CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

The beginning of the millennium witnessed the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration by the General Assembly. In the Declaration, representatives of the United Nations member states committed their nations to a new global partnership for development by establishing a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015. The adoption of this Declaration led to the subsequent elaboration of MDGs. The eight MDGs marked a significant step in the international development agenda as they offered a unique opportunity for focusing international policies and economic resources on achieving progress on human development priorities around the world. They contributed to cementing a new global partnership to tackle key development challenges and to galvanizing international attention and resources to address those challenges.

The MDGs didn’t come out of a blue while the idea of setting targets for development goes back to 1960s, the roots of the MDGs could be traced back to a series of UN conferences that preceded the MDG summit of 2000, particularly in the 1990’s. The World Summit on children (1990), The World Conference on Education for All (1990), the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and other conferences on a range of development issues such as nutrition, and Social Development, among others, have been influential in formulating the MDGs. The blueprint for International Development Goals that led to the MDGs appears to have culminated within the OECD-DAC and not the United Nations itself.

After the cold war ended donor countries were less enthusiastic, development aid declined sharply and the old aid mechanisms became rather inappropriate. Thus, the need to have a new way of engaging with and mobilizing the donors as well as a new justification was felt by the DAC. It appears that this was an initial reaction to their being marginalized and the need for showing their relevance and existence. The benign fiscally stable period also facilitated such a move. It is with this background that DAC
resolved to set up a ‘Group de Reflexion’ in 1996 to review the future of development aid and the role of the DAC in a post-cold war era. One of the tasks it undertook has been drawing up a list of UN declarations and pulling out a set of coherent goals. The outcome is the launch of a final report called “Shaping the 21st Century: The contribution of Development Cooperation” at an OECD high level meeting of ministers in the same year. The set of goals in this document evolved into what became known as the DAC International Development Goals (IDGs).

The IDGs initial impact was minimal, both amongst the larger donor countries and multinational institutions, as well as amongst developing countries, especially because the latter had almost no involvement in formulating IDGs beyond attending a few consultation conferences. IDGs were reduced into two achievable, measureable and popular goals within OECD circles; eradicating poverty, and promoting gender empowerment. Structural issues such as reducing income inequalities between the developed and developing countries and minimizing the negative effects of globalization would not have gained OECD backing at that time. Although the non-governmental community and civil society organizations endorsed the OECD concern with promoting universal primary education and reducing child & infant mortality rates, they remained critical of the fact that some of the actions under the control of the OECD member countries, such as increased aid, more debt forgiveness, and fairer trade, were not included in the IDGs and that the narrow framework of the reduction of extreme poverty did not allow for broader, more inclusive rights-based approaches to development.

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. The United Nations 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. Over the following period, international agencies, NGOs and activists began to try to shape the process and content of the Millennium assembly. Individuals, organizations & networks store to get the declaration they valued on to the Millennium Declaration in 2000.
The highly anticipated United Nations Millennium Summit was held in New York in September 2000, which resulted in the Millennium Declaration, which was based on a document submitted as a report of the Secretary-General, entitled “We the Peoples: The role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”. The dawn of the Millennium provided an unprecedented opportunity and the Millennium Declaration was soon adopted unanimously by 189 member states.

The unanimous approval of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000 set the stage for the next task of defining the specific goals and targets for development before allocating tasks to different multilateral organizations and raising the funds for achieving those goals. Efforts by high-level technical experts from DAC and United Nations organizations, which were tasked with harmonizing IDGs and the Declaration’s goals at a World Bank meeting in March 2001, finally resulted in the adoption and publication of MDGs.

To help focus national and international priority setting, the group agreed on goals, targets and 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 overarching “goals”. The 18 targets were later expanded to be 21, based on 2005 intergovernmental agreements. In the period between 2000 Millennium Declaration and the 2001 formal branding of the MDGs, the one substantive adjustment made by the UN officials was to identify a 1990 baseline for all the 2015 targets.

The Millennium Declaration projected the intention of broadening the focus of development to include human-centered, sustainable and equitable development, and to expand the concept of poverty from income poverty to multidimensional human poverty.

The UNO has taken significant steps to help achieve the MDGs. One such step is the United Nations Millennium Project which was commissioned by the UN-Secretary-General in 2002 to develop a concrete action plan to achieve the MDGs and to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people. Another step is the UN Millennium Campaign, started in 2002, which 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.

Action to achieve the MDGs and other goals set by the conferences and summits of the 1990’s should be based on the recognition that such goals are multidimensional, multi-sectoral and interdependent. To allow coordinated action on several fronts and to achieve a strong and lasting impact on poverty, the ways in which income, hunger reduction, education, health, gender and environmental issues interact must be understood.

The MDGs, which emerged from Millennium Declaration and other interactional conferences, characterized the multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation. The MDGs defined, for the first time, an integrated set of time-bound quantitative targets in an attempt to give operational meaning to some of the basic dimensions of human development and to strengthen the global partnership for development. The framework has provided focus for priority setting in national and international development policies, brought an inspirational vision together with a set of concrete and time-bound goals that could be monitored statistically robust indicators and has strengthened the global partnership for development (MDG 8) and linked Official Development Assistance (ODA), a fair multilateral trading system, debt relief and access to new technologies and essential medicines to human development.

However, the MDGs have certain weaknesses. The MDGs did not reflect all dimensions emphasized in the Millennium Declaration. The target setting was blind of “non-linearities” in trends: for instance, in 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. The MDGs have been criticized for failing to take into account the initial conditions of the various regions and countries. Likewise, there are some “missing targets”, such as descent work, human rights, governance and peace and security; elements of the international human rights frame work no captured in the MDGs.

Despite the weaknesses, MDGs have received a level of sustained attention that is unprecedented for only UN development declaration. Their simplicity, clarity and good intentions bonded the international community together. The MDGs are arguably the most politically important pact ever made for international development. They
generated an unprecedented global convergence around poverty reduction. They generated a new consensus between the IMF/World Bank and the UN, the former incorporating poverty dimensions in their structural adjustment programmes and later in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) shifting the emphasis from growth to human development.

Regions as well as respective countries have made attempts to localize the MDGs. One such attempt is the preparation of the SDGs. Four years after the inception of the MDGs, regional heads of states from South Asia came together in Islamabad for the 12th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit to assess its progress. By the end of the summit, the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation released a report entitled “An Engagement with Hope” wherein the MDGs were consolidated into four broad categories of livelihood, health, education and environment to form the SDGs. The four major categories of the SDGs encompass 22 goals, eight of which relate to livelihood, four to health, four to education and six to the environment, and are the collective vision of South Asian countries to address the problems of poverty and social development.

The SDGs were conceptualized and formulated as a strategic regional response to the urgent imperative of riding South Asia of poverty and achieving the international Millennium development goals by 2015. SDGs reflect, as majority of SAARC perceive it to be, the regional determination to make faster progress towards attaining the MDGs. MDGs and SDGs are complementary as majority of indicators of MDGs are overlapping with those of the SDGs.

Progress on attaining MDGs has been unequally attributed across regions, sub-regions and countries. Although South Asia has succeeded in reducing poverty to a great extent, the challenge remains formidable because of the sheer number of poor people, large variations within countries and worsening inequality.

In case of providing gainful employment to its people, south Asia has lagged behind all other regions except Northern Africa. Just over half of the population of working age (15+) was employed in 2012, out of which 60.9 percent lived below $1.25 per day. Besides, there is huge gender gap in South Asia with just 30 percent of women employed in 2012.
South Asia is the second hungriest region in the world after Sub-Saharan Africa. Although the region has decreased the proportion of overall hunger people, the region is going to miss the target of reducing hunger by half by 2015. Developing regions have made impressive strides in expanding access to primary education. Considerable progress has been made in southern Asia in increasing the net enrollment ratio in primary education. Infact, the rate of progress has been much more as compared to other regions. The region has been successful in ensuring gender parity at the primary level. However, gender party is a concern at the secondary and the tertiary levels with girls continuing to be at the disadvantaged position. Again, the region lags behind all other region except Northern Africa and western Asia in providing wage employment to women in Non-agricultural sector.

Globally the mortality rate for children under-five dropped by 41 percent between 1990 and 2011, but the situation in South Asia is still of great concern. Although, the region has made impressive progress in reducing under-five mortality rate, it is unlikely to achieve the 2015 target. The performance of the region in providing immunization to children aged 12-23 months has been poor as compared to other regions except Sub-Saharan Africa.

Antenatal care is an essential safety net for healthy motherhood and child birth, where the wellbeing of both the prospective mother and her offspring can be monitored. The performance of South Asia has been far from impressive on this count. Women who give birth in rural areas are more at a disadvantage in terms of the care they receive. However, still the region has been able to drastically reduce maternal mortality over the past two decades. Infact, if the current trend persists, South Asia will be able to achieve the 2015 target.

Frequent instances, widespread prevalence and subsequent deaths on account of TB have generated much vigorous policy response across the board. New and more effective interventions, including DOTS, have been developed, and production and distribution of key medicines have improved. All these developments have resulted in containing the life threatening diseases like TB, Malaria & HIV/AIDS within South Asia.

South Asia does not have much forest coverage as most other regions. It has however, managed to slightly increase the coverage of forests during a time when the
rest of the world has seen reductions. The cause of concern in South Asia is the biodiversity loss. Only 6.5 percent of terrestrial areas, and 1.6 percent of marine areas are protected, two of the smallest proportions in the world. In case of CO₂ emissions, while rich nations still contribute a heavy chunk, the contribution of South Asia is to spreading thick and fast.

Apart from being an important indicator in their own right, widespread access to improved sources of water and proper sanitation facilities have the potential to reduce substantially the morbidity and mortality of preventable diseases. Access to improved drinking water facility in South Asia has improved over the years and is now comparable to developed regions. However, access to proper and improved sanitation facilities provides a dismal picture of the region as a whole.

Over the past twelve years, the share of urban population living in slums in the developing world has declined significantly from 39 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2010. Almost all the regions have decreased the percentage of slum dwellers, with South Asia making the largest decrease in percentage terms. However, despite this reduction, the region still has the highest proportion of urban population living in slums.

Within the South Asia region, there are cross-country variations and some countries have made more progress in achieving many of the MDG targets, while others have lagged behind. Within the region, Maldives has been a success story in achieving many of the targets followed by Bhutan and Sri lanka, while Afghanistan has failed on majority of the targets. In fact, no country is in a position to achieve all the MDG targets by 2015 dead line.

The analysis presented in foregoing chapter shows that while all the countries of the region have reduced the proportion of population living below national poverty line, the progress made by Sri lanka is placed at a comfortable with poverty head count ratio at 6.7 percent in 2013. Within the region, Bangladesh is likely to miss the target by 2015 and Afghanistan has been a poor performer. Another relevant indicator showing the depth of poverty is the poverty gap ratio. Here the progress made by Maldives has been ahead of other countries followed by Sri lanka and Bhutan.
Employment to population ratio remains low in almost all the countries of South Asia and varies across countries with as high as 82.2 percent in Nepal to as low as 40.9 percent in Pakistan in 2010. Male employment is relatively high in almost all the countries suggesting that the low employment to population ratio is being driven by the lack of female employment. Further, over 50 percent of those employed work as own-account and contributing family workers with highest 81.9 percent in Nepal in 2010.

Malnutrition among children has been cause of concern in all the countries of South Asia. Although all the countries have reduced the proportion of under-weight children under-five, except Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives, other countries of the region are going to miss the target by 2015. Furthermore, while the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption has remained relatively stagnant in Sri Lanka over the last decade and half, Nepal has made impressive progress in reducing the proportion of undernourished population from 49 percent in 1990 to 15.7 percent in 2012.

Almost all the countries of South Asian region have given high priority in policy implementation to education to achieve the goals of MDGs. To achieve this goal, countries have to enroll children in schools and ensure that they complete the full course of schooling. Measured on this yardstick, except Pakistan and Afghanistan, all other countries of South Asia have performed well. It is quite satisfying to note here that all these countries have been able to achieve above 90 percent enrollment in primary schooling.

Access to education, however, is only part of the solution. Completion of a full course of primary schooling is necessary to achieve universal primary education. Millions of children start school but eventually dropout. In many SAARC countries, school systems are chronically under financed and under-resourced and often fail to deliver a high quality education. This issue is reflected by the fact that the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary schooling is below 85 percent in all SAARC countries except Sri Lanka and Bhutan where it is well above 95 percent.

Almost all the countries of South Asia have a long way to go with regard to promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. There are wide gender gaps which inhibit efforts to ensure gender party. While all the countries except Afghanistan
have been able to promote gender parity at primary and secondary enrollment, the countries are off track with regard to ratio of girls to boys at tertiary level of education. The countries are also lagging behind in other MDG gender indicators: of women’s share of paid non-agricultural employment which ranges between 10.45 percent in Pakistan and 40.5 percent in Maldives and of share of women in national parliament.

One of the highest priorities for governments across the region has been to reduce the number of children dying before their fifth birthday. All the countries have made significant progress in reducing IMR and under-5 mortality rate. Srilanka has been one of the most successful developing countries in the world in terms of infant and child mortality reductions. A major factor responsible for sharp declines in child mortality in all these countries has been attributed to the successful launch of immunization programmes.

Maternal mortality is among the health indicators that show the greatest gap between the rich and poor—both between countries and within them. Although, all the countries in South Asia have made some progress in reducing maternal mortality ratio, women and girls dying as a result of complications during pregnancy, child birth or six weeks following delivery is still a matter of concern. Many health problems among pregnant women are preventable, detectable or treatable through visits with trained health workers before birth. But, barring Srilanka and Maldives, the progress of other countries in provisioning of facilities relating to births attended by skilled health personnel leaves much to be desired. Antenatal care is another essential safety net for healthy motherhood and child birth. While Srilanka, Maldives and Bhutan have been able to record virtual universalization of antenatal care services, other countries are still struggling to widen the outreach of antenatal care services to pregnant women.

HIV prevalence in South Asian region as a whole is relatively low as compared to other regions of the world. However, there are cross country variable results. HIV prevalence is as low as 0.01 in Afghanistan and Maldives and as high as high as 0.30 in Nepal. The major way to prevent people getting HIV/AIDS is to widen awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS. However, the percentage of people with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS remains low in almost all the countries of South Asia.

Within South Asia, some countries are more susceptible to malaria than others due to location and geographical features. It is important to note here that while the new
cases of malaria have increased in all the countries of the region, malaria related deaths have come down in all the countries except India & Bangladesh. Another major disease of concern across the region is tuberculosis. As in the rest of the world, both the prevalence and the death rates from tuberculosis have started to decline, and most countries are on track to meet the goal.

Multiple dimensions of environmental protection are becoming an increasingly critical issue for this region- whether in terms of deterioration in the natural environment or the lack of access to clean water and sanitation. As has been suggested in empirical research, environmental deterioration is closely linked with poverty. An important indicator reflecting environmental sustainability is the proportion of area covered by forests. The situation in majority of the South Asian countries is a cause of concern. Leaving aside the case of Bhutan & Nepal (where this ratio has reached to a satisfactory level), the progress in other countries of the region has remained quite low. Besides, another indicator guaranteeing environmental protection is the reduction in CO2 emissions. The total CO2 emissions in the South Asian countries remain for lower than developed countries. But since emissions are coupled with economic growth, they are likely to rise.

In so far as access to safe drinking water sources is concerned, all the countries of South Asia, except Afghanistan have shown significant progress during the last two decades. Access to safe drinking water in these countries is almost universal with spectacular progress in providing access to safe drinking water sources in rural areas. Afghanistan has been a poor performer in this regard with almost 70 percent of its population without access to safe drinking water. Besides, there is wide variation among urban and rural households with regard to access to safe sources of drinking water.

Even though these countries have managed to provide access to safe drinking water facilities to a considerable portion of population, access to improved sanitation facility remains an issue. Although, there has been some progress in increasing the percentage of population with access to improved sanitation facility, the progress has been slow and almost 50 percent of the population lacks these facilities.

While the first seven MDGs are goals in themselves, the MDG8 is a means where by developed countries pledged to help developing countries to realize the first
seven goals. However, it is unfortunate that the progress on this goal has remained unsatisfactory. The momentum for ODA for MDGs has fallen over the years and weakened with the onset of the global financial crisis affecting developed countries from 2008 onwards. Besides, very high debt servicing in almost all the countries of South Asia contributes to macroeconomic crisis.

Information and communication technology can play an important role in the fight against poverty and can be an effective tool in helping countries to achieve the MDGs. Access to ICT has increased in almost all the countries of South Asia. Cellular subscribers have increased considerably over the years and the percentage of internet users has also gone up. This certainly has the potential to create earning opportunities and jobs, improve delivery of and access to health and education services, facilitate information sharing and knowledge creation, and increase the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of government.

Coming to India, India belongs to the category of ‘Hall of Fame’ nations with registering a growth of GDP to the tune of 8 percent and above for consecutive four financial years. The spectacular growth of service sector and the boom in stock markets are being publicized with unprecedented fervor and passion. Under the cushion of monstrous stocks of foreign exchange reserves and ever rising inward flow of financial capital, the country has all the potential to record a spectacular growth in GDP in the coming years as well, notwithstanding the mild recessionary phase being experienced on account of ‘imported’ financial setback.

Despite of the fact that Indian economy has registered an unprecedented GDP growth rates, the situation of hunger and poverty remains a serious cause of concern for India. India, despite being flaunted as the emerging economic power at the world stage, belongs to the category of countries where the extent of hunger is alarmingly serious, though not violent. Contrary to the magic figures of declining poverty ratios in India, the Global Hunger Index published by FAO places India in the group of countries where the severity of hunger is serious & alarming, though not violent.

To ensure food and nutrition security of the people, the government of India has taken a series of initiatives. One such programme is the extensive network of Public Distribution System (PDS) across the country. PDS means the distribution of essential
commodities to large number of people through a network of Fair Price Shops (FPS) on a recurring basis. The commodities distributed include: wheat, Rice, Sugar & kerosene.

The government allocates procured food grains under various heads, namely, Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Below Poverty Line population, Above Poverty Line population, Antyodaya Anna Yojana. In addition, the government allocates food grains for different welfare schemes, including, Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana, Mid- Day Meal Scheme, and Nutrition Programme for Adolescent girls.

To ensure better nutrition of the children belonging to age group 0-3 years, the government runs ICDS (integrated child development scheme) centers, where micro as well as macro nutrients are provided free of cost to the children and lactating mothers. However, given the lack of monitoring and poor governance, majority of ICDS centers, specifically in rural India are dysfunctional, defeating the whole purpose of the scheme.

Other programmes to alleviate hunger in India were taken by the government from time to time. These include Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Annapurna Scheme, Mid- Day Meal scheme and National Food Security Act, 2013. With the increase in allocation of funds by the government towards these schemes, there have been some positive results in providing food security to people. However, the programmes have failed to produce desired results and India still remains home to a large number of hungry people in the world. The 2013 Global Hunger index report ranked India 63 in a list of 78 countries. Challenges like inappropriate targeting, poor physical infrastructure, insufficient material and inadequate supplementary nutrition, corruption, leakage and mismanagement have been responsible for the poor performance of these programmes.

Poverty is the main cause of hunger. The poor people do not afford adequate food necessary for healthy life. Poverty also affects the health of people. It has also a negative impact on the education of people. India, like other third world countries is a low income developing economy. There is no doubt that one-fourth of its population lives in conditions of misery. Planning in India has always assigned poverty alleviation as an important goal. Consequently, a number of anti-poverty programmes have been launched from time to time to reduce the incidence of poverty in the country.
The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched in the financial year 1978-79 and extended throughout India by 1980. It is a self-employment programme intended to raise the income generation capacity of target groups among the poor. Since the inception of the programme till 1996-97, 50.99 million families have been covered under IRDP at an expenditure of Rs.11434.27 crore.

On April 1 1999, the IRDP and allied programmes, including the TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA and MWS were merged into a single programme known as Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), with the objectives of providing focused reach to poverty alleviation; capitalizing advantages of group lending; and overcoming the problems associated with multiplicity of programmes.

Under SGSY, about 29 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) were formed since the inception of the scheme till August 2008. 2.34 lakh SHGs were formed during 2011-12, out of which 80% Swarozgaris were assisted. Comprehensive reviews of SGSY have brought into focus several shortcomings. It was in this background that the government approved the restructuring of SGSY as the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) in June 2010 and is effective from April 2013. NRLM wants to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvements in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis.

Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana was launched from September 2001 by revamping earlier schemes like Jawahar Gram Samsiddhir Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme and Food for Work Programme. The scheme aims at the creation of employment opportunities in rural areas and sought to addresses food insecurity. With the launch of MGNREGA in 2006, the scheme was discontinued in April 2008. Close to 75 crore person-days were generated in 2002-03 and this increased by 14 percent during 2003-04. In 2006-07, the number of person-days generated decreased to 40.87 crore because of decline in outreach of the scheme.

Indira AwasYojana (IAY) was launched as an independent programme w.e.f 1st January 1996. IAY is essentially a public housing scheme for the houseless poor families and those living in dilapidated and kucha houses with a component for providing house sites to the landless poor as well. Since inception of the scheme, about
301.64 lakh houses have been constructed with an expenditure of Rs.93357 crore (upto 31.1.2013).

To alleviate poverty in urban areas, Swaranjayanti Shari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) was launched on 1.12.1997 after subsuming the earlier three schemes for urban poverty alleviation namely Nehru Rozgar Yojana, Urban Basic Services for Poor and the Prime Minister’s Integrated Poverty Eradication Programme. The key objective of the scheme was to provide gainful employment to the urban unemployed and under-employed though the setting up of self-employment ventures or provision of wage employment.

The SJSRY has contributed a lot to urban poverty alleviation. However, the scheme was beset with several problems. With the result, SJSRY was replaced by a new scheme called National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) w.e.f. 24th September 2013. The NULM focuses on organizing urban poor in self-help groups, creating opportunities for skill development leading to market-based employment and helping them to set up self-employment ventures by ensuring easy access to credit.

One of the most important programmes to fight rural poverty is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which was notified on September 7, 2005. The Act provides a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual labor at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labor prescribed in the state or else an unemployment allowance. As is evident from the data provided in the previous chapter, so far 7.14 crore households have been provided employment through this scheme. One important aspect of this scheme is that majority of the beneficiaries of the scheme has been from marginalized class of the society namely SCs and STs people who are placed at the bottom of the development ladder. More importantly, over 50 percent of the jobs have been provided to women, well above the percentage mandated by the Act.

Committed to achieve the MDGs, particularly MDG 1, India embarked on a series of hunger and poverty eradication programmes. The fact that the incidence of poverty declined from 47.8% in 1990 to 21.9% in 2012 and the proportion of undernourished population declined from 25.5% in 1990 to 17% in 2012 proves that the programmes have had some success. However, despite this success, India is still
home to a large number of poor and hungry people in the world. The schemes created by the government had some success but failed to produce the desired results. Blow are mentioned some of the causes of failures of different hunger and poverty alleviation programmes initiated in India:

(1) The first and formost reason for the failure of these schemes has been the wide spread corruption which have had deleterious effects on its out puts.

(2) Inappropriate targeting, poor physical infrastructure, insufficient material, inadequate supplementary nutrition and immunization have been responsible for the poor performance of these programmes.

(3) Another problem is that there is no linkage between different programmes and there has been lack of coordination among various departments running different schemes.

(4) Though there was a provision of peoples participation at the grass root level after the 73rd constitutional amendment, inspite of that majority of the rural people are unaware about the rural development schemes and they have less participation in the process.

(5) In the absences of proper knowledge and awareness, the people are generally trapped by the middleman. They became the messengers and all the fruits of development are being eaten up by these people. With rampant corruption, they also become the part and parcel of the corrupt system for which India’s development schemes are not able to reach to the desired level.

(6) The development schemes in India are not meant to make the people self-sufficient. Basically, these schemes are like charity which could not bring remarkable changes in the lives of people.

Development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In this context, the people should be provided better prospects for economic development, increased participation in development programmes, decentralization of planning and greater access to credit. Along with this, eradication of corruption and poverty are the urgent need of the hour. Last but not the least important factor for development, is the control of population growth particularly in rural areas so that employment opportunity could be sufficient for the overall population in the country.
In 2015, the day of reckoning will appear and countries worldwide will have to defend their policies and achievements towards the eight MDGs put forth by the United Nations. Conceived of and passed in 2000, the eight MDGs provide a road map with measurable targets to reduce poverty worldwide. The UN is starting to accelerate the pace of achievement of the MDGs, as most of the MDGs are not ready to hit their target by 2015. As the date approaches, many are starting to think about the post-MDGs era. The development community has a wide range of priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. Many international civil society organizations want goals that are set locally rather than globally with better systems of accountability and resourcing. Regional organizations are conducting consultations to formulate regional positions on the post-2015 Development Agenda. Besides, National consultations on the post-2015 Development Agenda were held which were designed to open to crowd sourcing the usually closed multilateral negotiation process.

The High Level Panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda released a report on 30 May 2013, entitled A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development. The Panel believes that the post-2015 agenda is a universal agenda and needs to be driven by five big transformational shifts—Leave No One behind, Put Sustainable Development at the core, Transform Economies for jobs and inclusive growth, Build Peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all, and Forge a new Global Partnership.

The UN Open Working Group responsible for crafting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has handed down its final proposal containing a list of 17 goals and 69 targets to be achieved by 2030. The list includes a reworking of the eight MDGs that expire next year, such as eradicating poverty and hunger, improving education and achieving gender equality, as well as new goals on water and sanitation, affordable energy, safer cities and climate change. The SDGs are action oriented, global in nature and universally applicable.

Likewise, the inter-governmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing submitted its report to the General Assembly an 8 August 2014. The report concludes that there is no one simple policy solution, instead a basket of policy measures recommended by the committee include. Effective institutions and
policies and good governance; Optimizing the contribution from all flows including public, private, domestic and international; financing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; and transparency and accountability in all financing to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness.

Results from consultations, key reports and other processes in 2014 will feed into the Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report, which is expected by the end of 2014. The Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report will be presented to member states to set the stage for negotiations leading up to the September 2015.

Suggestions:

Conceived of and passed in 2000, the eight MDGs will expire in September 2015. While most of the MDGs are not ready to hit their target by 2015, a debate has started as to what should replace MDGs after 2015. SAARC countries in particular are off-track on most of the indicators across MDGs. To address the bottlenecks in achieving development goals in a time bound manner and to make post-2015 development Agenda more effective, following suggestions are put forth:

1. Access to basic needs (including food, clothing and shelter) has to be ensured for all people. SAARC countries are struggling to keep poverty ratio below 40% measured on the yard stick of 1.25 USD per day. Each government of the region has to allocate adequate funds towards employment creation schemes, food for work programmes and supply of essential commodities at affordable prices for the poor so that they can be brought out of poverty trap.

2. For majority of SAARC countries, health indicators including TB prevalence, maternal and child mortality rates, access to antenatal care and prevalence of institutional births presents a sorry state of affairs. There is an acute need of sustainable public investment in provisioning of quality health care services for all.

3. Even though SAARC countries have been able to meet the targets of enrollment ratio and the associated gender parity index, secondary and territory enrollment and the issue of gender parity remains serious cause of concern. Further, the quality of education remains an enigma for majority of the SAARC nations. Furthermore, even at the primary school levels, there are high dropout rates. In the backdrop of massive level of out of school children and low level of
enrollment ratio in secondary and tertiary education, it is suggested that 6% of GDP should be allocated towards funding of quality education for all.

4. Even though there has been sufficient progress towards provisioning of access to safe drinking water facilities (except for Afghanistan) in SAARC region, access to proper sanitation facilities, both in rural and urban areas, remains a massive challenge for almost all the countries in the region. There is an acute need to initiate a mission mode programme with adequate public financing.

5. Strengthening of democracy through proactive and substantial decentralization of financial and political powers to local bodies may go a long way in ensuring benefits of development programmes permeates to the intended beneficiaries to the best extent possible. Although in various SAARC countries, enabling legislations have already been passed, yet in the absence of devolution of financial powers to local bodies has meant that the concept of decentralization remain limited to rhetoric and sloganeering. All SAARC countries should transform financial resources to local bodies and grass root activists and civil society organizations should be consulted in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of developmental programmes so that visualized benefits of the programmes are realized as efficiently as possible in a time bound manner.

6. There has been unfortunate trend in the region that almost every country is increasing the size of defense expenditure, presumably at the cost of social sector expenditure. It is suggested that the governments should focus on ameliorating the extent of development deficits, instead of investing heavily in the imports of expensive modern defense technology that may be avoided.

7. Another important factor impeding the achievement of MDGs in South Asia is the continuing cycle of conflict and civil strife. Poverty and conflict are inextricably interwined. Where the rule of law breaks down, it is the poor who become the victims, with women bearing the brunt of the violence. There is an acute need for cooperation and partnership building among SAARC countries to achieve the development goals effectively.

8. Gender based inequality across development indicators is rampant in South Asia, and it is a serious road block to achieving the MDGs. As we have observed, the participation of women in paid non-agricultural jobs is rather low and a majority of them are employed as own-account/family workers which is
unpaid. To ensure economic empowerment of women, enabling legislation should be enacted so that women do not face discrimination in job markets. In a similar vein, political empowerment of women may be enhanced through reservation of certain fraction of seats in national parliament as happened in Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan. It is suggested that other countries of the SAARC region should legislate effecting acts to increase the representation of women in national and state assemblies/Parliament.

9. On the one hand, countries of the region are loitering lots of resources in the name of giving incentives to the corporate sector, while on the other hand, social sector expenditure are being compressed to attain an arbitrarily imposed targets of fiscal rectitude. After the implementation of neo-liberal reforms in SAARC countries since the early 1990’s, the governments have opened its market for imported products and reduced the prevailing custom duty rates to a ridiculously low level, thereby loosing enough resources from custom duty. In addition, unchecked amount of cheap imports resulted in displacement of domestically produced goods of imports which, in turn, resulted in decline in trend growth of excise duty collections. Thus, the governments have persuaded fiscal and trade policies under the guidance of multilateral agencies (including the World Bank, IMF and WTO) which jeopardized the potential of revenue generation to meet the financing of developmental programmes. Given this backdrop, it is suggested that the financing of development programmes to meet the targets envisaged in MDGs should not be curtailed to attain the goals of arbitrary and self-imposed targets of fiscal prudence. There is no such thing as limit to government financial resources (as long as it has sovereign power to tax and create new money)

10. Deficit in governance is among the major factors that impede the achievement of MDGs in South Asian region. As a whole, the South Asian countries are unable to face the challenges ahead because of lack of good governance. The governments of these countries must deliver transparent administration and corruption free environment so that intended objectives of developmental schemes are realized.

11. Though HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in SAARC countries is far from alarming, preventive measures are to be taken in time to protect the devastating turn affecting the national development as a whole in these countries. Awareness
building campaigns regarding HIV/AIDS can be an effective way to prevent the spread of infection to a considerable degree.

12. Challenge to expand the tree cover includes the absence of comprehensive mechanism for the production and distribution of quality planting materials and efficient use of forest resources. Steps should be taken for prevention of degradation and rapid reforestation of public forest lands, expansion of social forestry programmes and reforestation/afforestation of private lands.

**Suggestions**

As we approach 2015 deadline, world is preparing to set a Development Agenda beyond 2015. The experience from the MDG initiative could be used as a basis for an effective post-2015 global development agenda. Some guiding principles of a new agenda should include among the others the following:

1. The national goals should take into account national characteristics, initial conditions and circumstances with ‘no one size fits all’ approach (treating countries differently) ideally through a national democratic process. However, too much focus on the national level will run the risk of reducing the global reach and relevance that were such defining features of the MDGs. This trade-off will have to be considered carefully.

2. The goals and targets should take into account not only crossing a particular threshold in quantity but also in terms of quality. Education is a clear example on this issue.

3. There should be an effective and clear champion/leader for each goal. Within competition should be avoided.

4. Focus should be on those aspects of development that can be addressed through coordinated global action. Rather than trying to develop a perfect agreement, the quest should be for one that seems more likely to work.

5. For countries that will achieve the target by 2015, the focus should be on consolidation and sustainability of progress on the goals. Ambitious goals of achieving broader development to cement a firm basis for higher level of human development may also be considered.

6. For those with mixed progress on the MDGs, the priorities should be in sustaining progress on those targets that have been achieved and strengthening
implementation modalities to achieve the other targets within a given time frame—e.g., shifting the goal post. Measures should also be taken to avoid slippage by paying attention to quality in addition to quantity, and minimizing inequalities. The MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF), which has been piloted in several countries, could be a good modality to accelerate progress in MDGs in this group of countries.

7. Indigenous peoples face systemic discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power; they continue to be over-represented among the poorest, the illiterate, the destitute; they are displaced by wars and environmental disasters. It is therefore critical that the rights and needs of indigenous peoples are discussed and addressed in the next development agenda.

8. One concern not addressed in the MDG is job creation. Lack of jobs is a concern of countries worldwide. Inter-related is the lack of social protections for those who are out-of-work or who are employed in the informal sector. Jobs are crucial for economic growth and for poverty reduction. These elements should be covered in the post-2015 development agenda. Targets could focus on the quality and quantity of jobs to help gauge sustainability, not only progress.

9. The current approach to measuring poverty leaves out many and only encourages economic production and thus material development. The post-2015 agenda could consider some of the recent shifts in approaches to measuring poverty and development, away from measuring economic production, and towards measuring people’s wellbeing. In this regard, the multidimensional approaches proposed by Human Development Report office of UNDP along with Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative; The Sarkozy Commission; ESRC Wellbeing in Developing Countries Network and OECD One-World indicators could give a basis for direction.

10. Sustained human development is the overarching goal of development strategies at the national level. Human rights are part and parcel of this. Although not formulated as “rights”, the MDGs are an important milestone in achieving economic, social and cultural rights. On the other hand, human rights can strengthen the MDGs, with a focus on vulnerable groups whose rights are violated. A word of caution is due here. The very words “Human Rights” can simply nullify the whole process if it confers legal obligation on the part of the
national governments or stakeholders. This applies not only to the states for ensuring their rights at the national level but also donors to act upon their obligations. In this context, the proposals to change goals into a right, which can encourage people to demand accountability from the state, could only generate resistance in reaching a consensus. While acknowledging the greater role that human rights could play in achieving the broader objectives embedded in MDGs, the priority should be to build global consensus on a workable solution to sustainable development and not on that looks fancy in terms of ensuring the rights of the people but lacks merit in attracting political agreement.

11. Since 1990, many developing countries have succeeded as a whole, in reducing extreme income poverty. Yet, while poverty has been decreasing, inequalities in income and wealth have been on the rise since the 1990s. Such trends suggest that a larger grouping of the population than the poor parse is being put at a development disadvantage. While inequality in access to income is an important barometer in its own right of improvement in the conditions conducive to human development, lack of equality in access to economic assets and opportunities also results in disparities in access to social resources such as health care, education and social protection in general. This is why, it is important for any post-2015 development agenda to closely monitor disparities in basic achievements in human development, starting with the disparities between the poor and the non-poor, and if possible, between income quintiles.

12. It is widely recognized that the MDGs framework has not adequately addressed the environmental challenges that the world faces. There are no real targets, for example, on such related environmental conditions as Carbon dioxide emissions or the proportion of land covered by forest. Moreover, among the goals of environmental sustainability are “halving, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation” (Target 7c). But such a goal cannot be understood more directly as an achievement in the area of human development. Lastly, under Target 7 D, while it is possible to achieve improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers at the global level, the global urban slum population is expected to radically increase by 2020.
These weaknesses suggest that more work will need to be undertaken to strengthen the dimension of environmental sustainability in a post-2015 development framework. Future environmental sustainability goals and targets should be more comprehensive and encompass such issues as ensuring a stable climate, reducing ocean acidification, and preventing land degradation and unsustainable water use.