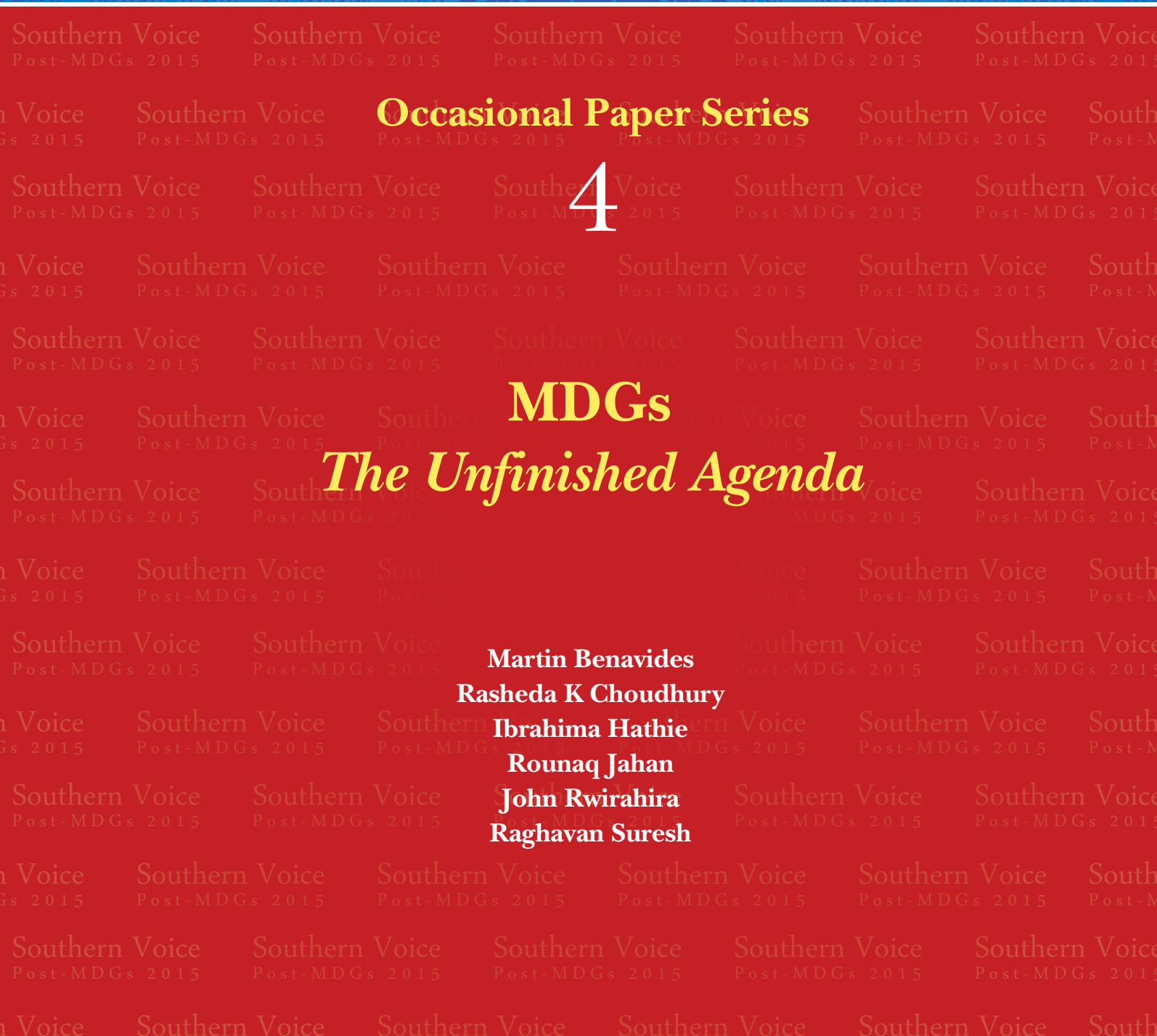




Southern Voice

2015 On Post-MDG International Development Goals



Occasional Paper Series

4

MDGs

The Unfinished Agenda

Martin Benavides

Rasheda K Choudhury

Ibrahima Hathie

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Publisher

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Preface

The *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) constitute one of the ideas of the United Nations (UN) that has literally changed the world. Conversely, the actual state of delivery of the MDGs continues to remain a matter of intense debate. With the 2015 deadline drawing near, the international development community remains preoccupied with reflecting on 'MDGs' future'. Indeed, an explicit understanding seems to have emerged that the MDGs are going to continue beyond 2015 in one form or another. Consequently, questions are being asked about the processes that are being followed to decide on the substance of the post-2015 international development goals as well as about what would be their distinguishing features.

The *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals* is a network of 48 think tanks from Africa, Latin America and South Asia that has identified a unique space and scope for itself to contribute to this post-MDG dialogue. By providing quality data, evidence and analyses that derive from research in the countries of the global South, these think tanks seek to inform the discussion on the post-2015 framework, goals and targets, and to help give shape to the debate itself. In the process, *Southern Voice* aims to enhance the quality of international development policy analysis, strengthen the global outreach capacity of Southern think tanks, and facilitate professional linkages between these think tanks and their respective governments.

The initiative emerged in Cape Town, South Africa in June 2012 at a meeting of awardees of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), a multi-donor facility managed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in Ottawa, Canada. Since then, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) has further conceptualised the initiative and prepared its programme document through a consultative process with the other think tanks. The initiative was launched to various stakeholder groups including the larger development community in November 2012. Subsequently, CPD organised an expert group meeting in Dhaka on 11-13 January 2013, to set the agenda for the initiative. The key outcome of the Dhaka meeting was captured in the document *First Approximations on Post-MDG International Development Goals*, which was forwarded as a contribution to the High-Level Panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General to draft the post-2015 framework.

It is reckoned that the guiding spirit and initiative of the programme will rest with the Southern think tanks, but it will operate as an *open platform*, where concerned institutions and individuals from both South and North will interact with the network members. This approach will help to enhance the quality of international development policy analysis, strengthen the global outreach capacity of Southern think tanks, and facilitate professional linkages among these institutions as well as with their respective governments.

Southern Voice Occasional Papers are based on inputs received at various platforms of the initiative. The present issue of the Paper includes the contributions made at the second session on "The Unfinished Agenda" of the Dhaka Expert Group Meeting (11-13 January 2013). The publication is a collection of six presentations and interventions which focus on specific development areas (e.g. gender agenda) of continued relevance for the post-2015 agenda. The contributions also provide a number of interesting geographical experiences (e.g. Latin America). The prospective role of the *Southern Voice on Post-MDGs* network has been highlighted in one of the pieces.

In connection with the launch of the *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals*, I would like to thank *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Executive Director, *Ms Anisatul Fatema Yousuf*, Director, Dialogue and Communication, *Dr Fahmida Khatun*, Research Director and *Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem*, Additional Research Director of the CPD for their support in getting the *Southern Voice* off the ground. I recall with thanks

that a number of CPD colleagues have worked hard in rapporteuring the sessions of the Dhaka Expert Group Meeting and preparing the transcriptions of the presentations and comments.

On this occasion, I would like to recall with gratitude the contribution of *Dr Peter Taylor*, Programme Leader, Think Tank Initiative (TTI) in shaping the *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals* and taking the initiative forward.

I would also like to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of *Ms Mahenaw Ummul Wara*, Research Associate, CPD for coordinating the publication process and *Mr Avra Bhattacharjee*, Deputy Director, Dialogue, CPD for designing the cover of the series.

I hope the engaged readership will find the document stimulating.

Dhaka, Bangladesh
January 2014

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MDGs

The Unfinished Agenda

The Unfinished Agenda: Notes from Latin America

*Martin Benavides**

The Influence of the MDGs

In most Latin American countries – especially, but not only, those that have recently experienced significant economic growth – progress has been made on indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as those regarding poverty levels, primary education enrolment and completion, child mortality rates, and gender gaps in education. How much this progress has been driven by the MDG framework is difficult to tell. However, the level of funding that the European Union contributed and the influence that it had on policy discourse in Latin American region cannot be ignored when assessing the progress made on the MDGs since 1990.

Alongside the MDG framework, economic growth and local politics have been two key drivers of development in Latin America. Some MDGs are more sensitive to economic growth and others to local politics. Poverty reduction, for example, is influenced significantly by economic growth, while improvement in primary education enrolment and completion, and reduction in child mortality are more sensitive to political decisions. Without economic growth it would be difficult to reduce poverty, but this is not the case with other development indicators. Increasing social services is more closely connected with local politics, though an increase depends on the health of an economy and is also linked to global frameworks. In this sense, the MDG framework has been instrumental in achieving progress in education and health in the Latin American region, especially for countries that have lacked economic growth.

Global versus Local Agendas

One of the issues regarding the MDG agenda in the region is the competition between two different agendas: the global and the local. This is true especially in the education and health sectors in countries that have achieved rapid progress on the MDG indicators. The MDG agenda in those sectors differs from the local agenda. In terms of education, for example, the local agenda is concerned with the quality of services, especially for poor indigenous students in countries that have a significant number of indigenous students who do not speak Spanish. In terms of health, the quality of services in poor rural areas is often much lower than the quality in urban areas. In addition, there is a dual policy agenda at the local level – one for local needs related to the quality of services, and the other concerned with ideas related to intercultural locations.

In the next global framework, the international community needs to reconcile the indicators used for the MDG framework with those used to measure local needs. The issue of dual policy agenda is important because in some Latin American countries the MDG indicators are no longer being used. For example, in Peru no one is talking about the MDG framework in relation to education and health because the local agenda has moved in a direction different than that proposed by the MDG framework.

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Issues Lacking Support

There are other development issues that lack the support of both global and local policy actors, such as violence and general vulnerability. In some Latin American countries, several major issues are not even on local agendas. In Peru, for example, indicators on domestic violence have not changed in the last ten years. There are few international non-governmental organisations working on the issue and no policy remotely connected with violence. Global frameworks and local politics alike seem to have little influence on reducing domestic violence. The new global framework should shed light on such invisible issues.

New Approaches: A Case for Distributive Policies

Despite the many dimensions of the MDG framework, the international community that uses and promotes it has had more influence on social issues than economic ones. At the local policy level, actors are split between those interested in economic issues and those interested in social issues, such as education and health. Growing economies alone will not be enough to improve the quantity or quality of social services, especially for vulnerable populations. To achieve more balanced development, it is important to integrate both economic and social issues in the future development framework and goals.

Improving Implementation

The implementation process is another important issue in the Latin American region. In Mexico, for example, there is currently no implementation plan for the MDGs. The new global framework will need to take into account the complexities various states face in implementation. It should promote implementation plans, more informed policy decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of policies, and synergies between sectors and indicators, among other things, to enhance the quality of implementation. Considering the interdependencies among the MDGs, improving the quality and efficiency of implementation will be especially important for tackling extreme poverty and social exclusion.

Global and Local Challenges

The next global framework should address both global and local challenges. There is a consensus in Latin America that a uniform approach is no longer appropriate, given the diverse conditions of countries, and that global targets should be aligned more closely with local goals to avoid diverging agendas. It may be possible to outline a typology of needs that considers national diversity. A global community of learning and influence, in which countries can disseminate their knowledge to others, can improve goal attainment.

Progress on the MDGs has been heterogeneous, and there are a lot of new ideas coming from many countries, especially those parts of the world where they can share knowledge with each other. There is an opportunity to integrate global and local objectives in the next global framework. Given competition and contradictions between the global and local agendas, seizing this opportunity is paramount.

Assessing MDG Progress in Rwanda: Achievements and Prospects for the Future

*John Rwirahira**

The ideas presented in this contribution are drawn from a 2012 MDG country progress report that the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) prepared for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Rwanda. The main objective of that study was to assess the progress that Rwanda has made toward achieving the MDG targets. The report also looked beyond this objective to the challenging targets that the country has set for itself for 2020. Data show that many MDGs are achievable in Rwanda, though the chances of achieving all of them by the end of 2015 are limited.

Since 2000, the MDGs have provided an important framework that has informed the social and economic development strategies and the allocation of official development assistance (ODA) in Rwanda. The elimination of poverty and other poverty-related issues have been the central concerns of the country's development strategies. Addressing the multi-faceted nature of poverty is an important factor in achieving many of the MDGs.

Where is Rwanda Now?

Rwanda has made tremendous progress in reducing poverty. In just five years, between 2005-06 and 2010-11, Rwanda reduced the incidence of poverty by 12 per cent, although 45 per cent of the Rwandan population still lives below the poverty line. This means that Rwanda is reducing poverty at an average rate of 2.4 per cent per year. At this rate, Rwanda is likely to reach its poverty target by 2018-19. Education and health-related MDGs indicators have significantly improved, but not all targets will be achieved by the end of 2015.

Our analysis of the potential for Rwanda to achieve the 2015 targets indicates that:

- a. Rwanda has already achieved its targets for the prevalence of underweight children under five-years of age (MDG 1), the ratio of boys to girls in primary school (MDG 2), the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament (MDG 3), the proportion of one-year old children immunised against measles (MDG 4), antenatal care coverage (MDG 5), the incidence of malaria and rates of death associated with the disease (MDG 6), and the proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities (MDG 7).
- b. Rwanda is on track to achieve its targets for the proportion of the population below the minimum level of dietary intake (MDG 1), net attendance ratio in primary school (MDG 2), the infant mortality rate (MDG 4), and the maternal mortality rate (MDG 5).
- c. Rwanda has the potential to achieve its targets for universal access to anti-retroviral treatment for all those who need it and the mortality rate from tuberculosis (MDG 6).
- d. Rwanda is off track for achieving its targets for the proportion of the population living in poverty (MDG 1), primary school completion (MDG 2), the proportion of women in non-farm employment (MDG 3), the HIV infection rate (MDG 6), and the proportion of the population with access to improved water (MDG 7).

Where does Rwanda Need to Focus its Interventions?

It is important to maintain a broad perspective because there is a danger of becoming too narrowly focused on achieving indicators and targets and losing sight of the goals. Indicators and targets are useful for monitoring progress toward achieving the ultimate goals, but achieving those goals must remain the primary objective. It is essential to keep in mind that all the MDGs are interrelated and

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aimed at supporting human development in order to build people's capabilities so that they are able to make real choices about their lives.

With that in mind, the following areas still need particular attention in the context of Rwanda.

Reducing Inequalities: Our analysis suggests that, although there has been significant economic growth in Rwanda, inequalities are still very pronounced. One might argue that those who were already better off are benefiting more from the government's current policies than the poor. The government needs to make its existing policies more pro-poor and adopt strategies that will ensure that the outcomes of these policies reach the poor and vulnerable.

Population Management: There is an urgent need to reduce Rwanda's population growth rate, which is currently more than 3 per cent per year. Doing this alone will have an effect on reducing poverty, increasing food security, and reducing maternal, infant and child mortality. It will enable investments in education to be shifted from primary to secondary, technical and higher education, which will contribute to building a more skilled workforce that will attract investment to the private sector. It will also reduce pressure on land, which remains a serious constraint for development.

Improving the Quality of Education: Rwanda has progressed much in terms of improving enrolment, completion and retention, and reducing gaps between girls and boys in primary schools. However, the government needs to focus on improving the quality of education at all levels, which will bring a high economic return for individuals and the country as a whole. Improvement in education at higher levels will enhance opportunities in the labour market and increase incomes.

Economic Empowerment of Women: There is significant evidence that empowering women makes good sense for furthering economic development. Educated women have fewer children, have healthier ones, and invest in their education. Empowering women helps a country benefit from their skills and enables it to make the best use of the talents of all of its population. Although significant progress has been made in empowering women and girls in Rwanda, a deeply patriarchal society, with cultural acceptance of male domination and the subordinate status of women, remains. Currently 56 per cent of Rwandan parliamentarians are women. This, however, does not necessarily indicate empowerment. There is a need to continue to emphasise the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Alignment and Conditionalities: Development partners are expected to align their aids with government priorities, provide technical assistance through national systems, use the Development Assistance Database, and work with the government to develop rules for settling disputes. However, at this point, only a few donors are aligning their support with the government's budgetary priorities. In addition, Rwanda is currently being accused by the international community of supporting the rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It has had part of its budget cut-off by a number of countries, including the United States and those in the European Union. It is not my purpose to prove whether Rwanda is supporting rebels or not, but rather to show the consequences of cutting aid on the ability of the country to achieve its MDG targets. The main losers in this political and diplomatic battle are the MDGs. To me, suspending aid to Rwanda jeopardises all its efforts toward achieving its MDG targets. In other words, cutting aid is endangering the lives of the poor and vulnerable Rwandans who should actually be benefiting from the MDG agendas. There is need for both the Rwandan government and its development partners to reconsider their positions. Whatever the case, the MDGs should be given priority over political interests.

The Role of Research and Action

Raghavan Suresh*

Reflecting on the unfinished agenda of MDGs, the issue I want to raise is : what was the role of research organisations and their responses to the implementation of the MDGs and what can we learn from it?

First of all, the analysis of the design of the goals was weak. Most research organisations took the goals as given, since we were not required to customise them. Researchers had the opportunity to tell governments that the design of the goals was weak, and then reshape and reformulate. I thought that the opportunity to contribute to designing the goals was to some extent lost early on.

Research was instead conducted on implementation, especially with a focus on numbers, not necessarily on critical policy areas. Capturing processes and measuring progress was largely inaccurate and unreliable early on. So there was an opportunity to identify detail processes and progress. This was also a great opportunity to include the user's voice, the primary theme of the MDGs. The user's perspective was present, but not prominent. The user can recognise local impediments, which vary from case-to-case, that hinder national goals and offer opinions about the achievement of goals. There was an opportunity to evaluate processes and progress by establishing new knowledge bases on development processes. Knowledge generated could have provided a basis for synergies across new stakeholders to improve processes. However, there was a tendency to use established frameworks for evaluation. These were often applied to new areas of knowledge, which hindered knowledge generation.

I think another critical issue is that most research organisations attempt to hold onto their ideas for themselves and do not want to share their 'brands' because they are intellectual property. This hinders the achievement of goals.

Further, companies along with governments attempted to facilitate and accelerate change. What was the role of research organisations in this? That we move a little bit on research about the economics of livelihoods and all that? To research on management itself, on business processes, how many of us had utilised this opportunity to do that? A lot of us commented and critiqued, but then usually failed to relate processes to the delivery of the MDGs. Promoting development goals as citizens' rights was another huge opportunity offered by the Millennium Declaration – that was even clearly expressed in the goals. So the opportunities were there. Thirteen years down the line, we look back at growing gaps between research and action.

Improved clarity and stakeholder involvement could have addressed these issues. Various communities increasingly used outputs by researchers and reporters, but did not use them adequately. Not adequately enough to change the shape of knowledge or contribute to the development of new approaches. We researchers, as critics of ourselves, should identify faults and correct them.

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The Role of Research in Advocacy

Rasheda K Choudhury*

We now have a lot of statistics and in-depth evidence on the status of implementation of the MDGs. We can identify one common solution while moving forward toward 2015, and that is political will to reflect on planning, politics and investment. Who will make the achievement of the MDGs happen? National governance may be an issue. We mostly see democratically elected governments, which have constraints, limitations and challenges, working on achieving indicators and targets.

How much achievements are driven by the MDG framework is hard to tell. We could give an example from Bangladesh related to the Compulsory Primary Education Act, signed in 1990. Enrolment in primary education had been increasing since 1990, long before the introduction of the MDGs. Following years of improvements, universal enrolment and gender parity in primary and secondary education are Bangladesh's two success stories. This was possible because the first elected government introduced a stipend programme for girls and declared that it would stay in place up to grade eight. Successive governments declared that it would stay up to grade ten. Now it is up to grade twelve, which is part of affirmative action.

Research has showed that government's own initiatives are making a difference. In many cases, social and economic achievements are more due to political agendas than compliance with the MDGs. Given this finding, how could research be used as a tool for advocacy? The gaps between research and advocacy are growing, but it is possible to address them by using research as an advocacy tool.

We have done it. I am the Member Secretary of Education Watch Bangladesh, a civil society initiative that began in 1999 to report on the state of education of the country. We believe that everything starts from the quality of education and finishes with the quality of education. When we were challenging the government in 2005 that quantifying enrolment in education is not enough, universal enrolment is not enough, and we should look at quality, a secretary of the government challenged me, essentially saying: "You are here and I am here. Both of us have come from mainstream schools. Don't talk about quality. Let us bring each and every child to school." We then conducted in-depth assessments of basic competencies of children in the fifth grade using UNICEF tools. We found that only 2 per cent of children achieved those competencies. We thought that something must be wrong with our tools. So, we went to assess the competencies of children in the fifth grade in the top ten performing schools in Dhaka. We found that 70 per cent of children had achieved competencies at those schools. That was how we could show that exclusion is happening in terms of public investment in education, and that was where we had been able to challenge the government with the hard evidence. The government has increasingly focused on the quality of the primary education programme since then. This is an example of how to use research for advocacy.

I would like to comment on exclusion, be it political exclusion, economic exclusion, or any other form of exclusion, such as exclusion due to disabilities. How many disabled people have had access to all levels of education? There are new and emerging areas of exclusion such as technology and social media. Social media is a very powerful tool to mobilise the youth, but how many have access to technology? Research can be used as a tool for advocacy to minimise such exclusion.

I would like to also comment on the retreat about the human security agenda. Not only is violence against women increasing, but violence that sometimes the state induces or supports – violence against unarmed civilians – is increasing, from Myanmar to Mindanao, and in Gaza; and many other conflict-affected regions in the world. Our major concern with these trends is that many developing country governments are becoming complacent. In some cases, the issues of quality

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and provision of education and health are being overshadowed. Again, research can be used as an advocacy tool to make a difference.

I would like to conclude by focusing on moving forward on the basis of what we have learnt over the years. Lessons should be learned from mistakes. At the World Education Forum in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, 164 governments pledged to provide quality basic education for all children, youth, and adults – an agenda that is known as Education for All. The MDGs have overshadowed this agenda, which is also getting bypassed in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. Going forward, we must make due on all the commitments that the international community has made in different fora, focusing on partnerships and relationships, investments in human development, reducing inequalities, and ensuring human security.

The Gender Agenda

Rounaq Jahan*

In his keynote speech, Professor Rehman Sobhan highlighted the structural causes of poverty and argued that these are root causes, and not mere symptoms be addressed by our policies and actions. In his special address, Professor David Hulme posited that setting some acceptable common global goals and creating simple slogans, particularly those that can transform social structures and norms, is a good strategy. He proposed “stop babies from dying” as a slogan because this is easy to understand, acceptable to all, and yet has the potential to change social structures and norms.

Both Professor Sobhan and Professor Hulme have asked us to pay attention to underlying structural forces. I agree with them. I endorse Professor Hulme’s idea of adopting some common slogan or campaign theme that can transform existing social structures and norms. However, I think I have a better proposal. I propose the adoption of “end violence against women” as a universal goal and campaign theme. The realisation of such a goal will require actions that will change our social structures and norms in a fundamental way.

There will be no quick technical fixes to attain this goal, and we will need multiple policies and actions on many fronts to end violence against women. At present, a number of national and international organisations are working on this issue. They are involved in research, data collection, and campaigning. If we adopt ending violence against women as a goal then these organisations as well as national and international women’s movements need to be mobilised to extend popular and grassroots support for the achievement of the goal. Earlier a discussant talked about the importance of bringing social movements to support the MDGs and post-MDGs. I fully agree with this sentiment. I have seen how the four United Nations World Conferences on Women involved international and national women’s movements and these movements successfully pushed forward the agenda of gender equality and women’s empowerment. I feel confident that social movements, particularly women’s movements, will be fully supportive of the goal of ending violence against women.

Dr Martin Benavides has already identified domestic violence as an area where little progress has been made in the past ten years in Peru due to lack of global and local support. He has urged greater effort in this area in the future. I believe data from other regions, including Europe and North America, will also point to similar slow progress and underscore the need for greater prioritisation of this theme in any post-MDG agenda. Indicators – quantitative as well as process-oriented qualitative – will have to be developed to track progress on this goal.

Dr Benavides has also argued that national diversities need to be taken into consideration and the next framework should take into account both global and local challenges. A uniform approach may not be appropriate given the diversity of conditions among countries. While I am sensitive to the reality of diverse local contexts, I would argue that having some global frameworks and standards are sometimes useful for excluded groups who may need to invoke global norms to promote their rights in their local contexts. For example, from my own experiences of advocating women’s equal rights in the past 40 years, I can state that international agreements on gender equality and women’s empowerment, such as the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and outcomes of the UN World Conferences on Women, definitely helped me and many others in our advocacy efforts nationally since we could argue that, as signatories to various international agreements, our governments are committed to developing policies and actions to promote gender equality and empower women. Similarly in many countries, indigenous people’s rights groups, who felt isolated and excluded in their national contexts, had to use international agreements and frameworks to promote their rights at home where they often had little political support. So sometimes having global frameworks can be helpful to excluded local groups who can use international frameworks to organise themselves.

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Since we are talking about the MDGs as an unfinished agenda, I would argue that the goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3) remains an unfinished agenda and needs to be included in any post-MDG framework. It should continue to be a separate goal. Additionally, gender-disaggregated data should be used to develop indicators to monitor progress on other goals. At present, despite availability of gender-disaggregated data, for example on infant mortality, child mortality and nutrition, these are not used to construct indicators to measure progress on the relevant MDG goals. In the future, wherever possible, we should use gender equality indicators to track progress.

I have listened with interest to the presentation by Mr John Rwirahira on Rwanda. I was struck by many similarities in the challenges and trends of progress between Rwanda and Bangladesh. For example, in Bangladesh, as in many South Asian countries, we face challenges regarding inadequate availability of skilled birth attendants and postnatal care, particularly in rural areas. Like in Rwanda, the maternal mortality rate in Bangladesh also registered a significant decline since the mid-1990s. The adoption of improving maternal health as an MDG (MDG 5) certainly helped to mobilise policy and resource support to facilitate this continued declining trend.

Finally, let me make some observations on the comments of one of the discussants. Mr Raghavan Suresh has correctly identified some of the gaps in our current research, such as inadequate representation of user's perspective. We have a few studies that attempt to bring forward voices of excluded groups and social movements but these studies are few and far between and are often ad hoc. We have not used this kind of research in a systematic way to influence policy and programme design. There is a need to promote more of such research and use these research findings in a routine manner to inform policy and action.

The Ongoing Process on Post-2015: Where does the Southern Voice Initiative Fit?

Ibrahima Hathie*

The ongoing process on the post-2015 development agenda is comprised of many parts, but I want to focus on two: the global process and the African process. What opportunities are available to Southern Voice?

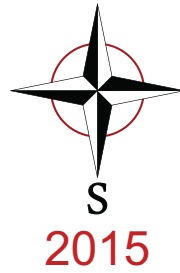
At the global level, key actors and processes are the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the High-Level Panel (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and the UN Development Group national and thematic consultations. The role of global civil society should be underscored. There are numerous civil society initiatives related to post-2015, and I urge everyone to visit www.beyond2015.org and www.worldwewant2015.org, which contain valuable information, and will give you a better perspective on civil society's contribution to ongoing consultation processes.

The African process on the post-2015 development agenda is led by the UN Economic Commission for Africa. In early 2011, it commissioned five papers, which were presented at a regional workshop held in Accra, Ghana, in November 2011. Forty-seven participants – government officials, academics, and civil society representatives – from 18 African countries were in attendance. The workshop's outcome document was later enriched by an online survey that targeted 112 representatives from 32 countries and five sub-regions of Africa. The African Union position on the post-2015 development agenda was constructed from these results.

The African Union position is comprised of three priority areas. The first priority area is to promote transformation and sustainable growth especially in the agriculture sector with employment creation, rural development promotion, value addition to primary commodities, food security, and sustainability and green economy initiatives. The second is to promote education and technological innovation. The third priority area is to promote human development through gender equity, women's empowerment, human rights protection, maternal and child health, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation initiatives.

Given this ongoing process, both at the global and regional levels, what opportunities are available to the Southern Voice initiators? Where does Southern Voice fit? The consultation process is accelerating and most of the consultation activities will end in a couple of months. This means that the time to act is right now. The best available opportunity at the global level in this regard would be to feed our reflections into the HLP report. We will need to interact with the HLP quickly and forward our contribution before its May 2013 deadline, time at which the HLP report is due to the UN Secretary-General. Another opportunity would be to establish contacts with the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and offer Southern Voice's inputs to this process. We may also want to connect strategically with the ongoing consultation processes, including those driven by civil society, online and during organised events. At the regional and national levels, our involvement is both possible and desirable. We could link with UN regional agencies and leading civil society organisations to provide Southern Voice's perspective on the post-2015 development agenda, and feed ideas into African, Asian and Latin American regional processes as well as national processes where appropriate.

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Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals (*Southern Voice*) is a network of 48 think tanks from Africa, Latin America and South Asia, that has identified a unique space and scope for itself to contribute to the post-MDG dialogue. By providing quality data, evidence and analyses that derive from research in the countries of the South, these institutions seek to inform the discussion on the post-2015 framework, goals and targets, and to help give shape to the debate itself. In the process, *Southern Voice* aims to enhance the quality of international development policy analysis, strengthen the global outreach capacity of Southern think tanks, and facilitate professional linkages between these institutions and their respective governments. *Southern Voice* operates as an open platform where concerned institutions and individuals from both South and North interact with the network members. *Southern Voice Occasional Papers* are based on inputs received at various platforms of the initiative. *Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)*, Dhaka works as the Secretariat of the *Southern Voice*.



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