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## **After 2015: Promoting Pro-poor Policy after the MGDs**

### **Background to Millennium Development Goals**

The *raison d'être* for the coming into existence of the Millennium Development Goals can be traced back to the discourse in search for a global consensus on harmonising strategies for reducing poverty in developing countries in the 1990s. The adoption of the International Development Targets that were later coined to be Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 emerged from a systemic failure to account on development targets from national to global levels. The global desire for a comprehensive framework on poverty reduction was well founded, but failed to align with most of the existing frameworks, particularly the Poverty Reduction Strategies popularised by the International Financial Institutions. The MDGs, framed around 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 (later 60) major indicators raised hopes as basis for monitoring international commitments, and approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2001. In the chronology, goal 1 to 7 largely called for investments in improving livelihoods, welfare of society, gender relations, environment sustainability strategies and confronting major diseases. Goal 8 was meant to mobilise a declaration of intent amongst the wide range of development partners including government, private sector, civil society and communities.

### ***Impact of Millennium Development Goals on Poverty reduction a: hanging paradigm!***

The MDG model was approved to ensure prioritisation of actions and tracking progress on 8 goals through harmonisation of financial resources and thinking, linked to pillars of governance, democracy, freedom, gender equality and sustainable development, a combination which would ensure irreversible focus on reducing poverty. As policy makers and communities of practice began articulating the implementation and monitoring of the MDGs, the first generation of Poverty Reduction Strategies was being anchored in countries under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) framework of the World Bank.

The architecture of Poverty Reduction Strategies was clearly established to be country-based and country specific, while MDGs were canvassing a global view that risked being virtual. Despite the MDG framework dominated poverty reduction dialogues at the international stage, discourses in PRSP hosting countries referred to MDGs only when interventions involved parts of the United Nations. This is evidenced by the fact that UN offices in countries and not ministries vested with poverty reduction matters were tracking and reporting on MDGs. A living example of this disconnectedness is the Millennium Village Projects (MVPs), standing alone as success stories with no practical influence in communities interfacing them. The Mbola Millennium Village in central Tanzania continues to stand as a technocratic skills laboratory hosting high level visitors and little known to farmers in Tabora Region. The complexity of leveraging the links

between MDGs and PRSPs was therefore a *fait accompli*, although this reality has not been publicly acknowledged. Arguably, there exists no framework for Millennium Development Goals accountability, as the goals are everywhere for everybody. On goal 8, the wish for making the development agenda inclusive of all actors and reaching needy people at the right scale and therefore contribute to reducing poverty was assumed to emerge out efforts to reconcile commercial and social values, along popularisations of concepts like ethical business, corporate and social responsibility .This appears to be an over assumption .

Further, beyond all the good intentions of making MDGs deliver for the world poor, development is about people, their rights and skills. The Millennium targets avoided a commitment on improving skills, as if the improved welfare would put and sustained into people who are without a sense of desire for a destiny. There is therefore no direct evidence to attribute progress made in reducing poverty to MDGs.

### **Crossing the half life –Have the MDGs delivered the promises?**

The year 2008 was considered a mid-point for the MDGs, whereby researchers and policy entrepreneurs were caught up in digging for evidence of progress on each of the goals. Some parts of the world celebrated progress in areas like education, surpassing primary school enrolment by quantities irrespective of quality, like Sub Saharan Africa.

It is obvious that many countries are either off track in achieving the MDGs by 2015, or data is missing to enable duty bearer declare progress. A number of studies suggest that MDGs will not be achieved by 2015, largely because of lack of political commitment.

In many situations, even where countries are struggling to demonstrate change, tracking has been a challenging task, and limits the participation of people affected by development interventions.

The opportunity to assess progress at midpoint provided not only a warning that the global goals were not reconciled with in country aspirations, but also reminded the international community that there was no comprehensiveness in this G-192 project. Even after the midpoint therefore, the project remains an undone and not unfinished business.

### ***Major global processes shaping development to up to 2015 and beyond***

The current development model is a suitcase of constrained positive drivers and strongly emerging reversers. The positive game changers shaping the development can be summarised as follows:

- In country innovations not acknowledged by the international community because they are too little scale and cannot be explained by popular international models

- There has been clearer understanding about barriers to poverty reduction and what needs to happen in qualitative and quantities terms, enabling actors to align resources to priorities within states.
- Improved collaboration of government, civil society and corporate sector in delivery of poverty reduction plans in development states.
- Civil society engagement with governments and donors at local, sub national and national levels on policies contributed to reminding duty bearers on their duties to citizens, alongside actions like Social Accountability Monitoring that have spread rapidly after the year 2000.

While the old challenges facing the implementation of the Millennium project had not disappeared, new challenges are emerging, and some exerting too strong force on the drivers of MDGs:

*Climate change:* A fundamental intervention in reducing the number of people in hunger in the developing world depends on improving agricultural productivity. The demand for food to feed the six billion plus people has kept increasing, while the impact of climate change is reversing the even the little success likely to be registered. Climate change has increased the uncertainty of improving food production and productivity, diminishing the resilience of farmers to leverage their livelihood strategies.

*The multidimensional crisis:* The multi dimensional crisis; food crisis, fuel crisis, economic and financial crisis, will definitely generate a strong force against mobilising resources for international development. At the recognition of the adverse impacts of food crisis in 2008, it was reported that the worst case scenario would reverse gains in international development by 7 years. This trend is likely to continue.

*Economic growth:* At the wake of the new millennium, growth was advocated as a strong determinant of poverty reduction. The International Financial Institutions provided blanket prescriptions for countries to entrust public goods into the hands of private interests through liberalisation and privatisation. It was assumed that economic growth through freeing up resources would help countries generate income that would be rationally distributed to reach the bottom billions. Real life experience has shown that, despite massive increase in economic growth in real terms, distribution of benefits resulting from such growth remains highly inequitable.

It is beyond doubt that the above combination will continue to shape the development paradigm, with wide ranging impacts on reducing poverty. It is therefore necessary for the development community to focus attention key aspects of change, towards and beyond 2015, with or without abandoning the G-192 project:

- The adoption of internationally agreed model of targets must be jig-sawn and aligned with existing development frameworks, including locally owned PRSPs.

- Comprehensive political engagement beyond “will” is critical for demonstrating commitment for policy and action.
- The comprehensive governance agenda, defined by the norms of good governance and not picking portions of it, remains a key foundation for discourses in development states. Fragile and failing states, on the contrary, continue to be at the bottom of MDG progress scale by any measure.
- Comprehensiveness and rigour on what should change should be inclusive of all dimensions of human development, including skills, employment.

***What, if anything should replace the MDGs, beyond 2015?***

The timeline to 2015 offers little hope for the developing world, taking into account the impacts of climate change and the bowl of crises forcing duty bearers to assign resources not to for progress but mitigating consequences. Technocratic presumptions will need to be accompanied by real world lessons and not simulated models. A post 2015 paradigm should therefore be ready to address the following:

- Be comprehensive in identifying human dimensions for change
- A global paradigm defined by a convergence of cross state aspirations that are rooted into country specific plans and strategies.
- Guided by a cross-national methodological framework for action and monitoring
- Appreciating the complexity of poverty and not based on reductionism
- Re-examine institutional reforms towards broader inclusiveness in global decision making processes to reflect governance that is meaningful for poverty reduction.
- Inclusion of indicators for state stability

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