Goals in a Post-2015 Development Framework: Options and Strategic Choices

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We… renew our commitment to **sustainable development** and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.

**Poverty eradication** is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. In this regard, we are committed to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.
At Rio+20, world leaders renewed their commitment to **sustainable development** ("an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet"). They also emphasized that **freeing humanity from poverty** remains the world’s most urgent global challenge.

After Rio, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda was asked to:

- Design a post-2015 development agenda that will **end poverty**, while setting out principles for reshaping the **global partnership** for development.

- Integrate its work with the intergovernmental Open Working Group, which is designing a set of **sustainable development goals**.

In the Rio outcome document, **goals, targets and indicators** were described as “valuable in measuring and accelerating progress.” This paper explores the role that goals could play in a post-2015 agenda.

Its objectives are to:

- Explore what different types of goals can (and cannot) **achieve**.

- Set out **options** for integrating poverty and sustainable development goals.

- Clarify the **choices** that must be made if the post-2015 development agenda is to end poverty within a generation.

This paper does **not** advocate a particular option. Instead, it aims to contribute to a more informed post-2015 debate, by ensuring that all participants understand areas of potential agreement and disagreement. Its main focus is on poverty, given the early stage of debate on the development of a comprehensive set of SDGs.
Designing Goals and Targets

- Goals for people, systems, and planet
- What makes a good goal?
Understanding Goals and Targets

The Millennium Development Goals are a framework of eight goals, twenty-one targets, and sixty indicators.

- The goals express ambitious commitments to “freeing the entire human race from want” (for example, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger).
- Targets are used to quantify each goal (halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day), while indicators enable progress against these targets to be measured.

Most of the MDGs focus directly on delivering outcomes for people across multiple dimensions of poverty. Meeting these goals would fulfill the commitment to freeing all “men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.”

The Millennium Declaration also aimed “to create an environment… which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.” The right to development can only be delivered through “good governance within each country,” for example. Specific action is also needed to protect civilian populations from natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies. The MDG framework, however, largely excludes targets for building the effective societies on which poverty reduction depends.

Some global targets are included in the framework, with potential benefits that stretch far beyond the poor. An open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system is important to “ensur[ing] that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people.” The target on biodiversity loss aims to protect both this, and future, generations “from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs.”
The Millennium Declaration contains a vision for creating a global and national environment that would end poverty, while ensuring development could be sustained for future generations.

The MDGs, however, are composed primarily of people-focused goals, and have few targets that cover the factors enabling poverty reduction.
What Makes Goals Effective?

Goals and targets have two primary functions:

- They provide a yardstick that enables us to **monitor** whether a desired result has been (or is likely to be) achieved.
- They can themselves become tools that **drive** progress towards achieving that result.

Although data quality is sometimes problematic, the MDGs have been extensively monitored, allowing the UN Secretary-General to report “results [that] represent a **tremendous reduction in human suffering** and are a clear validation of the approach embodied in the MDGs.”

However, we lack robust evidence on the extent to which the MDGs are responsible for accelerating this progress. Clearly, much poverty reduction would have happened without global development goals, but has there been an incremental impact on the speed with which people are escaping poverty? And if so, **which goals and targets have been most effective, and why?**

In the absence of a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the MDGs, it seems likely that normative goals can achieve three distinct types of impact. First, they can provide a focus for **debate, advocacy, and policy development**. Second, they offer a **common strategic language** that allows different types of actor to understand and work with each other. And finally, they can attract and direct **resources**, and drive higher standards of **delivery**.

Targets inevitably have **costs** as well as benefits, however. Development is complex, but goals and targets must be limited in number and relatively simple. The result is a trade-off. Simpler targets are more likely to be useful, but can distort incentives. More sophisticated targets may be more technically appealing, but risk being quickly forgotten.
The MDGs have retained their relevance to global policy and strategy for a decade. It is important to select goals and targets that will be equally effective after 2015.
To summarize, when designing goals and targets, we need clarity on…

....the overall mission

Is the framework designed to achieve a single mission for a clearly defined target group, or does it have multiple objectives?

....the role played by different types of goal

What is the right blend of goals for people, goals for societies and systems, and goals for global public goods?

....the hard choices inherent to effective goals

How do we balance the need for effective advocacy with goals that drive strategy and implementation? And what is the right trade-off between simplicity and complexity?
Integrating Poverty and Sustainable Development

- Goals for 1 and 7 billion people
- Options for integrating poverty into a broader SDG framework
SDGs and Poverty Goals

In designing goals to replace the MDGs, the most fundamental question is how to integrate goals for poverty eradication into a broader sustainability framework.

The MDG framework is primarily focused on poverty, but includes a small number of broader sustainability goals. This is an unsatisfactory compromise. Why include biodiversity, but not climate or energy? And why include global goals for the environment, but not for the economic and social pillars of sustainable development? The Rio+20 outcome document sets much more ambitious criteria for SDGs, which it says must cover all three dimensions of sustainable development and their ‘interlinkages’.

It describes poverty eradication as one of the ‘overarching objectives’ of sustainable development, along with:

- Sustainable production and consumption, and the related challenges of inclusive and equitable economic growth and creating greater opportunities for all.

- Equitable social development and inclusion – for all the world’s citizens, and not just for those living in absolute poverty – and the related objective of reducing inequality.

- Managing the resource base and ecosystems on which economic and social development depends, while increasing resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

It is therefore clear that poverty reduction is an essential part of sustainable development, not the other way around. Poverty reduction will not happen, or will only be temporary, if the world continues on its current unsustainable trajectory.
The High-Level Panel has been asked to make recommendations on a post-2015 development agenda that will end poverty, while ensuring its work feeds into that of the Open Working Group. The eradication of poverty can only be sustained if there is a broader commitment to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
Options for Integrating Poverty into the SDGs

There are three broad options for integrating poverty into the SDGs. Under the first, a set of poverty goals would be an important component of the broader SDG framework. These goals would sit alongside economic, social, and environmental components that pick up the key objectives set out at Rio+20, although they could also stand alone. This approach:

- Fulfills Rio+20’s commitment to focused and urgent action to tackle the challenges facing the world’s poorest people, while allowing poverty goals to be agreed well ahead of the expiry of the MDGs.
- Offers a logical division of responsibility between the High-level Panel and the Open Working Group, while ensuring compatibility between the work of the two bodies.

The second option builds on the approach developed by the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which has three targets, the first of which is specifically tailored to ending energy poverty. Under this option, poverty targets would be integrated into each sustainable development goal. This would:

- Allow for a family of SDGs to be constructed around the “priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development” identified at Rio+20.
- Ensure that poverty is fully integrated into a broader approach to sustainable development, but could risk diluting the focus on the vision of ending poverty.

While these options offer strategic clarity, a third approach could see the adoption of a hybrid that included elements of options 1 and 2, probably as the result of an attempt to find a compromise that satisfies demands from different interest groups. The potential shape of this compromise is considered in more detail on page 14.
OPTION 1

Integrate poverty goals into a sustainable development framework

**Economic**
Sustainable production and consumption

**Social**
Equitable social development and inclusion

**Environmental**
Managing the resource base and ecosystems

**Poverty**
Ending absolute poverty

- **✓** Fulfills part of the vision set out at Rio
- **✓** Ensures continued focus on the poorest, and provides continuity with MDGs
- **✓** Poverty consensus could provide foundation for broader SDG agreement
- **✓** The HLP’s work supports the OWG’s broader mandate

- **✗** Inevitable overlap between goals for 1bn and 7bn people
- **✗** Many are skeptical about whether consensus can be built around comprehensive SDGs
- **✗** Poverty goals will be incomplete if the sustainable development framework is weak
- **✗** May leave rich countries with few responsibilities if SDGs are not agreed

*Under this option, a set of poverty goals is agreed first and in a format that allows them to slot into a broader sustainable development framework that could include economic, social, and environmental goals. They can be implemented immediately after 2015, even if the full sustainability framework is still being discussed.*
Under this option, each sustainable development goal includes one or more targets for reducing poverty.
Many different hybrid options can be imagined. Three illustrative examples are set out.

The first has the same strengths and weaknesses as the original MDGs.

The second brings together planetary and social goals, but may not be politically feasible.

The third may lead to an unsatisfactory compromise, but could emerge from a difficult negotiation.
Integration of poverty and sustainable development goals...

....can be approached in three ways...

A set of poverty goals could be included in a broader sustainability framework, each SDG could have a poverty target, or various hybrids could be created.

...with each option having strengths and weaknesses...

Goals for the world’s billion poorest people are inevitably related to, but distinct from, goals for 7 billion that have comprehensive coverage of economic, social and environmental issues.

...while no solution will be perfect and it could take time for a new framework to be agreed

It is possible that only parts of the new framework will be in place in 2015, with new elements being added over time.
Designing Poverty Goals

- Goals for people
- Goals for societies
- Global goals
Post-2015: Goals for People

In whichever way poverty eradication is integrated into a broader sustainability framework, people will remain at its center. Like the MDGs, most or all headline goals will describe outcomes for people across multiple dimensions of poverty. However, the nature of these goals will be distinct from the MDGs for four reasons:

- First, many or all of these goals will be zero-based, with an objective of ending poverty, not just reducing it. These goals will act as a global social floor and all poor people will have the right to expect help to meet them. National governments, global development partners, and other responsible actors will face a powerful obligation to meet minimum standards of equity and social justice.

- Second, every success will make the remaining mission harder to achieve. Poverty reduction will proceed at multiple speeds, as economic growth means some people will move fairly swiftly above the absolute poverty line. Those that are left behind will face the steepest barriers to escaping poverty, experiencing high levels of violence and conflict, and social and economic exclusion.

- Third, the post-2015 framework will be most important for the ‘last poor’ – those who remain in poverty the longest. Goals will direct global attention to their needs, while focusing the efforts of all development partners towards creating the conditions in which human and economic development reaches the world’s most vulnerable people, and changes their lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

- Finally, technology will change the way that post-2015 goals are set, monitored, and implemented. We will soon live in a world where it is possible to know the names, addresses, and mobile phone numbers of every poor family. Better, and more open, data will allow near ‘real time’ measurement of results. The combination of new goals with new technologies will make it increasingly easy to offer social protection floors for all citizens.
After 2015, people-focused goals should…

1. Be zero-based — ending poverty, not reducing it

2. Have equity ‘wired in’ — establishing the right of every man, woman, and child to live above a social floor

3. Address multiple dimensions of poverty — capturing what people believe to be most important to their quality of life

4. Meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable — recognizing they will need a post-2015 framework for longest

5. Offer these people real outcomes — better and more secure lives for them and their families

6. Catalyze better strategies for tackling poverty — enabling a broader range of actors to work together

7. Encourage fresh opportunities and approaches to be captured — through better targeting and faster monitoring of results

Post-2015 goals should be designed to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs. However, the mission to end poverty in a generation, and a changing global context, means that the new goals will need to be significantly different from the ones agreed a decade ago.
Is Dollar a Day Poverty Enough?

The MDGs focus on indicators of absolute poverty – income ($1.25/day), nutrition (hunger), education (primary schooling), health (maternal/child mortality; major infectious diseases), resources (water/sanitation). Gender (educational inequality; access to reproductive health services) adds a ‘rights’ dimension to the MDGs.

After 2015, some argue that the world should complete the ‘unfinished business of the MDGs’ with a strengthened focus on absolute poverty. Others, however, believe that the post-2015 framework should adopt a broader definition of poverty, making it relevant to the lives of poor people in a greater number of countries.

Options include:

- **Ending absolute poverty** – use the definition of poverty used for the MDGs to construct a global social floor, with appropriate refinements (for example, basic learning outcomes, rather than attendance at school).

- **Move the poverty line up** – use $2 or $5 a day income poverty, with more stretching thresholds for non-income dimensions of poverty (for example, completing secondary schooling).

- **Global social floor, national elevators** – use the current definition of absolute poverty to set a global social floor for all countries and all people, but encourage countries or regional groups to build on this minimum by setting their own tougher targets.

- **All poverty, everywhere** – aim to reduce poverty in all countries, using a poverty line that is relative to their wealth and development status.

- **Reduce inequality** – instead of focusing on poverty, set targets that reduce the gap between rich and poor.
Goals for reducing poverty will be very different in ambition, focus, and potential impact, depending on the definition of poverty that they are based on.
Post-2015: Goals for Societies

At Rio+20, leaders acknowledged that “democracy, good governance and the rule of law, at the national and international levels, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development.” Three broad clusters of issue are at stake:

- **Strengthening societies** – can targets contribute to building the stable, peaceful and predictable governance environment needed to promote human development?

- **Transforming economies** – can targets create conditions under which economic transformation is possible or increase the rate at which growth is translated into sustainable, equitable human development?

- **Tackling conflict and violence** – can targets help address the challenges of countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, and reduce the violence that poor people are subjected to?

After 2015, **should goals and targets be set for these enablers** or should they be included in the broader framework, but **not quantified**?

**On the one hand**, sustained action on the enabling environment will become increasingly important as the remaining poor become concentrated in societies with the greatest need to strengthen institutions, revitalize their economies, and build the infrastructure needed to support poverty reduction. **On the other hand**, objectives in these areas are not easily quantified. National circumstances, capacities and priorities also differ markedly between countries.

There are three options: (i) **exclude** enablers from post-2015 goals and targets; (ii) **integrate** the most important enablers into the headline goals; (iii) **split** targets for societies from targets for people, and treat them differently.
Three options for dealing with goals/targets for creating an enabling environment for poverty reduction.

**OPTION 1  Exclude from goals/targets**
- Keeps focus on a small number of headline goals
- Avoids controversial issues (governance, conflict etc.)
- Framework less relevant to countries with greatest need
- Reduces strategic alignment between development partners

**OPTION 2  Integrate into headline goals**
- Highlights the most important enablers
- Maintains simplicity of goals
- Important enablers will be excluded, or
- The headline goals will become increasingly complex

**OPTION 3  Split out enabling layer**
- Allows for comprehensive approach to enabling environment
- Could be tailored to national circumstances; peer-reviewed
- Requires agreement on controversial issues
- Creates additional complexity
Designing Goals for Societies

Options 1 and 2 (excluding enablers from the post-2015 goals, on the one hand, or integrating them on the other) are relatively simple on a conceptual level. In contrast, the third option – splitting targets for societies from targets for people – creates a number of design challenges.

It would be likely to lead to a post-2015 framework with:

- A set of headline goals/targets for people that were simple, powerful and easily measurable – and that could be broadly communicated to a non-technical audience.

- Targets for societies and economies that could be tailored to national circumstances, in ways that would support the delivery of global goals.

However, it is still likely to lead to contentious debates about the extent to which international norms can be created for core areas of national sovereignty such as security and justice, taxation and public services, politics and governance, and property rights and market regulation. Clarity may be provided by:

- Focusing on those enablers that can be shown to make the most difference to the lives, and future potential, of the people that the headline goals aims to help.

- Experimenting with different types of goal and indicator (more qualitative, for example) and different ways of measuring progress against these goals (periodic peer review, for example).

- Offering countries or regional groupings the flexibility to define their own standards, based on their own analysis of the obstacles most likely to deliver improvements in the quality of life of poor people.
Various international agreements and plans have addressed the ‘constraints and structural impediments’ that impede poverty reduction. This indicative list – drawn from the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, and the work of the g7+ group of conflict-affected countries – shows the areas that might be included in a post-2015 framework. It is also illustrates the political challenges that must be confronted if agreement is to be reached in this area.
Post-2015: Global Goals

If a broader sustainability framework is agreed, most global goals will be included in that (see pages 8-15). However, it will also be necessary to directly address global drivers that have the most impact on the poorest people and countries, and to set out the obligations of the international community to support and sustain poverty reduction.

This requires:

- Concerted action to reduce the marginalization of poor people and countries in the global economy, with commitments to increase trade and market access, integrate poor countries into financial markets, and increase investment in agriculture and industry.

- Reduction of their vulnerability to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, and to the impacts of climate change, combined with support for adaptation to climate and other environmental changes over the medium and long-term.

- External assistance to help societies escape from cycles of conflict through political and peacekeeping missions.

- Tackling adverse impacts of globalization on vulnerable societies, such as transnational crime, corruption and money laundering, and the damage caused by poorly regulated resource extraction.

- Mobilization of the finance needed to end poverty, including development assistance, debt relief, foreign direct investment, and remittances.
Global goals will be difficult to agree and quantify, while the construction of a new global partnership for development is likely to divide opinion. However, there are factors that can catalyze a more constructive debate – especially as it is highly unlikely that the mission to end poverty can be accomplished without effective and targeted international assistance.
Poverty goals…

….will have three dimensions…

_They must deliver change for poor people, by building robust societies and economies, and addressing the global drivers of sustained poverty reduction._

…with each dimension posing different challenges…

‘People’ goals are easiest to define and communicate, but will be different from the MDGs in important ways. ‘Society’ goals may have to be tailored to national circumstance, while ‘global’ goals will raise contentious geopolitical questions.

…if the promise of ending poverty is to be fulfilled

_An imperfect framework – or a failure to reach agreement – would both be a betrayal of the poor and a clear sign that the world is no longer able to tackle the most important global challenges._
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