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Sustainable Development Goals –
the critical outcome from Rio+20

News from the Negotiations

a multi-stakeholder
magazine on
climate change
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outreach.

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pic: Cortes de Cima

Sustainable Development Goals – the critical outcome from Rio+20

Felix Dodds
Executive Director, Stakeholder Forum and Chair of the 64th UN DPI NGO Conference

The informal government meeting held in Solo, Indonesia in July 2011, may go down as one of the most significant government meetings for Rio+20. It put on the table the idea of upgrading the Commission on Sustainable Development to a Council of the General Assembly, which was originally proposed in 1992 by Gro Harlem Brundtland the Prime Minister of Norway. Also bought to the table, by the governments of Colombia and Guatemala, was the idea of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in what is called the Solo Message.

First to react to the idea of the SDGs was the 64th UN DPI NGO Conference on Sustainable Societies Responsive Citizens, which was held in Bonn in the first week of September 2011. The conference was attended by over 1500 NGOs, some governments and all the major UN Agencies and Programmes. It focused on Rio+20, the 10 year anniversary of the Year of Volunteers and the contribution volunteers could make to sustainable development.

It was clear to those attending that the idea of the **SDGs built upon the 25 years of global dialogue on sustainable development that had produced the Brundtland Commission Report, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation**. The SDGs offered an opportunity to focus those great texts around a clear set of goals.

This is unlike the Millennium Development Goals which had largely been dropped in at the last minute for the Millennium Development Summit in 2000 and were drawn from OECD Development Assistance Committee development targets.

The NGO DPI Conference meeting produced a Chair's Text which identified the following 17 possible SDGs:

- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- Sustainable Livelihoods, Youth and Education
- Climate Sustainability
- Clean Energy
- Biodiversity
- Water
- Healthy Seas and Oceans
- Healthy Forests
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Green Cities
- Subsidies and Investment
- New indicators of Progress
- Access to Information
- Public Participation
- Access to Redress and Remedy
- Environmental Justice for the Poor and Marginalised
- Basic Health

A full explanation of each of the goals can be found on the 64th UN DPI NGO Conference website www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ngoconference

The substantial work undertaken by NGOs in September 2011 has been utilised by governments and stakeholders alike to conduct their own conversations on SDGs. This is reflected in the Rio+20 Secretariat Issue Briefs as a substantive contribution to the Rio+20 discussions on SDGs. As the outcome Chair's Text said:

'To achieve the goals of Rio+20 in an ambitious, time-bound and accountable manner, we call upon governments in accordance with human rights, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities to adopt the following draft Sustainable Development Goals together with the sub-goals, reasons and clarifications relating to each goal.'

The question then for governments is can it be that difficult to develop SDGs based on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation? To paraphrase Robert Kennedy "Our lives on this planet are too short. the work to be done is too great. We cannot wait any longer." ∎

Our Vision of Sustainable Development Goals

Saba Loftus

Objectives Task Force of the UNCSD Major Group of Children and Youth

Colombia and Guatemala have proposed that a key outcome of Rio+20 must be a concrete agreement on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since then, SDGs have increasingly become a core part of the Rio+20 policy dialogue. This proposed framework for universal goals raises several important questions. It is undeniable that urgent action is required, but should SDGs be created at Rio+20? And if so, with what purpose?

The Objectives Task Force of the UNCSD Major Group for Children and Youth agreed that if SDGs are a potential outcome of Rio+20, all stakeholders (including young people) have a responsibility to ensure that such goals are concrete and incorporate existing international agreements and initiatives that have yet to be fully implemented.

SDGs offer several benefits. They can help tackle emerging issues such as water, urbanisation, and energy efficiency. They also bring the 'social pillar' of sustainable development back into focus. Too often, the 'economic pillar' is touted by governments and the private sector, and the 'environmental pillar' by many NGOs, while social implications are lost in the fold. SDGs are a chance to re-engage social sustainability.

Rio+20 requires ambition, SDGs could reflect and help fulfil this need. However, a legitimate concern has been raised that setting voluntary development goals might ultimately cause us to avoid more comprehensive measures on sustainable development. There is also concern that while the SDGs present an opportunity for a bold Rio+20 outcome, they might also prevent something concrete from emerging. If they are just idealistic agreements, then there is a lot of potential for empty promises.

As a result, we began to discuss our vision for the SDGs. We agreed that they need to be action-orientated, address emerging issues and focus on creating change, while halting or reversing negative trends. They need to be monitored, regulated, reported on and they must be binding. It was also agreed that the interlinkages between the Rio+20 issues – which are yet to be sufficiently addressed in the Outcome Document - should be a key feature of the SDGs. Although more challenging, tackling the global issues together, rather than in isolation, is a more effective way to work toward change. The inherent links between global issues are also not only a better way to work towards change, but a necessary one. Most importantly, we acknowledge that there is no universal solution for sustainable development challenges

We to provide an example of what young people globally hope these SDGs will look like. Incorporating youth movements globally who work on different thematic issues, and who would not traditionally participate in the CSD processes, has been the key tool we have used to create the first draft of our vision for the SDGs. In our discussions, we agreed that SDGs should not just be a continuation of MDGs, but rather comprise a stronger framework, which learns from the weaknesses of the MDGs and builds on the strengths.

For example, in *Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing,* the Global Sustainability Panel emphasises that '[p]articular attention needs to be paid to the development challenges faced by low-income countries experiencing or emerging from conflict' (para 238). Armed conflict has posed a significant obstacle to progress toward the MDGs in these countries, adding, the GSP notes, 'to the fragility of their situations and the insecurity of their citizens'. We therefore call for any SDG framework to include explicit targets and indicators for post-conflict recovery (including environmental cleanup), development and peace building. It should also feature mechanisms to ensure the active and meaningful participation of children and youth in these processes at all levels - local, national, regional, and global.

Our drafting process began in late January, and this vision of creating goals for our future has caught the imagination of the global youth. So far, we have young people from over 68 countries involved in this drafting process, with the diversity growing daily.

We invite you to participate in the brainstorming process by using an open source Google Doc to make changes, comment and work with us to make them stronger, more cross-cutting and holistic, while focusing on agreed upon language: www.bit.ly/SDGsDraft. We hope you will share your ideas with us. ∎

Resource Overshoot – Today's Global Challenge

Ed Barry

Director: Sustainable World Initiative and Sustainable Living Adviser to the Population Institute

As the human footprint becomes pervasive across all of Earth's terrestrial and marine ecosystems, modern humans are consuming prodigious amounts of resources and putting a tremendous stress on the biosphere. Within the past few decades, the growth of the human endeavor has passed a major milestone, producing a fundamental shift in our relationship with nature. The human species is now demanding more ecosystem goods and services, and extracting more non-renewable resources, than the finite earth-system can sustainably provide. This fundamental change in the global condition, which is getting worse with every passing year, is often described as moving from an 'empty world' economic model, to natural resource 'overshoot'.

Numerous international studies have documented - and raised concerns about - humanity's over-exploitation of environmental resources. The High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability recently reported to the UN Secretary-General:

'The current global development model is unsustainable. We can no longer assume that our collective actions will not trigger tipping points as environmental thresholds are breached, risking irreversible damage to both ecosystems and human communities.'

Business interests are also more broadly recognising that our current global development model is unsustainable. As the World Business Council for Sustainable development recently put it:

'...business-as-usual cannot get us to sustainability or secure economic and social prosperity; these can be achieved only through radical change, starting now.'

Indeed, a growing number of studies and reports from governments, think tanks, academia, and civil society warn that resource overshoot is imperiling the welfare of future generations. The frequency and intensity of these warnings are increasing.

pic: Friends of Family Farmers

Resource Sufficiency Planning – The Appropriate Policy Response

With few exceptions, advances in human welfare require natural resources. If the gains we have made with respect to the Millennium Development Goals are to be maintained and advanced, we must do so without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Resource sufficiency planning is essential to that end.

There is a growing call from the global community for the design and implementation of a meaningful set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) that would put renewed emphasis on making gains in human well-being measurable and sustainable. As the High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability noted in its recent report;

'Many argue that if it cannot be measured, it cannot be managed. The international community should measure development beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and develop a new sustainable development index or set of indicators.'

Human development programs will not produce lasting results if we continue to undermine the planet's natural resource assets at the current pace. We must, therefore, ensure that at least one set of SDGs (or class of development indicators) will measure and report on the longer term durability of national and global development. To accomplish this, the new goals must include actual bio-physical resource sufficiency 'balance sheets' that reflect aggregated national level demands and supplies of natural resources. These evaluations, including historical and projected resource sufficiency trends, should be made public and widely disseminated in order to better inform the policy process, and to build political support for needed change.

The overall practice of resource sufficiency evaluation and reporting must be adopted by all nations, with appropriate support from international institutions. This practice will 'operationalise' our shared responsibility to reduce, and eventually eliminate, global resource overshoot. Sufficiency planning represents a paradigm shift in policy administration; but one that is now urgently needed in response to the global reality of, and ever increasing development challenge associated with, resource overshoot. ∎

Sustainable – and Political – Development Goals

Jonathan Phillips
The Presidency Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the MDGs (OSSAP/MDGs)

International development goals are great for donors and NGOs: they help us to coordinate, monitor progress and mobilise support. But it is developing countries that are responsible for implementing the majority of actions through their national policies and budgets. While formed in the international arena, the SDGs will have their most important effects on domestic politics and policymaking.

Nigeria put the MDGs at the heart of its policy, and its national development plans – including 'NEEDS' and Vision 20:2020 – aligned social spending and poverty alleviation closely with the Goals. Since 2005, $750m from the savings of debt-relief has been channelled every year towards the MDGs. Many of these investments embodied the frontiers of development policy – matching grant mechanisms, conditional cash transfers, and independent monitoring by civil society. Committees dedicated to the MDGs, within the National Assembly, have for the past five years provided a level of monitoring and policy feedback that the country has never witnessed before. Significant results have been achieved – maternal mortality fell by 32% in the five years before 2008, and infant mortality by 25%.

Nigeria's experience suggests that international development goals can create new impetus for reform and accountability within developing countries. However, these achievements were politically contentious and forcefully contested. Recognising the tensions that dominate the domestic policy-making process can help us frame the SDGs in a more constructive way.

Consider for instance, that under the MDGs, developed countries' main obligations entail simple financial targets, while many developing countries are engaged in building entirely new systems of social welfare and service delivery. Not only are these systems technically challenging in scale and design, but they privilege access to state and donor resources for certain groups, providing both economic and political advantages that are worth fighting to obtain. To take a Nigerian example, the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria regulates this crucial profession and is a powerful

voice for the interests of employed healthcare workers. Yet, the Council places strict limits on the number of midwives any State Government can train and sets high benchmarks – in some cases exceeding the requirements of a fully qualified doctor – for new midwives. At the same time, state governments adapted to these constraints by deploying less qualified staff in the role of midwives. As a result, there were far too few skilled midwives to support Nigeria's rapidly growing population.

To make progress, extensive dialogue was required with the Council, new political coalitions were formed, and an innovative federal scheme to recruit more than 3,000 unemployed or retired midwives was negotiated. State Governments were also supported to expand facilities for the training of midwives to reach the standards set by the Council. The 32% drop in maternal mortality recorded between 2003 and 2008 was therefore the product of a politically-charged and contested set of reforms that spanned multiple tiers of government, required new funding and depended on sustained leadership.

In emerging democracies with limited systems of formal accountability and limited access to accurate information on government performance, these discussions and contests are also highly centralised and opaque. Development goals involving expansions in access, once agreed, can often be rapidly implemented in this environment. Nigeria's commitment to Universal Basic Education (more ambitious than the MDGs at 9 years of education) since 2004 has been backed by significant funding and has led to a significant increase in enrolment. However, development goals to improve quality have proven much more challenging. The complex systems of teacher recruitment, training and management depend on public service reform, decentralisation and empowerment of local government, and some level of accountability for school performance. Introducing these systems can generate uncertainty about future employment and often creates losers, as poor teachers are weeded out and resources are less easily diverted for personal gain. Again, Nigeria has started down this road with an intensive re-training program that covered all of the hundreds of thousands of teachers employed nationwide and recruited more than 74,000 new teachers. It did so by co-opting and involving stakeholders, such as the National Teachers' Institute, and providing flexibility to state and local governments in the forming of matching and conditional grants.

This perspective highlights a host of challenges beyond the traditional scope of international development goals and suggests that the process of engaging stakeholders, identifying political support, and compensating losers is by its nature drawn out and steeped in conflict. Empowering the actors and institutions that can lead these reforms, build coalitions, and articulate compromises is essential to the political sustainability of development efforts.

The SDGs should recognise and anticipate these domestic political contests. The Goals need to:

- Be simple, universal and uncontroversial - to facilitate political coordination around a common agenda.

- Provide sufficient flexibility, space and even, ambiguity - to prompt domestic political debate on how to adapt and achieve the goals, since this debate is often central to the process of change.

- Be framed to cascade down to the national and local levels, providing a clear fulcrum around which domestic processes of decentralisation and accountability can operate.

- Prioritise the application of domestic resources through domestic budgets and institutions - as new resources are often necessary to embed reform, ensure institutional ownership, and compensate losers.

- Recognise the political salience of issues, such as public sector reform and the public availability of information on service delivery, which are central to political conflict.

- Build new coalitions of support, not just with national governments, but with vested interests including local and opposition politicians, teachers' unions and civil society.

In Nigeria, these conditions were not prescribed by the MDGs alone, but were supported by a combination of new resources, which were provided by the opportunity of debt-relief and committed political leadership. The SDGs should be framed to recognise the politically-contentious process of development, and provide new opportunities for policy reform and political ownership within developing countries. ∎

Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda

Erica Carroll
Policy Analyst, Christian Aid

The proposal, and general acceptance of, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal and more holistic approach to development, has been an important force in progressing the sustainable development dialogue, as well as serving to highlight the shortcomings of the MDGs. A clear understanding of the successes and failures of the MDGs is vital to the formulation of a comprehensive set of goals for sustainable, equitable global development beyond 2015.

Among civil society groups there are distinctly different opinions on how to move forward with these processes. Among those who are pushing for SDGs, there is concern that aligning with the post-2015 discussions at this point will impact civil society legitimacy (as the MDGs process had very little civil society consultation and

participation), and the 20 years of work that have gone into what are now coming together as a comprehensive of goals for sustainable development. There is also fear that the post-2015 agenda will just be an MDG+.

On the other side, the post-2015 groups are afraid that moving forward with SDGs now will lead to a weaker post-2015 development framework. There is a fear that the amount of political will and momentum necessary to continue with MDGs and the formulation of SDGs means there will be no energy left to ensure a comprehensive post-2015 agenda. The concern is that the SDGs, as they are being discussed right now, do not adequately address poverty eradication and that social outcomes are only a by-product of the focus on environment. To sum it up, there is clearly an 'us and them' mentality at the moment.

Christian Aid published a paper in 2010 analysing progress on the MDGs and looking critically at what must be included in the framework or set of goals that succeed them in 2015. The main messages that emerged from the analysis were that the next framework must have equality, sustainability, and democratic and participatory governance (accountability of all actors) at its heart. We believe this to also be the case with sustainable development goals. We have the opportunity now to work together to ensure we have the best possible framework for equitable and sustainable development in the context of a constrained world. ∎

MORE INFO: www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/policy/poverty-over.aspx

pic: Ryan Woo/CIFOR

Whose Blueprint Are We Using?

Mike Freedman
Writer and Filmmaker

The present paradigm sees sustainable development as ultimately an issue of sustainable economic growth. That growth model has reached a point of diminishing returns. There is burgeoning unrest worldwide. The price of basic foods and commodities is rising precipitously.

In 2011, the world's population passed 7 billion, en route to 9 billion by 2043 and 10 billion by 2085. These people need housing, food, water and education. The ever-increasing demand for these things locks each individual into a wrestling match, as education, jobs and money become outnumbered by those competing for access.

This growth, in economic terms, is fuelled by debt issued against future output. The existence of this debt requires ever more labourers and consumers to service the compounding interest. The result is an economic and political model which lionises ever-growing population without necessarily taking stock of that population's needs.

Half a million additional school places will be required in Britain by 2015; 2000 schools must be built. In Pakistan, seven million children are without a school place. The British government has pledged aid to construct enough school space for half that number by 2015, but that aid will mainly be spent on private sector education, not the underfunded, overwhelmed state schools.

The debt/growth endgame is clear in the dire financial situation of the world's developed nations. Birth control use and standard of living have risen while mortality and fertility rates have fallen. Many developed countries may see their populations peak, and even decline. The growth model sees a diminishing number of people as a catastrophe. However, the emphasis on throughput and averages in the current growth model serves only the statistical functioning of the economy on paper, not the actual life experience of the people to whom the economy supposedly caters.

What of clean water and basic sanitation? To quote the IPCC, 'many countries will shift from water surplus to water scarcity as a result of population changes alone between 1990 and 2025'. The most water-stressed parts of the world also have some of the highest fertility rates. What will happen as populations rise while the total available water remains the same or even diminishes?

The world currently produces two kilograms of food per person per day. Between now and 2050, food production will need to rise by 70% in order to supply the 2 billion additional people expected in that time frame, and to align with shifts in consumption patterns.

pic: Charlie Pye-Smith/ CIFOR

By 2035, if current trends continue, China will have the same per capita income as the US. If the Chinese in 2035 consume at the same level as Americans do now, they will require, 75% of the world's paper and 70% of the world's grain, at current levels of production, as well as 100% of the world's daily oil production, to run a fleet of over 1 billion cars on a paved area equal to 60% all China's rice fields.

The human population will grow by almost 50% over the next seventy-five years. This is as much a human rights issue as a practical one - in terms of the need for free and affordable maternal healthcare, contraception, reproductive health education and family planning services.

The challenge of development going forward is to redress the existing financial, material and social imbalances, without perpetuating the existing economic and political power structure which has led us to this point. To serve life, we must serve all life, not just ourselves. This requires a bottom-up reconstruction of the current system, not a prolonged argument over which lever on the runaway train we should pull first.

Mike Freedman is a writer and filmmaker based in London, England and a member of Population Matters, the UK's leading population concern charity (www.populationmatters.org) ∎

Sustainable Development Goals: MDGs 2.0?

Jean Letitia Saldanha
Policy and Advocacy Officer at the international alliance of Catholic development agencies CIDSE

The world is standing at a crossroads. Climate change, growing inequality, food insecurity, demographic change, resource constraint and the financial crisis, are complex and interrelated challenges that need to be addressed in order to realise the sustainable development agenda set twenty years ago in Rio. Building on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of 'Sustainable Development Goals' has been put forward as the instrument to fulfil this need. Yet there are important lessons to be learned from the MDGs to ensure that a future framework effectively delivers on the ambition to secure well-being for all human beings and nature.

Process and outcomes are equally important

The MDGs shifted the focus of development orientation from inputs to outcomes. The targets and indicators that are lauded for providing valuable development data and evidence of progress, do however have crucial downsides that cannot be ignored and the MDGs have been criticised for a number of factors including: oversimplifying processes and skewing priorities, encouraging a reductionist approach to complex problems, privileging quantitative indicators at the expense of qualitative ones, distorting research allocation, and undermining professional motivation and responsibility. The 'dollar a day' poverty line used to monitor progress on MDG 1 (halving global poverty) stands out as an example of this reductionist approach.

The outcome orientation of the MDGs has also led to a preference for interventions where the impacts can be adequately measured, neglecting development aspects where impacts are not so easily measured, such as more accountable local governance, protection of poorer or minority groups' civil and political rights, and enhanced possibilities for community-designed and managed initiatives. The prioritisation of certain areas over others has also had indirect impacts on aid, which the MDGs have directed towards particular social sectors.

The gender-blindness of the targets and indicators is another example of the failure of the MDGs to address the complexity of development. Gender-sensitive measures of progress - including access to and control of land, equality before law, incidence of domestic violence and rape, and access to health services - are prominently absent among the MDG indicators.

Integration of international human rights norms and standards

The MDGs have some links to the human rights framework, in particular Articles 25 and 26 (the right to health, food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR). MDG 8 implicitly reflects Article 28 of the UNDHR (an international order supportive of the implementation of Human Rights). However, the over-emphasis of certain outcomes, alongside the voluntary nature of the MDG framework - which is not linked to any institutional framework to ensure accountability - has seriously undershot universally held human rights norms and standards in their totality.

Placing goals and processes in a rights framework - such as the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - is essential to establish clear links between citizens' rights and governments' responsibilities.

Informed local ownership is crucial

The process of setting the MDGs has been criticised for not involving civil society or largely southern governments. It was driven by donor governments, building on the OECD's compact, Shaping the 21st Century: the contribution of development cooperation. Their implementation has also been largely top-down. CAFOD's 100 Voices: Southern Perspectives on What Should Come After the Millennium Development Goals, shows that this has resulted in great cynicism and suspicion of the goals by many development organisations in the south. John Batten from the Poverty Eradication Network in Kenya commented: 'When civil society is disempowered, country processes are very suspect; local processes only work if you have empowered societies. There is a big difference between just putting a structure in place and really going through a process to develop informed, engaged participation. You can't just go to communities that have been oppressed for 100 years and expect them to drive development agendas.' A process which is centred on informed local ownership may be slow, messy and unpredictable, but it is the best way to ensure relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. ∎

Why principles are important

Neva Frecheville
International Development Policy Advisor and Chair of Rio +20 Task Force for Beyond 2015

First off, the focus on meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 must be maintained. Working to achieve success within the current global development framework must be our collective priority; the lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world depend upon it. The MDGs have shown that a shared agenda for action can be effective. Despite massive inequalities across different regions and within countries, progress has been made: targets on income poverty, gender parity in primary education, and access to drinking water will most likely be achieved. Losing focus now would place those gains in danger. We can only expect a strong successor framework beyond 2015 if we try our utmost to meet the MDGs.

Secondly, two parallel processes – the SDGs process and the post-MDGs process that has already begun – which will only come together at the UN MDG Summit in 2013, risk two different post-2015 development agendas being developed, which would cost time and resources to pull together again. It would be both wise and prudent for these processes to align as soon as possible.

But now onto **principles**. Principles underpin any development framework that will shape the global agenda and we welcome the support for them shown by some member states, such as the G77 and Lichtenstein. This is our opportunity to come up with a meaningful basis for a global development framework, which is of real benefit to the world's poorest people, and brings about the sustainable development so desperately needed. This must be the starting point because in the shared home of our collective future, principles form the foundation; the process builds upon them; and the goals themselves are the roof. No house has ever been built from the roof down. We shouldn't rush goals to secure a political win from Rio.

The process of creation and implementation must be **inclusive,** embracing input from all stakeholders, at all levels. It is not enough to have an agenda driven by a small cohort of countries; the shifting geopolitics of our times require the input and ownership of all, with civil society respected active participants. If the overarching objective – 'the mother of all goals' – is poverty eradication, then we must stop seeing poverty only as an economic condition but also in terms of lack of access to information, exclusion from decision-making processes, and lack of agency and autonomy. The inclusion of those experiencing poverty and marginalisation is central to achieving the objective of poverty eradication and will prevent marginalised groups from being excluded again.

A focus on **equity** is essential to overcome a core weakness of the MDGs – their inability to address inequality, both between and within nations. Groups who

traditionally experience exclusion - such as people living in poverty, ethnic minorities, and communities in rural areas - can be overlooked without impeding nations from meeting overall targets. The MDGs also fail to address structural drivers and root causes of poverty, thus ignoring inequality between nations.

We can no longer ignore massive environmental crises or continue to mismanage trade-offs. It is time to respond to the complexity of global challenges holistically - bringing together the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Sustainable development is an interconnected whole, these dimensions are indivisible, and none – particularly not the environment – can be left behind.

A **universally applicable** framework needs to address structural drivers of poverty, recognising that high income countries have a role to play in sustainable development, particularly through sustainable production and consumption patterns. It also needs to recognise the role of emerging economies and enable countries to define their own development pathways based on country contexts, which will differ for LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and conflict/post-conflict states. The countries furthest from meeting the MDGs are fragile and conflict-affected. This is the foundation of the Rio process, of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities.

Rio+20 should seek to contribute to this ongoing process by delivering a clear and detailed vision of sustainable development; clearly defining the poverty and environment nexus; committing to a global mandate and guiding principles; and agreeing to a process that works in conjunction with other UN-led processes to develop a global development framework for beyond 2015 which will lead to fully elaborated goals that encompass the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable dimension. This would be a lasting and beneficial legacy from Rio +20. ∎

Disability must be part of a post-2015 development framework

A.K. Dube & Thomas Ong'olo

In July 2008, a group of 200 demonstrators presented a petition to the Vice President of Kenya. The diverse group was made up of people from South, West, North, Central and East Africa, representing a range of disability groups.

The petition expressed concern that disability is not included in any of the eight Millennium Development Goals, the 18 targets set out to achieve these goals, or the 48 indicators for monitoring their progress. The omission is a matter of concern because the MDGs encapsulate the development aspirations of the world, whose objectives encompass universally accepted human values and rights.

The prevalence of disability is about 15-18% and it is strongly associated with poverty. Disability and poverty form a vicious cycle - disability leads to poverty, and poverty creates the conditions that generate more disability. Disability also impacts on entire families' labour force, participation and schooling; therefore failing to address the barriers they face to escape poverty, seriously undermines the effectiveness of poverty eradication efforts.

Proposals for the inclusion of disability in the MDGs

- The Universal Primary Education (UPE) goal, due to its universality, indirectly includes Children with Disabilities (CWDs). However, of the 115 million children not attending primary school in the developing world, 40 million are estimated to have disabilities. The UPE goal cannot be achieved without reaching out to disabled children.

- The Goal of Free Primary Education (FPE) has received the most investment of trust funds and targeted intervention of all the goals, but to a great extent excludes children with disabilities.

- In relation to the Goal on the Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment, violence against women is an important cause of both psychological and physical disabilities, some of which – such as obstetric fistula - are particularly stigmatising.

- The Goal of Reducing Child Mortality must critically recognise that children with disabilities are at more risk of dying, not only because of life threatening medical conditions or lack of access to public services, but more so because in many cultures they are neglected or left to die, as a result of intense stigma.

- The Goal to Improve Maternal Health is a strong entry point to disability. Women with disabilities are more likely to be victims of sexual abuse and less likely to have access to public health information, making them at greater risk of unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other STDs. As with other disabilities, issues of stigma and reduced functional capacity are central. To effectively stamp out any epidemic, the entire population must be reached. The current outreach and education efforts are usually inaccessible by people with disabilities, despite the fact that they are expected to have higher rates of infection.

As we rally towards Rio+20, the post-2015 development framework must reach the world's poorest and most isolated citizens. This time, a different approach needs to be adopted. Poverty reduction efforts must move from rhetoric to reality, by targeting issues that affect people with disabilities (PWDs). Mainstreaming of disability in the post-2015 development framework should be seen as a rights-based demand, indicative of social, economic and political justice, not as a sympathetic gesture.

Inclusive development is the only way to ensure sustainable development. The rationale for including PWDs in development projects is not only a moral obligation, but a legally binding imperative in the rights based approach.

The post-2015 development framework must have inclusion at its heart, to enable an environment that embodies broad based knowledge of social issues and the ability to identify and find synergies, as well as a focus on solutions rather than problems. The use of evidence based research and showcasing of best practices is essential to push disability up in the development agenda. We must create social networks of people with disabilities and forge alliances with other sectors. ∎

News from the Negotiations - Synthesis of Plenary Sessions

Emma Puka-Beals, Bridget Brady, Ahdi Mohammed

Mount Holyoke College

Wednesday, 21 March

The morning session began with overarching comments and a suggestion by the G77+China that section V be divided into a Framework for Action and a Means of Implementation. The US, Canada and Switzerland agreed that all text on means of implementation should be moved to one place. Mexico warned against addressing specific issues, such as climate change, as these have their own consultation processes within the UN. The US, with support from the Republic of Korea, proposed that specific issues be moved to a compendium.

In discussing paragraph 63, the G77+China emphasised poverty eradication as its overarching objective for Rio+20, highlighting the achievement of the MDGs as essential in achieving sustainable development, with special note to women and children. Canada, Sweden and Norway all expressed their support for gender equity.

While the EU, Switzerland, Japan and New Zealand supported the G77+China's text on poverty eradication, they suggested moving it to sections I and II and integrating it throughout the document. Many groups expressed the concern that the G77's pre63 text on implementation gaps had an overly negative tone for the section.

The EU, Switzerland and Mexico supported text on a commitment to actions if this text were to be further clarified, while the US moved to delete this.

FOOD SECURITY

The G77+China referred to a rights-based approach to development, stating that the right to food is an objective of sustainable development. The EU expressed concerns over the G77+China's reference to "lifestyles in the developed world", and stressed that the document must address all countries with rising consumption levels and that issues faced by small-scale farmers and indigenous communities are global.

Canada proposed the reduction of market-distorting subsidies, initiating a dialogue on the phrasing of a statement on avoiding subsidies that cause market barriers. The US reserved remarks on "rights" to food access, and there was no consensus on whether fishers should be referenced as farmers or in regard to oceans. Members discussed the inclusion of sustainable livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, a global platform for food security, the right to access safe and nutritious food, and the importance of women in food and agriculture.

WATER

In the discussion of the subsection on Water, there was disagreement on the concept of the right to safe and clean drinking water. The G77+China and Israel preferred the originally drafted rights-based language, while the US and Republic of Korea expressed hesitancy and confusion over the concept of the right to water, and Canada and New Zealand preferred the proposed language referring access, rather than rights, to water.

Japan was opposed to the proposal by New Zealand regarding the pricing of water for the efficient distribution, arguing that there is a no one-size-fits-all policy for water resource management.

ENERGY

In approaching this section the G77+China again emphasised that its primary goal was poverty eradication, and that its primary agenda item on energy was universal access. The G77+China expressed its view that improving energy access is a fundamental responsibility of governments, while Canada bracketed national support in implementation and the US referenced a number of red lines in implementing energy access for all. Norway expressed the view that developing and implementing low-carbon strategies could occur nationally, but that the bulk of investments will have to come form the private investment.

The EU recognised the need for accountability and commitments on sustainable energy access, and Iceland supported measurable goals. The G77+China and Japan referenced the need for consistent language and clear definitions of terms. ∎

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