



First Approximations on Post-MDG International Development Goals

A contribution by the Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals towards preparation of the report by the UN High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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A. Background

1. The *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) constitute one of the UN ideas that have changed the world. While the state of actual delivery on the MDGs remains a matter of intense debate, with the 2015 deadline drawing near, the international development community is preoccupied with reflecting on the 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, a discourse is evolving around the articulation of an international framework that will replace the MDGs in 2015.
2. The **Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals** (Southern Voice) is a network of 48 think tanks from South Asia, Africa, and Latin America 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.

3. Southern Voice organized an expert group meeting in Dhaka on 11-13 January 2013 to set the agenda for the initiative. The present document draws on the proceedings of the meeting and is being forwarded to the United Nations Secretary General's High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for its consideration. The document focuses on five key themes concerning the on-going discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, namely, (i) Framework Issues, (ii) Reflections on the Unfinished Agenda, (iii) Issues for the Future, (iv) Partnership and Resource Mobilisation, and (v) the On-going Consultations and the Southern Voice.

B. Framework Issues

4. Southern Voice recognises that one of the greatest strengths of the MDGs has been its ability to communicate to a broad audience the abstract idea of a global responsibility for eradicating poverty. This has been achieved thanks to a **simple framework with limited goals**, with targets that are in many cases measurable. The future framework must retain these attractive features; any attempt to overload the core agenda ought to be discouraged. A set of contingent indicators may be considered to accommodate concerns not explicitly addressed within the core agenda.
5. The post-2015 development agenda needs to retain its **focus on accelerated poverty eradication**. It must also strengthen this focus by drawing lessons from recent research findings, and it must build on policy analyses that highlight aspects of international development that are amenable to coordinated global actions. To this end, the focus should be on ensuring distributive justice in developing countries by way of (i) ending poverty, (ii) promoting greater equity, and (iii) empowering and encouraging the participation of the resource-poor.
6. In addition, the post-2015 development agenda must contribute towards **promoting a more just world order**. To do so, the new framework should contain effective mechanisms to enhance the voices of the South, and in particular of marginalized populations. Enabling Southern voices to be heard and facilitating South-South cooperation are critical for attaining new goals and targets associated with the framework. By doing so, the accountability mechanism of the new framework can actually be strengthened.

7. Addressing the dual tasks of promoting distributive justice at home and a more just global order should precipitate a process of inclusive and sustainable economic growth geared towards the structural transformation of developing economies. This may also contribute towards the convergence of countries at various levels of development, i.e. the reduction of inter-country disparity.
8. Southern Voice takes note of the recent moves to articulate a set of Universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the relevance of incorporating an environmental agenda into the future framework is recognized, an attempt to universalise the international development goals should not obscure the **particular development challenges of low-income countries**. This specifically relates to the need to address the unfinished agenda of the MDGs and highlights the importance of the principle of differentiated responsibility in pursuing common goals.
9. The post-2015 goals and targets have to be integrated with a **resource framework** from the very beginning. This dimension is particularly important in the aftermath of the recent global economic and financial crisis, during which additional and predictable resource flows to disadvantaged countries have become increasingly scarce. However, this is not to say that the resource framework should be exclusively based on concessional financial assistance.
10. In an attempt to forge a global consensus on post-MDG international development goals, important post-MDG targets may become diluted by **political considerations and asymmetry in power relations**. Such problems must be addressed and mitigated.
11. While articulating post-MDG international development goals, adequate attention must be paid to the availability, collation, and use of **relevant real-time data and information**. The monitoring mechanism should not be instrumentalist in its approach; rather, it should expand its scope to capture not only the levels of interventions, but also the real outcomes of these interventions. The Southern think tanks are major generators and users of such data and information and so have a key role to play in this regard, both before and beyond 2015.

C. Reflections on the Unfinished Agenda

12. Southern think tanks are connected to on-the-ground reality in developing countries, and through research, they interface with multiple policy actors. These institutes have been closely examining the implementation records of the MDG targets at the national level, and they have generated a wealth of knowledge and information on this topic. Many of them have been directly involved in monitoring exercises and thematic studies concerning the MDGs, both as a part of governmental process and in their individual capacities. Based on these national-level assessments, the Southern think tanks and other stakeholders have highlighted a number of shortfalls in the implementation of the MDGs.
13. Since the launch of the MDGs in 2000, discernible progress toward attaining the goals and targets has been observed in developing countries. However, the magnitude of such accomplishments varies significantly across indicators, countries and regions, and population groups. Moreover, country studies have established that progress towards the MDGs has slowed since 2007 in the wake of the multiple global crises. Thus, the post-MDG international development goals will inherit a large set of unfinished business.
14. While the **eradication of extreme poverty** is considered to be a prime area of success for the MDGs, a closer look at the data reveals a significant lack of progress in achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all; this is particularly true for women and young people. Indeed, the reduction of the proportion of the population living below \$1 (PPP) a day has not been accompanied by a commensurate reduction in the share of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Malnourishment of children under five years of age remains pervasive.
15. Regarding the achievement of **universal primary education**, despite achieving a high net enrolment rate, a high incidence of drop-outs has affected the completion rate. Moreover, because students in primary schools often receive low quality education, particularly in rural areas, the competency level of students is very low.

16. Gender parity in the area of education is further undermined by the fact that dropping out of school is more common for girl students. Lack of progress in **closing the gender gap** remains the most visible in tertiary education. In the area of employment, while one observes some increase in women's participation in the labour force, jobs going to women are usually the least remunerative ones. It is also observed that violence against women is a major impediment to achieving gender parity.
17. Targets set for the **reduction of infant mortality** as well as under-five mortality have tended to be off the mark. Progress is particularly unimpressive in the area of reducing neonatal deaths.
18. In the case of **reducing maternal mortality**, there has been some improvement, although it is modest. Adolescent childbearing remains an area of concern. The critical area of deficiency in this regard had been a serious lack of availability of skilled health personnel attending births. The attainment of targets relating to reproductive health has also been rather weak.
19. With regards to **combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases** such as tuberculosis, there has been some improvement. However, progress has not been even across countries and regions. The target of universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it by 2010 was not reached. Moreover, comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission and condom use among young people has remained lower than expected.
20. The goals and targets related to **ensuring environmental sustainability** are one of the areas of highest underachievement. Critical performance indicators such as the proportion of land area covered by forest, keeping fish stocks within safe biological limits, and limiting the share of total water resources used did not see sufficient progress. The proportion of the urban population living in slums has seen notable growth over the last decade. Some advancement may be noted in the case of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. However, a large part of whatever progress has been achieved towards the environmental sustainability indicators remains under threat due to the adverse consequences of climate change brought about by carbon emissions in developed countries.

21. As is widely maintained, Goal 8 concerning the **strengthening of a global partnership for development** remains the weakest link in the implementation of the MDGs. For example, the development of an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading system remains stalled by the deadlock in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Round negotiations and undermined by the proliferation of regional trading arrangements. Full implementation of the Duty-Free Quota-Free regime for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is yet to occur. Flows of official development assistance (ODA) remain underachieved, barring some exceptions, and they are set to decline further in the coming years. The distribution of ODA has also been skewed, and concerns have been raised over policies of aid for trade in support of the LDCs.
22. Accelerated and targeted efforts need to be set in motion for the remaining period of the MDGs so that countries in the Global South can embark upon the post-2015 phase with improved benchmarks. National governments have to play a lead role in this regard, reinforced by meaningful support from international development partners. **Nationally rooted think tanks can provide quality research and evidence-based policy advice to their respective governments in designing and implementing a 2015 completion programme.**

D. Identification of Issues for the Future

23. The think tanks that make up Southern Voice are uniquely positioned to draw useful lessons and meaningful insights about what works and what does not work in the context of delivering on the MDGs. Building on their assessments of the progress toward the MDGs and their identification of emerging issues affecting national development efforts, the think tanks have identified a number of elements for consideration during the design phase of the post-MDG goals and targets.
24. While continuing with a strengthened poverty elimination focus, the post-MDG development goals must **revise upward the poverty threshold**. Extreme poverty has to be redefined in terms of income equivalent to less than \$2 (PPP) per day.
25. An integral part of the poverty focus of the post-MDG framework must be on the **reduction of vulnerability of the poor**. It is critical to address the needs of the groups that are systematically

excluded from the development processes, including minorities, women, and youth. Targets related to the reduction of growing inequalities – particularly in the area of income and consumption – must be incorporated.

26. The **reduction of hunger and malnutrition** should be separated out from the poverty goal.
27. The critical issue in the area of education for the post-MDG goals is **improving the quality of education**. As well, indicators concerning completion rates and gender parity must be strengthened, and targets have to be set for universal secondary education.
28. The need to **improve the quality of healthcare services** should also be given a prominent place in the post-MDG goals and targets. Emphasis on reproductive health needs to be strengthened.
29. Along with an explicit reference to the attainment of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the **generation of more gainful employment opportunities** should receive separate mention. The creation of productive capacity should be delineated as a stand-alone target with a view to accelerate the structural transformation of developing economies.
30. While revisiting the targets regarding the attainment of gender parity, inclusion of the **reduction of gender violence** has to be considered.
31. Given the increase in the number of **fragile states and states in conflict**, the next set of international development goals should make a special mention of these countries.
32. Issues surrounding labour markets, including **migration and migrants' rights**, should be considered in the next phase of MDGs.
33. Indicators related to building capacity in **science, technology, and innovation** should be reflected in the post-2015 agenda.

34. Addressing the **development challenges emanating from climate change** should find a prominent place in the next set of international development goals. Targets relating to environmental sustainability should include a number of measurable indicators related to GHG emission, renewable and low carbon energy sources, the reduction of chemicals and hazardous waste, and improved air quality.
35. Concerns about **participation and representation** as well as **transparency and accountability** should be embedded in the post-2015 development agenda. This is pertinent to both domestic and international domains of governance. Southern think tanks can play a central role in this regard by disseminating their research findings through a robust outreach mechanism.
36. At the end of the day, not all new issues can be accommodated, and a prioritisation has to be made. In this process the Southern Voice ought to be heard.

E. Partnership and Resource Mobilisation

37. The post-2015 international development agenda will be framed within a global partnership agreement. Thus, there is a need to delineate the boundaries of national and international actions in the context of implementing the new goals and targets. This aspect becomes particularly pertinent in the context of the very weak delivery on Goal 8 of the MDGs.
38. The post-MDG consultation is just one process currently in motion within the UN system in the broad field of international development; others include financing for development, aid effectiveness, and climate change. The Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs is also on the table, as are WTO trade talks and discussions on global financial architecture. The post-2015 international development agenda needs to create a basis for a **development-oriented synergy** between all of these processes that could be leveraged by developing countries.
39. One can foresee a future challenge regarding integration of the concepts and processes concerning the post-2015 MDGs and SDGs. It remains to be seen how the global community will agree on a set of SDGs, in view of the absence of any demonstrated progress at the Rio+20

Conference. As the SDG formulation process undergoes a reality check, an agreement on post-2015 MDGs may be considered as an autonomous option.

40. The implementation process for the post-2015 development agenda must receive adequate support based on credible estimates of resource requirements. With this in mind, a target relating to **domestic resource mobilisation in developing countries** through the expansion of the tax base should be incorporated in the post-2015 goals. The reduction of illicit financial flows from developing countries must equally be considered. The existence of such targets would contribute towards enhancing ownership by developing countries of the new set of international development goals. Southern think tanks are well positioned to provide policy guidance in strengthening the revenue effort in their countries.

41. Compliance with the commitment of allocating **0.7 per cent of the GNI of Development Assistance Committee countries to ODA** must be strongly emphasised in the new agenda (the current level is 0.32 per cent). Currently, only five donors are on track to reach that level and only three bilateral donors have enhanced this aid flow in the face of the global economic and financial crisis. Concurrently, measures have to be incorporated to reduce the gap between aid commitment and disbursement, to improve the skewed distribution of aid flow among countries, and to enhance the quality of sectoral aid allocation. Financing related to climate change must be considered as an additional allocation. Debt conversion and debt swaps should not be counted as additional flows. Finally, the quality of aid must improve.

42. While some progress may be noted under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative and the Multilateral Debt Reduction Initiative, **debt overhang** continues to remain a development challenge for many low income economies in the South. These countries often spend more on debt servicing than on the development of their health or education services. Thus, the new document should contain credible measures to reduce the foreign debt of these countries to a sustainable level.

43. Because of the paralysis of the WTO Doha Round, not many **market access-related benefits** have accrued to the low income countries of the Global South in the recent past. For example,

the average tariffs on textiles and clothing have not declined and the level of trade distorting subsidies for agricultural products in OECD countries has not been reduced by any notable extent. These have affected the export performance of developing countries, including the LDCs. Accordingly, the post-2015 agenda should contain deliverable commitments in the area of trade.

44. New interventions have to be devised to tap **innovative sources of financial resources** for the implementation of post-2015 development goals. These may include carbon taxes, taxes on financial transactions, the creation of vertical funds, global philanthropy, and Corporate Social Responsibility expenditures.
45. One of the important elements of the future international partnership framework has to be **South-South cooperation**. This arrangement may include concessional financial assistance, preferential market access, investment promotion, transfer of technology, and other capacity building measures. Rapidly emerging economies should participate actively in the concessional fund replenishment exercises of the international and regional financial institutions. A large number of think tanks in the Global South are already engaged in designing a framework for the evolving South-South relationship.

F. The On-going Consultation Process and Southern Voice

46. With their participation in the on-going consultation process on the post-MDG development agenda, the think tanks that make up Southern Voice are already providing a structured critique of traditional paradigms of economic growth and resource management so that the new international development goals have the best chance of being realised. Indeed, more meaningful participation of the Southern think tanks in the consultation process may contribute towards reframing the current debates on the post-MDG development goals.
47. The consultative process should include a space for identifying and customizing goals and indicators relating to national priorities. The challenge of **implementing global goals while being mindful of national priorities** can be adequately addressed by the Southern Voice think tanks because of their professional exposure to both national and international contexts.

48. **Inclusiveness of the national consultation process** is of paramount importance for reflecting the aspirations of marginalised stakeholders. Southern Voice and other non-state actors may strive to fill in any participation deficits with outreach activities to these stakeholders. At the same time, given the capacity deficit afflicting many state agencies, national governments may fruitfully collaborate with their local think tanks in preparing their country reports on the post-2015 international development agenda. Indeed, these think tanks can be a formidable independent source of analysis in this regard.
49. Obtaining the **commitment and ownership of national governments** to adopt the on-going review process and its products is imperative for translating the post-2015 vision into reality. Independent analysis provided by the local think tanks may encourage governments to move in this direction.
50. **Networking and partnerships** are critical in the run-up to 2015 and beyond, so that citizen and community voices can be optimally and effectively leveraged. Synergies among stakeholders will be necessary to provide an institutional foundation for defining, designing, and delivering on the post-MDG goals and targets. Southern think tanks may very well catalyse this process with their research capacity and analytical skills.
51. The on-going consultation process on the post-2015 development agenda presents a unique opportunity for Southern think tanks to inform national policy from the global perspective and, at the same time, to feed local-level knowledge into global discussions and debates. Southern Voice is prepared to take advantage of this opportunity through a work programme that includes a combination of relevant research, policy analysis, and strategic outreach towards this end. More information is available on request from the contact below.

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