

POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

A NOTE ON THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK BEYOND 2015, BEING SHAPED BY THE UNITED NATIONS.

In September 2000, the Heads of State of 189 nations had come together at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York and signed the Millennium Declaration. In this Declaration, the states recognized their “collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level”, and, in order to accomplish these principles, a set of Millennium Development Goals was defined. The Declaration included eight important Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators. All the 189 states committed to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) AND INDIA:

India’s MDG framework is based on the United Nations Development Goals’ 2003 framework for monitoring the 8 MDGs. Out of the 18 targets, 12 targets are relevant to India. Corresponding to the 12 targets, there are 35 identified indicators. India embraced the MDG framework at the policy level and designed its ‘National Development Goals’ (2005) according to the targets set for MDGs.

The country report on the MDGs (2014) indicates that India’s achievement in respect of the MDGs has been a mixed bag. Thirteen years since the Millennium Declaration, visible progress has been achieved in reducing poverty, improving access and (to some extent) equity in education and healthcare. Yet, India is still struggling to deal with more complex issues like income inequality and gender inequity. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, proportion of seats held by women in Parliament, proportion of population with access to improved sanitation – in respect of these indicators, India is lagging by a huge margin. However, it has been argued that the framework of MDGs failed to integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of development; sustainable development and climate change are dealt as separate issues and there is a disconnect between the mandates for the different aspects.

POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:

With little more than a year to go before the deadline of end of 2015 (the deadline set to achieve MDG targets), there is a need to define the global development framework beyond 2015, which would succeed the Millennium Development Goals. The process to prepare a post-2015 development agenda has started as the UN has formed different expert groups. The vision underlying these UN-led efforts is to develop a comprehensive post-2015 development agenda, merging four key dimensions of inclusive economic and social development, environmental sustainability and peace and security.

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, 192 UN member states agreed to establish an inter-governmental working group to design Sustainable Development Goals which would build upon the Millennium Development Goals and

converge with the post-2015 development agenda. In July 2012, a High Level Panel (HLP) was set up by the UN to provide guidance and recommendations on the post-2015 development agenda that would “help respond to the global challenges of 21st century, building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and with a view to ending poverty.” The panel has come up with a report called ‘A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development’. The report advocates for a comprehensive sustainable development agenda with eradication of extreme poverty from the world by 2030 as the core objective. The new development agenda is to carry forward the best of MDGs with focus on poverty, water, sanitation, hunger, education and healthcare to find out optimum way forward for sustainable development beyond 2015.

The panel has identified five priority transformations (following the perspective that only a “paradigm shift can overcome the obstacles to sustained prosperity”) for post 2015 and recommended to work on these transformative shifts as a universal agenda.

1. **No one left behind:** The objective is to ensure that no person regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status is denied basic economic opportunities and human rights.
2. **Sustainable development at the core:** Climate change and environmental degradation are threats to humanity; attempts should be made for rapid shift towards sustainable development.
3. **Economic transformation for job and inclusive growth:** The panel has recommended creation of economic opportunities to improve livelihoods and end extreme poverty. Moreover, ensuring equal opportunity and capability for all to access quality education, healthcare, water and sanitation should be primary objectives of the post-2015 inclusive development process.
4. **Peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all:** Conflict and violence free society, transparency and good governance are some of the core elements of well-being; these core elements need to be treated as fundamental rights, not as additional options.
5. **A renewed global partnership:** Each priority sector in the post-2015 agenda needs to be supported by dynamic partnership between different stakeholders. Solidarity, transparency, cooperation and mutual accountability should be the main ingredients to build such partnership between governments, civil society organisations, local community, multilateral institutions, business community, women, marginalized groups, academicians and private philanthropists.

Universal Goals for Post-2015 Development Agenda as suggested by the High Level Panel of UN

**Post-2015
Development
Agenda**

- Goal 1: End Poverty
- Goal 2: Empower Girls and Women and Achieve Gender Equality
- Goal 3: Quality Education and Lifelong Learning
- Goal 4: Ensure Healthy Lives
- Goal 5: Ensure Food Security and Good Nutrition
- Goal 6: Achieve Universal Access to Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7: Secure Sustainable Energy
- Goal 8: Create Jobs, Sustainable Livelihoods and Equitable Growth
- Goal 9: Manage Natural Resource Assets Sustainably
- Goal 10: Ensure Good Governance and Effective Institutions
- Goal 11: Ensure Stable and Peaceful Society
- Goal 12: Create a Global Enabling Environment and Catalyse Long term Finance

Link to the HLP's report: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>



SUGGESTED ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW AGENDA:

The panel believes that effective implementation of these five 'transformative shifts' can end poverty and inequality and promote inclusive and sustainable development. As a way forward, the panel has suggested some actions to implement the vision of the post 2015 development agenda. Like the MDGs, as a first step, twelve illustrative goals (refer to the Box above) and targets have been set up to show how these transformations could be expressed in precise and measurable terms. The panel has recommended that all the goals and targets should be universal and that the targets will only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant income and social groups in the country. The report has clearly outlined that different national governments can design their national targets in line with the vision and goals of the post-2015 development agenda. However, reasonably disaggregated tracking of indicators should be in place to ensure inclusive achievement. Improving database with quality statistics and rigorous use of new technology are considered prerequisites for successful and regular dissemination of information about the progress made.

SOME OF THE DEBATES ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:

The report produced by the HLP does better than the current MDG framework but it falls short in many respects. With regard to the MDG process, it had been argued that the design had received minimal inputs from developing countries. Especially for middle income countries, the MDGs were perceived to be less relevant to their national development issues. However, the HLP has made the process for the post-2015 agenda more participatory as the agenda emerged after consultations with a diverse set of stakeholders.

Whether the post-2015 development goals should be about outcomes alone or about both outcomes and some of the core inputs for the same (like, quality of governance and public institutions) has been a matter of debate. However, civil society stakeholders, especially from southern countries like India, have strongly articulated their expectation that some of the critical inputs towards achieving development outcomes should be acknowledged well in the new development agenda.

The HLP has also recognized the widespread call for a universal framework of goals applicable to all people in all countries. However, the panel has recommended that post-2015 goals should not apply rigidly to every country, and, that a global framework should instead be adaptable to countries' individual situations. Such an approach would seem to be in contradiction with the logic of 'zero goals' (e.g. a goal of eradicating poverty by 2030), where, by definition, all countries must achieve the desired outcome on time.

The panel has affirmed that 'new goals and targets need to be grounded in respect of universal human rights', which was one of the prominent demands emerging from the civil society. However, the panel's rhetorical reference to human rights does not carry through into the report's operative recommendations and proposals. Many civil society organisations have argued that universal human rights should be a key component of the transformative shifts.

The HLP report views rapid economic growth as a major part of the solution, rather than recognizing the problems caused by growth obsession. It ignores the fact that economic growth may not address escalating inequality while redistribution of wealth and access to resources, certainly will. Indeed the word inequality – though it appears several times in the document – does not appear in the list of targets at all.

Financing has a crucial role in the pursuance of sustainable development. Though the report emphasizes on domestic resource mobilization as one of the fundamental financial sources for sustainable development, eradication of poverty and delivery of public services, a larger focus on engagement with the private sector suggests business as usual for financing of development. The report argues that many of the goals and targets can be met by the actions and efforts of private sector, but has very little on how they can be held accountable in the process.

The process of setting the post-2015 development agenda is a historic opportunity to move towards a bold new vision for the future, which would have socio-economic equity, ecological sustainability and genuine prosperity for all as its central pillars. In spite of several gaps, the HLP report has started with this promise. The new development framework can only be successful, if there is a joint effort both from UN and national governments. The framework would be more inclusive and appropriate if some of the pertinent suggestions coming from different stakeholders in the global south get incorporated in the final post-2015 agenda, and, it would be effective if respective national governments ensure that the agenda for post-2015 development goals are taken up as national goals and pursued seriously over time.

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