Chapter-1

**MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

The arrival of new millennium is an occasion for celebration and reflection. At the dawn of new century, the international development community, spearheaded by the United Nations, reflecting on its success and failures concluded that development to date has not brought the promised improvement in equality around the world.¹ In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the leaders from 189 member countries of the United Nations re-affirmed their commitment in the Millennium declaration to a set of eight goals. These eight goals, known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are internationally agreed time-bound and quantified targets for achieving, in most cases by 2015, the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equally and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other major diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development.²

1.1. Origin of Millennium Development Goals

Although international relations and international trade have existed for many hundreds of years, it is only in the past century that international development theory emerged as a separate body of ideas.³ The antecedents can be found stretching back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” (Freedom from want) speech of January 1941 & to the Declaration of Human Right of 1948 and its stipulation that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health & wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medicinal care”. The

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¹ “We the Peoples” The Role of United Nations in 21st Century, United Nations Department of Public Information Network, p1.
³ International Development Exchange (2009). (www.index.org)
launch of Marshal Plan was another important step in setting the agenda for international development, combining humanitarian goals with the creation of a political & economic bloc in Europe that was allied to the United States.4

The 1960s were declared unanimously in the general assembly to be the first UN Development Decade, sparking off a rash of target setting, but enthusiasm to set targets ran ahead of commitment to action. Processes for monitoring targets & mechanisms for producing plans of action were not created and the results often fell far short of the rhetoric.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the stalling of global summitry and goal setting and a dramatic change in the global intellectual environment. The United Nation’s influence waned, while that of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) increased as they imposed structural adjustment policies on a number of poor countries coming to them for loans. Towards the end of 1980s, more and more evidence began to emerge that structural adjustment and the associated conditionalities were not delivering on the promise of growth and prosperity and that the fiscal restraint they called for were damaging education, health & other essential services. This was particularly true in Africa and Latin America.5

With the wisdom of hindsight, 1990 can be seen as a pivotal year. In response to World Bank& IMF, various parts of the UN system led a counter movement, which in the long run has proved to be successful. They were led initially by International Labor Organization (ILO), influenced by Paul Streeten, then by the UNICEF. Then United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), even though headed by a conservative United States’republican, put forward the concept of human development, thanks to MehboobulHaq and AmartyaSen, thus changing the nature of the development dialogue to focus on human needs and capabilities. The UNDP published the first Human Development Report, which amplified the message that poverty was on the agenda and made the case for a broad-based conceptualization of poverty and poverty reduction.6

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The World Bank published the “World Development Report” 1990, which reviewed the poverty reduction and indicated that poverty was now a rehabilitated concept, having previously been marginalized within the Bank.

Subsequent years saw the re-activation of UN Summits and conferences, thus providing the foundation for UN Millennium Development Goals. Four such meetings were held in 1990: The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien), The UN World Summit for Children, the UNCTAD Conference on the Least Development Countries, and a Conference on Drug Problems. While Jomtein appears to have followed the established model of ministers of education waxing lyrical about extending primary education for all by 2000 and then flying off; Children’s summit broke the pattern, UNICEF not only advanced an agenda for improving the lives of the world’s children, but re-energized the processes of summittering, and in several respects, provided the model for subsequent summits. Bradford writes that the development of the MDGs has its roots in the World Summit for Children in 1990. The Summit set specific goals for infant, under-five & maternal mortality, universal access to and completion of primary education, improvements in adult literacy, reduction in malnutrition and universal access to safe water and sanitary services.

The next major meeting was the “United Nations Conference on Environment and Development”, known as the “Earth Summit” or “Rio Summit” held in 1992 in Rio De Jenero, Brazil. This was successful in mobilizing public attention on Environment but failed in its grander objective of reaching a global consensus on issues such as climate change and deforestation. The Rio summit was one of the events at which the women’s movement began to build its lobbying skills & greatly strengthen the impact it could have on UN conference declarations. Over the next few years, the movement was an unofficial but major player at such gatherings and utilized mechanisms such as, the ‘women’s caucus’ and ‘feminist prepcoms’. It was followed, in December 1992, by the International Conference on Food and Nutrition in Rome. This had a much lower

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public profile and appears to have followed an earlier conference pattern, with unanimous commitments to ‘freedom from hunger’ but little systematic follow-up. However, one of the targets it set, halving the number of hungry people in the world, would come to prominence in the MDGs. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, reaffirmed the commitment of UN members to human right & fundamental freedom and set off the process leading to the establishment of the office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. In terms of The MDGs, it reaffirmed the principles that underpin them but, by the very nature of the human rights discourse, it is broad and comprehensive.

Another important event for the MDG process came in the form of International Conference on Population & Development (ICPD) at Cairo in 1994. Like the Earth Summit, this was a programmed event following on from the 1974 & 1984 UN conferences, but it was given extra ordinary energy by its chair, Dr.NafisSadiq, Director of UNFPA and a lifelong advocate for family planning. However, the inclusion of ‘development’ in its title, for the first time, indicated that it planned to move on from the earlier agenda. The ICPD discussions proved to be much broader than the previous conferences, which had assumed that population control was the primary goal and had concentrated on demography & family planning. At Cairo, debates became heated, as many delegates adopted rights-based approaches, promoting ideas of sexual & reproductive health and women’s empowerment.¹¹

The year of 1995 was the peak year of Summitry, with the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in March and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing only six months late. With an unprecedented 117 heads of state and governments attending the Summit at Copenhagen, the final declaration was never going to be radical, but it did have exceptional legitimacy. The Summit was structured around three pillars- poverty reduction (from a multi-dimensional perspective), employment,& social integration- but it was the first out of these that dominated the discussion. Indeed, the UNDP refers to Copenhagen as a giant step forward with the new political commitment to eradicate poverty. However, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) felt that the summit failed to challenge the consequences of

economic globalization. In their view, it tackled the symptoms & not the causes of poverty. The NGOs’ concern that the declaration was not radical enough, and the related concerns that the declaration was non-binding, should not obscure the evidence of impacts in a relatively short period of time. The UNDP soon restructured its programmers so that poverty reduction was their overarching goal and the UN declared an international year for the Eradication of Poverty in 1996 (This became a decade the next year). While the social development summit may not have achieved binding goals for poverty eradication, it clearly had a profound impact on multilateral and some bilateral programmers, which increasingly began to define their development role as poverty eradication or reduction.12

Beijing was an altogether a different affair. Eyben interpret it “as not just another UN conference, it was a conference that represented a momentum, arguably the movement that the transformational approach to gender relations had the greatest chance”. The energy and drive released at the conference, however, was not reflected by its ultimate impact on global targeting exercises. It did not engage with economists, who are the dominant technical analysts of development policy; and its focus on rights & social relations does not lend itself to goal setting and performance management.13

After this peak in 1995, the UN summits continued- with the second UN Conference on Human Settlement (known as Habitat) in Istanbul and the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996. However, despite significant progress in each summit, there was a sense of overload, over engagement and summit fatigue with too many recommendations on too many subjects. The agora for global target setting was about to shift from the vast and diverse UN Jamborees that moved from continent to continent to much smaller, formalized meetings- mainly of men from industrialized countries- in Paris, at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD’s) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).14

13 Ibid. p 601.
1.1.1. From Summit Declarations to Lists of Targets: DAC Launches a Document, \textit{Shaping the Twenty First Century: The Role of Development Cooperation}. 

National leaders and ministers were making grand promises at global summits in the mid-1990s, but aid agencies around the world had a big problem. With only a few exceptions, their budgets as a share of GNI were in decline and total levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) were in long term decline. The right wing governments in power in many industrialized countries placed a low priority on aid. Even Clinton, the newly elected Democratic President of the United States, was committed to a ‘…number one priority…’ of reducing the US fiscal deficit and, foreign aid had to share the cuts. The cold war was over, so there was no need to use foreign aid to buy allies in poor countries.\textsuperscript{15} The following figure shows the decline in ODA from the DAC countries as percentage of GNI to developing countries:

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\textit{Figure 1: ODA from DAC countries as Percentage of GNI, 1960-1995}


For the donor club the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC), declining aid budgets were a particular problem. The atmosphere at the Chateau de La Muette where the DAC was holding its high level meeting on 3-4 May, 1995 was gloomy, with many delegates talking about ‘aid fatigue’ and lack of public support for long-term development. At the meeting, the delegates approved a document that had been produced over the last year, \textit{Development Partnership in the New Global Context}.\textsuperscript{16} Building on a review of the achievements of aid, it argued that development


cooperation is an investment, rather than an expenditure, that successful strategies could be identified, that poorer countries lacked the resources to promote job-creating growth and social cohesion, and that rich countries needed to increase aid, make it more effective and efficient, make their overall approach to development more coherent. This was a competent document, but it did little to change the mood of the meeting. As each delegate offered their praise for the document, many also offered their support to the European Union’s proposal to set up a Group de Réflexion with a view to review the future of development aid and the role of the DAC. The meeting ended with support for the idea of a Groupe de Réflexion.¹⁷

Three years later, the Groupe de Réflexion was launched at a breakfast meeting of the OECD ministerial event. The Groupe did not yet have a big idea, but it understood that it needed to come up with something that would appeal to politicians, would be understood and supported by OECD publics, and would contain a vision of the future that would mobilize action. The Groupe met several times over the next year to discuss ideas and drafts. It was supported from the DAC Secretariat. One task allocated to these ‘Junior bureaucrats’ was to draw up a list of the declarations agreed at UN summits & see if these could be pulled together into something more coherent.¹⁸

1.1.2. Framing of International Development Goals: Responses and progress

Following intense last minute negotiations, the final document “Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation” was launched at the High-level Meeting of Ministers of Development Cooperation of 6-7 May, 1996. The final document was 20 pages long, but it could be easily summarized by a simple listing of its “International Development Goals” (IDGs) that all OECD members had approved.¹⁹

The IDGs launched in the Document are:

1) Economic Wellbeing: The proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries should be reduced by at least one-half by 2015;

¹⁸ Phil Evans, DFID, January 1, 2007.
2) **Social development**: There should be substantial progress in primary education, gender equality, basic health care and family planning, as follows:

- There should be universal primary education in all countries by 2015;
- Progress towards gender equality & the empowerment of women should be demonstrated by eliminating gender disparity in primary & secondary education by 2005;
- A reduction by the two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants & children under age five and a reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality all by 2015;
- Access through the primary health care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015;

3) **Environmental Sustainability & Regeneration**: The current implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global & national levels by 2015.\(^{20}\)

The IDGs were successful in attracting media attention in Europe and the US, however, the governments of developing countries had little or no recognition for *Shaping the 21st Century* and the IDGs. This was not surprising as *Shaping the 21st Century* did not have a plan of action and it was a collective document that belonged to a set of minor ministries or agencies in the rich countries. The DAC Groupe meetings did not involve “shadowing” or “lobbying” from NGOs & social activists.

The responses of the major multilaterals varied. The IDGs registered at the World Bank but appear to have had little impact at the IMF. The education specialists at the Bank were pleased to see the apparent commitment of bilateral donors to educational goals: this should improve resource availability for their sector. By contrast, at the IMF, the IDGs and *Shaping the 21st Century* seem barely to have registered. Some saw the emphasis on social development as part of a “European Model” that countered the Fund’s focus on economic growth through liberalization &

\(^{20}\) Ibid. pp 9-11.
the need for fiscal prudence. The IDGs would only impact on the Fund if its major shareholder, the US, decided it wanted to promote such a vision.\footnote{C. Bradford, (2002). \textit{Towards 2015: From Consensus Formation to Implementation of the MDGs – The Historical Background, 1990-2002}. Mimeo. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute.}

The response of NGOs varied, depending on their goals & ideological orientation. Broad-based development NGOs still engaged in their confrontation, with structural adjustment and conditionality, could take satisfaction in an agenda that included several World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goals & incorporated ‘social development’ as a core component. For issue-based NGOs, the response depended in the treatment of their issue. ‘Save the Children’ might be pleased with universal primary education and reduced child & infant mortality goals, but there was little in the IDGs for the older persons that HelpAge International assists. Environmental NGOs saw a confirmation of the Rio Declaration and a further acceptance of the arguments that development and poverty reduction had to involve environmental goals. NGOs concerned about reproductive health rights were pleased to see their main goal in the text, but women’s NGOs, and more broadly the social movement for gender equality, were livid at the watering down of the gender goal.\footnote{A. Saith, (2006). ‘From universal values to millennium development goals: Lost in Transition’. \textit{Development and Change} 37(6), 1167-1199. pp 49-53}  

\subsection*{1.1.3. Preparing for Millennium Assembly: ‘We the Peoples’ and Millennium Declaration}

Drawing up the IDGs had unleashed a genie- the idea that an authoritative list of concrete development goals could be drawn up and used as a mechanism to rapidly reduce global poverty. By the late 1998, the progress of the IDGs was much more than delegates at the May 1995 High-level meeting of DAC might reasonably have expected when they had debated establishing a Groupe de Reflexion. The UN was now about to energetically re-enter the game of global target setting. During 1998, it had started to lay plans for the “Millennium Summit of the United Nations’, ‘the mother of all summits’, to be held in New York in September 2000. The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan was well aware that an event that happens only once every thousand years creates an unprecedented opportunity to raise ambitions and open up political space for key issues that have not made enough progress. He was keen to put UN reform
forcefully back on the agenda and a series of meetings with member states and NGOs were held to select topics that should be the focus of the Millennium Assembly and of a Millennium Declaration.23

Over the following period, international agencies, NGOs and activities began to try to shape the process and the content of the Millennium assembly. Individuals, organizations & networks strove to get the declarations they valued in to the Millennium Declaration in September 2000. The pressures on the Secretary-General and the UN Secretariat were enormous, especially as the United Nation’s ‘50th Anniversary’ summit in 1997 was widely judged to have been unsuccessful. Kofi Annan thought carefully about how to ensure that the Millennium Assembly would produce a coherent declaration. He decided that he would take responsibility for this by producing a document for all UN members, and the global public, to examine. He appointed his senior advisor, John Ruggie, a distinguished US academic, to prepare the drafty document. He had to craft a document based on the UN conferences and summit declarations, to which all UN members would agree. This became, ‘We the Peoples’.

On 3 April 2000, Kofi Annan launched “We the peoples: The Role of United Nations in the 21st century”. The object of the Report was to provide the gathering at the Millennium Summit with a basic document to work from. Poverty eradication was the leading global issue for the Report. The document was very different from the DAC’s Shaping the 21st Century. It was much longer, at 80 pages and it covered a much wider range of topics, with major sections on globalization and governance, conflict & renewing the UN. A comparison of the goals prioritized in We the Peoples and those in Shaping the 21st Century and the Human Development Report 1997 reveals a number of goals that have disappeared or have been watered down and others that appeared on Annan’s listing, but not in the DAC listing. There are three big losers—gender equality and women’s empowerment, reproductive health and more generally the goals for the health sector. In addition, the 20:20 vision proposal was not rehabilitated in We the Peoples. Arguably ‘the winners’ were economic growth,
technology, the setting of goals for rich countries, the environment and the highlighting of Africa’s problems.24

The launch of *We the Peoples* provided a strong indication of the best deal for the global poor that Kofi Annan thought could be achieved at the Millennium Summit. Inevitably, it attracted a variety of responses, some of which could be parried by the document’s length and ambiguity. With different sets of priorities identified in its executive summary and conclusion, with six grand overarching principles and with 80 pages of text, anyone concerned that their priority issue or goal had not been adequately covered could usually be referred to some part of the text. Renewed effort came into action to get omitted goals on to the list, especially for the women’s empowerment and reproductive health advocates who were the most obvious large group that was strongly dissatisfied. Apart from keeping the UN’s membership on board with his proposed goals, Annan needed to find a way of demonstrating that he was coordinating UN agreements on global poverty reduction with those of other big players - the World Bank, IMF and the OECD. He did this by signing up to the DAC’s IDGs, which already had Bank and IMF endorsement.25

1.1.4. From “We the Peoples” to the Millennium Declaration & Millennium Assembly

Over summer 2000, there were frantic negotiations about the final text of Millennium Declaration. There was a particular focus on what would go into the specific goals that would be spelt out, as these seemed likely to attract publicity, policy changes and resources. The position of OECD, and virtually all of its members was clear - they would like to see the IDGs as the goals. For other parties - other UN member states, NGOs, social movements, Private business - preferences varied with their interests & values. Networks of many different types - formally structured and loose coalitions, single issue and multiple issue, conservative and radical - sought multiple channels to advocate their issue or challenge issues over which they disagreed. The details of the myriad overt and covert final negotiations are not public knowledge, but by contrasting the concrete goals identified in *We the Peoples* and the Millennium

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Declaration, a partial understanding of the process shaping the final agreement can be glimpsed.\textsuperscript{26}

To deal with these last minute compromises, the UN civil servants involved appear to have developed a particularly subtle but useful device- they divided the resolution into two paragraphs. Paragraphs 19 – ‘we resolve further’- include the items that are to go forward to the plan of action (The Secretary- General’s ‘road map’) that would follow the Millennium Assembly. Paragraph 20- ‘We resolve further’- lists agreements that will not go forward as concrete item for implementation.\textsuperscript{27}

**Extreme poverty:** This remains the first goal, but shifted from having a single target to having three targets. This involved the merging of goals 1&2 from *We the Peoples* and the addition of IDG’s Hunger target.

**Education:** This goal remains identical to *We the Peoples*, reflecting the global consensus on universal primary education since the 1960s and the initial negotiating success of the UN member states concerned about the explicit targeting of ‘gender equality & the empowerment of women’. However, the gender equality and women’s empowerment appears in paragraph 20- ‘We resolve further’- a second class form of resolution.

**Infant, child & maternal mortality:** The inclusion of these goals was the most dramatic change between *We the Peoples* & the Millennium Declaration. They had a deep pedigree (resolved at the International Conference on Population and Development, reaffirmed at Beijing and Copenhagen and incorporated in the IDG), strong support from the powerful gender equality & reproductive health lobbies, & the World Bank, WHO and the UNICEF were very strongly behind them. This vast support had meant that even the strong objections of the unholy alliance were overruled. It appears that as long as the reproductive health goal was left out of the final document and no mention made of reproductive & sexual health rights, a UN consensus could be maintained.

**Major diseases:** *We the Peoples’* sole focus on HIV/ AIDS has been broadened to include ‘malaria and other major diseases’.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. p 34
Improving the lives of slum dwellers: This goal proceeded from We the Peoples to the declaration without modification.

Decent work for youth: This goal slipped from being on the main list to paragraph 20 for unclear reasons.

Benefits of new technology: This goal experienced a similar fate; it slipped from main listing to paragraph 20.

National policies & programs for poverty reduction: The final goal of We the Peoples listing fell off the declaration. It did not even manage to slip into paragraph 20.

The special needs of small island states & landlocked developing countries: Paragraph 17 & 18 reiterated the agreements of specialist UN summits that ‘the international community’ support these two groups of countries in overcoming the specific problems they face.

Goals for rich countries: We the Peoples had taken the highly significant step of listing goals for rich countries- the types of policy change they would have to make to support global poverty reduction. These goals were included in the Millennium Declaration but none of these goals is specific in terms of specifying deadlines for its achievement. In particular, a goal for the additional resources that the rich countries will contribute to the fight against global poverty is not included in the Declaration.

The additions, deletions and compromises discussed above worked – The Millennium Declaration was unanimously approved on 8th September, 2000, following short speeches from most of the world’s heads of state & government affirming their commitment. The Millennium Assembly had been a success. This was the most important re-affirmation of the values of the UN at the dawn of the 21th century. The Millennium Declaration approved by the representatives of 189 UN member states – including 147 heads of state & Government clearly demonstrated the mood of the leaders regarding the further role of the United Nations.28

1.1.5. The Millennium Declaration

The adoption of the *Millennium Declaration* in 2000 by 189 Member states of the UN General Assembly was a defining movement for global cooperation in the 21st century. The Declaration sets out, within a single framework, the key challenges facing humanity at the threshold of new Millennium, outlines a response to these challenges and establishes concrete measures for judging performance through a set of interrelated commitments, goals and targets in development, governance, peace, security & human rights.

The Declaration reaffirmed the faith of the world leaders in the UN and its charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous & just world. It commits world leaders as having a duty to all people especially, the most vulnerable and in particular the children of the world to whom the future belongs. It ensures that globalization becomes a positive force for all people.

The declaration has set out clear direction in each of the following areas for member states to follow:

(1) **Values & Principles**

The declaration considers certain fundamental values to be essential to international relation in the twenty first century. These include:

a. *Freedom*: Men and women have the right the live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger & free from fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best also ensures these rights.

b. *Equality*: No individual & no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal right & opportunities of men & women must be assured.

c. *Solidarity*: Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the cost & burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equality & social justice.

d. *Tolerance*: Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture & language. A culture of peace & dialogue among all civilization should be actively promoted.

e. *Respect for nature*: Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable
development. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interests of our future welfare and that of our descendants.

f. Shared Responsibility: Responsibility for managing worldwide economic & social development, as well as threats to international peace & security must be shared among the nation of the world & should be exercised multilaterally.

(2) Peace Security and disarmament

The leaders pledged in the declaration that they will spare no efforts to free people from the scourge of war, whether within or between states, & will also seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

(3) Development and poverty eradication

The leaders agreed to spare no effort to free men, women & children from the abject & dehumanizing condition of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. The leaders declared that they are committed to making the right to development a reality for every child and to freeing the entire human race from want.

(4) Protecting our common environment

The declaration spells out that the leaders must spare no efforts to free all of humanity, and above all children & grandchildren, from the threat of living in a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs.

The leaders reaffirmed their support for the principles of sustainable development, including those set out on Agenda 21, agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development and agreed to make every effort to ensure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol preferably, by the tenth anniversary of United Nations Conference on Environment and development in 2002.
(5) **Human Rights, democracy and good governance**

The leaders agreed in the declaration that they will make every effort to promote democracy & strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. In this direction, the leaders made a pledge to respectfully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to combat all forms of violence against women & to works collectively for more inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.

(6) **Protecting the vulnerable**

In the declaration, it was written that the leaders will spare no efforts to ensure that children and all civilian populations that suffer disproportionately the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflict & other humanitarian emergencies are given every assistance and protection so that they can resume normal life as soon as possible.

(7) **Meeting the special needs of Africa**

The leaders declared to support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication & sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the main stream of the world economy.

(8) **Strengthening the United Nations**

The leaders resolved to spare no effort to make the United Nations a more effective Instrument for pursuing all of these priorities:

- The fight for development for all the peoples of the world, the fight against poverty, ignorance & decreases;
- the fight against injustice; the fight against violence, terror and crime; and
- the fight against the degradation & destruction of our common home.  

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1.1.6. From Millennium Declaration to the Millennium Development Goals

The unanimous approval of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000 set the stage for the next task of defining the specific goals & targets for development before allocating tasks to different multilateral organization and raising the funds for achieving these goals. A follow-up resolution to the Declaration called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to issue a “road map” describing in detail how these commitments would be fulfilled. The United Nations secretariat subsequently convened consultations among members of the secretariat and representatives of the IMF, OECD, The World Bank, UNDP and UN specialized agencies. This group, known as Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG indicators (IAEG), held a meeting entitled ‘From Consensus to Action’: A seminar on the International development goals in Washington DC, from 19-21 March 2001.

Efforts by high-level technical experts from DAC and the UN organizations, which were tasked with harmonizing IDGs and the Declaration’s goals at the World Bank meeting in March 2001, finally resulted in the adoptions & publication of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Negotiations resulted in defining the goals in clear & quantifiable terms. To a certain extent, IDGs formed the basis of MDGs, with the clear exception of the issue of reproductive health, which proved to be politically unacceptable to some important UN member countries. However, gender equality and women’s empowerment, although presented primarily through the channel of educational access became an explicit goal.

A significant addition to the Millennium Declaration was MDG 8, which highlighted the responsibilities of developed countries in achieving the universal development targets. Although, discussions over the latter countries’ aid & debt relief commitments had already taken place, no explicit goals had yet been set. The MDGs technical team identified seven targets & 17 indicators for goal 8.

To help focus national & international priority setting, the group agreed on goals, targets & indicators that are limited in number, stable over time, and communicable to broad audience. The group identified a subset of 18 politically agreed commitments, which they categorized under eight over-arching “goals”. The 18 commitments were labeled as “targets”. Ten out of the 18 targets were quantitative in nature and nine out of ten set a deadline for 2015, the exception being the slum dweller target for 2020. The 18 targets were later expanded to be 21, based on 2005 intergovernmental agreements. Following the seminal outcomes of the 2005 UN World Summit, the MDG targets were updated in 2006 to incorporate the intergovernmental agreements from that event. The summit outcome led to four adjustments: Three new targets and one revised target. First, a target to achieve universal access to reproductive health was added under Goal 5 for maternal mortality. Second, a target to achieve universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment by 2010 was added under Goal 6 for infectious diseases. Third, a target to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 was added under Goal 7 for environment. Fourth, the original target 16 for employment was tweaked to include the world summit agreement to, “achieve full & productive employment and descent work for all including women & young people”, and was relocated from Goal 8 on global partnership to more logical goal for ending extreme poverty. Besides 41 “Indicators” were added that could be used to track progress on the goals & targets. The indicators have since evolved through a valiant technical process whereby expert staff aligns ongoing improvements in data systems with the political agreements of world leaders. As of now 60 indicators have been added to track progress towards goals In the period between the 2000 Millennium Declaration and the 2001 formal branding of the MDGs, the one substantive adjustment made by UN officials was to identify a 1990 baseline for all the 2015 targets. The 1990 baseline was identified for two reasons. First, the statistical experts pointed out that data for 2000 were not yet available for a wide range of countries, and were not likely to be for another few years. Referencing the year 1990 allowed monitoring efforts to begin much more quickly. Second, the team determined

33 Ibid. p 3.
that 1990 would be a more reasonable fit compared to historical trends, thereby lessening the pressure on world leaders for 2015.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. p 5.
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<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<td>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</td>
<td><strong>Target 1.A:</strong> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</td>
<td>1.1 Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day</td>
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<td><strong>Target 1.B:</strong> Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</td>
<td>1.2 Poverty gap ratio</td>
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<td><strong>Target 1.C:</strong> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</td>
<td>1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption</td>
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<td>1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed</td>
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<td>1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day</td>
<td>1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment</td>
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<td>Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education</td>
<td><strong>Target 2.A:</strong> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
<td>1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age</td>
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<td>2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education</td>
<td>1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption</td>
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<td>2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary</td>
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<td>2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men</td>
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<td>Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality</td>
<td><strong>Target 3.A:</strong> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</td>
<td>3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</td>
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<td>3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</td>
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<td>3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</td>
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<td>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</td>
<td><strong>Target 4.A:</strong> Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</td>
<td>4.1 Under-five mortality rate</td>
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<td>4.2 Infant mortality rate</td>
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<td>4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against...</td>
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| **Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health**             | **Target 5.A:** Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio | 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio  
|                                                |                                                                         | 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel               |
|                                                | **Target 5.B:** Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive Health | 5.1 Contraceptive prevalence rate  
|                                                |                                                                         | 5.2 Adolescent birth rate  
|                                                |                                                                         | 5.3 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)  
|                                                |                                                                         | 5.4 Unmet need for family planning                                         |
| **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other major diseases** | **Target 6.A:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS | 6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years  
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex                                     |
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS |
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years |
|                                                | **Target 6.B:** Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it | 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral Drugs |
|                                                | **Target 6.C:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases | 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria  
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets |
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate antimalarial drugs |
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis |
|                                                |                                                                         | 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course |
| **Goal 7: Ensure Environmental**                | **Target 7.A:** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and | 7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest  
|                                                |                                                                         | 7.2 CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per $1 GDP (PPP) |


### Goals

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| reverse the loss of environmental resources | **Target 7.B:** Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss | | 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances  
7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits |
| **Target 7.C:** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation | | 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used  
7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected  
7.7 Proportion of species threatened with Extinction |
| **Target 7.D:** By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers | | 7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source  
7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility  
7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums |

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<th><strong>Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development</strong></th>
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| **Target 8.A:** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system  
**Target 8.B:** Address the special needs of the least developed | | Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing Countries and small island developing States.  
**Official development assistance (ODA)**  
8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors’ gross national income  
8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)  
8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied  
8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes  
8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a |
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<td><strong>Target 8.C:</strong> Address the special needs of landlocked developing</td>
<td>[Market access]</td>
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<td>countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty second special session of the General Assembly)</td>
<td>8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty</td>
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<td>8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries</td>
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<td>8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product</td>
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<td>8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity</td>
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<td><strong>Target 8.D:</strong> Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing</td>
<td>[Debt sustainability]</td>
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<td>countries through national and international measures in order to make</td>
<td>8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)</td>
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<td>debt sustainable in the long term</td>
<td>8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives</td>
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<td>8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services</td>
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<td><strong>Target 8.E:</strong> In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide</td>
<td><a href="http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg">Source: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg</a></td>
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<td>access to affordable essential drugs in developing Countries</td>
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<td><strong>Target 8.F:</strong> In cooperation with the private sector, make available</td>
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<td>the benefits of new technologies, especially information and Communication</td>
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1.2. UN Initiatives for Achieving Millennium Development Goals

- **UN Millennium Project**

  The United Nations Millennium Project was commissioned by the UN Secretary-General in 2002 to develop a concrete action plan for the world to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger & disease affecting billions of people. In 2005, the independent advisory body headed by Prof. Jeffery Sachs, presented its final recommendations to the Secretary-General in a synthesis volume *Investing in Development*: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The bulk of the project’s work was carried out by 10 thematic Task Forces, each of which also presented its own detailed recommendations in 2005. The Task Force comprised a more than 250 experts from around the world including: researchers and scientists; policy makers; representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank, IMF and Private sector.

  After the presentation of the Millennium Project’s final reports, the secretariat team worked in an advisory capacity through to the end of 2006 to support the implementation of the project’s recommendations, with special focus on supporting developing countries’ preparation of national development strategies aligned with achieving the MDGs.\(^{35}\)

- **UN Millennium Campaign**

  The UN Millennium Campaign, started in 2002, supports and inspires people from around the world to take action in support of the MDGs. The Millennium Campaign seeks to help create the conditions necessary to achieve the MDGs, through advocacy and engagement efforts aimed at civil society. The Campaign helps to bridge the analytic, communication and advocacy efforts of the UN system with partners globally by disseminating data and analysis emerging from the substantive efforts of the UN system and other development partners. In this way, the Campaign supports citizen’s efforts to hold governments accountable for the promises made in the Millennium Declaration, including the MDGs.

  The Campaign works at both national and international levels to support advocacy efforts of civil society and other local groups to hold their governments accountable for achieving the MDGs.

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achieving the MDGs. The Campaign accompanies the MDG process by organizing workshops, launching awareness Campaigns, holding public events, sensitizing politicians, conducting research & disseminating good practices. In programme countries, the Campaign creates and links coalitions of people who work to encourage governments to take seriously their commitments to poverty reduction through design & implementation of policies to achieve the MDGs.36

- **2005 World Summit: HIGH-Level Plenary Meeting of the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly (14-16) September 2005, UN Headquarters, New York**

  A follow up to the Millennium Summit, the World Summit was a high–level UN plenary meeting at which global leaders recommitted to their partnership for development, underscoring the need to focus at the country level, and pursue policies that support good governance, the rule of law, and macroeconomic policies that reduce inequality and poverty & reinforce sustainable development. They also identified additional priorities for progress towards the MDGs (reproductive health, employment, biodiversity preservation & treatment of HIV / AIDS).

  The agenda was based on achievable set of proposals outlined in March 2005 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report “In Larger Freedom”. Following the World Summit, the United Nations Development group (UNDG) issued an ‘Action Plan on the Development outcome of the 2005 World Summit’, meant to build on the lessons learned through the implementation of core strategy. The Action Plan noted the high level of political engagement seen since the Millennium Summit, the strengthening of democratic governance, civil society, the private sector & science & technology, as well as commitment in the development community towards a prioritization of Millennium Declaration and MDGs. However, the Action Plan also recognized that positive changes in the lives of the poor are either taking place too slowly, or in some countries & regions, even being eroded. It recognized that scaling up is not yet under way in most countries, and that most countries do not have assurance of predictable financing from domestic & external sources.

In that context, the Action Plan aimed for a renewal of resolve & urgency to meet the Millennium Declaration and MDGs, and focused on the ways the UN system could respond more proactively, efficiently & effectively to the needs of developing countries as they try to scale up action.\footnote{Ibid. pp 20-21.}

- **High- level Event on Millennium Development Goals, 25 September, 2008- “Committing To Action”: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals.**

  The High- level event on Millennium Development Goals was held on 25 September, 2008. Governments, foundations, businesses and civil society groups rallied around the call to action to slash poverty, hunger & diseases by 2015, by announcing new commitments. At a midpoint towards 2015, the summit identified that there has been real progress towards achieving some of the goals, even in regions where the challenges are greatest. A number of recent successes across the developing world- including improved macroeconomic indicators, expansion of AIDS treatment and increased agricultural productivity, school enrollment & access to water and sanitation- demonstrates that rapid progress is possible when sound national policies are matched with increased Official Development Assistance (ODA) &technical support from international system.

  The High-level event also recognized that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven. While many developing countries are on track to achieving a few of the goals, large disparities persist across and within countries. On current trends, no African country is likely to achieve all of the Goals.

  While the number of people living is extreme poverty continues to decline globally, success masks slow and uneven progress in some countries, including much of Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though the proportion of people in the world suffering from malnutrition& hunger has fallen since the early 1990s, with the increase in food prices, about 1 billion people go hungry, while at least another estimated 2 billion are undernourished. In education, despite evidence of some success especially in enrolment at the primary level, gender disparities in education are still evident in some regions, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, in other Goals also, if the progress has been made, the rate of progress has been very slow.
The summit identified some Action points to be followed to accelerate progress towards all the goals. These include:

- Promote bilateral, regional and global cooperation to enhance food security and reduce trade distortions;
- Minimize the adverse consequences on the poor of the global financial turmoil and the rising food and energy prices by establishing effective and efficient social safety nets;
- Increase assistance and support to scale up the implementation of proven health, education and water & sanitation interventions targeting the poorest & vulnerable groups;
- Ensure predictable & sustained funding for a long term response to the HIV/AIDS epidemics;
- Develop specific steps & actions to complete Doha Round of Trade negotiations to reduce existing trade distortions in favor of more equitable mechanisms.  

- **2010 Summit on Millennium Development Goals: “Keeping the Promise”:**

  United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

High-level plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on Millennium Development Goals was held at UN headquarters from 20-22, September 2010. The summit concluded with the adoption of a global action plan to achieve the eight anti-poverty goals by 2015, and the announcement of major new commitments for women’s and children’s health and other initiatives against poverty, hunger & disease. The outcome document of the three-day summit- Keeping the Promise: United to achieve Millennium Development Goals reaffirms world leaders commitment to the MDGs and sets out a concrete Action Agenda for achieving the goals by 2015.

In a major push to accelerate progress on women’s & children’s health, a number of Heads of state and government from developed and developing countries, along with the private sector, foundations, international organizations, civil society & research organizations pledged over $40 billion in resources over five years. The Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health- a concrete worldwide efforts

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initiated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Kin Moon, has the potential of saving the lives of more than 16 million women & children, preventing 33 million unwanted pregnancies, protecting 120 million children from pneumonia and 88 million children from stunting due to malnutrition, advancing the control of deadly diseases such as malaria & HIV/AIDS, and ensuring access for women and children to quality health facilities and skilled health workers.

**United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20:** *The Future We Want*

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development –or Rio+20 took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20–22, June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document- *“The future we want”*, which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. It offered the opportunity for a forward-looking reflection and identified concrete guidance on how partnerships can be best positioned to help expedite the implementation of agreements reached at Rio+20 as well as contribute to the post – 2015 development agenda.

In Rio, member states decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be built upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post-2015 Development Agenda. The conference also adopted ground-breaking guidelines on green economy policies. Governments also agreed to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on several fronts with action to take during the 67th session of the General Assembly. The conference also took forward-looking decisions on a number of the thematic areas, including, energy, food security, oceans, and cities, and decided to convene a third international conference in SIDS in 2014.

Many developed countries also made commitments to achieve the target of 0.7 present of GNP for ODA to developing countries by 2015, as well as a target of 0.15 to 0.20 present of GNP for ODA to least developed countries.³⁹

**2013 Global MDG conference-“Making the MDGs work”**

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On 25 September, 2013, the President of the UN General Assembly hosted a special event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving MDGs. At the special event towards achieving MDGs, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented to member states his report entitled “A life of Dignity for All”. In the outcome document adopted by member states, world leaders renewed their commitment to meet the MDGs’ targets and agreed to hold a high-level summit in September 2015 to develop a new set of Goals building on the achievements of the MDGs.

The Summit realized the importance of promoting human rights, good governance, the rule of law, transparency & accountability at all levels. The Summit called for the urgent implementation of all commitments under the global partnership for development so as to overcome the gaps identified in the reports of the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force. In parallel with the intensification of efforts to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, the leaders also declared that they are determined to craft a strong post-2015 development agenda that will build on the foundations laid by the MDGs, complete the unfinished business & respond to new challenges.40

1.3. Synergies between the Goals

Action to achieve the MDGs and other goals set by the conferences & summits of the 1990’s should be based on the recognition that such goals are multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, and interdependent. To allow co-ordinated action on several fronts and to achieve a strong and lasting impact on poverty, the ways in which income, hunger reduction, education, health, gender & environmental issues interact must be understood. Access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (MDG7) is closely related to reducing the incidence of poverty (MDG1) and of major diseases (MDG6), while hunger reduction (MDG1) cannot be divorced from the achievement of universal primary education (MDG2) and the goal regarding major diseases (MDG6). Progress towards meeting commitments on trade, debt & ODA (MDG8) is essential to support the national processes to achieve all MDGs. Thus multi-sectoral approaches & coordination among various implementing agencies are critical.

1. **Gender equality and women’s empowerment have large multiplier effects on other MDGs:**

   This is perhaps one of the most important linkages across the MDGs. In some communities, girls are given less food than boys, contributing to nutritional imbalances between men & women. In many countries, transactional sex, social norms that disempower women and domestic violence are among the causes of HIV infection. Birth rates are likely to be lower in households where women are empowered, which in turn, is associated with better health and education for children.

2. **Education also underpins the entire set of MDGs:**

   Achieving the education targets contributes to reductions in poverty and child mortality. Children born to mothers without formal education are more likely to suffer from malnutrition or die before the age of five than babies born to mothers who have completed primary schooling. Where the head of the house-hold has some form of educational attainment, the poverty levels for the household are also lower.

3. **Eliminating major diseases improves child and maternal health while contributing to higher productivity:**

   In Ghana, a third of hospital admissions of children below five are due to malaria. In Ethiopia, pregnant women are more susceptible to malaria, leading to significant miscarriages, low birth weights, mortalities & morbidities. In Lesotho, 25 percent of the country’s population is food insecure, 42 percent have stunted growth and 14 percent of children are underweight, primarily due to HIV/AIDS. In Botswana, between 1993 and 2008, breastfeeding rates have also fallen sharply because of HIV, slowing down improvements in child survival. The HIV prevalence rate at 23 percent, affects the working age population, leaving many households in poverty and children in orphanages.
4. **Environmental sustainability is needed both to achieve the MDG and sustain progress:**

   Child mortality is high among households with poor access to clean water & sanitation facilities. In Syria, environmental deterioration is directly correlated with under-five & infant mortality. Large proportions of the population do not have access to improved water sources, and as a result diarrhea accounts for the majority of infant deaths. Evidence suggests that provision of water closer to homes & low-cost electricity from sustainable sources saves times for women.

5. **Investing in techniques that enhance agricultural productivity reduces hunger & improves the health & education status of households:**

   Crossbreeding of Asian & African varieties of rice in 13 African countries, under the New Rice for Africa (NERICA) initiative, was followed by an increase in the income of women farmers. The protein content of some of the NERICA rice was also 25 percent higher than the normal varieties. The areas under the NERICA initiative experienced a 6 percent increase in the primary school attendance rate, a 2 percent reduction in child sickness & a 5 percent increase in regular health checkups.

6. **Promoting employment-intensive growth positively impacts on many of the MDGS:**

   When growth leads to higher employment and productivity levels, the income of the poor is expected to increase, leading to higher consumption and investment. The consumption & investment patterns of the rural poor are likely to be in labor-intensive goods & services, further reinforcing the employment intensity of growth. There are also reverse linkages. The three MDGs with significant externalities (education, child & maternal health) also have positive impacts on employment. Education contributes to productivity of labor & the demand for it, decline in child mortality, lower birth rates, contributing both to lower dependency ratios & reduction in the excess supply of labor. Tackling maternal mortality reduces...

1.4. Evaluation of MDGs: Strengths & Weaknesses

The vision for global development contained in the Millennium Declaration was intended to unify pursuance of economic, social & environmental objectives along with ensuring peace, security & respect for democratic values. The Millennium Development Goals, which emerged from Millennium Declaration & other international conferences, have become a subject of discussion since they were framed in 2001. There are some who hail the goals because of the strengths they possess, while, there are other who criticize the goals because of many inherent weaknesses.

Strengths:

1. The first strength of MDG framework is that it defined, for the first time, an integrated set of time-bound, quantitative targets in an attempt to give operational meaning to some of the basis dimensions of human development and to strengthen the global partnership for development. The MDGs have been instrumental in building a common agenda of broad priorities and have induced governments to take concrete actions & improve coordination in support of poverty reduction efforts. As a result, many developing countries have designed national development strategies, explicitly oriented at achieving the MDGs and have aligned these objectives with other national priorities.\footnote{42}{ESCAP, ADB, UNDP, (2011); \textit{Asia- Pacific Regional MDG Report 2011/12}. P 33}

2. A major strength of the MDG framework derives from its focus on a limited set of concrete, common human development goals and targets: eradication of poverty & hunger; universal access to primary education; reducing child and maternal mortality & improving maternal health; promoting gender equality & empowering women; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases.

3. The framework has provided focus for priority setting in national & international development policies. Its simplicity, transparency and multidimensionality helped rally broad support for the goals and their achievement, and emphasis on human development shifted policy attention well beyond the
economic growth objectives that dominated previous agendas. The RIO+20 outcome also recognizes these as features to be retained in a future development agenda.

4. The format of the MDG framework brought an inspirational vision, together with a set of concrete and time-bound goals that could be monitored by statistically robust indicators. This has not only helped keep the focus on results, but also motivated the strengthening of statistical systems and use of quality data to improve policy design & monitoring by national governments and international organizations.43

5. The MDG framework strengthened the global partnership for development (MDG-8) and linked Official Development Assistance (ODA), a fair multi-lateral trending system, debt relief and affordable access to new technologies & essential medicines to human development.44

6. The format of the MDG agenda (That is the sequence of goals, targets & indicators) is generally considered effective. It has provided a much more operational framework to the international development agenda, thereby helping mobilize support for development, fostering cooperation & influencing global policy debates. Arguably, it has also helped to create stronger accountability mechanisms for the international community.

7. The regional & sub-regional level responses, in terms of MDG advocacy, monitoring, goal practices and lesson sharing have served as effective & powerful mechanisms that have pushed the MDG Agenda forward. The regional dimensions of development and regional responses have emerged as essential building blocks that provided the critical link between global agenda & national level MDG implementation. This is well reflected for example, in Asia & the Pacific through the long-term partnership between UN/ ESCAP, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNDP.45

43 N. Kabeer, (2010); Can the MDGs provide a Pathway to Social Justice? The Challenge of Intersecting inequalities, Institute of Development Studies.
44 United Nations System Task Team on Post- 2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012; Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary General, New York.
Weakness:

However, despite these strengths, the MDGs have been criticized because of some weakness:

1. Some critics question the ownership of the MDG Agenda to the extent that there were no consultations with all stakeholders. The original 18 target were selectively drawn from the text of the Millennium Declaration signed by 189 countries which, in turn, reflected much of the consensus that had been built through various development conferences & summits in the 1990s. But, the MDGs did not reflect all dimensions emphasized in the text of the Millennium Declaration. The decision to include the original 18 targets & not others was made on the basis of the targets that contained previously agreed indicators & robust data for proper monitoring, although that choice was seen by some as reflecting a more politically palatable agenda on access to social services, rather than politically more difficulty issues such as inequality or human rights.46

2. Defined as global targets, the MDGs were structured following global trends in key development areas. The assumption behind the quantitative targets was that progress in the past 25 years could be sustained in the next 25 years (the life span of a generation). This is what defined the target to reduce poverty by half and to cut child mortality by two-thirds in relation to the benchmark year of 1990, for example. This formulation, however, led to criticism that the target setting was blind of “non-linearities” in trends: for instance, in the case of child mortality, when getting closer to the target and/or when rates are already low, reducing them further tends to become more difficult and costly.

3. The MDGs have been criticized for failing to take into account the initial conditions of the various regions and countries. In addition, the differences in efforts countries would need to make in order to make the same relative degree of progress (e.g. countries with high initial levels of poverty as those in Africa would need to make much greater efforts to halve the poverty incidence coming from, say an initial level of 70 percent, than a country with an initial poverty incidence of, say 10 percent). On a related issue, the MDG frame work failed to

46 S. Amin, 2006; The Millennium Development Goals: A Critique from the South. *Monthly Review*, 57(10), (March)
account for the vulnerability of countries to natural disasters & the possibility of sudden reversals of years of development gains.  

4. Fourth, their focuses on minimum achievements (halve extreme poverty as opposed to relative or multi-dimensional poverty, the focus on primary school enrollment as opposed to secondary education, or lack of reference to quality to education) did not capture the challenges of middle income countries and it overloaded the danger of perpetuating developmental bottlenecks where, for instance, lack of adequate secondary education & teacher training defies the goal of universal primary education.  

5. Fifth criticism focuses on what are seen as “missing targets” such as descent work, human rights, governance, and peace & security; elements of the international human right framework not already captured in the MDGs; and the inadequate incorporation of some human development dimensions in the goals & targets such as employment, gender equality, and inclusive, sustainable & resilient development. While all the issues were clearly delineated in the principles & values of the Millennium Declaration, they were not (fully) operationalized as goals and targets within the MDG framework.  

6. Sixthly, the MDGS present an agenda rather than a development strategy. While, clearly rooted in the “human development approach”, they have been interpreted in isolation from the Millennium Declaration. The MDGs are not explicit as to the perceived structural cause of poverty and social exclusion, nor in regard to the strategies and policy actions necessary to address the structural causes to facilitate their achievement. The over emphasis on “outcomes”, rather than on development “processes” is seen by some as a major drawback to the effectiveness of the MDG agenda.


7. Seventhly, while the MDG agenda galvanized broad support for an international development agenda & has arguably strengthened development cooperation, it has not delivered on all the commitments it made to the global partnership for development. Important shortfalls, and even some setbacks, remain in delivering on aid commitments, establishing a fairer multi-lateral trading system, dealing comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries, and providing affordable access to new technologies and essential medicines, as stipulated under MDG 8.  