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Abstract: From October 25th – 27th, 2012, the conference Beyond 2015: Towards a New Consensus on Ending Global Poverty was held at Ryerson University in Toronto in collaboration with Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), an international professional network of poverty-focused scholars. The conference launched the Canadian chapter of ASAP and focused on the current process for replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The purpose of this final conference report is to discuss the conference presentations while considering the broader literature related to the MDGs. This report also strives to highlight potential agendas for a post-2015 framework, in addition to outlining areas for further research and action related to the eradication of poverty.

*Keywords: MDGs, post-2015 agenda, global poverty, poverty eradication.*
ACADEMICS STAND AGAINST POVERTY (ASAP)

Beyond 2015: Towards a New Consensus on Global Poverty

Final Conference Report

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Introduction

From October 25th – 27th, 2012, the conference Beyond 2015: Towards a New Consensus on Ending Global Poverty was held at Ryerson University in Toronto in collaboration with Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP). The conference launched the Canadian chapter of ASAP and focused on the current process for replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The purpose of this report is to discuss the conference presentations while considering the broader literature related to the MDGs. This report also strives to highlight potential agendas for a post-2015 framework, in addition to outlining areas for further research and action related to the eradication of poverty.

Background

The origins of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be found in a series of UN summits and conferences in the 1990s that covered a wide range of topics such as nutrition, gender issues, human rights and childhood health (Hulme and Scott, 2010). These summits were formulating new development targets and in 1996, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) articulated the International Development Goals (Wisor, 2012).

Simultaneously, aid agencies were facing a funding crisis. Official development assistance (ODA) was in decline with contributions from wealthy countries, falling from 0.34 per cent of gross national income (GNI) in 1990, to 0.22 percent of GNI in 1999 (Hulme and Scott, 2010). As such, resolutions and development targets remained intangible.
Important projects and programs were either not implemented in a manner to yield anticipated outcomes, or not implemented at all. The gap between developed and less developed countries was widening, and it became clear that something needed to be done (Ojogwu, 2009).

From 1999 to 2001, John Ruggie, professor and special advisor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, worked on the Millennium Declaration which included development targets from the 1996 OECD/DAC list and included a commitment to just, peaceful, and sustainable development. The Millennium Declaration was adopted in 2000, and a group of high-level development experts were convened to create the MDGs, including targets, indicators and commitments for action. The MDGs were added as an annex to a report from the Secretary General and with the acceptance of this report and the Millennium Declaration; it was argued that the General Assembly had assented to the MDGs (Wisor, 2012) and (Sachs, 2013). This was an unconventional, somewhat contentious beginning, but eventually the MDGs were widely endorsed.

It is important to understand the political context at the time of the MDGs. Fukuda-Parr (2012) argues that the international community was divided in the 1990s over structural adjustment programs and the Washington Consensus. There was no agreement on the appropriate approach to development. As the MDGs were concrete, well-communicated and arguably un-ambitious or narrow (Fukuda-Parr, 2012), they became the accepted way to conceptualize poverty and development.

The eight MDGs are as follows: (United Nations, 2013)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

2. Achieve universal primary education.

3. Promote gender equality and empower women.

4. Reduce child mortality.

5. Improve maternal health.

7. Ensure environmental sustainability.

8. Develop a global partnership for development.

The goals currently consist of twenty-one quantifiable targets and sixty indicators (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). The MDGs represent a global norm, meant to mobilize stakeholders and increase levels of development assistance, and also provide benchmarks to create an incentive structure which may hold governments and donors to account on poverty reduction (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). The MDGs also represent a change in policy with, “a reduced emphasis on increasing the supply of resources through the net transfers of resources and substitution of a focus on directed aid initiatives expressed as time-bound, objectively measurable social development goals” (Kregal, 2009).

The MDGs have been described as a “low powered incentive scheme” (Gauri, 2012). By this he means they rely on inter-agency cooperation, naming and shaming through reports, good will, and monitoring data. The MDGs have also been described as monitoring indicators as opposed to objectives (Fukuda-Parr, 2012).

Different perspectives on what the MDGs are, or are not, will continue to be discussed in the sections below. The MDGs have an expiration date of 2015 and as such, maintaining and promoting a dialogue on a post-2015 development framework is important and urgent (Pogge, 2012). Additionally, this discussion is important because it is likely that the post-2015 agenda will shape poverty alleviation for the next generation (Tanay, 2012).

Replacing the MDGs

It is important to note that the process of replacing the MDGs is taking place in an environment that is very different from the environment that gave rise to the first set of MDGs. In terms of economics, the world has gone into a time of a financial slump or recession (Tiwari, 2012). Additionally, data on climate change is more integrated into development research than it was when the original goals were conceived (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010).
The context of poverty itself has also changed as it is no longer located solely in the ‘global south’ (Tiwari, 2012). There are now a greater number of poor people living in middle income countries, than low income countries (Wong, 2012). This fact signals the economic growth is not translating into poverty alleviation.

This relates as well to the environment of inequality that will permeate the post-2015 development process. Inequality, and its growth over the past several decades, was a theme at the conference for ASAP Canada’s Launch discussed by Pogge, Wong, Orbinski, Shaffer, and Berry explicitly, and many others implicitly.

The process of replacing the MDGs, in this shifting environment, will culminate in September 2013 with a United Nations Summit (Tanay, 2012). This will settle most of the content of the post-2015 development framework. The UN Secretary General has, to this end, put together a group of ‘eminent people’ who are compiling the reports and recommendations of civil society groups (CSOs) (Tanay, 2012).

The process is attempting to be inclusionary, whereas the first MDGs were developed by elites. Participation- through the submission of reports, roundtables, and consultations at various points during the process- by stakeholders we will discuss below, will help the goals be viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the world (Tanay, 2012). However, given that many developing nations have latched onto the MDGs, and have strived to incorporate them into their public policy (Lewis, 2013), one could argue that in terms of global legitimacy, the first set of MDGs did very well.

The process of developing a post-2015 agenda is also closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are being created as a product of the Rio+20 Summit (Sachs, 2013). Most recently, on June 6, 2013, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network delivered a report to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, which identified ten priority areas that are meant to converge with the MDGs post-2015 to create one framework under the auspices of the SDGs (Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2013). The SDGs will be discussed further in an upcoming section.

Stakeholder Involvement

The MDGs are cross-jurisdictional in nature and as such, the stakeholders involved in the process of replacing them, and ultimately the implementation of the goals, are varied.
The stakeholders, who have the most to gain from the MDG and yet wield little power in shaping them, are the people across the globe living in poverty. Specific groups that are targeted by the MDGs are women, children and youth, farmers, and indigenous peoples (Millennium Development Goals Stakeholder Forum, 2008). It is in fact arguable that everyone in the world has a stake in MDGs and their attempts to better the global situation. It is important throughout the process of developing a post-2015 framework to keep in mind who the MDGs are targeting, and to be cognizant of their needs and wants.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are difficult to define, but are most often conceptualized as the organized activities of citizens that are, “not associated with major institutional systems” (Poverty Eradication Network, 2007) by the development community. CSOs are also often characterized by; a desire to hold powerful actors accountable for their actions, elements of volunteerism, the pursuit of a common good or human right, and not-for-profit status (Poverty Eradication Network, 2007). CSOs may be grass roots, unions, relief organizations or charities to name a few.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often grouped with, or used synonymously with CSOs. Though they do share common characteristics, and many organizations are both CSO and NGO, a general distinction between the two is that while CSOs may be informal associational movements, NGOs are legally constituted (Patra et al., 2012). They are also often referred to as the third sector, with governments being the first sector, and private sector being the second (Bromideh, 2011).

CSOs, NGOs and the private sector are all MDG stakeholders as they may; disseminate information about the MDGs, advocate a position or pressure other stakeholders or decision makers, monitor and report on MDG activity and progress, and provide linkages between local and global initiatives (United Nations Development Program in Europe and Central Asia, 2007). Transnational corporations (TNCs) and global CSOs and NGOs may often have loud voices when it comes to stakeholder engagement. It was argued by MacDonald (2012), that TNCs have the agency and power to play an even great role in creating and implementing the MDGs, but that it is unclear how to best harness their power. Potentially, pressure from CSOs, NGOs and the public, may play a role in informing corporations of their obligations to be socially responsible as well as work towards curbing illicit financial flows.
Governments, namely national governments, are crucial, powerful stakeholders in the MDGs. The sovereign state has historically been the unit of analysis in international relations, and in large part, still is (Van Langenhove, 2010) and (Lewis, 2013). National governments are the face of the sovereign state on the international stage and in global governance institutions. They are generally either funders of development, or recipients of aid. It is recommended that both donors and recipients are engaged in the post-2015 process (Sachs, 2013).

National governments, 193 of them, form the basis of our chief global governance institution the UN. Since 1945, the UN has grown in the scope of issues it takes on, tackling issues such as climate change, the evolution of warfare from interstate to non-state combatants, and of course poverty reduction. It has two sister institutions in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The World Bank focuses on development assistance and the IMF is tasked with promoting international monetary cooperation (Woods, 2007). Global governance institutions are clear stakeholder in the post-2015 agenda, as they are often facilitating the replacement process.

Pogge (2012) discusses these supranational bodies as an arena where there is no democracy, thus generating a great environment for lobbying. As well, global norms are easier to change than state written laws, and the process of supranational decision making is not always clear to the majority of people. This atmosphere for lobbying provides potential for the powerful actors to continue consolidating power and growing inequality through illicit financial flows, the grandfathering in of protectionist rules, and labour standards (Pogge, 2012). It also, more hopefully, provides an arena for CSOs, NGOs and academics, who we will discuss more below, to lobby for positive reforms.

The actors most frequently discussed at the ASAP Canada Launch conference, in terms of power and influence both in the replacement and implementation process, were national governments. They were referenced as the most critical international actor, directly or indirectly by Smillie in relation to international agreements, Pogge in relation to institutional reform and as a vehicle for citizen mobilization, Mukherjee Reed in relation to food security, and Koc in relation to who has failed the impoverished the most. These are but a few notable examples.

Regional organizations as stakeholders and actors in the post-2015 agenda were discussed at the conference. Kwasi Tieku (2012) stressed that by focusing on states and
governments, informal and formal regional governance arrangements, which are prevalent on the African continent, are left out. As these regional institutions are relevant actors, they should be actively engaged in the post-2015 framework.

Orbinski (2012) brought up the involvement of faith-based groups in the post-2015 process. This is seen as problematic by activists such as Stephan Lewis, who argued (2013) that these organizations often negatively affect efforts to encourage family planning for women’s reproductive rights, condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, and abortions.

Hildebrand of the group “Millennium Kids” spoke of the involvement of youth in the post-2015 agenda at the ASAP Canada Launch conference (2012). She spoke of the involvement of the public school systems, specifically referencing Ontario letter writing initiatives, curriculum integration, fundraising initiatives and workshops. She spoke of using children born the year the declaration was signed as benchmarks for progress and also indicated that engaging youth early in the process of the post-2015 framework will help to ensure the completion of goals (Hildebrand, 2012).

The group of actors not highlighted in the literature that was frequently mentioned at the ASAP Canada Launch conference was academics. Pogge (2012) and Tanay (2012) both spoke of academics coming together to engage with each other and society to contribute to the post-2015 framework. King (2012) spoke of the importance of academics creating work that was policy relevant and participating in interdisciplinary activities to make connections that can better contribute to development studies.

Timelines and Format

Timelines mentioned during the conference panels and throughout the literature are generally vague, although the terminology ‘post-2015’ implies a looming deadline for either the drafting or acceptance of a replacement framework. A timeline that was mentioned above is September 2013, when the post-2015 agenda will be discussed at the General Assembly (Tanay, 2012) and (United Nations, 2013). This underscores the sense of urgency that was a recurring theme at the ASAP Canada Launch conference.

In terms of important events, Prammer and Martinuzzi (2013) give an outline of what some of these are and when they are anticipated to take place:

- 05/2012- 02/2014: UN Development Group Meetings take place.

- 31/05/2013: Expert group on SDGs submits its report to the Secretary General.
• 09/2013: The UN General Assembly MDG Review Summit.

• 09/2014: UN Review of the Political Declaration.


Consensus on what the replacement framework for the MDGs should look like was built in the most general sense by those at the conference, and indeed in the literature. That broad consensus is that a post-2015 framework should not be a simple continuation of the MDGs as they are now (Pogge, 2012) and (Nayyer, 2012).

Guari (2012) argued that it is unlikely that the MDG replacement framework will become legalized obligations, and this sentiment is commonly echoed. However, there are some contradictions because of documents or speeches, for example one made by UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson (2013), that makes references to the need for of accountability and enforced implementation. Pogge (2012) as well calls for goals attached to agents. The reality of enforcement, in terms of international law, is that there is little that can be done to ensure compliance with the targets set out in the post-2015 framework, no matter what format they take (Lewis, 2013). The extent to which goals can be accountable, or at least attached to certain actors, is an area where more discussion is needed. Smillie (2012) speaks of the need for commitments in the long-term in order for any international agreement work.

**The Existing Framework: Strengths and Criticisms**

Many of the criticisms of the MDGs that are commonly identified in the literature were reflected by numerous conference speakers. What follows in this section, is a discussion of these criticisms, contrasted against strengths of the MDGs that are often identified. In addition, some more unique or specialized criticisms of the MDGs will be highlighted.

*Strengths*
It is useful to understand the commonly identified strengths of the MDGs to provide context and contrast to the weaknesses or criticisms that will be noted below. One such strength is that the MDGs have rallied stakeholders and provided a common understanding of poverty reduction (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). Tanay (2012) echoed this at the conference, speaking of the MDGs being successful in bringing focus to the topic of poverty. The MDGs have brought a level of awareness to poverty reduction efforts, and although the goals have fallen short, they have spurred progress (Sachs, 2013).

A second strength of the MDGs is that they have provided targets and indicators to guide and motivate policy decisions with a view to also providing accountability (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). Though not fully successful on the score of accountability - as the MDGs are goals that are not attached to particular agents (Pogge, 2012) - numeric goals associated with MDG targets, are important in providing normative objectives and evaluative benchmarks (Fukuda-Parr, 2010).

The MDGs have also put pressure on stakeholders and academics to produce more data on poverty and have themselves contributed to data production (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). ASAP as an organization speaks to this point as they currently are research, writing, and discussing the MDGs.

The MDGs have been, in some cases, such as Tanzania, mainstreamed into National Development Plans (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010), which may be considered a strength. Lewis (2013) goes further, discussing how the MDGs have been successful in becoming a matter of public policy for most nations. He views many nations as obsessed with reaching the goals. Though it is debatable if the MDGs effect national planning in a positive or negative manner, they do provide points of reference, and again, a common understanding of poverty reduction.

In terms of the literature put forward by the UN, the 2012 United National Development Program (UNDP) report discusses some of the successes of the MDGs. It states that preliminary estimates indicate the target of halving the extreme poverty rate (living on less than $1.25 a day) has been met. The proportion of people without access to improved sources or water has also been halved, ensuring another MDG1 target has been met. (United Nations, 2012) As well, the gender parity index examining primary education enrollment indicates the ratio between the enrollment rate of girls and boys is at 97, an accepted measure for parity (United Nations, 2012). These are but of few of the indicators.
demonstrating that the MDGs have had an impact on global poverty, however, the report also show stark inequalities within global regions and an urban/rural divide.

When looking at numbers such as this, that herald success, it is important to remember the critique brought forward at the conference by Pogge, also mentioned in the list above; the problem of measurement and the adaptability of numbers. The numbers can be fraudulent (Pogge, 2012). In general, there appears to be some consensus on key strengths of the MDGs across the literature and the conference. 

**Criticism**

The MDGs have been critiqued as reductionist, and as weak on social justice (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). For Fukuda-Parr (2012) the most significant problem with the MDGs is their simplified version of development and social objectives. The 1990s transformative agenda on development was hijacked by the MDGs and as such, the MDG focus is on basic needs delivery and not empowerment or agency. As well, Fukuda-Parr (2013) illustrates that, for example, MDG2 which strives to achieve universal primary school enrollment, is not a challenge for all countries. Some nations may need to focus on expanding access to higher education, or may need to work on the quality of the education delivered. The global target does not meet the local need.

Related to the common critique of a lack of focus on justice, is the theme labour/worker’s rights and its links to structural injustice as well as inequality, which was touched upon by Ng (2012). Valiani (2012) also discussed growing inequality, a recurring ASAP Canada Launch conference, but with a focus on migrant workers. The loss of labour from developing countries has negative implications for global poverty and these areas are not addressed by the current MDGs.

The MDG measurement mechanisms are critiqued as limited and often considered a weakness of the existing framework (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). Pogge (2012) demonstrated how revised numbers and various estimates can give the illusion of progress and are not as true or consistent as they may seem. Moreover, the MDGs do not assign responsibilities or concrete tasks to stakeholders (Pogge and Sengupta, 2013). This further limits the existing MDGs, weakening their accountability as well as attempts to measure progress.

The MDGs were created by elites and therefore have a weak buy-in from developing countries and discourage local development initiatives (Fukuda-Parr, 2012). This criticism was reflected by others at the conference, including Kwasi Tieku (2012) who noted that
regional institutions were not sufficiently included in the current MDG framework. This partially stands in contrast to those who believe national institutions have incorporated the MDGs into national development plans. However, it may be related to a more specialized, or unique critique of the MDGs that emerged from the conference.

This critique came from John Lewis from KAIROS (2012). He spoke about how KAIROS was a victim of the MDGs. They were defunded by the Federal government because the focus of KAIROS is ecological justice, which is outside the scope of the MDGs. This provides support for the idea that the MDGs may funnel funding into narrow areas, and that they encourage larger national or global poverty eradication strategies, taking resources away from local or grass roots initiatives. Planning for the MDGs may ultimately undermine development by focusing on only certain areas, such as primary schooling, and not on related areas that may be a cause of low levels of education (Fukuda-Parr, 2010). While it is admittedly difficult to ensure all NGOs such as KAIROS are funded for their purposes, ineffectively utilizing the resources that are available through either global or national MDG related initiatives is a problem that may undermine the efforts to alleviate poverty.

Macroeconomic policies, guided by national government and global governance stakeholders, have been too restrictive under the MDG framework (Chowdhury and Islam, 2011). An additional critique of MDG era economic policies is that they have not been effective in combating capital flight and illicit financial flows, which are a major problem facing impoverished countries or regions. For example, it is estimated that for every dollar of aid to Africa, 2.4 dollars leave the continent (Ooms et al., 2010).

As well, as of 2012, there is an estimated a USD 167 billion gap between actual aid disbursement and the amounts committed by donor countries. This could widen with a delayed impact from the 2007 economic crisis (United Nations, 2013). The economic policies that have been put in place during the time of the MDGs have not led the bulk of developed countries meeting their pledge of 0.7% of their GDP to development assistance (Garces-Ozanne, 2011). MDG approaches to aid, in order to encourage increased development assistance such as the ‘big push’, provide short term shocks. This approach does nothing to promote sustainable funding mechanisms and reliable channels for aid (Ooms et al., 2010).
Other criticisms, derived more specifically from the conference, include the MDGs representing the lowest common denominator of development, and the idea that public policy can be achieved through charity (Orbinski, 2012). As well, the MDGs were critiqued as an economist driven agenda as opposed to human rights driven (Marks, 2012). Therefore they focus on growth, efficiency, resource constraints, infrastructure and measurement. While Marks speaks of economics in general, or perhaps older economic ideologies, some call for a focus on economics in terms of paid employment to be included in the post-2015.

It is important to note that some initiatives are already currently underway to address some of these weaknesses. For example, several countries, including Cambodia and Kenya, have adopted so-called MDG9s, which are locally defined MDGs (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). As well, as mentioned in the sub-section ‘Strengths’, national planning in some countries, including their poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) related directly or indirectly to the MDGs has taken place (Fukuda-Parr, 2010).

As well, there is data to demonstrate that certain MDG indicators are experiencing an accelerated rate of poverty reduction in least developed countries when compared to the pre-MDG period. For example, the indicator of the mortality rate for children under five has improved by 32% in all developing countries and by 50% in least developed countries for the first three years the MDG framework was in place (Sumner and Tiwari, 2010). However, as we have discussed, numbers may not tell a true or complete story.

**Proposed Changes**

In discussing the criticisms and strengths of the existing MDG framework, it becomes clear that in order to move towards the eradication of poverty, changes post-2015 need to be made. Proposed changes for the MDG successor framework derived from the conference and the literature broadly recommend:

- **Addressing Inequality.**

- **Institutional reform.**

- **A reorientation of macroeconomic policy.**
• Increasing ODA, or creating a new ODA funding model.

• Considering the local or regional contexts.

• The incorporation of women’s rights.

• A theoretical framework for the post-2015 agenda.

These broad themes, and how they relate to both the ASAP Canada Launch conference and the literature, will be discussed in order to better understand how to make the post-2015 agenda more successful, more inclusive and more legitimate.

Inequality

Inequality relates to a number of other proposed changes and is a noticeable theme in sub-sections below, such as women’s rights and macroeconomic policy. Underscoring many of the criticisms mentioned above, is the idea that the existing framework does not account for growing inequality.

Fukuda-Parr (2010) discussed the need for the post-2015 framework to have a goal related to reducing inequality within and between countries. She noted that this could be measured quantitatively today if it was to be a goal. As well, she explored how the lack of a goal related to reducing inequality has impacted the PRSPs of nations who have incorporated the MDGs and donor policies. What Fukuda-Parr found is that although PRSPs and donor policies do often align with the MDGs, they do so in partial and varying ways. In aligning with the MDGs, PRSPs and donor policies reflect neo-liberalism- ‘trickle down’ economic strategies- and do nothing to remove constraints to equality that exist in the global market environment (Fukuda-Parr, 2010). Sandbrook (2012) spoke of the neo-liberal language and strategies in PRSPs, critiquing them as technocratic and not truly inclusive of those the PRSPs are intended to aid.

The stress Fukuda-Parr placed on inequality was echoed by conference speakers. Idahosa (2012) spoke about the MDG focus on growth, and how they lack an understanding that growth does not necessarily mean equality. Wong (2012) noted at the conference that a redistribution of resources, or assets, is important in order to begin addressing inequality.
Institutional Reform

Institutional reform also relates to a number of more specific proposed changes, and is considered to be a mechanism to address inequality. In the broad sense it was discussed at the conference by Pogge (2012) in relation to intellectual property, participatory consultation, protectionism, labour standards, environmental sustainability, migration, and illicit financial flows.

A goal to curtail, rather than stop, illicit financial flows would need to have the aim of placing responsibility not only on the countries from which the money leaves, but the countries where it arrives (Baker, 2012). The origins of illicit financial flows also paint a picture of areas of focus for the post-2015 framework. Corruption only contributes approximately five percent of cross border flows, criminal activity about 35 percent and tax evasion 60-65 percent (Baker, 2012). Thus, a focus on the developed world, and tax loopholes would likely be beneficial.

Institutional reform goals (IRGs) could be included in the post-2015 framework in relation to trade, innovation, and other areas in addition to the area of illicit financial flows. A Human Development Fund could be used to collect fees related to these IRGs (Pogge, 2013). For example, in order to deter pollution and offset some of the effects of climate change, countries could pay a fee to the Human Development Fund, based on per capita carbon dioxide emissions. Pogge (2013) estimated this could amount to anywhere from $7 billion to $70 billion annually. In another example, for the purpose of deterring arms sales, rich arms-exporting countries could agree to pay a share of the value of such exports into the Human Development Fund (Pogge, 2013). Though IRGs such as they may redistribute resources and combat inequality, compliance would likely be a problem, and buy-in from countries and institutions to monitor and hold actors accountable could be weak.

Macroeconomic Policy and Changes to Official Development Assistance

More workers than ever, are employed in the informal sector (Wong, 2012) and this relates to illicit financial flows, accounting for remunerative employment, and general economic policies. A post-2015 framework should highlight MDG1b which is to “achieve full and productive employment for all” (United Nations, 2013). A reorientation of macroeconomic policy aimed at full and productive employment will move away from conventional economic approaches, such as maintaining low fiscal debts (seen in MDG8).
and keeping inflation rates low, which have contributed to a decline in public investment and negatively affected poverty reduction efforts (Chowdury and Islam, 2011).

Berry (2012) also put forward the need to create remunerative employment as opposed to growth. Teichman (2012) used the example of the government intervention policies of South Korea to highlight how explicitly directing growth through employment generation links to poverty reduction. Teichman's example links changes in macroeconomic policy back to a need for institutional reform as previously discussed. Related to MDG1b and institutional reform as well, is the suggestion of the creation, where appropriate and possible, of a government employment guarantee or employer of last resort program (Kregal, 2009).

Chowdury and Islam's (2011) idea of 'functional finance' (evaluating financing based on impact and the productivity it creates) should be promoted at the national and global level, helping to ensure UN spending is also sustainable. 'Functional finance' may also help official development assistance (ODA) reach the poorest as it will help governments receiving aid to stop focusing on maintaining donor appropriate budget levels (Ooms et al., 2010).

As a step towards a new funding model for ODA, or for the achievement of MDG targets, the geo-political effects of the rise of new donor countries must be considered (Melamed, 2012). Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs), arguably including South Africa (BASICs) are economies that are fast moving from emergent to emerged and they will have more to contribute regionally and locally, if not globally, to development initiatives (Sumner and Tiwari, 2012). The role of the BASIC countries in global governance should also be increased to foster participation.

**Considering Context**

The ability to adapt to the local context will help to address weaknesses of the MDGs and strengthen a post-2015 framework. Haider (2012) stated that local circumstances require local thinking. Instituting a formal MDG9 that each national government can create, present to the UN, and have integrated into international and domestic programs could be recommended. This will help ensure development is not solely a top down experience.

This ability to create an MDG9 would be more useful in conjunction with institutional reforms and a focus on inequality in the post-2015 framework. It is crucial to
remember that these proposed changes have interdependencies and should be considered holistically, as well as individually.

*Women’s Rights*

As mentioned, a general weakness of the MDGs is their reductionist nature. This especially speaks to the experience of gender and the MDGs. The platforms produced by the UN World Conferences on Women of the 1990s were essentially reduced to MDG3, which focuses primarily on gender disparity in primary and secondary education, and MDG5 which focuses on maternal health. (Agostino, 2008) While there are a few other minor indicators, such as the percentage of women in parliament, larger issues, such as gender violence, are not addressed (Lewis, 2013). The MDGs fail to integrate gender despite the fact that the majority of the economically poor are women (Agostino, 2008). In a post-2015 framework, it is recommended that gender be integrated into each goal, recognizing not only the consequences for women if the goals are not met, but also ensuring policies are produced with women participating at every level.

At the conference, Mukherjee Reed also noted the value of women in development with a focus on the impact they can make at a local level. Women, who are producers, or valued labourers, have the agency and autonomy to make political decisions, and have greatly contributed to not only development, but equality.

*A Theoretical Framework*

Lewis (2012) says the process of replacing the MDGs cannot be led by governments because their positions are too entrenched. This is a more uncommon idea. He also says philanthropists cannot take the lead, and suggests that a post-2015 framework must be led by the victims of injustice. Lewis also speaks of the right to say ‘no’ to development, which is not accounted for in the MDGs, and is also a difficult aspect of rights to consider in the post-2015 agenda.

Whatever comes after the MDGs should be developed in a global secular ethical framework (Orbinski, 2012). This framework would need to include governments, the private sector, civil society and the spiritual community working in partnership (Orbinski, 2012). Framing is important to Orbinski. He discussed the need for positivity in lieu of scare tactics at the conference. He also discussed the importance of engaging a variety of people in problem solving to avoid the idealization of experts. He uses the term ‘distributive leadership’ to describe this model that would be important in the framework.

**Final Conference Report**
At the conference, Marks (2012) spoke of using a human rights framework to strengthen the post-2015 agenda. This includes the right to an adequate standard of living which should appeal to economists as it is related to the principle of available resources and progressive realization. The relationship between human rights and human development was also discussed as sharing a common goal, which is freedom.

An interesting point was brought up by Sandbrook (2012) who discussed two competing poverty paradigms: neo-liberal and leftist. Though he is careful to note that neither perspective is homogeneous, and that disputes exist within each discipline, he does highlight some commonalities of each perspective. Neo-liberal proposals for poverty alleviation are often easier to implement, yet less effective. Leftist based proposals for change- which incorporate inequality and power structures into the concept of poverty- are difficult to implement but more profoundly impact poverty and inequality.

Using both of these poverty paradigms and their views could be harmful for building consensus around proposals. Proposals that come from a hybrid of policy paradigms could be incoherent (Sandbrook, 2012). Though in the short term, buy-in for proposed changes may be easier to gain if they are theoretically vague, ultimately there is more to be gained in the long term by situating poverty reduction in on paradigm. For Sandbrook, poverty reduction policies in the post-2015 framework should be situated in the leftist paradigm.

**Additional Proposals**

Though not necessarily a novel proposal, the global fund for health was discussed at the conference and is not often mentioned in the literature surrounding the MDGs. The global fund is believed by many at the conference to be a feasible option to improve access to medicine. Mackie, Chung, and Hollis (2012) spoke to the global health fund as a model that can evolve and be built upon to ensure more strategic investment, and also potentially connect the global to the local. Initiatives such as this fund should leveraged by a post-2015 development framework (Global Fund, 2011). Herder (2012) suggests that performance based innovation rewards for health should be a focus in the post-2015 framework as well. A global social fund for redistribution was brought up at the conference indirectly by Wong and directly by Koc (2012). This idea was not fully developed however.

A proposed change that is also not fully developed comes from Stephan Lewis (2013) who sees a much greater role for UN agencies in a post-2015 framework. Though it was unclear what this role would be, using already well-known and arguably effective
agencies to either gather data, monitor for accountability, or implement global policy decisions, could be useful and should be considered moving forward.

The inclusion of other additional stakeholders such as NGOs and CSOs in the formulation and implementation of a post-2015 framework would strengthen it. The policy would be to utilize already specialized organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Global Health, for their expertise, networks, implementation and review mechanisms (Ravishankar et al., 2009).

As well, it was generally recommended in both the literature and at the conference, that to ensure integration, transparency and accountability, citizen voices are heard and considered. This should include the representatives from the very poor, the very wealthy and those in between as well as women, youth and the people who deliver programs directly.

Varun Gauri also stated that the post-2015 agenda needs to ‘nudge’ in order to transform the behaviours of the actors or stakeholders involved. This could help with participation and perhaps enforcement. Nudging can be achieved through:

1. Psychological salience (facts and data that feel easy and familiar such as the tax dollars per person that goes to ODA).

2. Moral salience (constructed as saying ‘no’).

3. Political salience (draw on states instead of international civil servants because states have more legitimacy. For example, allow states to set their own targets and ratify them but if they do not, have international targets as defaults).

The sustainable development agenda has been proposed as the overarching framework the post-2015 agenda (Tiwari, 2012). Sustainable development could potentially address development in a more holistic way, bringing together poverty, health, nutrition and inequality, and it will be discussed in an upcoming section.

Support for Proposed Changes

Total consensus, or proposed MDG changes with total support, would not be worth the paper they are written on according to Tanay (2012). Consensus, he continues, should be built by those who are committed to the post-2015 development framework, and built around the ‘must haves’ in the framework. Tanay (2012) also points out that consensus has
been broadly built around the idea of ‘do no harm’ practices. However, which practices ‘do harm’ is debatable.

As the proposed changes are varied, judging the amount of the support behind each proposed change is very difficult. In general, we can see from the discussion above that the literature and conference speakers point towards support from civil society, the aid community and academics for measures to curb illicit financial flows, promote remunerative employment, and combat inequality.

A focus on employment in the current context of a global recession has some universal appeal (Ooms et al., 2010) but curbing illicit financial flows, reforming pharmaceutical practices to shift the focus from profits to people, and allowing that food security is a human right are challenges to political and corporate actors. These options are not very politically feasible.

In the past, there have been trade-offs between stronger accountability and creating broad goals that result in change. This trade-off can affect the amount of support a proposal gains globally, not only in theory, but in practice. This trade-off is something the post-2015 framework will face. Sachs (2013) noted that three treaties, more accountable than the MDGs as they are law, related to climate change, desertification, and biodiversity, signed in 1992, have had little to no impact on our environment. The current MDGs have had more impact than these negotiated treaties, Sachs argued, because the goals were broad and the accountability framework low.

Academics reacted to the High Level Panel Post-2015 Report, which posits a way forward post-2015 and addresses some of these proposed changes, by pointing to inequality as something that is still missing from discussions and documents (Tran, 2013). However, there has been very little reporting on government reactions thus far which would help to gauge political support for the proposed changes. Perhaps, some indication on the tone of government reaction and level of commitment could be conjectured by Canada pulling out of the UN Treaty on Desertification, or the experiences of the Kyoto Protocol. Many CSOs appear to be speaking with rhetoric about the Report in general. Gauging the support for proposals related to the post-2015 framework is an area where more time for in depth research could be warranted.

**Sustainable Development Goals and the MDGs**
The outcome document of the 2010 MDG Summit requested the Secretary-General to initiate thinking on the global development agenda beyond 2015. The outcome document of the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development initiated an inclusive process to develop a set of sustainable development goals.

There is broad agreement that the two processes should be closely linked and should ultimately converge in one global development agenda beyond 2015 with sustainable development at its core. The process of arriving at this new framework is state led with general participation from external stakeholders such as CSOs, the private sector and businesses, academics and scientists (United Nations, 2013).

In order to integrate the two post-2015 agendas, SDGs and MDGs, the United Nations could begin by highlighting that the agendas have common threads of environmental sustainability and human development (United Nations, 2013). Further to this, the thematic consultations that have been initiated by the UN regarding SDGs could be expanded to include themes, such as gender integration or illicit financial flows, which pertain to MDG proposals for post-2015. It is important to note however, that the themes of education; inequalities; health; governance; conflict and fragility; growth and employment; environmental sustainability; hunger, nutrition and food security; population dynamics; energy; and water (United Nations, 2013) do already incorporate many MDG themes.

The fact that the consultations are taking place both online and offline, and attempting to consider local context (United Nations, 2013) is already a step towards integrating the two processes. The ‘My World’ initiative should as well be revaluated for the purposes of integrating the MDGs with the SDGs as it is a useful tool that could reach stakeholder not reached in the development of the first set of MDGs.

The ‘My World’ initiative is a UN global survey for citizens. It aims to capture people’s voices, priorities and views, for the purposes of informing the post-2015 process (United Nations, 2013). It allows an individual to electronically choose six priorities from pre-set list, or input their own priorities. ‘My World’ is closely related to ‘The World We Want’ platform, also created by the UN. It is a website designed to encourage global conversation around a new development agenda (United Nations, 2013).

Integration in the lead up to a post-2015 framework will help to streamline the process and simplify the highly complex nature of these two parallel processes so that accessibility is less of an issue. It may be inefficient to run parallel processes when the two
share many intersections. The realm of global politics is not easily accessible even to those who are privileged (Pogge, 2012), thus integration of the two streams is important.

It seems that the Rio+20 outcomes have been interpreted by scientists, academics and policy practitioners in different ways. Glaser (2012) views the MDGs as targeted at emerging nations and the impoverished alone, with the SDGs under development having global reach, targeting not only people but earth systems and developing and developed countries alike. However, Griggs (2013) writes that the SDGs are meant to be integrated into the follow up to the MDGs.

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network Leadership Council’s most recent report (2013) identified broad goals that endeavor to capture the MDGs and SDGs. They are listed as follows:

1. End extreme poverty including hunger.
2. Achieve development within planetary boundaries.
3. Ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood.
4. Achieve gender equality, social inclusion, and human rights for all.
5. Achieve health and wellbeing at all ages.
6. Improve agriculture systems and raise rural prosperity.
7. Empower inclusive, productive, and resilient cities.
8. Curb human-induced climate change and ensure sustainable energy.
9. Secure ecosystem services and biodiversity, and ensure good management of water and other natural resources.
10. Transform governance for sustainable development.
These SDGs, at least in this preliminary stage, do appear to have integrated some of the MDG framework, as well as some MDG criticisms. They may appease some of the concern that the environmental agenda will overtake the poverty agenda (Knoll, 2013). However, some post-2015 proposals are absent. Inequality is something that is visibly missing. As well, gender equality is not entrenched in all goals explicitly. Employment as a macroeconomic area is also missing. One benefit of integrated goals however, may be that the push to recognize these missing areas can be focused on one process instead of two. Having two separate tools post-2015 may weaken the general debate and discourse around development issues (Prammer and Martinuzzi, 2013).

Concerns about focus being diverted from poverty with the SDGs and MDGs being integrated was echoed again in a summary of an expert group meeting on Southern voices on post-MDGs (2013). However, the importance of climate change and the impact it will have on the global south was also highlighted. As a way of starting a dialogue about the post-2015 agenda, this document discusses the possibility of differentiated responsibility as a way of accounting for the universal agenda.

**Potential Formats for Integrated Goals Post-2015**

As mentioned, one of the greatest successes of the MDGs was their simplistic call to action. Simple does not mean the goals should be unambitious or unengaged, but that they should be understandable to different stakeholders and leave room for adaptation to the local contexts. Vandemoortele (2013) argues the integrated agenda should also be relatively simple. While there may be concern about a simple integrated set of goals lacking focus, (Loewe, 2012) these concerns can perhaps be mitigated if the post-2015 development framework provides for reporting, communication and data gathering so that more quickly than ever before, areas that are lagging behind can be identified, accounted for, and ideally adapted for increased success. CSOs, NGOs, TNCs and the technology they wield can collaborate with UN Agencies and states to potentially gather the maximum amount of feedback.

A potential format for integrating the SDGs and MDGs is to have one overarching framework split into two parts. MDGs 1-7, with some addition of sustainability could be one part that focuses on the goals of development. The other could use MDG 8 as the foundation for the creation or protection of global public goods that are preconditions for
human development (Loewe, 2012). This addressed the concerns of focus, but with an overarching framework that could be viewed as accessible.

The distinction between the MDGs and SDGs as measurable and micro-level on one hand, and global public goods on the other is an important one when considering integration (Knoll, 2013). It has implications for how measurable a goal is, for example, whether it can be measured locally at all. An interesting side note is how peace and security could fit into the concept of a global public good or precondition for development (Knoll, 2013). This would add a dimension to this group of goals that is not overtly linked to the environment, though of course, there are linkages below the surface.

In April 2013, the European Sustainable Development Network produced a document that clearly articulated three options for the post-2015 agenda that involved integrated the SDGs to some degree. The first option is the MDGs extended as they are, with some minor changes associated to the SDGs (Prammer and Martinuzzi, 2013). This option and does also not seem to go far enough in addressing some of the proposed changes and criticisms discussed previously in this report.

The second option is to develop a completely different framework (Prammer and Martinuzzi, 2013). An option such as this could be a framework without goals or targets and a focus on transformative structures and processes that may alleviate poverty (Vandemoortele, 2013). The lack of continuity that would accompany this option may undo some of the successes of the current MDG framework and result in either stakeholder confusion or disinterest (Vandemoortele, 2013).

The third and most feasible option is a redesign of the MDG architecture and contents (Prammer and Martinuzzi, 2013). This could manifest, for example, by the three health goals being collapsed into one overall health goal, thereby making space for including other areas. Another example of redesign would be eliminating overlapping targets. Countries that achieve universal primary education automatically comply with the target on gender equality in basic education (Vandemoortele, 2013). This demonstrates that there may be room, without adding numerous new goals, to add new content post-2015 by reducing duplication and overlap. In addition, this option could see interim or short-term goals being set, and allow space for proposed changes and the SDGs agenda to be considered (Vandemoortele, 2013).
This subject of integration of the MDGs and the SDGs and the concerns that come with it is an important and emerging area. While much of the information indicates that an integrated agenda would be effective, more research in this area could be warranted to keep up with recent publications and better sort through the literature available.

Conclusions

Overall, no matter what proposed changes are incorporated into the post-2015 development framework; there will be challenges that remain. Three that are very pertinent in light of the discussion above are highlighted by Vandemoortele (2012). The first is that the post-2015 agenda may become overloaded, the second is the concern of it being donor-centric, and the third is the goals becoming prescriptive. Other challenges that will persist that have been discussed as critiques of the MDGs are inequality, accountability, political will, and the participation of developed countries.

What we can hope for, is that by making the process of developing a post-2015 framework a more inclusive discussion, even more focus will be brought to bear on this important issues by a variety of actors. This may, in turn, favorably influence policy. As well, if more reporting and information gathering is encouraged at different levels and stages of implementation, perhaps the post-2015 framework could adapt to better achieve goals of poverty reduction in real time. The success of the MDGs should be built upon in the post-2015 agenda, and lessons should be learned from its weaknesses.

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