



## Post-2015: the road ahead

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## Executive summary

There is broad consensus that at least part of the objective of any new post-2015 agreement is to end poverty, and in doing so, to finish the job set out in the UN Millennium Declaration. Given this objective, how broad should a post-2015 agenda be, and how deeply should it go into the different factors which drive poverty and development?

Most would agree that ending poverty as defined by the current MDGs should form part of the post-2015 agreement. Information about those households who remain in extreme poverty, from household surveys, participatory research and opinion polling, provide useful insights into how a new agreement could be constructed to tackle the problems they face.

Building on this information, together with the 12 years of experience of the current MDG agenda, suggests several lessons:

1. **Inclusion:** Approximately two-thirds of those currently living in extreme poverty are from ethnic minorities within their own country. A specific focus on inequality and the most excluded throughout the new goals would ensure that policy attention and resources are focused on the poorest.
2. **Solving today's problems in health and education:** Building on the current MDGs in these sectors could involve focusing on quality and outcomes as well as access to services; the danger of perverse incentives and undermining systems when designing targets; new trends in the burden of disease.
3. **More jobs, less risk:** The existing MDG agenda on incomes and nutrition could be adapted to emphasise the huge importance of inclusive growth and employment in eradicating poverty; the continued concentration of extreme poverty in rural areas; the need to support poor people to cope with risks and shocks.
4. **More connections:** Improving infrastructure of all types is a key requirement for reaching other goals, as well as an important issue in its own right. This could include targets to incentivise reduced resource use in some areas, such as energy.

A second option would be to expand an agreement still focused on ending extreme poverty to include other key aspirations of poor people, not covered in the current MDGs. These might include improving people's personal security, or their ability to participate in making the decisions that affect their lives. For a post-2015 agreement, this could involve the inclusion of new targets on security and political freedom for individuals, and/or greater transparency and accountability through the choice of indicators for new goals or targets on other development outcomes.

A third, even more ambitious choice, would be to add other objectives, beyond addressing extreme poverty, to a new agreement. This could include adding some environmental goals or targets to a new post-2015 agreement. To this, some propose adding goals on institutions and governance or national level security issues. Including either of these issues would address parts of the Millennium Declaration that were not addressed by the current MDGs, and would involve a shift away from an agreement which focuses on improvements in the lives of individuals to one which tackles pressing global challenges.

How this debate is resolved depends ultimately on how the political consensus develops. What this political consensus has to deliver is an agreement which has political traction and which addresses the key problems that a post-2015 world must tackle.

## 1. The destination: the Millennium Declaration

The MDGs are underpinned by the UN's Millennium Declaration, a lofty and ambitious document which set out some key aspirations for the world at the turn of the millennium. Among these were 'development and poverty eradication'; and it is here that the MDGs first appeared, in a slightly different form, as specific resolutions under that heading.

But this was not the only objective of the Millennium Declaration. As well as eradicating poverty, the Millennium Declaration committed the world to achieving 'peace, security and disarmament', 'protecting our common environment' and 'human rights, democracy and good governance'. None of these last three had the same quantitative targets of the development section, which is perhaps one reason why they have joined the ranks of forgotten UN resolutions.

One way to look at the post-2015 process is to see it as constructing the implementation plan for the Declaration to cover the next 15 years of the millennium. If the MDGs represent the first, most urgent and most achievable set of issues, what should be the priorities for the next fifteen years in order to make progress on these objectives?

This is the heart of the post-2015 argument. There is some consensus – but also a great deal of disagreement. There is considerable agreement that ending poverty as defined by the current MDGs is a priority for the next fifteen years, and consensus that this should form part of the post-2015 agreement, though the precise targets and indicators required are by no means agreed.

There is then a debate over whether as our understanding of poverty has improved over the last twenty years or so, mainly informed by the views and experiences of poor people themselves, the objective of 'ending poverty' should be broadened to include other dimensions that poor people consider to be important in defining their situation, such as their sense of personal security, or their ability to participate in making the decisions that affect their lives.

While there is consensus over poverty eradication, though not over exactly what that implies, there is less consensus over whether other issues, which can also be linked to the objectives of the Millennium Declaration, should be added to this list. There is already a decision, following the Rio conference, to include an element of environmental goals in a new post-2015 agreement. To this, some propose adding goals on governance or security issues, reflecting the commitment in the Declaration to human rights, democracy and good governance as an aspiration for all people, not just the poorest.

How this debate is resolved depends ultimately on how the political consensus develops and what turns out to be possible. This paper sets out a series of considerations covering these different parts of the debate, in order to inform the design of whatever goals are eventually chosen. It looks first at progress on the current MDGs, then considers new data on the households who remain in extreme poverty to draw some lessons on how a new agreement should aim to finish the job on the poverty agenda as defined by the current MDGs<sup>1</sup>. Expanding the poverty agenda to include new areas of concern to poor people is a second option discussed, followed by the implications of expanding the agenda beyond extreme poverty to include some new global objectives such as environmental sustainability.

## Part 1: The first destination - poverty according to the existing MDGs

### 2. Where have we got to?

The current MDGs summarise an approach to tackling poverty based on what people have – incomes, food, and access to essential services. A huge amount has been achieved on this agenda since 1990, the year which was established as the baseline for the current MDGs. Globally, there has been progress towards all of the seven key MDGs (income poverty, primary completion, gender equality in education, nutrition, child mortality, maternal mortality, and water). For three of these (income poverty, gender parity in primary education and water), progress has been sufficient that the targets set in 2002 for achievement by 2015 are likely to be met at a global level. Three will be nearly met (nutrition, primary completion and child mortality), and just one (maternal mortality) is lagging very far behind the target<sup>2</sup>.

The MDG targets were agreed at global level and some of the original architects argue that applying them at national level is misleading and unhelpful<sup>3</sup>. However, it is perhaps inevitable that they have been applied at national level since that is where accountability lies. At a country level, half of countries will meet the income, education, gender and water MDG targets and a quarter to a third of countries will meet the targets for nutrition, child mortality and maternal mortality.

It is important to note that the MDGs did not incentivise a particular focus on the poorest or the hardest to reach. Progress towards the targets is expressed as national averages which can mask sometimes quite large inequalities within countries<sup>4</sup>. In some cases, progress is concentrated among the better-off in a given country. Research by Save the Children found that in some cases progress on child mortality, for example, was achieved nationally even where the poorest saw no change, and occasionally, as in Burkina Faso, an increase in death rates.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1: Summary of global MDG progress**

	Improvement since 1990?	'Distance progressed to global goal' (100% = goal attained)	On Track?
Poverty	Y	80	Y
Undernourishment	Y	77	N
Primary Education	Y	90	N
Gender Equality*	Y	96	Y
Child Mortality	Y	69	N
Maternal Mortality	Y	57	N
Drinking Water	Y	88	Y

Sources: Kenny and Sumner<sup>6</sup> (2011), Leo and Barmester (2010), World Bank (2011) and authors own estimates based on World Development Indicators and Hogan et. al. (2010) data. Notes: \*Represents the proportion of developing countries for which the appropriate data is available

### ***Absolute and relative progress on the MDGs***

Progress on the MDG targets is calculated in a relative sense, and each country has its own starting point. The target on infant mortality, for example, was to reduce the global infant mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. Whatever the original intentions, they were adopted by governments, donors and NGOs as national level targets, with the assumption that each country

should be looking to reduce its own IMR by two thirds in the same period. This means very different things depending on the starting point. Vietnam, for example, had an IMR of 56 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990, and has reduced that to 15, thus achieving the MDG at a national level. Compare that with Malawi, which started the 1990s with an IMR of 209 per 1000 live births, and had reduced this to 111 by 2007. Malawi has not achieved the MDG target at a national level, and yet in absolute terms has reduced its IMR by more than Vietnam (41 children out of every 1000 were not dying in Vietnam by the end of the period, compared with 98 in Malawi).

Progress on the MDG targets is normally calculated on a relative level, as they demand. But when absolute progress across all the MDG targets is set aside relative progress, the top performers at a national level look quite different:

**Table 2: Absolute and relative progress on the MDGs, top 10 achievers**

Absolute progress	Relative progress
Benin	Ecuador
Mali	China
Ethiopia	Thailand
Gambia	Brazil
Malawi	Egypt
Viet Nam	Viet Nam
Uganda	Honduras
Nepal	Belize
India	Nicaragua
Cambodia	Armenia

Source: ODI, 2010, *Millennium Development Goals Report Card: Measuring Progress Across Countries*, London

It is partly for this reason that there is a strong case to be made for creating national or at least regional targets for new goals to take into account countries' very different starting points, and to make new targets more useful for national monitoring purposes. If this were to be done, it would be useful to have clear criteria to establish targets – such as identifying suggested ranges for new targets based on country classifications or other criteria, a clear time frame in which they should be agreed, and a baseline which every country would be expected to meet, to prevent the development of targets from becoming a political football within countries and from leading to inequalities between countries<sup>7</sup>.

### 3. Who is still poor?

The global achievement on the MDGs has been impressive, and is the result of decades of work and commitment by governments, NGOs, academics and foundations, and of the individual decisions of millions of individuals and companies that have generated the economic growth which has fuelled poverty reduction.

But not everyone has benefitted, and there is still a job to do. If a post-2015 agreement will be at least in part about finishing the job that the MDGs started, then we need information from and about the people who have not benefitted from the progress toward the current MDGs so far, in order to design appropriate targets to reach them in the next fifteen years.

Two sources of information can help with this. Firstly, empirical data from household surveys and other sources about the characteristics of people who are still living in extreme poverty. Secondly, information from poor people themselves about how they define their situation and what they see as the priority actions required to change it.

While data is still limited, the regular household surveys undertaken as part of the DHS exercise can shed some light on the characteristics of those who are being left behind by progress on some key MDGs, and the regular polls undertaken by a number of countries can help to indicate how people in different countries view policy priorities.

On the data side, the table below illustrates some key facts about households in low and lower-middle income countries who remain extremely poor in terms of nutrition (MDG1), education (MDG2), and health (MDGs 4,5 and 6).

**Table 3: The composition of poverty in LICs and LMICs (% poor in each group of all poor), 1998 vs. 2007**

Classification	Subgroup	Education poverty		Health poverty		Nutrition poverty	
		1998	2007	1998	2007	1998	2007
<b>All poor households</b>	<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Type of place of residence</b>	<b>Urban</b>	15	17	18	22	17	18
	<b>Rural</b>	85	83	82	78	83	82
<b>DHS Wealth Index</b>	<b>Lowest</b>	30	35	27	28	27	31
	<b>Second</b>	27	27	24	24	25	25
	<b>Middle</b>	21	20	21	21	21	20
	<b>Fourth</b>	15	13	17	16	18	16
	<b>Highest</b>	7	6	11	12	10	8
<b>Education of household head</b>	<b>No education</b>	58	58	46	43	48	48
	<b>Incomplete primary</b>	20	20	18	17	17	14
	<b>Complete primary</b>	8	8	12	12	10	9
	<b>Incomplete secondary</b>	9	10	13	19	15	22
	<b>Complete secondary</b>	3	2	5	6	5	4
	<b>Higher</b>	2	1	4	4	6	3
	<b>DK</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Occupation of</b>	<b>Did not work</b>	48	35	47	35	52	42

<b>household head</b>	<b>Prof. / Tech. / Manag.</b>	1	1	1	2	1	1	
	<b>Clerical</b>	0	0	1	1	0	1	
	<b>Sales</b>	6	8	8	11	4	5	
	<b>Agriculture</b>	35	40	32	35	31	35	
	<b>Household &amp; Domestic Services</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	
	<b>Skilled Manual</b>	1	3	1	4	1	3	
	<b>Unskilled Manual</b>	6	10	7	10	6	13	
	<b>DK/Other</b>	4	1	3	2	4	1	
	<b>Ethnicity of household head</b>	<b>Ethnic Minority groups</b>	0	1	0	1	0	0
		<b>Largest Ethnic group</b>	71	69	72	69	70	72
		29	32	28	31	30	28	

Source: Sumner, A. (forthcoming), The New Face of Poverty? Changing Patterns of Education, Health and Nutrition Poverty in Low and Lower Middle-Income Countries by Spatial and Social Characteristics of Households, 1998 vs. 2007. IDS Working Paper (Estimates processed from DHS datasets).

Although any aggregated attempt to assess the changing pattern of poverty across low and lower middle income countries is an inherently imprecise exercise, estimates based on aggregating DHS surveys suggest the following four broad lessons for how to end poverty after 2015:

1. Three quarters or more of the extremely poor live in rural areas (a proportion which is higher in low-income than in lower-middle income countries). Polling data<sup>1</sup> suggests that, not surprisingly, among the rural population, agriculture and food security loom large as priorities for governments to tackle. And for people living in rural areas, particularly in Africa, infrastructure is frequently cited as one of their top policy priorities. The persistence of rural poverty over time indicates the importance of creating incentives for a stronger policy and funding focus on agriculture and infrastructure in a future agreement aimed at ending poverty, raising incomes, integrating rural areas more closely into national economies and improving service delivery.
2. Just under half of the extremely poor live in households where the head has 'no education'. While this confirms the continuing importance of improving access to education as part of a post-2015 agreement, the fact that just over half of the extremely poor live in households where the head has some degree of education illustrates that education is not providing the route out of poverty which was hoped. This is particularly true in lower-middle income countries, where a larger proportion of extremely poor people live in households where the head has some education.

This may be related to other issues such as lack of economic growth and jobs, but also reflects concerns about the quality of education as well as access. Polling data indicates that poor people do not rank education as their highest policy priority, but that it frequently features among the top 3 concerns. The combination of poll and empirical data suggests a need for the debate to move on to issues of educational outcomes rather than attendance, and of

<sup>1</sup> All polling data in this section comes from the excellent analysis of Afrobarometer, Latinobarometer and Asiabarometer surveys in Leo, 2012



expanding global ambitions to secondary education.

3. A third of the extremely poor live in households where the head is 'not in work'. While this shows how important simply creating jobs is to ending poverty, the fact that two thirds live in households where the head is in work (of which about half work in agriculture and half in other sectors) also indicates that the quality of jobs is key. Around one in three people polled in Africa, Latin America and East Asia cited jobs or income related issues as their most urgent concern. This proportion is much higher among specific groups, particularly young people in Africa and low-income households in Latin America, and it is similar in fragile states, where jobs are even more of a concern than security. However, a post-2015 agenda will need to consider not just creating jobs, but creating jobs which are productive enough to put an end to poverty.
4. Two thirds of extremely poor people live in households where the head is from an ethnic minority group. While this finding should be viewed as tentative due to data constraints, it points to the need to consider national level inequalities and social exclusion as a key part of a global plan to end extreme poverty.

## 4. The roadmap to the end of extreme poverty

Given what we know about the people who live lives of extreme poverty, and what they see as the priorities for action, what does this imply for how to end poverty, and what, in turn, might that imply for a new agreement which focuses on finishing the job on extreme poverty, as defined by the current MDGs?

### ***4.1 There is still a job to do on health and education – but the job is a bit different to what we thought***

Nearly half of households who remain extremely poor on these three dimensions are headed by someone with no education, and progress on getting children into school has slowed down despite impressive achievements over the lifetime of the MDGs. However, the fact that over half of the extreme poor live in households where the head has some education also illustrates the urgency of the debates over educational quality and learning outcomes.

It is well known that attendance at school does not necessarily reflect adequate learning, and there is an argument that the existing MDGs produced something of a perverse incentive to elevate quantity over quality in the provision of education. There is growing consensus that a new agenda should add quality to the existing quantity goals to drive educational progress in the right direction. What is important is that the debate does not become a choice between the two.

However, the data show that it is not until the household head has completed secondary education that the proportion of extremely poor in each category drops below ten per cent. While the focus on primary education, both quantity and quality, is important, it does not in itself provide the route out of poverty for many people. A significant number of African governments are calling for a new post-2015 agreement to also focus on secondary and even higher education, and what we know about who remains extremely poor adds weight to that call<sup>8</sup>.

In health, the existing MDGs focus both on outcomes – child and maternal deaths – and on specific communicable diseases. The debate around post-2015 is essentially one between these two approaches – there is one argument for adding new disease categories, particularly non-communicable diseases given the greater global burden of NCDs expected over the coming years.

However, NCDs are not yet major killers of the poorest people, with nearly two-thirds of all deaths among the poorest twenty per cent of the world's population from communicable diseases; while in the richest twenty per cent only one in ten die from communicable disease. By contrast, just over a third of deaths in the poorest twenty per cent were from NCDs, while among the richest quintile the figure is nearly 90 per cent<sup>9</sup>.

A focus on specific diseases, communicable or non-communicable, has been criticised for encouraging a 'vertical funding' approach, where donors and policy makers focus on specific disease goals at the expense of developing robust health systems. There is, therefore, also an argument for focusing more on general health outcomes or systems – narrowing down to some outcomes such as maternal health or stunting which are a good proxy for all outcomes, or on systems indicators which are likely (though not certain) to have a positive effect on outcomes overall<sup>10 11</sup>.

Given the likely need to reduce the number of health goals, there is something of a choice between the two. In terms of finishing the job of the MDGs and eliminating absolute poverty from the world, communicable diseases would seem a more urgent priority than NCDs. However, an overall health outcome measure, or an indicator of the effectiveness of health systems – if a suitable indicator could be found – could be a more effective way of providing governments and health providers with the flexibility needed to adapt to circumstances, without being constrained by the vertical funding from donors which followed the adoption of disease specific targets.

The predominance of people in rural areas and of ethnic minorities among those left behind by progress on both health and education indicates the importance of integrating an equity focus and incentives to focus on the hardest to reach and the most excluded, if the aim of a new agreement is to finish the job on the MDGs<sup>12</sup>. Simply choosing a new, even if a technically better, set of targets, will not take us all the way. Setting all targets at zero or one hundred per cent is one approach to this, as governments will not reach them without reaching the most excluded<sup>13</sup>.

But the experience with the current education target, which is set at 100 per cent attendance, illustrates that this is not quite sufficient – there are still huge equity issues relating to attendance and to quality in the education sector, even after 12 years of a 100 per cent target. One way these could be dealt with would be to provide a specific requirement to monitor equity through indicators on progress on the bottom ten or twenty per cent.

This would also be more appropriate for areas such as secondary education – where a universal target would be unfeasible in the likely lifetime of a post-2015 agreement, but where equity issues should nonetheless be built in<sup>14</sup>. An advocacy effort would be required to ensure that this happened – experience with the existing MDGs shows that the more complex and demanding indicators (including equity indicators) are often effectively ignored.

***Summary: finishing the job on health and education will involve***

- Tackle inequality: Focus on the most excluded, socially and geographically, through both targets and indicators
- Tackle primary education: Maintain a focus on access, while also addressing quality issues
- Tackle secondary education: Targets which recognise the importance of secondary as well as primary education
- Tackle the health problems of the poorest: Maintain a focus on communicable diseases, though possibly through an outcome target rather than disease specific targets, to prevent perverse incentives and incentivise a systems approach.

***4.2 There is an even bigger job to do on income and nutrition, and the job is quite different to what we thought***

The income target in the current MDGs is very likely to be met, mainly thanks to explosive growth in China and to a lesser extent India, which has generated many millions of low-skilled jobs. However, this still leaves half the job of ending poverty undone, since the original target was to reduce the proportion of people on less than \$1.25 a day by half. Eradicating extreme income poverty requires paying attention to the other half. This is partly about economic growth and creating jobs – key drivers of success so far, but given recent trends in both growth and distribution, it may also involve a policy focus on income inequality. At current trends,

growth rates would have to be consistently high over many years in many countries to end extreme income poverty through growth alone<sup>15</sup>. As with health and education, a new target on inequality as part of the effort to end income poverty could help to galvanise action at national level.

While the income target may be met, the nutrition target - the other component of MDG1 – is almost certain to be missed. Progress on nutrition was already lagging behind progress on income, and the food price spikes of 2007/8 and 2011, combined with continued price volatility at a national and local level, have put the target even further out of reach. Those 'left behind' by progress on the nutrition component of MDG1 are almost evenly divided between the non-working, and agricultural workers, with between thirty and forty per cent of the extremely poor in these two categories. Manual workers – both skilled and unskilled – comprise around 10 per cent of the extreme poor.

This suggests two priorities for a post-2015 agenda trying to bring resources and policy attention to bear on finishing the job on the income and nutrition components of MDG1. Both imply a shift in focus toward longer term development and economic growth and transformation, rather than the more short-term, aid based poverty agenda traditionally associated with the MDGs. This is very much in line with what many governments and civil society organisations, particularly in Africa, have been saying in debates around post-2015<sup>16</sup>, and with the proposal of the UN Task Team on post-2015 for 'inclusive economic development' to be a key part of a future development agenda<sup>17</sup>.

First, creating jobs is still key (and does in fact have its own, often ignored, target within MDG1). The huge priority put on jobs by poor people in survey after survey shows the extent to which jobs remain the key route to a more prosperous and secure future for individuals and households, and suggests making jobs and employment issues more visible in a new set of goals, together with a new focus on more inclusive growth processes which will be more job-creating.

Secondly, focusing on the high proportion of the extremely nutritionally poor who work in agriculture will have to be part of a new agreement. This in turn suggests a further two priorities: enabling rural to urban migration and raising productivity and therefore wages or earnings in agriculture. Changes between the 1990s and the present indicate that the working poor in agriculture comprise a higher percentage of the extreme poor now than they did fifteen years ago. However both agriculture and the role of urbanisation have to date received very little attention in post-2015 debates. Urbanisation tends to be seen as a problem to be solved, and agriculture predominantly through the lens of nutrition and increasing food production, rather than raising incomes overall.

What, then, should a post-2015 agenda be on incomes and nutrition? While there is a strong degree of consensus that greater attention should be paid to creating more jobs, how this could be achieved in practice is far from clear. Growth and employment policy are very firmly an issue for national government policy, and the problems faced by individual governments depend strongly on the context<sup>18</sup>. It is not always clear what a global agreement could add in this area. Depending on the level at which they are pitched, new goals or targets could be used to incentivise global change in specific areas, such as trade or migration, or to drive policy thinking and resources at national level.

Global or national targets on, for example, increasing the proportion of the population in secure employment, or the wages of the poorest, could focus political attention and provide a focus for national level advocacy. More specifically, targets or indicators could be included on agricultural productivity (possibly also with indicators on resource use in agriculture to

encourage sustainable development paths in this sector) or reducing restrictions on internal migration, if these were barriers to the reduction of rural poverty in particular contexts.

More ambitiously, a global agreement setting out targets for reforms in the areas of trade, migration, technology transfer or financial regulation could lead to specific changes in these key areas which would remove some of the global level barriers to progress on productive employment. It might be possible to identify some parts of these otherwise difficult agendas which would be possible to agree – a target for temporary migrants offering specific skills, for example<sup>19 20</sup>.

What is clear is that whatever the policy, the main driver of job creation and income growth remains the private sector, with around 90 per cent of new jobs created by private companies. There is much debate over what the role of the private sector should or could be in a new post-2015 development agreement. It is clear already, with the appointment of two private sector representatives to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on the post-2015 agenda that the private sector will have a role in building the new agenda. In part this will be about companies contributing to the discussion about what external factors are barriers to their expansion and job creation, and suggesting reforms and related targets. It may also involve companies taking on some specific obligations, most likely on a voluntary basis – such as by having their own targets or by embedding new goals into their internal reporting systems<sup>21</sup>.

***Summary: to finish the job on incomes and nutrition will involve***

- Tackle unemployment: Focus on creating more jobs, and raising earnings from employment for the poorest
- Tackle poverty among the working poor in agriculture: Raising earnings in agriculture and facilitating rural to urban migration
- Tackle income and nutritional inequalities within countries.

#### **4.3 There is a new job to do on infrastructure**

The vast majority of the world's extremely poor still live in rural areas. For them, the provision of adequate infrastructure is absolutely crucial to ending poverty. Two things are key: water and energy to make life in rural areas safer and more productive, and access to transport and to communications technology to open up the world beyond the farm or village and allow more trade, easier migration, and the faster spread of information – all key to progress on existing MDGs, as well as being important goals in their own right. The existing MDGs have targets on water and sanitation, but nothing on energy, transport or communications.

There are growing calls from governments too for a greater focus on infrastructure in any new post-2015 development goals. This comes both from developing countries who feel that the lack of attention on infrastructure has compromised their attempts to end poverty, and from new development partners such as China and Brazil, who place greater emphasis on this sector in their development cooperation policies.

Since DHS data do not report on infrastructure, the exact dimensions of poverty in this area are not clear. However, the very high proportion of the 'left behind' who live in rural areas, together with existing data which shows that provision of almost every type of infrastructure is worse in rural areas, implies a strong role for infrastructure in finishing the job on existing MDGs.

A post-2015 agreement which contributed to mobilising resources and to ensuring that infrastructure projects were planned with the objective of ending poverty rather than providing high-prestige and visible legacies for governments would help to finish the job on almost all the current MDGs, and meet the aspirations of poor people themselves for whom access to infrastructure is a crucial priority. Lack of access to infrastructure, and energy in particular, is also one of the constraints on growth frequently identified in business surveys in Africa – giving it a special place in the strategy for achieving MDG1 in particular.

In addition, in bringing together the MDG and the SDG agendas, infrastructure is a key place where the focus of resources and political attention on both development and sustainability issues at the same time can make the difference between infrastructure strategies that are sustainable (such as energy projects based on renewables, transport strategies based on public transport), or those which lock countries into unsustainable development paths over the long term (such as a reliance on new coal-fired power stations for meeting energy needs).

In doing so, goals on infrastructure can also help to bridge some of the political divides in the post-2015 agenda, such as between countries most focused on the need to grow and diversify their economies, and those more focused on expanding the agenda to include environmental objectives. This may be one area where expanding the range of issues can help, rather than hinder, the making of an agreement.

***Summary: finishing the job on the MDG agenda will involve***

- Tackle access: Targets to increase access for poor people to all types of infrastructure
- Tackle sustainability: Targets to incentivise the development of an environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

## Part 2: going further, adding new poverty goals

The MDGs reflect an understanding of extreme poverty based on the state of research and thinking in the 1990s, simplified into a set of goals. However, since the MDGs were designed in the 1990s, there has been a change in how poverty is understood and researched by the non-poor. As well as data on incomes, educational attainment and other material aspects of poverty, there is an increasing understanding that poverty has social and emotional aspects too. Ending poverty will require more than just reaching the existing MDGs, since these do not encapsulate poor people's understanding of what poverty is and how they experience it.

Poverty as poor people actually experience it is not just about a material lack of income, or a physical condition of ill-health or lack of education. It is also about social relationships and how people feel – feeling unsafe, feeling powerless or feeling a sense of humiliation in everyday social interactions are important aspects of poverty that need to be understood in their own right. Ending poverty as poor people understand and experience it will involve tackling these problems too – and would form a part of a post-2015 poverty eradication agenda that was informed by current understanding and analysis. There is therefore a good case for adding these dimensions to the definition of extreme poverty which a new agreement would be trying to end, and adding new goals or targets accordingly.

### 4.4 There are new jobs to do on security and political freedoms, as key aspirations of poor people

Experiences of crime and violence are not systematically captured in household surveys, so it is difficult to draw general conclusions from data. But it is clear that insecurity at a country level is both a cause of poverty, and a barrier to eradicating it – by some estimates, by 2025 the majority of extremely poor people in the world will live in insecure places<sup>22</sup>. Even if the post-2015 agenda is confined to poverty eradication, there are reasons to focus specifically on security concerns within it. Twenty-two of the 34 countries most off-track on the current MDGs are either in or recently emerging from conflict.

It is also clear from numerous participatory surveys and from opinion polling that in many regions concerns about crime and violence are close to the top of poor people's lists of anxieties, and an end to crime is key to their understanding of how to end poverty<sup>23</sup>. In some countries, concerns about crime and violence also come close to the top of issues raised in national opinion polling<sup>24</sup>. However, individual security is absent from the list of current MDGs.

Crime is notoriously hard to measure, in every society. Some of the most common forms of violence, such as domestic violence, suffer from the least adequate data. There are some proposals for the post-2015 agenda based on the work of the Geneva Declaration on reducing armed violence, both in conflict situations and more broadly, and a broader range of possible indicators focusing on specific experiences of crime, such as gang related violence, homicide rates or human trafficking<sup>25</sup>. This could form the basis for future goals aimed at meeting poor people's aspirations for greater security for themselves and their possessions<sup>26</sup>.

The World Bank's 'Moving out of Poverty' study found that for poor people, empowerment, including participation in local government institutions, was a key element of successful strategies for escaping poverty<sup>27</sup>. The experience of the 'Arab Spring' demonstrated again how powerful people's individual aspirations for political freedom can be. Again, these elements of poverty are not captured in the current MDGs. While empowerment is a difficult, though not impossible thing to measure, other proxies, for instance political freedoms such as freedom of

speech and association could be included as goals or as part of the preamble to a new post-2015 agreement<sup>28</sup>.

An alternative or complementary approach would be to build in more transparency and accountability into the monitoring of other goals, potentially increasing the accountability of governments to the users of public services, the extremely poor among them<sup>29</sup>. There is momentum behind this approach – through the Open Government Partnership, 45 countries are already delivering on new commitments to improve domestic transparency, such as major legislative changes on access to information about public services and public expenses in Brazil. Indicators on transparency and accountability, and community level monitoring using new technologies could be part of a new set of goals on health, education and other services. This would not be a magic bullet, as evidence is mixed about the impact of these initiatives on outcomes, and on empowerment in the long run, but it would be part of meeting people's political aspirations through a post-2015 agenda.

The politics of agreement on both security and political reforms are tricky. In some states, there is a sense that the two are in opposition – that a prerequisite of offering people personal security is to keep political conflicts to a minimum through limiting participation. It is partly due to the difficult politics around these twin aspirations, that they have been neglected elements of the poverty agenda. Reaching agreement on including them would not be easy, but would be important in ending poverty as defined by poor people themselves.

#### **Options for new goals:**

- Tackle violence: Goal on armed violence or other indicators for violence
- Tackle crime: Goal on rates of crime, including sexual assault/rape
- Tackle political freedoms and participation: Goal on political participation and freedom of association, speech
- Tackle accountability: build transparency and accountability indicators into targets on health, education etc.

#### **4.5 There is a new job to do on resilience and risk**

Ending poverty permanently involves not just moving people above a certain level of income, health or education, but also ensuring that they stay there. There are one billion people living above \$1.25 a day, but below \$2 a day, who are all likely to be vulnerable to sudden shocks which could push them back below the extreme poverty line<sup>30</sup>. While not currently part of the MDGs, building in targets which focus policy attention and resources on allowing people to deal with the risks and vulnerabilities which are an inherent part of the experience of poverty is important.

Risk takes many forms, and environmental disasters are one. Since the early 1990s, around 4.4 billion people have been affected by natural disasters, and this can only increase with the impact of climate change on the severity and frequency of hazards<sup>31</sup>. For individuals, a disaster can mean a loss of assets, health problems, and social disruption. A target on resilience, properly framed, could encourage governments and donors to establish systems to maintain incomes and social service provision following natural disasters<sup>32</sup>. A target on disaster risk reduction is also a possibility, but would be hard to monitor given the variability in disaster losses over time, making trends hard to establish and improvements hard to demonstrate.



For many poor people, social and economic risks are also part of everyday life. Illness, unemployment, theft or other disasters can push households or individuals back below the poverty line. Providing security is a key part of making poverty reduction last over the long term.

A stable job offers this security, and is one reason why jobs are so high on the priority list for poor people. But in the absence of stable jobs, or in cases where illness or other crises interrupt people's working lives, a functioning social security system, including health care, education and cash transfers, is a core part of ending poverty permanently. Health and education have their own MDGs, but cash transfers to provide vulnerable people with the financial security they need to stay above the income poverty line are absent from the current MDGs. The revolution in cash transfers that has been spreading throughout the developing world happened after the current MDGs were agreed, but given the growing evidence of their link to positive outcomes in a range of areas, and the increased understanding of the role of risk and vulnerability in creating and maintaining poverty, it would be surprising if they were not reflected in the new post-2015 agreement.

#### **Options for new goals:**

- Goal on resilience with targets and indicators relating to different types of shocks
- Goal on disaster risk reduction
- Target on cash transfers within income goals to accommodate risks to income.

#### **4.6 Implications for post-2015**

There's a long list here of essential components of a post-2015 agenda aimed at finishing the job started in 2000 in the new context of 2015. Probably too long. But the evidence points to five essential components of a new agreement focused on finishing the job on extreme poverty and in doing so meeting the aspirations of poor people:

- ***Inclusion:*** A specific focus on inequality and the most excluded throughout the new goals
- ***Solving today's problems in health and education:*** Adapt existing health and education goals to reflect: the importance of quality and outcomes as well as access to services; the danger of perverse incentives and undermining systems when designing targets; new trends in the burden of disease
- ***More jobs, less risk:*** Adapt existing income and nutrition goals to reflect: the huge importance of inclusive growth and employment in eradicating poverty; the continued concentration of extreme poverty in rural areas; incorporate the need to cope with risks and shocks either as part of income goals or as a separate goal
- ***More connections:*** Include new targets on infrastructure of all types as a key enabling issue
- ***More safety and freedom:*** Include new targets on security and political freedom as key aspirations of poor people, and/or greater transparency and accountability through the choice of indicators for new goals or targets on other development outcomes.

This could be done through both goals and targets, to prevent an unwieldy and unfocused number of goals in a new agreement, and it is likely that choices will still have to be made within this list to ensure that a new agreement has the same political impact as the current MDGs. But in order to end poverty as poor people understand it, and to tackle the actual

problems of those who have been left behind by progress on the current MDGs, all are essential components of a new agreement.

#### **Extreme poverty or universal goals?**

A focus on poverty does not necessarily have to mean a focus on extreme poverty alone. While the discussion above has focused on an extreme poverty agenda, issues such as access to and quality of social services, or unemployment and productive work, are close to the top of the poverty agenda in all countries. It would be a short step to make targets universal by having a cascading set of targets appropriate to different groups of countries. Proposals for such targets have been developed in the water and sanitation sector, to ensure that all countries are incentivised to improve the quality of and access to water, and they could easily be imagined for other sectors: for health, progressive increases in life expectancy, or the range of treatments offered through universal services; for income, universal achievement of first the \$1.25 per day and then the \$2 per day and higher poverty lines, through to the relative poverty lines targets used in the UK and other OECD countries, and so on.

### **Part 3: Travelling beyond extreme poverty**

The Millennium Declaration, the basis for the whole endeavour of the MDGs, aspires to more than development and poverty eradication. It also commits the UN's member states to 'protecting our common environment' and 'human rights, democracy and good governance'. There is a live debate about the extent to which each of these three issues should be included in a new post-2015 development agreement as separate objectives, to add to the extreme poverty agenda.

The overarching questions are twofold. Firstly, the extent to which a new framework moves from one which focuses on specific improvements in the lives of individuals – be that in the form of improved health, higher incomes or better education – and one which looks also at the context in which those improvements happen. And, secondly, the extent to which a new framework moves beyond an extreme poverty agenda and starts to tackle global problems – such as environmental damage or insecurity – not simply because of their impact on the extremely poor, but because of their impact on the whole world.

#### **New objectives: democracy and governance**

Since the MDGs were agreed in 2000, interest in and concern with the links between politics and development have grown rapidly. Breakdowns in politics – in the case of conflict and state fragility, are clearly linked to poor development outcomes. Beyond those extremes, there is much controversy over the extent to which specific aspects of politics, such as corruption or data transparency, are linked to positive or negative development outcomes. What is less controversial, in particular since the Arab spring uprisings of 2010, is that political freedoms are an important aspiration, in their own right, for individuals and groups, whether poor or not.

However, the political difficulties with translating these insights into a global agreement remain acute. Alongside the commitment to 'human rights, democracy and good governance' the Millennium Declaration contains an unequivocal statement on the 'sovereign equality' and 'political independence' of all member states, and a commitment to 'non-interference in the internal affairs of States'. To some extent these two elements of the Declaration are in conflict with one another.

Apart from the focus on individual freedoms and transparency as part of an absolute poverty agenda described above, a further option is to have actual goals on governance focusing on the operation of institutions, which would potentially have salience well beyond the extremely poor. There could be goals for domestic resource mobilisation, for the existence of anti-corruption laws and practices, for open recruitment practices, or a host of other things related to the effective operation of government institutions. Some existing global initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership could form the basis for a global approach, but the politics would be immensely difficult.

Related to this, the 'Peacebuilding and Statebuilding goals' developed by the G7+ group of countries, already have significant political traction and targets and indicators are currently being developed. While these are currently focused in particular on fragile states, a review of these and other proposals for security goals by the advocacy group Saferworld finds that there are a number of common characteristics to proposals for peacebuilding or security frameworks, which imply a wider governance agenda which could apply to a wider range of countries. These include a focus on governments which can effectively manage revenues and perform core functions, equity between social groups in access to services, political participation and access to justice and personal security<sup>33</sup>. These potentially extend far beyond a focus on the extreme poor, and encompass changes to whole governments, affecting all the people within the states' borders and many beyond.

### ***Democracy and governance: key options***

- New goals on governance and targets at level of national and global institutions and processes
- Expand existing work on security and peacebuilding goals and integrate into new agreement.

### **New objective: sustainability and environment**

Despite lip-service paid to ‘sustainable development’, the two tracks of development and environmental protection have remained separate in global politics for many years. The decision made at the Rio Conference in June 2012 to launch a negotiation process on ‘sustainable development goals’ is an opportunity to bring them back together. Clearly there are significant overlaps between these issues. Dirty development causes climate change, climate change impacts poor people, and the health of ecosystems and availability of environmental resources shapes economic growth and well-being. If current trajectories continue, climate change will shortly begin to undermine the last 50 years of development gains<sup>34</sup>.

However, the history of trying to link development and environmental objectives through actual policy initiatives is not encouraging. ‘Sustainable development’, a concept originating in the Brundtland Report of 1987, has become the mantra in global policy circles since the first Rio conference in 1992, but it has had remarkably little impact on actual policy. Despite much academic work and many innovative ideas in this area, the two have remained stubbornly separate on the terrain of politics and implementation.

The politics of the two are very different. While development policy is about accelerating existing trends towards growth and rising levels of human development, both of which are politically popular, environmental sustainability is about reversing current trends, and involves less popular political decisions. The scale of economic and social change required to reverse environmental degradation, particularly in rich countries, is also far greater than that required to bring about development – further increasing the political difficulty of doing so.

Despite these political difficulties governments are now mandated, following the Rio conference, to agree a single set of global goals bringing together environmental and development objectives. But what this means is very far from agreed.

One possibility is for goals to be agreed on global objectives such as preserving clean oceans, maintaining forest cover and reducing carbon emissions, or even changing consumption patterns as with the proposal for Millennium Consumption goals<sup>35</sup>. These targets could be developed following the nine ‘planetary boundaries’ identified by the Stockholm Environment Institute which together make human life on earth possible<sup>36</sup>. Monitored at global level, the task would then be to allocate the resources and the changes to their use that would be required to ensure a fairer distribution of finite resources between today’s rich and poor countries. It is exactly this task which has paralysed the efforts of the UNFCCC to agree a global deal on curbing carbon emissions, so the prospects of non-enforceable goals achieving significant change must be limited. They might, however, if they could be agreed, serve as new global norms to slowly change the political consensus in the way that human rights agreements have done over half a century<sup>37</sup>.

A second and more limited approach would be to develop targets for poverty reduction that also incentivise reduced resource use at either global or national level. The ‘Sustainable Energy for all’ proposal stands as a good example. The single goal on universal and sustainable access is followed by global targets relating directly to both poverty (universal access to modern energy sources) and sustainability (doubling the rate of improvement of energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix). While the poverty targets would mainly be met through changes in

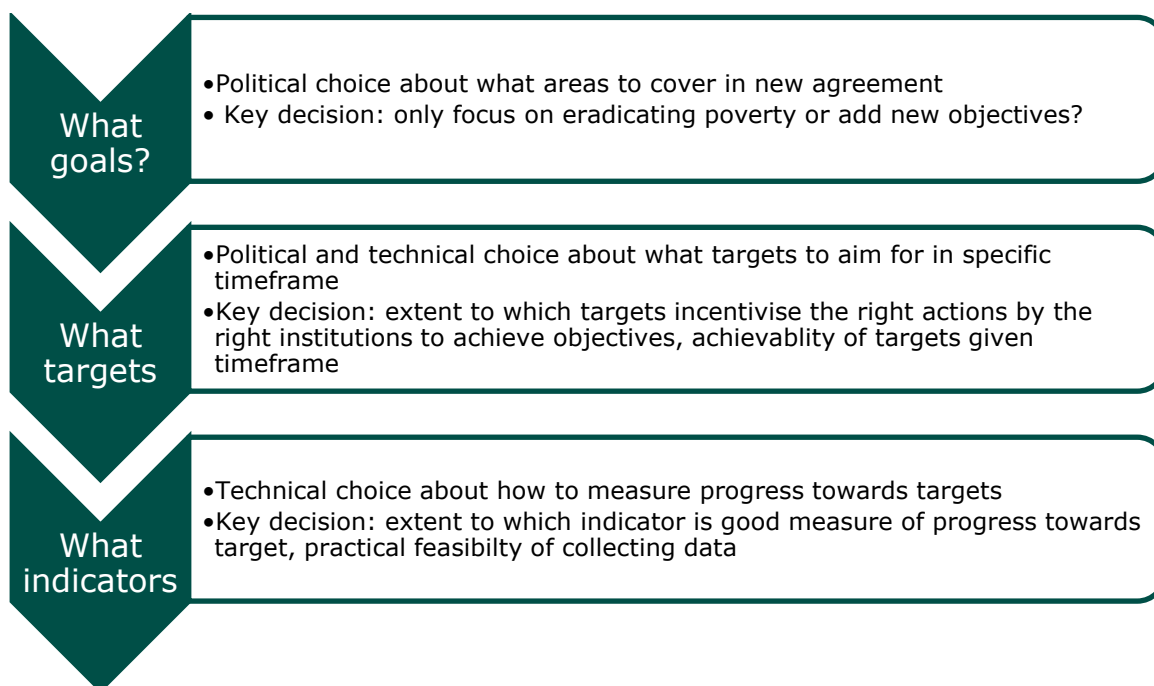
the lives of people in developing countries, the sustainability targets would depend on changes in lifestyles and technology in today's rich countries. Other possible areas that might be politically ready for the development of similar goals and targets could be water and sanitation, or food and nutrition. In both cases, a target for universal access could be combined, in 2015 or at a later date, with a target for reducing natural resource use.

***Environment: key options***

- Goals which focus on global objectives (oceans, forests, global consumption targets, planetary boundaries)
- Targets within development goals to incentivise sustainable development paths (energy, water, agriculture).

## Part 4: Is there a map?

This paper has set out options, mainly for the choice of goals and some targets in an eventual post-2015 agreement. The road to a new framework is long and will be determined mainly by the politics. But there are a number of choices to be made along the way, and illustrating what they are could help to signpost the way to an agreement.



## Part 5: the road ahead

The MDGs have taken the world part of the way toward the aspirations contained in the Millennium Declaration. How much further we should hope to get in the next fifteen years is in part a technical and academic question, informed by current trends and likely changes. However, it is also a political challenge. How much commitment is there to ending the exclusion and inequality which drives extreme poverty? How much will governments accede to people's aspirations for greater openness and lives that are more secure? Will some governments agree to limit the carbon emitted by their populations in order that people in other countries should be able to meet their aspirations for universal access to energy? Will governments be prepared to reform their tax systems to raise the resources needed to provide access to basic healthcare for their whole population?

If a post-2015 agreement sticks only to the technical and is entirely written with an eye to extrapolating current trends, it can be argued that the value added of the agreement will not be very great – it will simply be committing the world to what would be likely to happen even in the absence of an agreement. But, at the other extreme, if it contains aspirations or goals that are wholly unattainable or politically unfeasible, it will not, on its own, be able to change those realities and will also fail to deliver any extra results to those who need it.

The political and technical job is to strike a balance between these two extremes, and in doing so to add value and improve outcomes compared to a world without an agreement. This paper has set out various options currently on the table for ending extreme poverty and for expanding the agenda to include other objectives, based on the analysis of the problem remaining to be solved and the different proposals put forward for doing so. The task now, for politicians and for analysts alike, is to sift through, test and prioritise between them to come up with a coherent yet concise agenda for the post-2015 world to tackle.

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