

GRAND DEBATE

THREE YEARS TO THE DEVELOPMENT GOALS DEADLINE: WHERE DO WE STAND?

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MAIN FINDINGS

One of the strengths of the MDGs is that they are clear and measurable – at least in theory. Three years before their target date, the outlook is encouraging since certain goals are close to being reached; this is the case in certain regions of Africa which have witnessed unprecedented growth over the last ten years. Nevertheless, the MDGs do have their weak points, such as the fact that the goal of halving poverty is partial. The difficulty in measuring progress lies in the lack of reliable data.

SPEAKERS

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SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

MDG strengths and weaknesses

Cécile Molinier believes that the strength of the MDGs lies in the fact that they represent the entirety of human development. MDGs have allowed the international community to gather together, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions and the UN agencies, in order to support goals that are the foundations of development. The advantage of the MDGs is that they can be measured to see if they have been reached; they are clear, easy to understand and are centred on reducing poverty. The drawback of the goals is that the measuring of results is done using averages, and this does not reveal the large gaps between and within countries.

Xavier Godinot confirms that the simplicity of averages poses a problem. It is worth bearing in mind that achieving consensus among the different agencies when setting the MDGs was difficult. The weaknesses of the MDGs are the following: firstly, they only retain a limited number of human rights; secondly, although some MDGs are universal, others, such as halving poverty, are only partial, meaning that the most vulnerable are left out; thirdly, MDGs do not take into account the fact that extreme poverty means that individuals are no longer considered human beings, meaning that different social relationships should be set up. Finally, the MDGs are not sufficiently adapted to stakeholders on the ground.

MDG progress so far

Hans Timmer explains that progress over the last ten years has been considerable. Global poverty levels have but cut in half. It is only sub-Saharan Africa that has not reached its goals; although progress has been made, it has not been visible. Most regions have seen improvements in terms of education, particularly in girls' access to education, and infant mortality has dropped by a third. There are nevertheless large problems remaining: there are still one billion people living in extreme poverty. The goals for which the mark has not been met are those related to health. However, on the whole, developing countries are the ones that

should be congratulated on their overall positive results.

Gérard Payen notes that the goals pertaining to water are related to access to drinking water and access to sanitation. Half of the world's population does not yet have access to these essential services, even though water is of primordial importance to development since it is thanks to water that health, education, economic development and work can be achieved, while also contributing to a reduction in inequality. Access to lavatories gives people dignity. In order to solve these problems, more ambitious policies are needed. MDGs are a good stimulant since they offer quantified goals and a timescale. Progress is real, since one billion people have obtained improved access to these services in the space of ten years. There has also been real progress in awareness of the issues at stake. Nevertheless, ambitions for drinking water are insufficient. As a result of scarce availability of statistics, the only efforts made in this area have been attempts to avoid sharing water sources with animals, affecting 800 million people. However, there have not been efforts to guarantee drinking water quality, which is insufficient for at least two billion people. This has meant that many stakeholders, including governments and the media, have greatly underestimated global drinking water needs.

MDG statistical limits

Xavier Godinot stresses that ATD Fourth World has been led by the aim of giving a voice to the poor since its creation. 2.8 billion poverty experts in the world do not have their voices heard. ATD has worked on implementing MDG evaluations in 14 countries. These show that the very poor are off the radar in terms of poverty statistics. By way of example, some countries have not held a census in twenty years. UNICEF carries out surveys every month, but the households included are those that are easily recognisable; the homeless and those in shared housing are not counted. In order to include the poorest in a census, we must work closely with them. If we consider that 70% of the population are not included in any statistics, we must then be aware that experts' figures are merely estimations.

Jon Lomoy is well familiarised with Africa having lived four separate stints there. He has therefore witnessed the progress which has been achieved and has seen the emergence of a middle class. Nevertheless, development continues to be very slow. The job market has to be improved, prices stabilised and resources have to be better put to use.

Cécile Molinier recalls the fact that Africa started from a very low base, and that most African countries have been heavily reliant on others up until now because national capacities have been weak. Today, there is more pride in being from Africa and Africans want to take their destiny into their own hands. It is now up to supranational organisations to respect state decisions so that national ownership becomes a reality, for instance in terms of sustainable use of natural and agricultural resources.

Hans Timmer confirms that progress must be made in terms of data quality. The World Bank helps to raise quality standards by investing in data collection and by making all data freely accessible, so that it can be checked and approved by all users. What is more, there are simple reasons as to why certain countries are lagging behind on some indicators: for example, health is

heavily dependent on other factors such as education and the quality of the services available.

Future prospects

Jon Lomoy underscores the fact that it is important to maintain efforts without allowing our energies to be sapped. Furthermore, there are significant North to South funding needs.

Gérard Payen believes that requirements in terms of access to drinking water were clarified in 2010 when it was recognised as a human right. The future post-2015 global aims will have to be more ambitious, aiming to improve the lot of a large part of the 3 to 4 billion people whose right to drinking water is not met, this being half of the whole of humanity.

Cécile Molinier concludes that the MDGs should be universal but with different typologies. We should think out alternative types of funding, including internal funding. MDGs should take into account inclusive economic growth, inclusive social growth, environmental sustainability, peace and security. What is more, in the future, civil society should be involved right from the start.

REPORTER

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www.convergences2015.org/Content/biblio/Brochure%20MD%20C2015_Nov12.pdf
- The New Paris Appeal for the Future Millennium Goals, Aiming at a Sustainable and Equitable Development. : www.convergences2015.org/Content/biblio/New%20Paris%20Appeal%20ENG.pdf
- Jeffrey D Sachs. « From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals ». Lancet 2012; 379: 2206–11 :
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