the world and millions of people still cannot afford decent homes, access to basic water and sanitation or a reliable energy supply. So for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as CAFOD, the post-2015 framework should not attempt to tackle "all the important issues in the world" but should restrict itself to "the issues that matter most to people in acute poverty".⁴ To **reach the poorest groups**, CAFOD proposes that the first priority international goal is to ensure the 'basic conditions for human flourishing', which includes access to essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation, and financial security. Their proposal for a second goal is to support 'enabling societies', emphasising civic participation and inclusion of marginalised groups. A third goal would be to promote 'equitable economies' by regulating corporate power and creating fair markets.⁴

1.2 It's about protecting human rights

Although few disagree with the need to help the poorest communities, many say the 'basic needs' approach does not go far enough. The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the Korean Development Institute (KDI) jointly point to research⁵ showing that, even in the poorest communities, priorities extend far beyond basic services — to jobs, better connections to the rest of the world, reduced threats of violence and ending humiliation and disrespect. They argue "The new goals should not only provide for basic human needs, but also **ensure essential human rights**

and create enabling conditions to help individuals realise their potential".⁶ For example, CIGI and KDI propose that a new education goal should move beyond primary schooling towards universal literacy and numeracy and improved job skills. They also put a much greater emphasis on promoting civil rights, saying, "Without being overly prescriptive, the civil and political rights goal should promote public participation, accountability and transparency".⁶

Other organisations take the civil rights focus further, emphasising that the failure to underscore the MDGs with **international human rights standards** has undermined the framework's effectiveness. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) argues that although issues of global and democratic governance (for example in trade, debt relief, intellectual property, and technology transfer) were all implicitly reflected in the MDGs, civil and political rights were excluded because they could not be measured satisfactorily.⁷ For example, MDG 2 aimed for universal primary education but it did not require that primary schooling be free, "...without which universal access is unachievable".⁷

1.3 It's about restoring our natural systems

For many organisations, the MDG framework's most profound limitation is that it fails to adequately represent **the needs or the rights of our natural systems**. With the exception of the target for access to clean water, progress towards achieving MDG7 (to ensure environmental sustainability) has been minimal (that is, efforts to protect forests, fisheries, biodiversity or to slow carbon emissions). Our failure to protect our natural systems hits the poorest people hardest, and is undermining much of the progress towards alleviating poverty in recent decades.⁸

Informed by research on ecological limits, conservation organisations such as WWF propose that the post-2015 agenda will need to be one that: “promotes resilience and adaptation to climate change”; “embeds a low or zero-carbon development pathway”; “promotes a model of development based on shared use of natural resources within the context of a finite planet”; is based on the principles of equity (of resource use) and equality (human rights, democratic participation); and is “universally applicable”.⁹ Similarly, IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature) stresses the role that biodiversity plays in the poorest communities and proposes that a post-2015 system should ensure that the value biodiversity offers is integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies.

Recognising the role that our natural systems play in all aspects of human development, many players are advocating for science to be at the core of the post-2015 agenda. Alex Evans, from the Centre on International Cooperation (CIC), argues that the concept of ‘planetary boundaries’, as pioneered by the Stockholm Resilience Centre,¹⁰ is becoming “the most important idea in sustainable development to emerge in the 25 years since the Brundtland report” because boundaries show “natural resource limits as critical – but, importantly, focus not on abstract, polarising ideas like ‘limits to growth’, but instead on evidence-based, quantified limits to the sustainable use of particular renewable and non-renewable resources”.¹¹ As such, the post-2015 process should set up a more serious and comprehensive global institutional mechanism for monitoring all nine ‘planetary boundaries’ so that our ecological limits act as an anchor for global conversations and add pressure for responsive policy development.

Building on the concept of ecological limits, the German Development Institute proposes that the post 2015 framework include a “baseline goal guaranteeing the basic functions of the Earth system that underlie human wellbeing”, which would aim to secure “Earth System Security: policies and incentives for an effective global programme of ecosystem conservation, restoration and low emissions to avoid harmful damage to ecosystems”.¹²

1.4 It’s about tackling inequality

For an increasing number of organisations the ‘new frontier’ of development policy is the issue of inequality. Research over the past two decades shows that while gaps between countries have shrunk, inequalities within many countries, both developed and developing, have widened. More specifically, incomes are distributed very unevenly, with extreme highs and extreme lows.¹ There is mounting evidence from a diverse range of sources, including the World Economic Forum,¹³ The Economist,¹⁴ the World Bank,¹⁵ labour movements and NGOs, that economic polarisation is undermining our attempts to alleviate poverty

and protect our environmental systems at national and international levels. Francois Bourguignon, Director of the Paris School of Economics, has shown that inequality in the world is back to where it was a century ago. He says, “These worrying trends [on inequality] raise questions about the inclusiveness of growth and call for a re-examination of economic structures and growth models that contribute to skewing growth in favour of certain segments of societies or geographical areas and perpetuating inequalities”.¹

Inequality affects communities at all levels. Save the Children’s latest analysis¹⁶ reveals the long-term damage inequality does to children and their chance to thrive in later life. Save the Children argues that: “A focus on alleviating absolute poverty must be augmented by a common commitment to tackle inequalities in opportunities and outcomes”.¹⁶ Similarly, the African Development Bank (ADB) and African Union emphasise that “Africa’s aggregate performance on the MDGs masks wide income, gender and spatial inequalities in accessing social services. Left unchecked, these trends are likely to lead to social tensions and unravel progress made on the MDGs. Hence it is important that policymakers design and implement policies that address inequalities, promote social cohesion and sustain Africa’s progress on the MDGs”.¹⁷

Labour groups also use the lens of inequality to examine the structural problem of poverty. They show that while employment rates globally have increased in the last two decades, the jobs created have not provided enough income to reduce income inequality. Wages have remained low, and most jobs have been short-term, part-time, casual or informal. Labour groups want the post-2015 agenda to **prioritise employment and welfare** in order to tackle poverty and inequality. For instance, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) proposes that one goal must be to provide “full and productive employment and decent work” and must come with agreed parameters to help national stakeholders define context specific targets. A second goal, it argues, should focus on “social protection floors for poverty reduction and resilience”.¹⁸ The ILO wants a framework that aims to ensure male and female labour is properly valued and rewarded; and one that requires laws and policy to protect formal and informal workers, so ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination and minimum wage legislation and securing effective and universal access to social protection.

But for an increasingly vocal lobby, inequality is not just relevant within country borders but rather **between countries**. A letter to the HLP from 90 leading academics, including development economist Jose Antonio Ocampo and Indian academic Jayati Ghosh, stresses that “inequality both within and between countries is a barrier to individual development and sustained economic growth. It undermines social cohesion and distorts the democratic process”.¹⁹ For this lobby, the post-2015 framework must therefore focus on creating more effective tax systems, ensure greater economic stability and support more equitable trade, investment and financial flows.

For many other NGOs global inequality relates most

pertinently to how **access to natural resources and environmental services is distributed**. With 80 per cent of the world's resources now consumed by the wealthiest 20 per cent of the world's population, while the poorest 30 per cent are not able to consume enough to meet their basic needs, many NGOs stress the imperative for the post-2015 framework to tackle the governance of our global commons. The ACT alliance states that "the post-2015 agenda must be formulated in a way that takes into account inequalities in access to resources globally, and provides clear indicators and incentives to change consumption and production patterns in order to reduce inequality and ensure a sustainable future".²⁰

1.5 It's about growth — but this time green and inclusive

In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and continued economic uncertainty, many governments and NGOs are encouraging a very different take on the 'next generation' of international development. Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) flows are already falling (and in some recipient countries becoming far less relevant), so many governments are interested in how an international framework can encourage development by engaging innovation, and the private sector, including by nurturing smaller enterprises. For example, a UN survey of 112 government, civil society organisations, research institutions and academic

stakeholders from 32 African countries found that most felt that the MDGs had not given **inclusive growth and jobs** adequate attention.²¹ Similarly, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening, calls for the core ambition of the post-2015 framework to "reduce poverty through helping **to drive economic growth and create jobs** for the poorest and most vulnerable people".²²

1.6 It's about better institutions

In order to catalyse greener and more inclusive growth, many of those trying to influence the post-2015 agenda have emphasised that the international framework needs to support stronger institutions. The UK's Prime Minister, David Cameron, has stressed the importance of "...good and honest government, the rule of law, transparency and accountability, and free markets as the cornerstones for prosperity" — what he calls the "golden thread of development".²³

Discussions at the HLP's open dialogue with the private sector suggested that, to engage business more effectively in meeting the challenges of tomorrow, development goals need to help provide "better business climates".²⁴ Such climates might include "progress towards a fairer international trading system; improved regional, national and rural infrastructure; a greater emphasis on agricultural development; support for women entrepreneurs; tackling the finance gap for small and growing businesses".²⁴

BOX 2. SUMMARY OF THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The High Level Panel identifies five 'transformative shifts' for the post-2015 global agenda. (i) **Leave no one behind** by ensuring universal human rights and basic economic opportunities for all. (ii) **Put sustainable development at the core** by mobilising social, economic and environmental action — particularly on the part of developed countries and the private sector — to halt the pace of climate change and environmental degradation and bring about social inclusion. (iii) **Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth**, which means a rapid shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production by harnessing innovation and technology, as well as an effort to create new job possibilities and access to essential services. (iv) **Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all**, by generating responsive and legitimate institutions that encourage the rule of law, property rights, freedom of speech and the media, open political choice, access to justice, and accountable government and public institutions. (v) **Forge a new global partnership**, whereby the international community should go beyond an aid agenda to implement a swift reduction in corruption, illicit financial flows, money laundering, tax evasion, and hidden ownership of assets. It will also mean free and fair trade, technology innovation, transfer and diffusion and the promotion of financial stability.

On this basis, the panel outlines twelve global goals that span from ending poverty, and empowering girls and women to managing natural resource assets sustainably and ensuring good governance. In addition to the MDGs, the panel suggest goals dedicated to creating jobs and equitable growth, securing sustainable energy, ensuring stable and peaceful societies and creating an "enabling environment and catalysing long-term finance". The framework is based on universal goals — some of which will aim for 'zero' — accompanied by nationally defined targets.

2

So how can we tackle these problems?

In the words of the CIDSE, a global alliance of Catholic development agencies, the post-2015 framework requires the international community to build a “a new global, legally binding, time-bound over-arching, cross-thematic framework that addresses the interlinked challenges of poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, economic equity, gender equality, climate change, resilience and equitable distribution of limited national resources in ways that uphold human rights obligations”.²⁵

The question is how. Although there is some consensus on the challenges facing our communities and natural systems, there is little agreement on the structural causes of the problems we face or what an international framework can usefully do to tackle these.

2.1 Spotlight on inequality

The issue of inequality sits centre-stage in the post 2015 agenda discussions. Thinking on inequality is intensifying the ‘fault lines’ between different political approaches, and is also beset by questions of practicality.

Self-standing goal?

Many of the civil society organisations campaigning on inequality hope that a global framework will encourage **national governments** to introduce more progressive social policy that helps redistribute income and essential services more equitably. Examples often cited include China’s plan to raise the minimum wage to 40 per cent of average urban salaries by 2015, or social protection policies to protect the poorest families, such as the Oportunidades programme in Mexico²⁶ and the Bolsa Familia in Brazil.²⁷

But there is great debate on how an international framework might feasibly support national action. The most popular proposal, supported by numerous NGOs, is to include a **self-standing goal on income inequality** within the post-2015 framework, measured by the Gini coefficient or the Palma ratio.²⁸ The proposition has the advantage of simplicity — a key strength of the MDGs. But an increasingly vocal lobby stress that the Gini coefficient is more sensitive to changes at the top of the income pyramid rather than the bottom. They also emphasise that indicators alone do not prompt government action — a key criticism levelled at the MDGs — and therefore need accompanying guidance on implementation. Furthermore, many organisations including the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) have shown how income inequality is only one part of the picture.²⁹ The more significant challenge is the inequality of access to essential services, including safe, sufficient water, good quality sanitation, drainage, healthcare, schools, emergency services and safety nets.

On this basis, many non-governmental and civil society organisations are supporting a **stand-alone goal on inequality complemented by inequality targets across the entire framework**. For example, participants in a global consultation hosted by UNICEF and UN Women³⁰ recommended not only that the self-standing goal on inequality should extend beyond income indicators, but also that it should be complemented across all the framework’s goals by targets and indicators that focus on the most disadvantaged groups. As such, data on progress would be disaggregated across different income, gender or geographical groups and would reveal, for example, the quality of water or education for the poorest as opposed to the top few percentiles. Presumably, countries whose progress on a

given indicator was more evenly distributed would rank higher in a global league table than those with less equal progress.

As an Overseas Development Institute (ODI) discussion paper³¹ notes, such an approach has the advantage of providing clear incentives for governments to focus attention on the poorest or most marginalised groups, while addressing disparities between whole populations.

But these proposals on inequality have prompted some forceful disagreement. Objectors say they involve making subjective value judgements on groups' relative vulnerability, as well as requiring impractical levels of data collection. And governments have raised objections to both a self-standing and cross-cutting approach to measuring inequality, on the basis that it will impose **too regimented a framework on national decision making**. For example, the HLP recommendations have not included a self-standing goal on income inequality, saying "we recognised that every country is wrestling with how to address income inequality, but felt that national policy in each country, not global goal setting, must provide the answer".³

Finally, critics question the added-value of an explicit focus on inequality. In an opinion piece, economist Stephan Klasen argues that the MDG framework already implicitly embraces the inequality agenda because reducing income poverty is more successful if growth is accompanied by declining inequality.³² "If the poverty goal is ambitious enough, reaching it will necessarily require that countries reduce inequality". As such, he and others argue that goals tracking inequality are redundant.

Tackling global inequality

Ways to tackle **rising global inequality** are prompting similarly heated debate, particularly around the issue of tax avoidance, which has attracted much international media attention in recent months. Action Aid cites research that shows net financial transfers to developing countries over the past decade may be negative once illicit flows (tax evasion, money laundering, trade and transfer mispricing by companies, and bribery) are taken into account.³³ The NGO is joining others in advocating **a new global partnership** that would tackle international tax rules. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Nigerian finance minister and member of the HLP, has expressed her frustration at many rich countries' lack of appetite for a stronger stand on tax evasion,³⁴ and the panel has included a target to "reduce illicit flows and tax evasion and increase stole-asset recovery"³ in their recommendations to the Secretary General. However, representatives in the business lobby argue that tackling tax avoidance should not be adopted as an exit strategy for aid. One business commentator has said, "Focusing on the tax payments of a few high-profile corporates... risks detracting from what matters to the poorest", adding, "the true exit strategy from aid is a vibrant domestic and international private sector — one that will create the vast number of jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities needed".²⁴

Re-distributing resources

Any post-2015 consensus becomes even more fragmented when it comes to distributing our natural resources or **'global commons'**. Scarred by the climate change negotiations, or in some case sceptical about proposed biophysical thresholds,³⁵ some advocates recommend that the politics of benefit and burden sharing of our environmental services are restricted to other intergovernmental negotiation processes. The HLP reiterates the commitment to "hold the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels, in line with international agreements"³ and acknowledges ecological limits more broadly, but does not use the concept of planetary boundaries as a founding principle for their framework.

On the other side of the debate, many NGOs informed by work on planetary boundaries are advocating **'contraction and convergence'** models. For example, CIC's Alex Evans argues that incorporating planetary boundaries at the heart of the post 2015 framework would "send an unambiguous signal about the need for fair shares to natural assets"³⁶ thereby helping to release the political deadlock of the climate change negotiations. However, scientist Johan Rockstrom and economist Jeffrey Sachs³⁷ raise concerns over contraction and convergence models because "it seems impossible that politicians in rich countries would ever agree to drastically lower the standard of living".³⁸ This, they argue, implies that developing countries will be capped at "a level of income that is below the income enjoyed by rich countries". In response, Evans argues that the contraction and convergence model applies to key resources and ecosystems rather than per capita incomes.³⁶

To bridge issues of global equity and resources, civil society groups such as the ACT Alliance endorse the 'Greenhouse Development Rights framework'.³⁹ The model combines justice-based disaggregated data to determine three measures by which to share out the global 'effort' needed to meet the demands of a rapidly changing climate. The measures are the right to develop, the responsibility for historic and current levels of greenhouse gas emissions and the capacity to fund adaptation and technology transfer to develop by alternative means. Taken together, these establish a responsibility and capacity index for each country.

2.2 Spotlight on universality

In light of the divisive politics surrounding inequality, many organisations argue that a more feasible option is **a universal framework**. Rather than the relative targets attached to the MDGs (such as halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, monetary poverty and inadequate provision of water and sanitation), the post-

2015 framework should have absolute goals applicable to every country. The HLP calls this a 'zero framework' — the advantage is that no group would be 'left-out'. In the words of John McArthur, Senior Fellow of the UN Foundation, "it means minimum standards for humanity by 2030, with explicit targets for every community, subnational unit and country in the world".⁴⁰

For others, a universal framework may not be sufficiently sensitive to different national contexts. The HLP, Colombia and a range of NGOs propose a framework founded on a set of universal **absolute goals and boundaries coupled with differentiated targets**⁴¹ to respond to different country needs. A coalition of NGOs including Third World Network and Social Watch go one step further. They propose that internationally codified rights, such as the right to food, and to respect for ecological boundaries (which includes a limit to human contributions to carbon dioxide concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere), are "by their very essence absolute goals, universally valid and not time-bound. They apply to all people and not to only a section of the world population".⁴¹ But these should be accompanied by differentiated targets that respect "the human rights principles of progressive realisation and non-regression". As such, rather than fixing a date when the goals have to be achieved, for example 2030, governments would commit themselves to continuous progress at regular intervals — perhaps every five years.

2.3 Spotlight on growth

The HLP report, and statements issued on behalf of Japan, UK, the EU and African governments have all stressed the role that 'inclusive green growth' should play in the next international development agenda, particularly in light of continued economic recession and falling aid flows. However, there are numerous practical and ideological questions as to how an international framework should (or could) support national economic growth.

First, as the discussions in preparation for Rio+20 highlighted, many stakeholders are highly dubious that economic growth can be 'green'. Research by Tim Jackson, former Economics Commissioner for the UK's Sustainable Development Commission, finds there is little evidence that resource efficiency gains could be sufficient to 'decouple' economic growth from its resultant effects on our ecosystems.⁴² Second, some networks of civil society organisations, particularly in Latin America, are concerned that green growth will serve powerful countries and international businesses and do little to improve the lives of the poorest communities. Finally, many governments are concerned that an international agenda on 'green growth' will be overly prescriptive.

In response to such concerns, numerous organisations and networks, including the World Bank, UNEP, the Green

Growth Knowledge Platform and the ILO, are working with governments to explore alternative growth models in practice. International multi-stakeholder alliances such as the Green Economy Coalition (GEC),⁴³ which with its partners has supported green economy national dialogues in a number of countries, are generating evidence on how alternative growth patterns can deliver benefits for people and planet.

In more practical terms, groups are exploring a number of different ways for including growth in a post-2015 framework. An ODI discussion paper posits three viable routes.⁴⁴ First, a post-2015 agreement could be used to establish **global norms** of inclusive growth. This, says ODI, could be a way to confirm a new consensus on how growth drives development and poverty reduction, "addressing the centrality of economic transformation for long-term development, but also the need to consider distributional issues when analysing the impact of growth".⁴⁰ As a case in point, Japan has proposed a post-2015 'Pact for Global Wellbeing', prioritising growth that is green, inclusive, shared and knowledge-based.⁴⁵

Another pathway would be to incentivise **new development partnerships** that address barriers to inclusive growth at the global level. The hope is that a post-2015 framework could be used to drive progress on key areas for growth where agreement between countries has so far proved difficult (for example, finance, trade, commodities, technology, and climate change adaptation and mitigation). For example, one goal area might focus on ensuring market access for low income countries or agreements on new technology access.⁴⁴

A final option would be designing new goals to influence **national-level policies and resource flows** towards growth and employment. International think tanks such as CIGI are complementing labour groups' positions and proposing that the post-2015 agenda could identify national targets for the quantity and quality of jobs needed to help drive economic growth.⁴⁵

2.4 Spotlight on integration

One of the most prominent debates yet to be resolved is whether the MDGs and the SDGs should be integrated. The HLP and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon have come out strongly in favour of a single agenda, and for the EU, "the review of the MDGs and the work on elaborating SDGs need to be brought together towards one overarching framework with common priority challenges and objectives".⁴⁶ Colombia has also strongly favoured integration, arguing that failing to integrate SDGs and MDGs would create high-level divisions between efforts on poverty and sustainable development, and would lead to "unmanageable overlaps

regarding finance, and infrastructure, and create difficulties in monitoring, reporting and accountability".⁴⁷

Other governments, most notably Brazil, have stressed that the pressing challenges related to poverty eradication could be "lost in the SDGs".⁴⁷ The fear is that basic issues prioritised by the MDGs would lose visibility and remain unfinished. In a regional consultation amongst African governments, most favoured an 'MDG-plus' approach, seeking to eliminate overlaps and increase space for salient issues that the MDGs omitted, rather than producing a whole new framework.¹⁷

2.5 Spotlight on politics

Underlying all these discussions about what is on the 'post-2015 agenda', is a wider debate on whether international frameworks are actually effective at catalysing national change. In one Oxfam discussion paper, the authors point to poor evidence that recent national and global improvements in health, education and other key sectors can

be plausibly attributed to the MDGs, "rather than to factors such as national politics, economic growth or technological innovation".⁴⁸ Similarly, as economist Dani Rodrick points out, the goal of halving extreme poverty (measured by the number of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day) will likely be achieved ahead of time, largely thanks to China's phenomenal growth.⁴⁹ China implemented the policies that engineered history's greatest poverty eradication programme prior to, and independently from, the MDGs.

The authors of the Oxfam discussion paper urge the debate to move beyond what governments or civil society 'would like to achieve', and engage instead with 'what kind of instruments are most likely to influence decisions and deliver lasting impact'.⁴⁸ It posits three key ways to influence governments. First, by changing national norms (for example, women's rights); second, by directly influencing governments through incentives (such as aid, contracts, approval) and disincentives (such as sanctions); and third, by giving civil society organisations and other actors more tools with which to lobby their governments and secure action.

3

The longer term view

As more and more players join the post-2015 stage, the danger is that the agenda becomes subsumed in today's politics and priorities, rather than learning lessons from the MDGs or considering potential improvements.

3.1 Learning from looking back

MDGs: the strengths

There is wide consensus that the MDGs have provided a unity of purpose. They put poverty firmly on the international agenda, and were a global attempt to deliver coordinated development across issues of water, sanitation, health, education, gender and the environment. The MDG framework, based on a set of concrete goals and predominantly quantifiable targets, has been relatively simple and straightforward to understand, making progress relatively easy to monitor. As such, the MDGs have become an advocacy tool with which to shape national development policies. They have generated a huge amount of data to share between countries, identifying trends and emerging issues. And they are widely credited with driving up development aid funding at the beginning of the 21st century through their role in raising public and political support for global poverty reduction.

MDGs: the weaknesses

But the MDGs have struggled to meet the needs of the poorest. Many organisations stress that the MDGs are an 'ends and not a means' and that the process provided little guidance on how the goals could be achieved. The targets and indicators were formulated by international finance institutions and developed country governments with little consultation or negotiation between and within countries. Finally, they relied on a 'one size fits all' approach, particularly for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which required

low-income countries to set "rigid national policy agendas" that followed international benchmarks in order to qualify for international aid, rather than fitting local conditions, and thereby "often ignoring the complexities of the development process".⁵⁰

3.2 Looking ahead

Power is shifting

The world's economic balance of power is shifting. Most analysts predict that China will overtake the United States as the world's largest economic power within a generation, and India will join both countries as a global leader by mid-century. In addition, regional players such as Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa and Turkey will become more important to the global economy. The US National Intelligence Council expects "a tectonic shift" by 2030, with "the health of the global economy increasingly linked to how well the developing world does — more so than the traditional West".⁵¹

It is likely that global economic transformation will shift international relations in unpredictable ways. According to the Carnegie policy outlook, as we move towards 2050, European nations will be pressed to collaborate on foreign policy positions and will need to reach out to emerging powers.⁵² The largest emerging nations may come to see each other as rivals. The shift in economic power will have a significant impact on all institutions, ranging from multinational companies, to the governance structures of the UN Security Council, World Bank, IMF, and so on.

More competition for resources

Emerging economies' rising wealth will continue to bring a broader range of consumption goods to huge numbers of new consumers. More of them will cross the annual income threshold of \$5,000, putting them within the 'global middle class' and enabling more discretionary spending. According

to some estimates, demand for food, water and energy will grow by approximately 35, 40 and 50 per cent respectively.⁵¹ Climate change will intensify existing weather patterns and make them more unpredictable. Tackling problems pertaining to one commodity will not be possible without affecting supply and demand for others. Yet the United States could become energy independent due to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) technology, which has expanded the life of US energy reserves from 30 to 100 years.⁵¹

Financial forecasts look gloomy

Many analysts suggest that the global economy is unlikely to return to pre-2008 growth rates or such rapid rates of globalisation. Across G7 countries, total non-financial debt has doubled since 1980 to 300 per cent of GDP and the 2008 recession is still ricocheting around global markets. The

US National Intelligence Council notes that "Historical studies indicate that recessions involving financial crises tend to be deeper and require recoveries that take twice as long".⁵¹ They also suggest that "the potential impact of an unruly Greek exit from the euro zone could cause eight times the collateral damage as the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy". Restoring Eurozone stability could take up to an entire decade.

Urban centres are expanding

Today's roughly 50 per cent urban population will climb to nearly 60 per cent, or 4.9 billion people, by 2030.⁵¹ Africa will gradually replace Asia as the region with the highest urbanisation rate. Urban centres will generate 80 per cent of economic growth by 2030. There is much potential to apply modern technologies and infrastructure, promoting better use of scarce resources.

4

A way through?

To make sense of the many pressures and issues surrounding the next set of development goals, some research groups are exploring **new models of analysis** that seek to reconcile macrovisions of change with practical solutions.

The Independent Research Forum (IRF),⁵³ a group of twelve research organisations from different disciplines and geographies, describe a post-2015 development agenda based on the principles of sustainable development, “which recognises the mutual dependency of economic, social and environmental outcomes; is grounded in local experience and needs; and is adaptable to diverse contexts and capacities”.⁵⁴ To bring about this vision, the IRF identify eight ‘major shifts’ for transforming the way that we approach development. The shifts include moving from “businesses models based on shareholder value to stakeholder value”; from “concepts and testing to scaled-up interventions”; and from “damage control to investing in resilience”. The forum is now testing its

analytical framework against different themes, such as water, agriculture and food security and urban issues, to “define the policy frameworks and interventions that are needed to achieve those outcomes from different angles and at different scales of interventions”.⁵⁴

Johan Rockstrom and Jeffrey Sachs⁵⁵ also suggest an analytical framework founded on a series of ‘transformations’, but this time focusing on sectors. To stay within planetary boundaries while continuing to develop economically, they argue, six transformations are required in energy, food security, urban sustainability, population, biodiversity management and public and private governance. Each transformation will require different tactics but all will depend on “the deployment of new sustainable technologies and new global rules of the game”, and “detailed strategies, major on-going R&D efforts and continued problem solving”.

Conclusion

The energy around the post-2015 agenda is to be applauded. The level of activity testifies to the scale and urgency of the problems that our communities and our ecosystems are facing. However, a considerable challenge lies ahead: to bring the kaleidoscope of conflicting opinion into a coherent framework — one that is grounded within a real-world political context.

This snapshot of the post-2015 stage highlights three hurdles. First, although there appears to be a broad consensus on the major challenges facing people and planet, organisations are interpreting the structural causes of those challenges in myriad different ways, and this is prompting a 'dashboard' of different solutions in the shape of proposed goals or targets. Although many proposals acknowledge the need for integration, for the most part, organisations are struggling to contextualise their own agenda item within a wider or longer context.

Second, despite the often cited critiques of the MDGs, or indeed some of the lessons learnt through the climate change negotiations, most post-2015 propositions — including the HLP recommendations — use a similar

structure, projected timeframe and format. But given that the future is looking increasingly unpredictable owing to climate change, resource competition and economic volatility and so on, the post-2015 framework will need to build in much greater flexibility. There are many lessons to be learnt from national policy frameworks on climate change adaptation as governments plan for an increasingly uncertain future.⁵⁶ Similarly, time-bound targets, though useful, may need to be more sensitive to emerging events.

Finally, in the rush to secure items on the agenda there is a risk that all groups — government, NGO, or business — mistake 'broadcast' mode for 'dialogue'. In particular, it is important to listen carefully to the needs and the voices of the poorest groups. This is not just a moral necessity but a practical one. It is the poorest groups who first encounter the problems we may all face — the first to experience even minor shifts in their local ecosystems; the first to feel changes in the labour markets; the first to suffer from fluctuations in basic commodity prices. By listening to and supporting the poorest communities we can start preparing for an increasingly unpredictable future.

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2015 will be a watershed year for international development, when the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework will be revised, extended or replaced. With less than 1000 days to go until the MDGs 'expire', dialogue among governments and civil society is gathering energy. Is inequality a pivotal issue for global development goals? Can the 'post 2015 agenda' simultaneously support action on poverty reduction, environmental health and economic growth? How can the next set of Goals replicate the simplicity of the MDGs, yet be more flexible to national conditions and to emerging issues? This paper identifies some of the players, their propositions and the emerging 'fault lines'.

IIED is a policy and action research organisation working to promote sustainable development —development that improves livelihoods in ways that protect the environments on which these are built. Based in London and working on five continents, we specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges. In Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific, we work with some of the world's most vulnerable people to ensure they have a say in the decision-making arenas that most directly affect them — from village councils to international conventions.



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