

Post-2015 Development Agenda

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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. The Declaration included eight important Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators. All the 189 states had 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 are relevant for 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 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 National 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 less than a year to go before the deadline 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.

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 for the post-2015 development agenda; these are – 1) No one left behind, 2) Sustainable development at the core, 3) Economic transformation for job and inclusive growth, 4) Peace, and, effective, open and accountable institutions for all, and, 5) A renewed global partnership. The panel has recommended working on these transformative shifts as a universal agenda.

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

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 report: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>

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, 12 illustrative goals (see Box) and a number of targets are set up to show how these transformations could be expressed in precise and measurable terms. It 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.

Debates over 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 process, it is said that the design of MDGs had received minimal inputs from developing countries. However, the HLP has made the process for the post-2015 agenda more participatory as they came out with the agenda after consulting a diverse set of stakeholders.

The HLP has also recognized the widespread call for a universal framework of goals applicable to all people in all countries, with targets tailored to national realities and with mechanisms that promote accountability at every level. However, the panel's rhetorical reference to human rights does not carry through into the report's operative recommendations and proposals.

The 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. In fact the word inequality – though it appears several times in the document – does not appear in the list of targets at all.

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. However, this approach contradicts 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 HLP acknowledges the necessity of improving governance system and effective institutions by formulating a new goal for this. However, one of the major problems in developing countries like India today is corruption and mismanagement of public resources. A 'zero tolerance' to corruption, instead of 'reducing bribery and corruption' should be the target for the post-2015 development agenda.

Financing has a crucial role in the success of the sustainable development agenda. The report emphasizes on domestic resource mobilization as one of the fundamental sources of financing sustainable development, eradication of poverty and delivery of public services; however, it also has a strong focus on constructive engagement of the private sector for financing of development. The report argues that many of the goals and targets can be met by the actions and efforts of the private sector, but has very little on how the private sector will be genuinely accountable to those living in poverty.

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 many 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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