

On the road to COP21

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([COP21](#)) comes in a context of increased consciousness on the fact that several planetary boundaries actually limit our growth pattern. Some go on to call it the 'last chance' Agreement, and ask for another development model to be adopted, one that is more protective to our planet. There is a strong concern and consensus that these limits were already overcome when it comes to biodiversity loss and the cycle of nitrogen in the atmosphere, while others such as climate change may quickly grow in the coming years^[1]. Moreover, 2015 is also the year when humanity prepares for a new set of more general development goals to be adopted, much of which pointing towards environmental protection and the fight against climate change.

More than 1.5 planets are used everyday in order to provide the resources we use and to absorb the waste that we produce. This means that it now takes the Earth one year and six months to regenerate what we use in a year.



If current population and consumption trends continue, **by 2030 we will need the equivalent of two Earths to support us.**

In our current society, resources are turned into waste way

faster than waste can be turned back into resources. This creates a global ecological instability that affects the quality and the quantity of those assets on which human life and biodiversity depend for their survival.

The result is diminishing forest cover, reduced soil fertility, intensive agricultural practices, collapsing fisheries, depletion of fresh water systems, and the build-up of carbon dioxide emissions, which creates problems such as global climate change. These are just a few of the most noticeable effects of the ecological instability that we create.

Additionally, this disequilibrium also contributes to resource conflicts and wars, mass migrations, famine, disease and other human tragedies, which tend to have a disproportionate impact on the poor, who cannot buy their way out of the problem by getting resources from somewhere else.

Our (sustainable) life on this planet is influenced by the assumption of these ecological limits central to our decision-making processes. That is what the successive Conferences of the Parties (COPs) are all about. Or at least what they try to achieve.

From the first UN Climate Change Conference held in 1995 in Berlin, to this year's Conference in Paris, this annual meeting reunites all parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in order to assess progress in dealing with climate change, and try to establish legally binding obligations for developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The last COP was held last year in Lima, Peru. The main outcome of the Conference at that time was a consensus on the way countries would state their contributions to the Paris 2015 Agreement, as well as on the

role adaptation plays in the fight against climate change.



There is a high pressure on the 21st COP to deliver concrete and effective solutions for fighting **climate change**. More than the political and legal pressure, there is an urgency to take immediate action in order to avoid ending up with a planet that is not liveable anymore. For some, the damage accumulated during all these years is so important, that even a complete, full stop of our activities would not prevent world temperatures to continue rising over the next couple of years. But a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is essential to avoid the worst scenario, and selfish behaviours are not part of the solution.

The EU clearly stated its priority for the 2015 meeting in Paris: the adoption of a legally binding agreement that is ambitious as possible, and that allows us to keep track to deliver the objective of keeping the temperatures rise below **2°C**. Together with the United States and China, the EU committed to a major greenhouse gas emissions reduction.

Parties to the Convention were invited to come forward with their **intended nationally determined contributions** to the Agreement (INDCs) early 2015, well before the Paris conference. These INDCs represent what countries are ready to do to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The Agreement itself would validate and reiterate these commitments. The success of the Agreement would therefore depend on (1) the number of Parties and in particular of major emitters that come forward with such commitments, (2) the strength of the

rules designed to enforce those commitments, the progression in ambition from the pledges made under previous agreements, and (3) the flexibility and commitment of the Parties to further, and periodically review and strengthen their greenhouse gas reduction commitments over time, as scientific claims, economic and technologic development ask for stronger action.

In practice, one can notice **two types of climate change policies**: some which are dealing with **climate change adaptation** (i.e. reducing the intensity of and vulnerability to climate change impacts), while others are dealing with **climate change mitigation** (i.e. reducing the magnitude or the intensity of climate change). Adaptation becomes rather a local responsibility, while mitigation is a more global responsible thing to do. Although these two policies complement each other, financial, human, technical resources, as well as the intensity and urgency of dealing with climate change made these policies follow the global division North-South. While richer countries in the North focus on climate change mitigation, poorer (and usually the most affected) countries in the South focus on climate change adaptation. As it was initially designed, the Paris Agreement would focus only on climate change mitigation efforts. This ignores however the needs and priorities of those that suffer the most from climate change.

Two serious threats could hinder the adoption of an international binding and effective agreement: **(1) international solidarity in the fight against climate change, and (2) transparency and accountability.**

Achieving the 2°C climate change objective is not about autarchic measures. International solidarity should contribute towards a



strong agreement that benefits all. In particular, wealthier countries should help countries in need towards increasing their climate resilience and offer them climate-related support.

The EU, as a Party of the Convention, has translated its at least 40% economy-wide GHG domestic reduction target into an INDC. Together with its Member States, the Union provides also technical and financial support to countries in need for drafting their own INDCs. The Union also encouraged the inclusion of an adaptation component within INDCs, which was one of the main concerns of developing countries. In fact, European support towards third countries against climate change already includes support to national climate change adaptation strategies. Existing arrangements under the Convention could however, and should be used to strengthen cooperation and coordination between climate change adaptation and climate change mitigation. International aid should therefore contribute not only to achieving developing countries goals, as set in their INDCs, but also strengthen these countries' resilience against climate change.

Public actors don't bear alone the responsibility and costs of achieving a solid agreement though. They will act as enablers and facilitators for climate resilient investments, development plans and national policies that attract private investors. They will put the basis for investments in technology and infrastructure that allow us to live on a resource-constrained planet. Their action represents just the first step towards the set up of a public demand that enables

businesses and policy-makers to participate. In order to achieve a climate resilient society and keeping the increase in temperature under 2°C, the world needs a significant amount of resources. 100 billion dollars per year by 2020 were estimated to be the needs of the world population back in 2009 at the COP in Copenhagen. This amount is however far from the actual flows of development aid against climate change. As an example, the EU contributes around 12 billion dollars out of this amount.

For **developed countries**, engaging in the fight against climate change would also procure self-benefits, apart from the obvious social justice. Avoiding climate migrants and easily spreadable climate related diseases are just some examples.

But the goodwill of some is not enough to ensure that everyone will deliver on their commitments. The seriousness of the efforts must be measured through a standardised procedure. Expectations, possibilities for climate change action should therefore be made clearer through a simple, understandable and predictable accounting system and standard, that is internationally enforced. Introducing fairness in the process will make sure that rules apply to each and every country which is Party of the Convention, in a way that reflects its capability and national circumstances.

Civil society is encouraged to fully participate in the preparatory events for the COP21. Ensuring the same level of knowledge about the importance of climate negotiations among NGOs, local authorities, media, researchers and companies in both developed and developing countries would ideally increase popular pressure for transparent and accountable commitments. Moreover, solutions and actions coming from the civil society could guide decision-makers in formulating their own actions.

The road to Paris was long and fastidious. Some countries went to deny their responsibility for climate change and claimed their “right” to make use of world resources and develop.

Indeed, for a long period countries have considered that decreasing their carbon emissions would slow down their development. This mentality is against any agreement to be found in Paris. To put all chances on our side for keeping the planet a liveable place, solidarity and transparency must be the key words to define the new climate deal. And there is hope for a strong agreement in Paris. Economic and social data now slowly comes to prove that the transition to a low carbon society is not only decisive, but it can also generate prosperity, create new jobs, and improve our health and well-being. New business models were developed, allowing us to make an infinite use of rare resources that would otherwise fill up our landfills, pollute our waters and soils, and deteriorate our human condition. Climate change adaptation is in some cases not seen as a constraint anymore, but as an opportunity to generate growth and create a better way of living. In some countries, for example, protecting ecosystems and coastal areas against erosion has generated economic opportunities, preserved landscapes and livelihoods. Civil society is also more and more mobilised in the fight against climate change. Numerous networks have already shown their support to making the COP21 a successful Conference and have shown their interest in maintaining a strong dialogue before, during and after the official meetings.

[1] Limits to growth, planetary boundaries, developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-programmes/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html>

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Communicating the SDGs? Mind your business!



When analyzing Eastern European's reactions to the refugee crisis Ivan Krastev rightly pointed to a *compassion deficit*[\[1\]](#), quoting statistics that showed that the citizens of the Czech Republic were against allocating any public resources to help the refugees and Slovakia's Prime Minister saying that 95% of the people arriving to Europe are not 'real' refugees and in any case Slovakia could only receive Christians into the country. In Romania, President Iohannis embarrassed himself by first saying that under no circumstance will Romania receive more than 1700 refugees, just to realize later that he will have to bend to the quota voted by the European leaders in Brussels and receive a bit over 6000 people. Still in Romania, after World Vision launched a

fundraising campaign for the refugee children, under the slogan 'They have no fault, but they are the most affected', cynical comments flooded their social media channels: 'Why don't you help the poor Romanian children? Poverty in Romania is rampant and all you can think is how to help a group of future killers', 'Their only fault is that they have stupid parents', 'These kids are dangerous. They are taught to kill from very early ages. Help Romanian children instead'.

How, in this context, can we expect to successfully communicate the **Sustainable Development Goals** in the Eastern European countries? UK observers deplore that less than 4% of the British citizens knew about the MDGs in 2013 and call for better communication strategies to be created for the SDGs. If this is the case in one of the countries who invented the notion of 'international development' from the ashes of the colonialism ideology, how much bigger the need is in a country like Romania, Bulgaria or Hungary (to name just a few) where the majority of the people believe that they still need to be helped to overcome their own poverty and where events from the developing countries are very rarely reported by the media?

Here are four simple ideas:

Mind your messenger.

The agreement on a new global plan to fight poverty is an important step, but similar plans have been presented and have failed in the past. Many in the post-development circles show that after 60 years of 'development' and trillions spent, poverty is still a shameful reality of the human race, at a time when we would have all the resources to truly eradicate it, as the supporters of the development business have been trumpeting all along the way. Development is growingly contested as a useful technology and many call for its demise. 'Development is dead' or it should be killed as soon as possible, say thinkers like Wolfgang Sachs, Gustavo Esteva, Dambisa Moyo, James Ferguson, Serge Latouche and many others.

In Eastern Europe not many will remember the Millennium Development Goals and still fewer will be able to say if they were a success or a failure, but many believe that our own development is our first priority and a promise that was not delivered on. Additionally, racism is rampant, with many people believing that other nations do not develop simply because they are too lazy to do so. Cynicism is also on the rise as shown by the recent refugee crisis.

Who, in this context, is the right messenger for promoting the SDGs? CEOs of big NGOs or inter-governmental organizations (many of them perceived as indulging in luxury and totally disconnected from the 'normal' people), high profile public officials, diplomatic staff will in no way be the best people to communicate that. The people who should carry the message should be perceived as genuine and legitimate: those who can talk about poverty from their own efforts to help poor people or those who know poverty in and out because they live in it. Compelling story-telling techniques rather than sophisticated advertising techniques should be used. The story of the people who fight poverty or the story of the people experiencing poverty should be documented, told and disseminated instead of advertising vague messages about how the world should fight poverty. The costs would probably be in the same range, with far better results that can also have indirect results, such as reducing the mental space for racism and cynicism.

Mind your language

The development business is infested by technical jargon, many 'isms' that combine into long and abstract sentences that are incomprehensible for the non-expert audiences, i.e. the majority of the population. Mass murders are transformed in 'abuses', wars become 'tensions', 'incidents' or 'crisis', starving children and adults become 'people who live on 1.25 USD / day', the millions who run from torture are actually facing 'escalations'. In terms of actions, what we do is to 'condemn', 'regret', 'deplore', express 'concern', ask for

resolutions and make recommendations on top of other thousands of recommendations and resolutions never heeded by anyone. Jargon can never produce the empathy which is needed for the global solidarity movement that is implied by the SDGs, but it can surely create the kind of misunderstandings that lead to prejudice and narrow-mindedness. The messages should therefore be 'tested' with their end users and not only in the large creative agencies or communications departments of the institutions and the organizations meant to lead the 'awareness' campaign. In general, the civil society should consider fighting the 'discursive' war that waters down the big tragedies of our world in a way that allows for starvation in a time of lavish affluence. Fighting under-development is the word of the day, but why not fighting the over-development that creates and perpetuates under-development? Fighting poverty can easily turn into fighting the poor, if the ways of the opulent are not considered.

Mind your business

In the Eastern European countries the talk about the predicament of the developing countries is constantly opposed to 'our own poverty'. In Romania and other EU Member States the failure of the state administrations to integrate the Roma populations created unprecedented levels of racism. Many still use the term 'crow' to refer to the Roma citizens, as they use the term 'monkey' to refer to non-white persons. Before 1989 the non-aligned movement included the Eastern European countries in a global movement where under-development was hotly debated, although ideologically blamed on the Western countries. In those years the Romanian 'Scînteia' (the main newspaper) had a whole page on international affairs and very often the articles reflected the situation of the developing countries, global meetings, Romania's positions in the international summits, etc. After 1989 the 'free' but resource-depleted mass media stopped reporting from the developing countries which totally disappeared from the public

discourse. For the regular Romanian, Romania is probably one of the poorest country in the world and statistics showing that Romania scores in the first 70 countries in the world in the Human Development Index are not convincing. And still, the voices who want us to first address 'our own poverty' before any talk about global development are frequently dismissed by development professionals as a proof of degrading and outdated selfishness that should be quickly marginalized. This can result only in frustration on both ends, while a middle way, that of speaking of co-development and the global inter-dependencies do exist, although it would require us to go the extra mile for identifying those areas where these inter-dependencies could be explored and harnessed.

Mind the compassion deficit

Krastev is doing us a big favor when coining the metaphor of the 'compassion deficit', as he gives us a crucial insight into how our SDGs communication campaigns should be framed. People in the 'new' EU Member States were eager to join the EU for the prosperity promise. A promise about how prosperity would be shared with themselves and not about how they would be expected to share with the 'others'. Living at the margins of the most developed club of nations, not far from the shiny comforts of some of the most industrialized countries in the world, the Eastern European citizens feel that they are the unluckiest people in the world. History had wickedly conspired to keep them away from progress. Any comparisons with those who are even unluckier is taken as a bad joke. Blinded with the sparkly luxuries they can almost touch across a border that does not even exist any longer, Eastern Europeans feel that they suffered enough and now they 'deserve' to be as developed as anyone can dream. In the EU 'new' Member States any SDG 'awareness campaigns' needs to take this complex aspirations into account and probably build on them, instead of dismissing them. Smart communicators will want to talk about common interests, before they speak about any

'duty' or moral obligation to help those in need.

[1] Ivan Krastev, Easter Europe's Compassion Deficit, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/09/opinion/eastern-europes-compassion-deficit-refugees-migrants.html?_r=0.

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Where do youth fit in the SDG architecture?

Our vision is a world that values diversity, environmental sustainability and active participation by all citizens. A world that operates an economic system based on fairness and equality, where everyone has access to basic services such as health and education and where the standards of those services are high no matter what people's background or economic situation. No young person in this world would be excluded or marginalized because of gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation. Young people in this world are incorporated into decision making processes and given access to the levers of power regardless of their background."

[Visions and principles for a post-2015 world](#)

In September 2015 world leaders met in New York to adopt the

post-2015 development agenda. In what has been considered the most inclusive global debate, thousands of voices made themselves heard and tried to bring their contribution to the world of tomorrow. The SDGs are the goals to be achieved by 2030 and a simple reading of them makes it quite obvious that by success or failure, they will shape the future in a significant way. From ending extreme poverty in all forms to fighting climate change, inequality and injustice, what has come to be known as the seventeen global goals touch upon all aspects of human life, all over the world.



The world of 2030 will be inhabited by today's youth, and we currently live in a 'younger' world than ever before. There are an estimated 1.2 billion youth age fifteen to twenty-four worldwide, 85% of them living in developing countries. Improving economic opportunities, promote quality education and ensure healthy lives for all are just a few aspects that will shape their

life and future choices. Consequently, it should be quite obvious that youth should have a prominent voice on these topics. Moreover, since the SDGs are not legally binding and the review of their implementation is voluntary, citizens' involvement or lack thereof will have a great impact on their success.

Today's youth face a number of general and specific problems whose resolution will depend upon the success of the SDGs. To name just a few, low economic opportunities, poor education and poor health services affect the lives of hundreds of millions. According to the [International Labor Organization](#), youth unemployment has been constantly rising to reach up to

13% in 2015, roughly three times bigger than the adult unemployment, while youth represent 25% of the working age population. In 2014 alone, 74 million youth were looking for work, this problem not being contained to developing countries alone. An [index](#) developed in the spring of 2014 shows that the overall wellbeing of 85% of the youth in the countries included in the index falls between medium and low, with the lowest index score in the economic opportunity domain. More than 87% of young women and men living in developing countries facing a broad range of development challenges and issues related to [inequality](#), with around [238 million youth living with less than one dollar a day](#).

Youth voice in the SDGs

In contrast to their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs focus on all countries, with an overall focus on sustainability. Even if the global goals pick up the unfinished work of the MDGs, they feature a much more comprehensive view of development, which falls in between social and economic development and protecting the environment. As youth consultations point out, all three dimensions of sustainable development are relevant to youth everywhere, thus it is interesting to see how youth were involved in the shaping of the post-2015 agenda, what are their top priorities in the SDGs, where do they fit in within it and how will they participate in its implementation.

Youth around the world have actively participated in shaping the global goals through consultations and working groups which made recommendations for the decision-makers. While youth participated in the national and thematic UN consultations as stakeholders, they were also represented in one of the Major Groups for the negotiation of the post 2015-agenda. The UN Major Group for Children and Youth in the United Nations ([MGCY](#)) was the youth 'constituency' within sustainable development negotiations, and worked in the shaping of the global agenda by making [recommendations and](#)

[proposals](#), with major thematic proposals falling in twelve categories, the most important being promoting **gender equality and participation, decreasing youth unemployment worldwide through the promotion of decent work and universal education and increasing access to universal health care.**

Similarly, another significant involvement of youth in shaping of the global agenda was through the consultations carried in twelve countries worldwide under the Youth Conversations for Post-2015, a project initiated by the DFID/CSO Youth Working Group. Worried that youth participation in the UN consultations was not as meaningful and broad based as it should be given youth relevance for the whole process, the group carried inclusive consultations in twelve countries, in order to mainstream the results into the negotiation process.

Eleven principles emerged, which are the backbone of the vision for the future the consulted youth hold (in the order of their importance, as compiled in the [final report](#)):

1. Equality and freedom
2. Fair, responsible and accountable governance
3. Environment sustainability
4. The right to be healthy
5. Peace
6. Quality education for all
7. Responsible approach to the economy
8. Respect for diversity
9. Decent employment for all
10. Civic participation and active citizenship including youth empowerment
11. Global co-operation

Although these are the priorities emerging from all consultations, youth from different countries prioritized these principles differently. For example, for the Romanian youth, the most important ones were **active citizenship, primary health affordable to everyone and combating all forms**

of discrimination, while the youth in Sierra Leone prioritized **equality of power and resource distribution**, **increased youth participation in decision making** and **stability for all**.

How are these principles reflected in the SDGs?

A look at the seventeen goals shows that the above mentioned principles are generally fairly represented. However, interestingly enough, young people do not have an SDG 'of their own', but they are included in three of the seventeen goals and six of 169 targets, specifically those regarding education, employment and one climate change-related goal. Under the mentioned targets, we are supposed to achieve universal literacy for youth, increase the number of youth who have relevant skills for employment, reduce the proportion of youth not in employment and raise the capacity for effective climate change related planning in least developed countries, including focusing on youth. However, youth are not explicitly included in the goals regarding health, political infrastructure or security, although these were identified by youth themselves as most relevant areas of interest.

To get to the point, while youth are somewhat represented in the post 2015 agenda, it is not at all obvious how this targets will be achieved, with states being quite free to adopt their own policies, and youth in different parts of the world having different priorities. Similar with not specifically including youth in the goals, youth participation in the achievement of the SDGs is not explicitly codified in the post-2015 agenda. With the MGCY itself observing that children and young people are seen rather as beneficiaries than contributors, and that the overall post 2015 agenda falls short of recognizing the centrality and potential of youth in the implementation of the agenda, it seems that while the SDGs somewhat represent the key interests of youth, they fall short of empowering them to actively engage into the achievement of the Goals.

Steps further

While states have pledged to allocate resources for the achievement of the Goals, and, more importantly, the Goals themselves stand as a moral commitment to the world of 2030, there is a lot to look forward to. However, since the SDGs are not legally binding, and review of the progress made by states is voluntary, citizens will have a large impact on the success of that commitment. Moreover, citizens should be the driving force behind the achievement of the SDGs if they are to be truly sustainable.

As the majority of tomorrow's population, youth have both incentives and opportunities to actively participate in the achievement of the SDGs and shape the world they will live in. The same youth consultations carried between 2013 and 2014 identifies five major themes which synthesize the results of all debates in terms of solutions for the problems identified by youth:

“Sensitize: Raise awareness to promote human rights, respect for others, support equality and protect the environment.

Empower People: Support wide scale civic participation, proper representation, accountability and knowledge of human rights.

Harness Technology: Use technology and promote innovation to enable, support and strengthen solutions and their reach.

Collaborate: Build effective relationships from local to international levels to support solutions across issues and amongst everyone involved.

Reform Institutions: Review and reform systems across education, health, governance and infrastructure (to ensure access to basic human securities).”

While all solutions proposed by youth consultations sound great in principle, the degree of their practical usability

depends on the overall progress of the SDGs as a whole, starting with empowering youth to take action and awareness raising with a strong focus on education for sustainable development. Definitely, with the transition from the *Millennium Development Goals* to the *Sustainable Development Goals*, the focus shifts on the world of tomorrow.

With Professor Thomas Pogge on the SDGs

Thomas Pogge, November 6th 2014:



The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG) on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** has formulated a draft of the SDGs, proposing **17 goals**, which summarize **169 targets**. There is still time to improve the draft in the run-up to the UNGA meeting in September 2015. Among the most important improvements to be made are these.

(1) Goal 10, to reduce inequality, looks laudable but then laughable upon inspection: we should “by 2030 progressively

achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average.” In other words, inequality may increase without limit until 2030 so long as it then starts declining just before the SDGs expire.

(2) After witnessing many cosmetic revisions of definitions and measurement methods involved in the Millennium Development Goals, with each revision making our efforts against poverty look more impressive, we should insist that no such revisions be allowed from now on. Moreover, the measurement of progress should not be left to politically exposed and vulnerable international agencies, such as the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization, but be entrusted to a group of respectable academic experts.

(3) The SDGs should not merely express wishes that this or that should happen but should assign concrete tasks to competent agents, esp. to the most powerful governments and enterprises. Here reforms of the structural causes of poverty are crucial. The rich countries should agree to stop facilitating illicit financial outflows from the poor countries, to stop imposing their protectionism and pollution on the world without compensation, to stop blocking poor populations' access to advanced medicines, to stop blocking the adoption of decent global labor standards, and to stop supporting dictators by paying them for their countries' natural resources or by lending them money or selling them arms.

Never has persistent severe poverty been more easily avoidable and hence a greater moral scandal. We must eradicate it as quickly as we possibly can.

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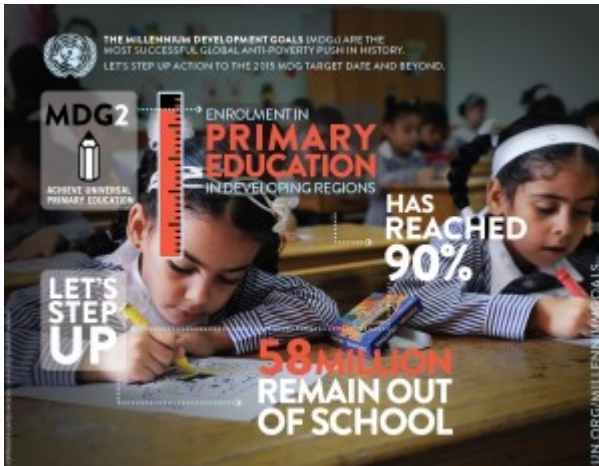
He is also president of [Academics Stand Against Poverty](#) (ASAP), an international professional association focused on helping poverty researchers and teachers enhance their positive impact on severe poverty. He is the author of several well-known books, such as *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (second edition, 2008), *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right: Who Owes What to the Very Poor?* (editor, 2007), *John Rawls: His Life and Theory of Justice* (2007), and *Realizing Rawls* (1989).

For more on Thomas Pogge, visit his [website](#).

The Importance of Education for Sustainable Development

Throughout history, humans have developed by learning, creating new ways to improve their life and in the process they amassed a large body of knowledge which was and still is currently transmitted to new generations through education. The knowledge and skills an education confers is merely an instrument and its purpose depends entirely on the individual possessing it. For the most part of history, humans have used knowledge only to improve their way of life usually at the cost of the environment but today we are faced with its unsustainability. Therefore, I shall argue that the best way of surpassing the challenge of sustainable development is enhancing our current system of education to include more aspects of sustainability. This is what I consider to be the most pressing need that should be globally addressed and highlighted by the new development agenda.

Emphasizing education



Currently, education has been an important part of global development as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which consists of achieving universal primary education. Over the years, the level of education did improve but it can be argued that without first eliminating poverty and hunger and also improving a child's health, education cannot be a priority. For example, in Malawi, Africa, 'attending school now is a hit-and-miss affair. Children are in and out of school with illness. Their attendance depends on how urgently they are needed at home to fetch water and firewood, or to care for siblings or cousins; on whether they can afford to buy supplies, a uniform, and pay local fees; and on the safety of walking several kilometers to the school itself' (Sachs 2005, p.23).

On some level, all MDGs are interdependent but if the aforementioned problems can be reduced, through short-term solutions like foreign aid, to a scale that will permit children to attend school then education will become the force that drives global development. This can be accomplished through a few steps.

First of all, after achieving a basic level of well-being that allows families to send their children to school, education will eventually confer individuals the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their economic standing. They will be sufficiently competent to occupy better positions in a society with higher incomes and thus evading poverty and hunger. 'It is well established that the distribution of personal incomes in society is strongly related to the amount of education people have had. Generally speaking, more schooling means

higher lifetime incomes' (UNESCO 2005, p.40) Although a quality education that provides useful cognitive skills is more important than a quantitative one (UNESCO 2005), numerous studies have found that 'the rate of return to schooling across countries is centered at about 10%, with returns higher for low-income countries, for lower levels of schooling, and frequently for women' (Hanushek & Wößmann 2007, p.2). Basically, an analysis of education and income levels leads to the conclusion that one year of education is worth a 10% increased income. This mechanism is why education is an excellent instrument for increasing the economic and social mobility of individuals that contribute to the development of a state by improving its human capital.

Another major benefit of education is that it leads to the improved health of individuals. Educated persons are able to adopt a healthy way of living by knowing all sorts of habits that sustain and prolong life. More importantly they are 'better prepared to prevent diseases and to use health services effectively. A woman with six or more years of education is more likely to seek prenatal care, assisted childbirth, and postnatal care, reducing the risk of maternal and child mortality illness' (Center for Global Development, 2002.).

At this point it is evident that education is a necessary investment for global development because better education leads to the improvement of other current MDGs and numerous benefits like better governance. But what the previous decades have shown us is that education, even in developed countries, has not brought large scale awareness about the lack of sustainability of our way of life. The prevalent mindset adopted through education is consumerism with too little regard to caring and preserving the environment. This type of education is a part of the problem but it can also be a part of the solution because it 'is essential for improving the capacity of people to address environmental and development

issues, which are inextricably tied to sustainable development'(Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.1).

Recognizing the importance of education to all other aspects of development and that it is essential to sustainability, the United Nations established the practice of Education for Sustainable Development (EDS) and respectively, a Decade of EDS (2005-2014) led by UNESCO. In its view, EDS 'allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. EDS means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; it also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development'(UNESCO, n.d.). In order for this new curriculum in education to be successful it needs to be preceded by a change in people's mentality. Individuals must first learn to care to protect the world. As Stephen Sterling stated EDS is more than simply adding sustainability concepts to the curriculum but also a cultural shift in education and learning, based on a more ecological or relational view of the world.(Sterling 2001).

The importance of education in our pursuit of sustainable development is highlighted by two major aspects. First of all, education is strongly related with technological advancement. The better educated and knowledgeable an individual is, the higher the chance that he will be able to make scientific discoveries that improve the sustainability of our way of life. The best example is the large scale use of clean, renewable energy like solar and wind power that were made possible by dedicated people who research such issues. Without the proper education, these individuals would not have been



able to do so. Further scientific discoveries and technological improvements can render obsolete or at least minimize the damage of our current polluting ways of producing energy and other products.

Secondly, the progress of technology tends to be rather slow when compared with the urgency of our problems, so in order to develop in a sustainable manner we have to better manage our resources. The current system and mentality has led to an immense waste and although our current technology can minimize it, not much effort has been put into it because many do not care about the consequences or either they are not aware of the impact our wasteful way of life has on others and the planet. To this problem, one of the best solutions is an education for sustainable development that can change people's mindset and bring awareness on how our actions affect the world. 'For example, overconsumption of consumer goods such as paper leads to deforestation, which may contribute to global climate change. The ability to consider an issue from the view of different stakeholders is essential to sustainable



development education' (Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.4). This example brings up the problem of recycling and its still small scale practice, the massive waste of roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption (FOA, 2011). Food that people in the least developed countries are in

dire need of and also other resources that are squandered. By including even in basic level of education, more knowledge, skills and values that promote sustainability, these challenges can be surpassed.

Finally, the most important reason why education must be emphasized among all other development goals is because

eliminating poverty, hunger, inequality and combating diseases does not bring us closer to a sustainable world. But an enhanced education can solve poverty and most of the problems associated with income insufficiency by improving economic growth; it can lead to higher life expectancy and pave the way to a sustainable world through technological improvements and better resource management.

Conclusion

In spite of all its benefits, education isn't a miracle solution to all the problems of global sustainable development. To reach a high level of EDS is itself a challenge and 'while many nations around the world have embraced the need for education in achieving sustainability, only limited progress has been made on any level. This lack of progress stems from many sources. In some cases, a lack of vision or awareness has impeded progress. In others, it is a lack of policy or funding' (Hopkins & McKeon 1999, p.1). But of all the possible solutions and means to achieve sustainable development, education is still the best option we have at the moment. At the very least, the awareness for the need of sustainability has grown, considering the changes in my mindset to be a testimony of this fact among the growing number of people and organizations who desire a sustainable world.

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Photo credits:

World Bank/Alfredo Srur, "A student in a classroom in Tegucigalpa, Honduras."

CONFLICT AND THE NEW OBJECTIVES OF THE HUMANKIND

The paper investigates the connection between conflict and

sustainable development seen as a target of the international community. The paper aims to demonstrate that the current MDGs and future SDGs will not be achieved if greater emphasis will not be placed on the prevention and management of conflicts. Violent conflicts matter because they are fertile ground for poverty, regional instability, terrorism, diseases and death. Therefore, in order to eradicate all these problems, conflict should be placed on the policy map and measures for preventing, managing and resolving should be foreseen.

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Following **the Millennium Summit** from 2000, UN has adopted **the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, a series of 8 targets to be fulfilled by 2015, aiming at eradicating and solving the following humankind problems: poverty and hungry, lack of education, child mortality, gender inequality, HIV and other diseases, environmental degradation, through a global partnership formed by international organizations and states.

As progress reports show, by the end of 2014, many developing countries were on their way to achieve the MDGs except the conflict affected states. Only 12 of 40 conflict affected states have reached one or two MDGs (like reducing poverty), an improved situation compared to 2011, when none of them reached any MDGs. However, the progress remains a modest one, the conflict affected states severely lagging “behind the rest of the developing countries in terms of meeting the MDGs”. (World Bank 2013, 2)

Given the negative relation between conflict and the possibility of reaching the MDGs, the current essay argues on the importance of considering and therefore treating the **prevention, management and resolution of conflicts** as one of the new Sustainable Development Goals in order to achieve all the other targets formulated by the UN.

In this paper, we understand “conflict” as organized violence

which includes: “state actions against other states or against civilians, civil wars, electoral violence between opposing sides, communal clashes based on regional, ethnic, religious or other group identities or competing economic interests, gang-based violence and organized crime and international non-state armed movements with ideological aims.” (World Bank 2011, xv) Since 1945, the number of conflicts registered in the human history reached 331, with 32 ongoing conflicts leaving behind 26 million deaths. (Marshall, 2014) Although the number of inter-states wars, civil wars and coup d’état has fallen since 1990, [the Global Peace Index 2014 Report](#) considers that the overall trend of the world has seen a slight deterioration of peace since 2007. The conflicts taken place today are affecting the same states repeatedly diminishing their capacity to develop and prosper. According to the World Bank , “90% of the last decade’s civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a civil war in the last 30 years” (World Bank 2011, 2).

Scholars argue the existence of a **connection between economic growth/decline and conflict**. According to this theory, where countries start to develop, wars are becoming less possible because people are more interested in keeping the wellbeing; where development fails, states are at risk of conflict by slowing down the economy and concentrating the precarious resources in the hands of small group generating frustration for the others. Paul Collier, in his masterpiece “The Bottom Billion”, claims that “unless economic growth takes place post-conflict, a nation has a 44% chance of slipping back into violence”. (Mercy Corp 2011, 3) The economists from the World Bank go further advancing the idea of a **“violence trap”**: countries are poor because they are affected by conflict and are dragged into conflict because they are poor. People join violent movement due to the lack of opportunities caused by country instability. (Collier et all 2003, 1) Therefore, the “violence trap” cannot be overcome unless economic situation is improved at a national level, institutions gain public

trust and start functioning properly and resources distribution is becoming more equal. Walton (Helpdesk Research Report 2011) mentions that civil wars often start following growth collapses (the growth rate during the five years prior to conflict averages -0.5%, compared to 2% in peaceful countries) associated to other factors as demographic consistency of the population, external shocks, distribution and exploitation of natural resources. Because of its deep negative relation with development, conflict puts in danger the reach of any MDGs and in future of any Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in conflict affected states with direct effects on their neighbors. The economic cost of violence at global level was in 2013, 9.8 trillion USD. The amount equates to 11.3% of the global GDP or to 1.350 USD per person, a figure which could lift out of poverty the total population living under the 2\$ threshold. (Institute for Economic& Peace 2014, 3)

From a social and human costs perspective, conflict affects today almost one-and-a-half billion people which are becoming more exposed to the lack of food, education and health, all of them goals set by UN. According to World Bank, one in four people on the planet lives in areas affected by conflict. People in conflicted-affected areas are “twice as likely to be under-nourished as those in other developing countries”, thrice as likely to be unable to go to school, twice as likely to die before age five and more than “twice as likely to lack clean water” (World Bank 2011, 5). UNHCR appreciate that “at the end of 2013, 51.2 million people were forcibly **displaced** due to violence”. (UNHCR 2013, 2) Developing countries host 86% of the world’s refugees adding an additional burden to their weak economy by providing additional social services. Refugees may compete with local citizens for scarce resources inducing tensions (Gomez& Christensen 2010, 7). **Poverty** represents a challenge to overcome in conflict. It is estimated that the average agriculture production losses reach 12% per year. “War,

therefore, by increasing the gap between food production and need, aggravates poverty and hunger, and consequently promotes continued dependence on food aid". (UNEP 2006, para.3) One of the main problems in conflict affected states is related to **health**. Violence results in millions of people injured, traumatized and exposed to communicable and non-communicable diseases. (Roberts 2012) For instance, polio outbreak in Middle East during Syria conflict after being totally eradicated. (Vargha, 2014) Although getting an **education** is an universal human right, 40 million children from conflict affected states are out of school (War child, "Access to education", para. 4). Proliferation of attacks on schools (3.600 in 2013 according to Tran 2013 para. 2), lack of personal documents, killing or injuring of teachers and pupils, flee of families, lack of financial support to pursue education, force children to renounce to school.

Conflict affects in a large measure another goal set in MDGs: **gender equality**. During conflict time, woman vulnerability increases opening the path to sexual abuses, force marriage, exploitation, domestic violence and trafficking. (Gomez& Christensen 2010, 12) Conflict has a negative impact on **environment**. Refugee camp can reshape the landscape by excessively use of local resources. "Habitat degradation, reduced access to water points [...], species loss, alteration of the natural food chain, and additional pressure on biodiversity" are other effects that conflict may have over the environment. (UNEP 2006, para.13)

Conclusion: Given the economic, social and human costs, as well as the negative impact on health, education, gender equality and environment, the new SDGs should include also the **prevention, management and resolution of conflict** as one of the main targets.

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Photo credits: Alexandra Sabou, May 2014, Gal/i region, Abkhazia

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AID

AND THE CULTURAL IDENTITY KOBOLD

The starting point of this article is the assertion that development policies aim to modify certain sets of behaviour which ultimately strive at improving human life and potential, primarily developing infrastructures and building the means for that new behaviour to be sustainable and become part of the local mindset.

Some time ago I took part in a heated debate on whether or not culture should play a role in the framework of international aid and more importantly, in the process and management of the aid efforts. Of course, if we were to debate an abstract situation, we would think of culture as a factor which would logically have to be taken in account as long as one functions within a cultural environment which in itself is tributary to its own characteristics. However, as most aid programs do not deal with abstract matters but actual forms of human sufferance, things can get a little uncomfortable to say the least.

Before we charge head-on into sensitive matters though, let us spend a little more time on some abstract yet very tangible aspects of intercultural communication. Thus, there would be two main attitudes with which we could start the abovementioned debate: an ethnocentric one or one of cultural relativism. Both these attitudes towards culture and ultimately people and their mindsets, have traps that one may become a victim of. Nonetheless, behaviour that is practiced over and over again shapes our personalities up to the point that some behaviours are not necessarily logical or beneficial but are regarded as positive because of their wide-spread use and tradition.

If we were to adopt an ethnocentric attitude (from a

Western/European point of view), then we would acknowledge that there are several universal truths to this world and human rights are definitely among them. Thus, the female genitalia mutilation phenomenon that takes place in certain parts of the world is something immoral, unlawful, unjust and illegal and it goes against the very principles that our society is based on. If we were to engage with a community that enforces the aforementioned practices, the way we would implement an aid project would be to confront the phenomenon head-on and as long as we can do something, prevent any and every case that it is in our power to stop. With the adequate political support and funding of the project, we would hope that in time we would reach a goal that a certain percent of the young female population would not have to suffer from genitalia mutilation.

If our choice was a culturally relativist attitude, we would first acknowledge that even if female genitalia mutilation is immoral, unlawful, unjust and illegal in our own culture, it may be an accepted practice in that place where it is practiced. Nevertheless, our purpose in implementing an aid project on the subject within that particular area would be the same, which would still be reducing the percent of young females that are mutilated in this way. However, the approach would have to be a little different, underlining the mindset, not necessarily the practices themselves. Of course, practices are important but the society that practices them is the ultimate arbiter of their use. A certain cultural community, just like markets, has a certain degree of permeability. This means that certain behaviours of the people from that community may permit us to engage with them to a lesser or to a greater degree. The less permeable a cultural community is (of course, also taking in account our instruments of engagement), the harder it is to produce change in people's mindsets. Inescapably, international aid projects have a start date and an end one but the people that live in the targeted communities will continue to exist there long after the

foreign change agent has been long gone. Also, it is important to note that targeted communities are not isolated in most cases, they continually interact with other communities which may or may not retain traditional behaviours related to the targeted phenomenon.

The two attitudes described are ideal types, an optimal attitude most probably benefiting from both the concepts presented. However, the question remains: What happens after the project ends or attention focuses from one region to another? Culture is hard to pinpoint within a statistical report but it exists nonetheless. Practiced behaviour that gives birth to certain mindsets weave people together like an invisible web which can garner an extraordinary counter-force to change, even if the change is, paradoxically, a beneficial one to that society. The web, on the other hand, is as strong as the individual strains that construct it and in this case the people and the families that practice female genitalia mutilation.

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Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan (CPCA)



Contributing to Peace Consolidation
in Afghanistan (CPCA): A Joint
Romanian-Afghan Effort

The [Contributing to Peace Consolidation in Afghanistan](#) project represents a one year joint Romanian-Afghan endeavour, having as aim the highlight and analysis of peace consolidation related capacity building gaps, challenges, achievements, lessons identified, and “best-fit” solutions in Afghanistan on the eve of the 2014 transition process and the 2015 MDG mark. As an integral part of Romania’s Official Development Assistance policy, the implementation of the project was made possible with the financial assistance of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the Official Development Assistance budget, in partnership with UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre, and is being implemented by the [Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania](#) (PATRIR) in partnership with the Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) from Afghanistan.

The CPCA project was developed as a result of a series of consultations with various Afghan and international organisations engaged in peace consolidation and sustainable

development activities, which have highlighted the need i) to enhance Afghan ownership over peacebuilding and peace consolidation capacities required by a peaceful transition process; ii) to highlight the link between the nationally and locally owned peacebuilding and peace consolidation programmes and the successful engagement with the MDG targets; iii) to boost national, local and community based capacities to reach the MDG targets in the post-2014 transition period through the use of peacebuilding and peace consolidation skills and knowledge; iv) to place a central role on the traditional Afghan peacebuilding and peace consolidation practices; v) to strengthen the role of Afghan civil society in development of such capacities for national and local use.

In order to reply to these needs, the project had foreseen the development and implementation of a series of activities with multi-stakeholder character, in two phases: a needs assessment phase and a capacity building phase. The target group chosen for the project included key government/ state actors, policy and decision makers dealing with development, peacebuilding and peace consolidation in Afghanistan, key civil society/ non-state actors active in the same or adjacent domains, staff of UN agencies and peacekeeping missions and EUPOL personnel.



The first phase of the project was made up of a four months long capacity building needs assessment process, containing a comprehensive desk review process of relevant Afghan and international reports and resource materials on the status of peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities and programmes existent within the country. Coupled with this, the assessment team had undertaken a multi-stakeholder interview and survey process, involving representatives of the before-mentioned target group. After

having overviewed more than two hundred online and hard-copy documents, more than thirty five online interviews and lectures, and having conducted more than sixty interviews and surveys, the seven-member assessment team had drawn a series of conclusions and presented relevant recommendations regarding the link between peace consolidation and development, peace consolidation and development related capacity building needs on the ground and existing strengths on which to build further efforts. The second phase of the project involved a four-day capacity building programme entitled "Collaborative Efforts for Building National Capacities for Peace Consolidation and Sustainable Development in Afghanistan", bringing together fifteen Afghan practitioners engaged in peacebuilding, peace consolidation and sustainable development.

The findings of the project show that "defining and contributing to the process of peace consolidation in the 2014's Afghanistan proves to be a challenging undertaking, due to the narrow connotation such a concept has received in the light of the impending security transition: that of general peace-making" (Observation made by UNDP Afghanistan staff of Afghan nationality). Basing strategy and action on the principles of systemic engagement, multi-stakeholder approach, national ownership and legitimacy, cumulative impact creation and evidence-based / demand-driven engagement aids in expanding and creating an integrated understanding of the concept itself, towards constructive and sustainable results. As such, peace consolidation needs to be understood from the perspective of positive peace creation, in which, based on the absence of direct violence, equitable and integrated outputs and outcomes are developed in the spheres of economy, social services, politics, justice, human relations, and constructive conflict resolution. Essentially, successful peace consolidation may be achieved only through the interrelated cycle of peacebuilding/ peacemaking/ peacekeeping, sustainable development, and nationally owned capacities (Kacsó et al.

2014).”

Further on, the assessment team concluded that there is a series of historical and contextual factors impacting and being impacted by the lack of proper capacity, among which the general state-building project, the military and human security situation, the socio-economic and cultural realities and the available resources. The customization of international capacity building programmes to the particularities of Afghanistan’s culture and context is quite scarce, which is coupled with a low level of local and national ownership of capacities and capacity building programmes serving peace consolidation and development. Due to a siloed work practice among the different actors, the cumulative impact of the capacity building programmes is minimal, especially when most of the programmes provided follow a supply- and donor-driven approach and little integration of previous lessons learned and local capacities.

The appraisal of existing capacity building strengths in Afghanistan has highlighted a series of principles aiding the consolidation of capacity building. Among these we may find a strive towards unitary planning and strategizing based on comprehensive situation analysis, country-led processes, the respect of dialogic principles in capacity building processes, and several others. The high awareness level of the interconnectedness between peace, conflict and development is coupled with gradually strengthened cooperation mechanisms between actors, both contributing to the decrease of dependency on foreign peace consolidation and sustainable development capacities. In order to contribute to the sustainable development of Afghanistan, the majority of actors attempt to link to a more or lesser degree with national peace consolidation and sustainable development objectives, traditional Afghan peace mechanisms, and the Afghan National Development Strategy in particular.

The project, which is scheduled to end in December 2014, has

managed to link closely not only with the existing MDG agenda, but also with the upcoming post-2015 UN Development one. Tackling the link between development and peace and security concerns, the project was developed and implemented closely in line with the UN System Task Team's "Peace and Security" Thematic Think Piece, offering a set of recommendations in the direction of systemic peacebuilding strategy development and implementation, and related capacity building requirements.

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Migration as a driver for development



The emergence of a long-awaited global consensus on the MDGs during the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit laid the foundations of a new era of worldwide cooperation and common development framework. With the imminent expiry of the eight time-bound goals rapidly approaching, the international

community has been actively engaged in discussions on how to advance and reshape the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. In the light of the latest shifts in human mobility and migration patterns, it becomes clear that migration must be brought to the negotiation table. More specifically, since the adoption of the original MDGs in 2000, international migration flows have increased by approximately one third, from 175 million international migrants in 2000 to 232 million in 2013 (UN DESA 2013). The same source highlights shifting global migration trends, with a substantial increase in the global South – South migration (between developing countries) which almost equals the South –North migration (from developing to developed countries) (UN DESA 2013).

Reaching a global consensus on the adoption of the eight MDGs was a long-term process which took almost 10 years. This might account for the fact that migration – a politically controversial topic, and at the same time a goal difficult to measure – slipped away from the negotiation table. It is interesting to note the shift in perception of migration at

the time of the adoption of the MDGs and its evolution up to today. The 2001 UN Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration refers to migration as one of the factors contributing to the worsening of global malaria problem, and portrays migrants as “victims of discrimination, racism and intolerance” (UN General Assembly 2001). Fortunately, a departure from this point of view is to be seen in the 2005 final report of the UN Millennium Project, called “Investing in Development: A Practical Way to Achieve the MDGs” (UN Millennium Project 2005). More specifically, the report shows an evolution of the concept of migrants portraying them as agents of development in the context of poverty-alleviation. The migration-development nexus was reiterated in further conferences such as the Second Earth Summit in 2002 “Rio +20” UNGA High Level Dialogues (HLDs) in 2006 and 2013 as well (Lönnback 2014).

Why should migration be an integral part of the post-2015 development agenda?

Migration has the potential to boost both the economy of the country of origin and of the host country. Firstly, the remittances sent back home by migrants are crucial to reducing household poverty by providing an additional income which can be used in various ways in order to meet the family’s needs. According to the World Bank, remittances sent to developing countries exceed up to three times the amount of official development assistance received (The World Bank n.d.) and at the same time are comparable, if not higher than the export earnings of the recipient countries. For instance, in Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, remittances exceeded the total earnings from exports of goods and services. Another case in point is India, where in 2013 the value of remittances was higher than the earnings coming from the export services of its vibrant IT industry (The World Bank 2014).

Remittances have been shown to be an extremely powerful tool for poverty reduction in developing countries, which has been

correlated with increased child schooling, especially among girls, as reported in Pakistan (Ratha 2013). Likewise, it has been shown that households which receive remittances tend to invest more in health care than those which do not receive remittances.

In the light of the illustrated impact, it becomes evident that migrant remittances actually contribute to the achievement of the original MDGs by reducing poverty and hunger (MDG 1), contributing to an increase in child schooling, including primary education (MDG 2) especially among girls, with positive impact on efforts to achieve gender equality (MDG 3). Furthermore, migrant remittances also contribute to health care improvement, which results in reduction of child mortality (MDG 4), maternal health improvement (MDG 5) and stepping up efforts in preventing or combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, other diseases (MDG 6) and ensuring environmental sustainability (MDG 7) by improving the access to safe water and sanitation.

Secondly, it has been argued that migrants can improve also the economy of the host country by “ tackling skills shortages and labour market bottlenecks.” (Andor 2014).

A recent study (OECD 2014) shows that the financial contribution that migrants make to the host country budgets through taxes and social security actually exceeds the benefits received. In addition, claims that migrants are draining the social welfare of the host country were found to be inaccurate by a report commissioned by the EC. It was shown that unemployed migrants represent a very small share of beneficiaries, with low impact on the social budgets of the host countries (Juravle et al. 2013). Beyond the taxes that migrants pay, they contribute to the development of the host countries by stimulating trade, investments and business.

Thirdly, migration also brings about an increase in the transfer of skills and innovation. For instance, in 2013, almost half of the patents applications in the U.S. were filed by foreign-born citizens. The same is valid also for the business sector where more than half of the start-ups in

Silicon Valley were set up by citizens of foreign origin (Quittner 2014). Moreover, migrants are important agents for development since they facilitate links between private and public sectors in both country of origin and country of destination and can even act as “the basis of business partnerships, trade, and flows of investment” between the two countries (House of Commons International Development Committee 2004). By acting as the facilitators of development between home and host country, migrant further global partnership for development, contributing to the achievement of the last of the eight MDGs.

To conclude, migration can be a driver for development in both home and host country. This is not to say that migration does not pose challenges. However, if efficiently governed, it can become a win-win process for the main parties concerned, i.e. country of origin and of destination but most importantly, for the migrants themselves. In order to do so, it is necessary that the international community agrees that the migration discourse must re-shift its focus from border control policies which basically see migration rather as a problem than as a solution. Likewise, seeing migration only in economic terms will not do since migrants might run the risk “to be regarded as commodities, rather than as individuals entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights” (The UN Committee on Migrant Workers 2005). Hence, migration should be dealt with from a holistic perspective within which human rights play a crucial role.

The post-2015 development agenda has the potential to successfully re-shift the focus from border control policies to the improvement of the quality of migration. Quality migration approach sees migration as a development enabler and hence not as a problem per se but as a solution. It implies the protection of migrants’ fundamental rights as human beings, protection of migrants’ labour rights as workers (decent work) and safe migration for potential and returning migrants. The human rights approach to migration and

development should be understood in terms of quality improvement of the migration process and not in terms of increasing the number of migrants.

Given the migrants' contribution to the development of both home and destination countries and their undeniable positive impact on the achievement of the original MDGs, migration ought to become an integral part of the post-2015 development strategy. This will not only pave the way for a gradual expansion of migrants' rights but, in the words of Peter Sutherland, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Migration "[...] perhaps even more important, it could change public perceptions of migrants, so that they are viewed as a blessing rather than a scourge.'" (Sutherland 2013). This is to say that the potential of migration potential as a development enabler cannot be fully achieved unless migrants' human rights are protected and at the same time efforts are made to end the stigma and discrimination against migrants.

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2014. What Have the MDGs Accomplished and What Are the Prospects for the World's greatest promise to end poverty?

A retrospect for the Millenium Development Goals. What has been done so far?

(by Alexandra Sabou)

Two cross-cutting topics in the field of international development concern both the governmental and the non-governmental sector and the academia: firstly, the evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) due to expire at the end of 2015 and secondly, the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 agenda designed to guide our efforts until 2030. For more than a

decade already, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have galvanized opinions and raised criticisms around the methods of improving our living conditions and ending poverty in the world. Following [the 2000 Millennium Declaration](#) put forward by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, the MDGs were supposed to represent the crafted framework for promoting normative transformation in the global society. It is worth to mention that since their very beginning, they were meant to express ends for development, not a 'one-size-fits-all' recipe to solve the humankind problems put down on paper and unanimously recognized by all the UN members (Vandermoortele 2012, 8) . They have set a global call for improvement in order to halve extreme poverty (MDG 1), reduce child and maternal mortality (MDG 4, MDG 5) , combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6), promote gender equality (MDG 3), environmental sustainability (MDG 7) and universal primary education (MDG 2). Beneath the eight goals stay several quantitative targets and many dozen indicators that are supposed to orient the actions and reactions of all the actors involved in the process. However, despite the fact that the eight cartoons or drawings that illustrate our prospects seem to universalize the targets, in some cases it is still very hard to set the bar too high and expect for quick and sustainable results.

The goals are about to expire on December 31, 2015 and the debate on what should come next is extremely provocative and effervescent at the global scale. Prior to come up with new recommendations for the post-2015 agenda, the world community should evaluate what has already been done.



Over the years, the international community

has embraced several goals and campaigns aimed to reach several development goals, variously defined. For example, the UN campaigns '*Education for All*' (1978) and '*Health for All*' (1990) aimed to achieve universal primary education and access to healthcare by 2000 (McGillivray 2008, 1). Another very similar set of objectives were the *International Development Goals* (IDGs) set by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) within OECD, endorsed by the World Bank, IMF and UN in June 2000. However, the major difference between these campaigns aiming to set global objectives and the MDGs stays in the already worldwide recognized interdependent character of the latter. The MDGs were not set as a monolithic policy with a definite budget and a specific mapping out of responsibilities. Instead, they were supposed to function as a partnership between developed and developing countries, as it was stated in the declaration adopted by the General Assembly during the Millennium Summit held in New-York on 6-8 September 2000: "Only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable" (UN General Assembly 2001). The Declaration itself is much broader than the eight MDGs and contains *inter alia* other commitments to key principles and values (i.e. freedom, tolerance, equality, solidarity, respect for nature, etc.) that should intrinsically go together with the goals to achieve wellbeing outcomes in all developing countries.

They were all reiterated on the '*Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration*' (UN General Assembly 2001) presented by Kofi Annan:



In practical terms, the MDGs have been officially launched as a mutually agreed-on partnership between developed and developing countries in March 2002, during the UN International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, where world leaders highlighted the crucial importance of the ODA (the Official Development Assistance set at 0.70 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) of developed countries, compared to an average of 0.22 percent of GNI given to aid in 2000). Used wisely, aid is crucial if it is transferred to real investments (schools, hospitals, infrastructure, sanitation, etc.); however, the aid target of 0.7 percent was unlikely to be achieved considering the economic crisis affecting developed countries as well and the amount of debt forgiveness and humanitarian aid that are also part of the donor efforts. According to the latest reports (United Nation, The MDGs reports from [2013](#), [2014](#)), in 2013 the ODA represented 0.3 percent of developed countries' GNI and the US, the UK, Germany, France and Japan were the largest donors. Only Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Luxembourg managed to exceed the ODA target of 0.7 percent of their GNI. Nonetheless, despite several critiques that address the architecture of the ODA and the real costs and commitments to the MDGs, the 'little' that has been done gives hope or, at least, provides us with analysis and substantial lessons for the new framework that is about to be established starting with 2016.

What has been done so far?

(Sources: *The MDGs Report*, (United Nations 2014) and *The Global Monitoring Report 2014/2015: Ending Poverty and Sharing Prosperity* (World Bank 2014.).

MDGs	Current status																					
<p>MDG1 – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</p>	<p>Between 1990 and 2011, the share of people who live with less than one dollar/ day has been halved, reaching 1 billion in 2011. However, progress in reducing undernourishment and poverty remains uneven across regions and countries. Between 2011 and 2013, one in eight people in the world were estimated to have been suffering from hunger. The majority come from Sub-Saharan and South-Asian countries where poverty is prevalent:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="300 539 1479 595"> <thead> <tr> <th>Country</th> <th>1990</th> <th>2005</th> <th>2011</th> <th>2015</th> <th>2020</th> <th>2030</th> <th>South Asia (%)</th> <th>53.2</th> <th>39.3</th> <th>24.5</th> <th>18.1</th> <th>13.8</th> <th>2.1</th> <th>Sub-Saharan Countries (%)</th> <th>56.6</th> <th>52.8</th> <th>46.8</th> <th>40.9</th> <th>34.2</th> <th>23.6</th> </tr> </thead> </table> <p>(Source: Global Monitoring Report 2014/2015: Ending Poverty and Sharing Prosperity, The World Bank (2014), p. 19)</p> <p>According to the World Bank, around 14.5 percent of the world's population remained in extreme poverty. In the 1990s, East Asia had the greatest poverty rate; nowadays, Sub-Saharan countries and South Asia face the highest poverty rates. Prospects of reducing global poverty to below 3 percent by 2030 are not optimistic for several countries from these areas.</p> <p>Nowadays, the world's extreme poor are concentrated in 5 countries, mainly in China, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, p.2)</p> <p>Prospects for 2030 don't look good for 6 countries which, according to the World Bank will continue to face poverty rates above 30 percent: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Madagascar, Malawi and Zambia (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, p.21).</p>	Country	1990	2005	2011	2015	2020	2030	South Asia (%)	53.2	39.3	24.5	18.1	13.8	2.1	Sub-Saharan Countries (%)	56.6	52.8	46.8	40.9	34.2	23.6
Country	1990	2005	2011	2015	2020	2030	South Asia (%)	53.2	39.3	24.5	18.1	13.8	2.1	Sub-Saharan Countries (%)	56.6	52.8	46.8	40.9	34.2	23.6		
<p>MDG2 – universal primary education</p>	<p>Despite important progress that has been made in the last couple of years, more than 700 million adults and 125 youth worldwide do not have basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, p.16) In the last decade, the net enrolment rate raised to an average of 80 percent. Moreover, the majority of out-of-school primary school aged children live in areas affected by conflicts: 20 percent in Southern Asia and 44 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. In these areas, girls face numerous problems entering and finishing primary school. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, pp.17-20). Moreover, finishing primary education is not at all sufficient to escape poverty and the vulnerability trap. In addition to this, some cultural factors play an important role in traditional societies. Religion and culture involve more research in order to give us the tools to advocate for education solutions or other investments.</p>																					
<p>MDG3 – Gender equality and women empowerment</p>	<p>All gender related disparities should be eliminated from all forms of education by 2015. The Gender Parity Index (GPI, which corresponds to the girls gross enrolment ratio divided by the gross enrolment of boys) should correspond to 0,97-1,03%. Despite the fact that Northern Africa made important progress in raising the GPI from 0,82 to 0,96%, girls face several disadvantages comparing to same aged boys. It is confirmed that larger gender related disparities are met in secondary education than in primary. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, p.20) Despite the fact that the gender gap in education has been met, disparities in the labor market are still persistent. The World Bank (data from 2010-2012) shows that the time related unemployment rate between men and women stays higher in Sub-Saharan countries (12,6 to 15,8 percent), Northern Africa (3,7 to 17,5%) and Southern Asia (12,0 to 20,6%). Moreover, between 2000 and 2013 women's political participation increases and the proportion of women holding parliamentary seats in 2013 increased consistently (from 13 to 23% in Sub-Saharan countries, from 3 to 24% in Northern Africa). Rwanda has the greatest women representation in parliament (56%), North Africa and the Middle East are still reluctant to female participation in public life. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, p.23)</p>																					
<p>MDG4 – reducing child mortality rate</p>	<p>According to the UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality estimations, between 1990 and 2012, the child mortality rate has been halved, being reduced to an average of 48 deaths per 1000 live births. In addition to this, the rate of under-five deaths decreased from 12,6m in 1990 to 6,6m in 2012. South Asia and Sub Saharan countries face major problems in reducing infant and under-five children mortality. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, p.26) The majority of the 6,6m deaths are due to infectious diseases (see MDG6), (such as malaria, measles, diarrhea and pneumonia), under- nutrition, weak-immunity systems and the lack of appropriate health services. (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, pp.168-169)</p>																					
<p>MDG5 – reducing maternal mortality</p>	<p>According to the UN Maternal Mortality Inter-Agency Group, the global maternal mortality ratio has been reduced by 45 percent. However, this doesn't meet the MDG5 target to reduce maternal mortality by 75 percent. (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, p.170) More than 60 percent of maternal deaths have occurred in Sub-Saharan countries due to poor health infrastructure and lack of antenatal services, lack of sexual education, gender-based violence, under-nourishment, etc. Sierra Leone has the highest maternal mortality rate (1,100 maternal deaths to 100 000 births). Despite important improvements made in healthcare access for young mothers, the gap between rural and urban areas is still persistent. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, p.29)</p>																					
<p>MDG6 – Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</p>	<p>According to calculations based on data from Health Nutrition and Population Statistics by Wealth Quintile, WB 2014, in 2012, approximately 35m people were living with AIDS/HIV in the world. 58% were women and 3,3m were persons under 15 years old. The share of newly infected persons dropped by 33 percent between 2001 and 2012. Sub-Saharan countries are the most affected by HIV/AIDS and it remains the region where almost 70 percent (1,6m cases) of the estimated number of new infected cases have occurred in 2012. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, pp.35-36) In 2012, access to ART (the Antiretroviral therapy) has saved 1,6m people and 9,5m have received treatment. It is estimated that ART has averted almost 6,6m AIDS/HIV-related deaths between 1995 and 2012. Malaria is another sub-target or MDG6 and, according to estimations provided by the WHO, has killed almost 600,000 people in 2013. The majority of these deaths occurred among under-five children living in Sub-Saharan countries. (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, pp.37-38)</p>																					

<p>MDG7 – ensuring environmental sustainability</p>	<p>According to the Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center and World Development Indicators Database, global emissions of carbon dioxide have increased by 50 percent between 1990 and 2012. (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, p.176).By 2010, all countries stopped using ozone-depleting substances that affect our Ozone Layer (because of the commitments made after the signature of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, 1987).The Red List Index has revealed that the biological diversity is threatened and there is a risk of extinction for many species (i.e. some mammal species, insect pollinators). (The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, pp.43-44)Despite the important progress made in improving sanitation facilities and adequate water access, better access to improved water sources is still a major problem in some areas such as the Sub-Saharan countries where the share of population with access to water sources raised from 48 per cent in 1990 to only 64 per cent in 2012. (The Global Monitoring Report 2014, p.176).</p>
<p>MDG8 – developing a global partnership for development</p>	<p>All the above mentioned MDGs (1 to 7) cannot be met without consistent aid for development coming in terms of a partnership between developed and developing countries. According to OECD, ODA provided by OECD and DAC, expressed in real terms, has dropped by 6 percent in 2010; moreover, as a share of their GNI, ODA provided by DAC members decreased below half of the target fixed by the UN (0,7 percent of their GNI). ((The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, United Nations, 2014, pp.48-49)</p>

Sustainable Development Goals: What now?

(by Adela Militaru)

Efforts of the international community to ambitiously meet the indicators of the MDGs until 2015 have generated a considerable progress so far, by engaging and mobilizing world leaders to adhere to the common development agenda which was readopted at the Rio +20 Summit in June 2012. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “The future we want”, builds on the MDGs – their structure, the mechanisms of their implementation, the challenges faced, and the lessons learned¹, serving as a solid foundation to be integrated in the post-2015 development agenda. Its vision specifically highlights three dimensions standing at the core of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental sustainability. These dimensions are the driving forces behind the 17 SDGs, elaborated by the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals², which are ready to be adopted in September 2015, at the UN Summit in New York. In the next section, we shall take a closer look at the advancements proposed by the SDGs under these three dimensions, as a renewed commitment of the international community towards achieving the vision of a world that is “just, equitable and inclusive” (UN Open Working Group Proposal for SDGs).



SDGs and a world of development

The most crucial indicator of achieving economic sustainability, now standing out as “the single, most *urgent* task in all of the interconnected challenges of sustainable development”, is the eradication of *extreme* poverty (Sachs, 2014, p.482). As a legacy of the MDGs, the post-2015 development agenda strives to keep one of the fundamental promises that the UN has made to humanity: to *end poverty, in all its forms, everywhere*. It then comes as no surprise that this is the exact formulation of Goal 1, which is reinforced by Goal 2: *end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*. Both these goals rely on the need for sustained economic growth and inclusive economic policies, of which employment creation is a precondition that remains in focus under the post-2015 agenda (see ILO, 2009; Melamed & Scott, 2011). To such end, several initiatives have been put in place, such as the International Labor Organization’s Decent Work Agenda, which encourages full and productive employment, decent working conditions, and social protection as cumulative measures for sustainable economic growth. These propositions are subsumed in Goal 8.

What seems to be a special focus of the post-2015 development agenda, under both the economic and environmental dimensions, is the role of current *consumption and production patterns* to ensure the sustainable management of global resources, which include the conservation of *oceans, seas and marine resources* (Goal 14), as well as *terrestrial ecosystems, to halt biodiversity loss* (Goal 15). The need for *sustainable*

consumption and production has been highlighted under Goal 12. This goal is nonetheless mutually reinforcing with several other goals which promote environmental awareness and sustainability, as scientific evidence on the impact of industrialization on climate change is increasingly alerting the international community.

It is now a shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders, ranging from governments to civil society and businesses, to *take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*, as set forth in Goal 13, and in doing so, to *build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation* (Goal 9). Therefore, it is our common challenge to enhance our capacity to innovate our current economic, social and environmental practices, in order to propose achievable measures to support sustainable development for all, that are able to encompass the needs to *ensure availability of water and sanitation for all* (Goal 6), as well as *access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all* (Goal 7). As the experience of implementing the MDGs has taught us, this endeavor is not bound to be easily achievable.

So far, the measures discussed have seen the economic and environmental dimensions at work, in the formulation of their corresponding goals. With regards to the social development aspect, we are still faced with profound discrepancies between the world's inhabitants, despite the evolution based on the previous MDG agenda under some of these aspects. As posited by Goal 10, one of the post-2015 priorities for achieving sustainable development is to *reduce inequality within and among countries*, while at the same time *making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable* (Goal 11).

To this end, the SDGs bring significant advancements as compared to the previous MDG approach, insomuch as they incorporate some important suggestions of the critics of MDGs,

who point out that concepts of equity and equality had been insufficiently addressed by the former Millennium agenda (Fehling et al., 2013). Generally, we can see an important paradigm shift whereby the process of elaboration of the SDGs responded to previous critical voices concerning the MDG's limited approach to incorporating important human rights, reported by some voices as "missing targets" of the MDGs, i.e. decent work, governance, and peace and security (Melamed & Scott, 2011). In the same note of improvement, Goals 3 and 4 also seem to bring added value by aiming to *ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*, and *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*, respectively.

Clearly, the focus has moved from very specific targets to overarching measures promoting well-being, which indeed appear as more equitable and inclusive than their previous counterparts. Equality also continues to lie at the core of the post-2015 development agenda, and it appears as no surprise that achieving *gender equality and empowering all women and girls* (Goal 5) should continue to represent a crucial target for social development. In order to secure all these advancements, it is fundamental to *build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*, which prove enough resourceful in order to *promote peaceful and inclusive societies* and *provide access to justice for all* (Goal 16). In this respect, it also proves decisive to *strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development* (Goal 17).

The value(s) of SDGs

Based on all previous advancements and reports of the past years, in 2013 the UN Secretary General published a report entitled "*A life of dignity for all*". Dignity as a leading value in the fight against extreme poverty seems to be a fundamental milestone when speaking about the advancement of the post-2015 development agenda. In fact, at a closer look,

what all SDGs seem to have in common is a value system that incorporates core values such as freedom, equality, peace, good governance, and respect for human rights and for nature. Achieving sustainability in ensuring a just and inclusive world is a commitment made by multiple stakeholders, not only for our own benefit, but also for that of future generations.

Many important directions which helped draft the current Sustainable Development Goals have emerged from the continuous interaction of science and policy, particularly through the mobilization of epistemic communities (or knowledge communities), described by Sachs (2014). However, having the knowledge on how sustainable development could be achieved is no guarantee in itself: as stated in the prototype Global Sustainable Development Report (2014), political will remains a necessary precondition for the successful implementation of any of the measures developed with a view to facilitate the enactment of the SDGs. Naturally, achieving long-term success of such complex agenda of sustainable development requires policy coherence on a large scale (UN Prototype Report, 2014), which in turn requires the condition of good governance (Sachs, 2014).

Therefore, the current value of the Sustainable Development Goals, as part of the post-2015 development agenda, lies in concentrating available knowledge, know-how, and long-term commitment from all sectors and stakeholders. All of these cannot be translated into achievable measures in the absence of political will, nor of good governance. But what we now know is that the SDGs are offering the world a common vision of the process of achieving sustainable development, in order to keep its promise of ensuring a life of dignity and well-being to all people, for generations to come.

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¹ Review of the contributions of the MDG Agenda to foster development: Lessons for the post-2015 UN development agenda, Discussion Note. UN system task team on the post-2015 development agenda, available from <www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg_assessment_Aug.pdf>, last accessed November 23, 2014.

²Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals, for an overview, see <sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal.html>, document available at undocs.org/A/68/970, last accessed November 23, 2014.

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“Above, people carry drinking water in Bangladesh. ” by Mohammad Rakibul Hasan, UNDP.