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An Indian perspective

One size does not fit all in education

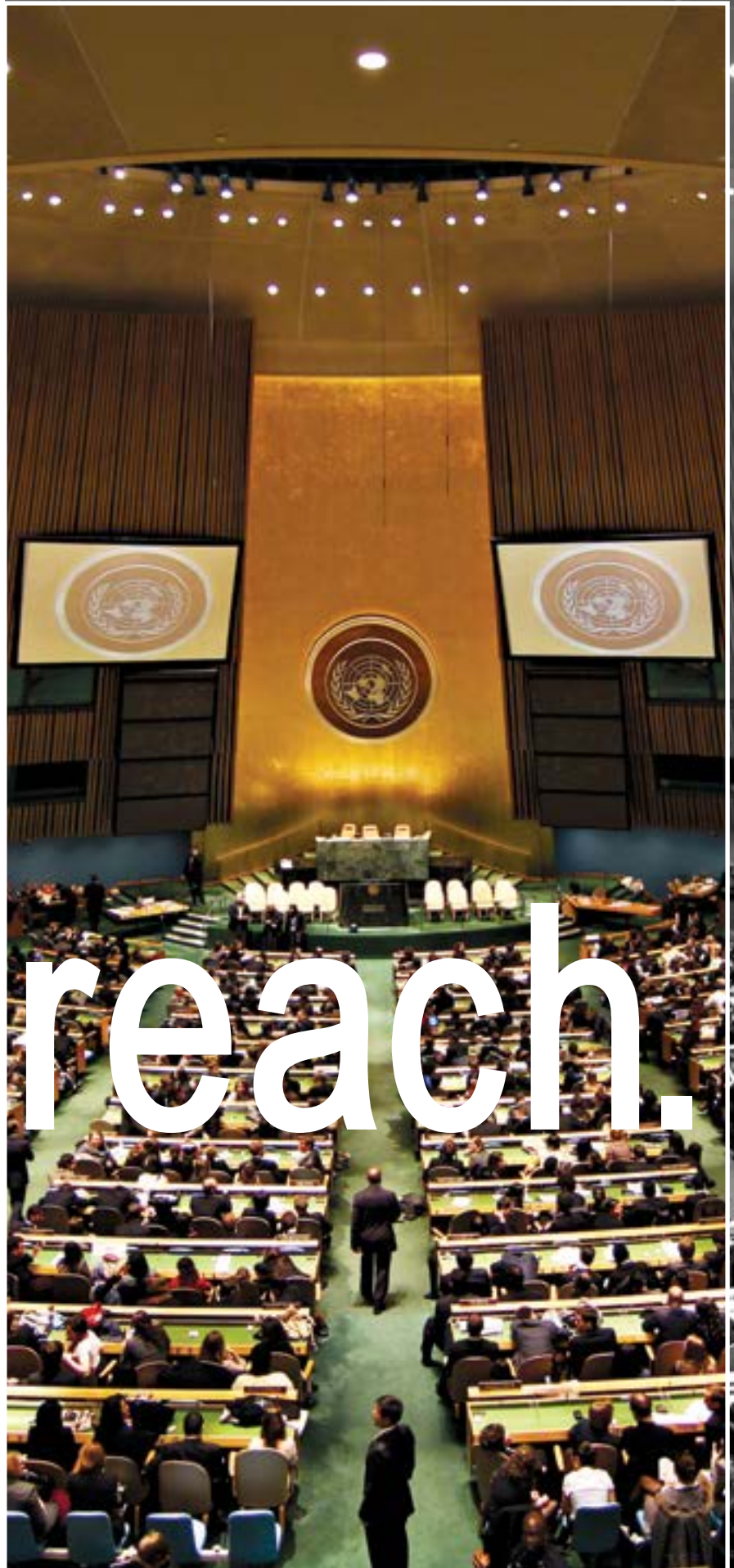
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pic: Robert Garcia

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Outreach is a multi-stakeholder publication on climate change and sustainable development. It is the longest continually produced stakeholder magazine in the sustainable development arena, published at various international meetings on the environment; including the UNCSD meetings (since 1997), UNEP Governing Council, UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) and World Water Week. Published as a daily edition, in both print and web form, Outreach provides a vehicle for critical analysis on key thematic topics in the sustainability arena, as well as a voice of regional and local governments, women, indigenous peoples, trade unions, industry, youth and NGOs. To fully ensure a multi-stakeholder perspective, we aim to engage a wide range of stakeholders for article contributions and project funding.

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# Millennium Development Goals: An Indian perspective

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One of the core strengths of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been the shaping of the global development agenda by laying down priority action areas through mobilising opinion worldwide. By creating 18 time-bound targets they have ensured a concerted effort towards achieving the goals. In India's case, the 95 per cent target for the goal of universal primary education was achieved in 2008-09. The poverty ratio fell to 21.9 per cent in the year 2012 and access to safe drinking water was achieved in 2007-08. While energy intensity has shown a considerable decrease over last 13 years and the forest cover has increased by nearly 21 per cent.

In India, the National Five Year Plans, the National Development Goals (2005), National Common Minimum Programme (2004) and several other initiatives such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2006), Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (2005-06) amongst others, try to integrate the MDGs into their frameworks in an effort to create a new development pathway for the country.

However, an analysis of the MDG framework in India, which shows improvement with respect to some targets, also highlights several deficiencies. In particular, the latest two official country reports, 'Millennium Development Goals: India Country Report 2011' and 'Millennium Development Goals: States of India Report 2010', show considerable uneven progress in the achievement of the MDG targets country-wide.

While noble in their aims, the MDGs have been largely donor-driven and therefore can at times fail to take local needs into account. This is particularly a handicap for a country like India which has various minority groups such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Dalits, Muslims, Christians, amongst others, needing special attention. The relatively high economic growth rates experienced by the country over the last decade, has been marked with a rise in income inequality. As per the National Sample Survey Organisation, average income of the richest was 12 times that of the poorest in urban areas in 2000, increasing to 15 times in 2012, thus dispelling the theory of the trickle-down effect. This necessitates the inclusion of relative poverty in the post-2015 agenda.

Furthermore, India has a highly skewed gender ratio of 914 females for every 1000 males. As per the Gender Adjusted Human Development Index (2013), India is the second worst performer in South Asia next to Afghanistan. Only 29 per cent of the labour force comprises of women (above 15 years of age). The problem is accentuated by a lack of an integrated approach towards the global development agenda. For example, gender issues are clearly stated in goal 3 relating to gender parity and 5 relating to maternal mortality rates and universal access to reproductive health. However, its inter-linkages with poverty, vulnerability and the play of power and responsibility are not properly explored. In order to achieve pro-poor sustainable development, the MDG framework has to mainstream the concerns of women in its agenda. The poor framing of its gender targets does not adequately cover discriminations/issues faced by women, such as equal pay and opportunity of jobs and the safety/modesty of women, and therefore, has to be corrected.

Hence, the MDG framework needs to be more responsive to address specific problems of individual countries. For this purpose, the scope of the goals will need to be increased in the new post-2015 framework. For example in India, while the target for universal primary education (measured by the Net Enrolment Ratio) may have been achieved, the drop-out rates are very high. Furthermore, other aspects such as quality of education, student-teacher ratio, school infrastructure are not explicitly accounted for. Concerns with respect to the quality of other social services, such as healthcare facilities and provision of free medicines, also need attention. India faces many policy and governance challenges, including overlapping responsibilities between the state and central government, resulting in poor implementation and accountability. The MDG framework does not address such issues in its targets and indicators.

Another weakness of the MDG framework is that despite stating priority areas for action, it does not lay down the methods to achieve them. Moreover, even the data for a lot of the indicators is suspect, raising concerns over the accuracy of measurements of progress.

It is hoped that the post-2015 development agenda learns from the successes and shortfalls of the MDGs and is more holistic and inclusive of the social, environmental and economic triple-bottom line ■

# Changing course in global agriculture

Dr Hans R. Herren

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Halving the number of undernourished people by 2015 was one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established following the internationally agreed Millennium Declaration of 2000. It will not be reached. In a world where we already produce enough food to feed the 9 billion population projected for 2050, at least 870 million people worldwide – one child in five – still go hungry.

Further progress towards achieving this goal can be made in the remaining months, but we must ask ourselves what comes next. The debate on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), expected to have a target date of 2030, has already begun. On 25 September, Heads of State and Government will meet in New York to continue discussions on what should come after the MDGs end in 2015.

Defeating hunger remains a priority. This is not simply a matter of providing everyone with enough food. What is critical is to determine how this should happen. Food security and nutrition for all through sustainable agriculture and food systems must be set as one of the fundamental goals of global development. It is therefore imperative for agricultural policy to change course, as requested in 2008 by the IAASTD (International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development). The same message was reiterated in the Rio+20 Outcome Document, 'The Future We Want'.

## What constitutes sustainable agriculture?

Widely spread forms of industrial, conventional agriculture are not sustainable. With high-yielding varieties and a heavy reliance on fertilisers, water, pesticides, and energy, it has delivered impressive yield increases, but only by exhausting its own production base in the long run. According to the often-cited IAASTD report, 1.9 billion hectares of land are already affected by degradation due to unsustainable use. This comes at an annual cost of around \$40 billion.

This form of food production must be replaced by more sustainable forms of agriculture, which maintain and restore natural soil fertility, protect water sources and promote biodiversity. The aim here is not the maximum conceivable yield but a sustainable yield. This is certainly enough to nourish the 9 billion people who will inhabit the earth by mid-century. According to the 'Green Economy Report' published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), food availability per capita could be increased through sustainable production methods by 14 per cent, creating millions of new jobs in rural regions, and thus also alleviating poverty. At the same time, sustainable agriculture could mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The main players here are small-scale farmers, especially women. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), equal access to education and agricultural resources in Africa would boost harvests by 20-30 per cent. Worldwide, 70 per cent of food production comes from small farms, which collectively use 40 per cent of the world's arable land. They have the potential to nourish people in developing countries, but must be supported. They need guarantees regarding the ownership and rights of use for their land, better access to education, information and markets, as well as fair prices for their products. Rural infrastructure and services are a key factor in this and must be promoted much more intensively by state and international authorities. Also, agricultural subsidies and trade policies must be reformed and adapted to take into account the needs of small-scale farmers.

According to these models, a SDG on **Food security and nutrition for all through sustainable agriculture and food systems** should include the following elements:

1. End malnutrition and hunger in all of their forms, so that all people enjoy the right to adequate food at all times.
2. Ensure that all smallholders and rural communities, in particular women and disadvantaged groups, enjoy a decent livelihood and income, and secure their right to access productive resources.
3. Achieve the transformation to sustainable, diverse and resilient agriculture and food systems that conserve natural resources and ecosystems, and reverse land degradation.
4. Minimise post-harvest food losses and food waste.
5. Establish inclusive, transparent, and equitable decision-making processes on food, nutrition, and agriculture at all levels ■

# One size does not fit all in education

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It is no news that Brazil will not meet the target of providing universal primary education, the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG), by 2015. Although the country may be cheered for increasing the schooling enrolment rate by 8.2 per cent from 2000-2011, this number overlooks the difficult reality of education provision in Brazil. The case of education in the Amazon Region is illustrative. In a place where the world's attention is directed to the bulk of natural resources, deforestation, and environmental impacts of major infrastructure projects like Belo Monte Dam, educational prospects are awful.

The Brazilian government has successfully reached people living in the most remote areas of the country through its social programme 'Bolsa Família' (BF). The impact of the programme on poverty reduction is noteworthy. As the programme design is based on the school attendance levels, it provided a huge incentive for educating the poor. Thus, while Brazil has successfully reduced educational inequality in terms of access to school, it remains a challenge to provide a quality public education and in a way that allows children to effectively take advantage of it. The acknowledgment of the differences in the cultural context in which these poor children live is mandatory because standardised educational public policies do not capture the daily struggle faced by Brazilian poor children at school.

In the Amazon rural areas, teaching students from different grades at once is commonplace and almost 50 per cent of primary school teachers do not have a university degree. Schools are closing due to a lack of human and financial resources, and pernicious cost-effectiveness arguments, often concentrating students in distant schools. The transportation system is either precarious or inadequate. The logistics of providing basic education extraordinary and the high incidence of schools in very isolated places drive away experienced teachers. The educational material, designed with urban lens, do not make sense for kids living in the Amazon. So, what can be done about it?

First of all, the design of Brazilian educational public policies must cease to be based on a standardised viewpoint about educational processes and give space for alternative learning methods to flourish. The pedagogy of alternating – present in Amazon rural and jungle areas, and worldwide – is a successful example of education provision adjusted to the local circumstances. Developed through initiatives of rural families and civil society organisations, this methodology combines theoretical and practical experience in alignment with the surrounding environment. Through adaptation of the standard curriculum, kids are taught forest stewardship, organic farming and other practical skills that are closely related to the local culture. The methodology captures the vicissitudes of the local population and values indigenous knowledge. Besides allowing children to stay in their community and develop a good, productive and profitable life, it is a powerful methodological tool to advance practices in favour of a sustainable use of natural resources.

One size does not fit all in educational policies in extremely diverse countries like Brazil. If the country is serious about meeting MDG 2 and reach 100% school enrolment, this premise must be internalised by the public administration in charge within the framework of the quality of education debate. While expertise in policy design and management practices is flawed among those implementing the educational policies, the last mile of the target will not be met. The successful experiences of the 'Bolsa Família' program can inspire the world by showing that to reach the poor, effective coordination among different levels of the state and incentives for education yield returns. However, without policies that are sensitive to the different circumstances of educational processes, these efforts will fall short in sustainably and effectively improving the lives of our children ■



Data from the last national census shows that while illiteracy rates among people aged 15-24 years in Brazil have dropped from 12.4 per cent to 8.6 per cent during 2000-2011, in the North it reduced only from 11.2 per cent to 10.2 per cent in the same period. The Brazilian Northern states have the highest amount of school evasion in the country, with over 10 per cent of children out of school, and levels of school achievement way below the national average. Why is that the case?

# Country level challenges to achieve the MDGs: Focus on Bangladesh

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It is not uncommon that while framing global development agendas, uncertainty factors are often overlooked, such as how a particular or group of unknown variables will influence a desired outcome. As we are close to the reaching the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these uncertainty factors are becoming more important than ever for many countries in the Global South.

Right now, countries like Bangladesh are confronting different types of uncertainty that can jeopardise efforts to achieve MDG targets. Bangladesh plays a major role in regional cooperation, the promotion of peace, and development. Despite this, Bangladesh has a large poverty-stricken population. Therefore, since the inception of the MDGs, the Government has been very committed to the global effort to confront human challenges. Bangladesh has demonstrated progress on the reduction of poverty and hunger, universal primary education, and decreasing the gender gap in education and workforce services, along with many other improvements. However, a number of developmental challenges have also been emphasised and it will not be a big surprise if Bangladesh fails to achieve the majority of MDG targets by 2015.

These “country-level” challenges offer us renewed perspectives on why some countries or regions will not be able to achieve their MDG targets, and what needs to be done by the international community, governments, and the local community to avoid similar challenges or uncertainties in achieving future development goals and targets.

In Bangladesh, the contributing factors that make it difficult to achieve its targets are: population size; environmental and climate change; different types of natural disasters; confrontational politics and poor governance; inadequate financial and institutional capacity; heavy dependence on foreign aid; lack of urban decentralisation; weak civil society; and global issues, such as increases in oil and food prices.

Even though the government has tried to achieve the MDG targets by the deadline, these challenging circumstances have served as major barriers to the country being able to demonstrate mentionable holistic progress across all the Goals. It is also particularly important to emphasise the impact global environmental change-related factors have had in many low-income developing nations, such as Bangladesh. This global environmental change, particularly climate change, can jeopardise local, regional and national economies and livelihoods.

Such environmental issues will therefore, in particular, need to be carefully addressed by the future development framework, ranging from short-term adaptation responses, to longer-term mitigation efforts on local, regional and global scales. For this, there ideally needs to be a legally binding global consensus – something the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will hopefully be able to deliver. Without climate resilience, no development efforts will make lasting positive impacts on society. The future development agenda, therefore, should have robust climate resilience components.

Furthermore, economic recession, conflict and regional or national level political tensions can also undermine national development efforts. The success of the future development agenda will therefore also depend on how the UN and its Member States respond to these macro-level challenges. Conflict and war have the potential to generate political polarisation, thereby hampering the achievement of global consensus on a collective way forward.

Many countries of the Global South are also dependent on international aid, investment and remittance flows. These factors influence and shape the local scenarios too. So if there is a disruption to these chains of global cooperation and development partnerships, there will be significant ramifications for developing countries at all levels of society. The post-2015 framework therefore has an important role in helping to strengthen these North-South partnerships and reducing developing countries' dependence on “bad” foreign aid where possible.

In the Bangladeshi media, MDG success stories remain prevalent, particularly relating to successes around poverty reduction. Yet very few reports address the difficulties or challenges of achieving other unmet MDG targets. In reality, however, we must learn from present developmental challenges and use these experiences to avoid future ones. The obstacles mentioned in this article are not unique to Bangladesh; rather they are visible across many parts of the Global South. The sharing of such country level MDG experiences can foster further South-South collaboration and play a major role in helping create a better future in the regions of the world where the majority of its population reside ■

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# Time for leaders to listen to the people and commit to a single process to define a single post-2015 agenda

Mwangi Waituru, Neva Frecheville and Leo Williams  
*Beyond 2015*

As the final negotiations on the Outcome Document of Wednesday's Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda kick off, the Member States of the UN must seize the moment to clearly lay out a legitimate and participatory roadmap to a single process to define a single global development and sustainability agenda post-2015.

This is a crucial moment in the post-2015 puzzle, signifying the half-way point of the international discussions, which started in mid-2011 under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly. The UN Development Group has since then organised a series of national, regional, thematic and global consultations, the results of which have recently been synthesised in the report 'A Million Voices: The World We Want'. The Secretary-General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda delivered their report, 'A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development' earlier this year. As did the Sustainable Development Solutions Network ('An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development'), and the Global Compact ('Corporate Sustainability and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda'). The UN Secretary-General recently published his report, 'A Life of Dignity for All' which focuses on both the MDGs and the post-2015 framework. And the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been discussing the post-2015 agenda for a number of months now.

This Special Event presents an opportunity for world leaders to listen to the voices of the people. As Amy Pollard, former co-chair of Beyond 2015, set out in an early blog, leaders have a chance here to set out key milestones in the process and commit to the global cooperation needed to agree a legitimate and ambitious framework

by 2015. And, as Beyond 2015 and numerous other civil society campaigns, governments and UN agencies have been affirming for almost three years now, we need a **single unified process leading to the definition of a single set of international development goals putting poverty eradication and sustainable development at the core**. We have heard this consistently. During the UN national and thematic consultations, and the national deliberations organised by Beyond 2015, GCAP and the International Forum of National Platforms.

As leaders of Beyond 2015, a global campaign aiming to influence the post-2015 agenda, it is our duty to reiterate the demand for a single post-2015 agenda, with a single set of goals that address both sustainability and human development. A two-track approach would undermine the universal commitment needed, fragment resources and implementation, lead to policy process fatigue from all concerned, and endanger meaningful stakeholder participation. It is imperative that governments do not miss this opportunity to bring these tracks together.

The Special Event to follow up on efforts on MDGs on 25th September is the right moment for governments to commit to this, and to clearly set out the details of the ongoing process in the public arena so that stakeholders can effectively plan their engagement. This is the time for governments to show ambition, and illustrate that they are truly committed to an inclusive and people-centered agenda, which is crafted by a transparent and participatory intergovernmental process, which must first and foremost include people (and specifically those most affected by poverty and injustice) and their organisations.

But it is not enough for them to commit to this on paper. Governments need to go back to their countries and ensure that they meaningfully engage their constituencies on this agenda. All stakeholders must be able to engage meaningfully with their governments on this agenda at every stage, from design to implementation and monitoring, recognising their role as active agents in their own lives, rather than passive recipients of 'development'. Some governments have been championing this approach already – it is time for other governments to get on board and show the world that they take participation seriously. Beyond 2015 stands ready to mobilise its constituency and engage with governments at the national level, providing meaningful input into the discussions ■

## MORE INFO

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# Faithful outreach for Human Rights in the post-2015 development agenda

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A study published by the World Health Organization in the early part of the millennium, provided an important reality check for many of those working in human development. According to the study, faith-based organisations (FBOs) provide an average of 30-40 per cent of basic healthcare in the world. This figure is much higher in contexts of humanitarian crisis, conflict and fragility of state services, where it can be up to 75 per cent. If we were to take into account the range of FBO interventions in education, environment, disarmament, and gender equity – to name but a few – we would also come across significant figures for the FBO contributions. Much research and many post-2015 development agenda related events later, it is increasingly clear that FBOs are forming a “tipping point” when it comes to the combined power of community level outreach and capacity to steward behavioural change, in actively countering violence, prejudice, and insecurity.

Given these realities, being knowledgeable of the world of FBOs is necessary, in order to strengthen basic service provision and engineer critically needed Human Rights oriented social change. Informed and systematic outreach to key partners in the world of religion is essential.

The UN is able to draw on the articulated wisdom of its key policy makers, including the former and present Secretary-Generals Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, who have consistently advocated that FBOs and civil society actors in general, are critical development actors.

Given this vision, there are certain strategic and tactical concerns that must be effectively dealt with, and which UN inter-agency experience-sharing and learning point to:

- FBOs and “religion” are not one and the same. The world of religion is vast and difficult to quantify and categorise into neatly distinct entities. Religion and faith do not lend themselves to the usual normative frameworks of development. This means more effort is needed to be learned, strategic, and Human Rights-focused with regards to how “religious” partners are identified, managed, and evaluated.
- The engagement with religious communities has to be sustained, built on existing knowledge and practice, and be part of broader civil society and government partnerships. This is needed to ensure ownership of national development processes, but it is also necessary for mutual trust building; especially given the rising concern among secular actors that engaging with faith-based entities is shifting resources from the UN’s more traditional

partners. The latter perception is not only erroneous, it is extremely unhelpful in contexts where religious actors may be ‘competing’ for political authority. What has to be made unequivocally clear is that by engaging with FBOs, the circle of concerned actors who engage with the UN is widening to serve the principles of inclusion and strengthening of services to all peoples – after all, it is about securing all rights for everyone.

- As the UN, working with only one faith tradition, or only one FBO, or the same group of religious leaders on all issues, is ill-advised – even where this may be a dominant group or organisation. The UN is obliged to work with all faiths, several FBOs, and varied religious representatives on a multiplicity of human development needs. And it must do so while maintaining the same manner of (mutual) respect, and appreciation for the respective strengths and modus operandi, as long as there is agreement on the goals of human development: Human Rights, peace and security of all peoples.
- The responsibility for learned, strategic and sustained partnerships to realise human rights lies on all sides. As the UN bears its own responsibilities within the respective UN mechanisms and holds itself accountable to its Member States, so should the FBO partners be held to the same standards with their own communities, leadership and organisations.

The lessons learned have resulted in, among others, two contradictory streams: one which argues that religion is too contentious, and faith must remain personal, and another which encompasses those now running to embrace what has become a new fashion for faith based implementation of development, with little study, and much instrumentalisation of all actors involved. Both trends must be met with serious self-reflection. One of the lessons emerging from the post-2015 processes, is the need to fundamentally change the culture of development. In order to do so, a dose of self-reflection, guided by basic values and devoid of exclusive vested interests, need to be instilled in the new framework ■

*The opinions expressed here belong to the author alone and do not necessarily represent the positions or opinions of any institution, agency, government or staff member.*



# Why we should partner with libraries to achieve MDGs

Amber Ehrke  
IREX

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Information access is key to advancing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through to 2015, and beyond. When considering how to provide information to the people we serve, we must not overlook a key institution - one present in great numbers in almost every developing country - in the MDG discussion.

More than 230,000 libraries already work to reduce poverty, expand primary education, empower women, and improve economies in developing countries. As trusted community institutions, libraries are part of a multi-stakeholder society. They partner with NGOs, governments, and local organisations to deliver information and services to communities, and they do it in a cost-effective, sustainable way. This is why development policy must target libraries as partners for development.

Whether in education, job skills development, agriculture, or health, libraries provide guided access to useful information that empowers people to achieve their goals. Libraries are uniquely positioned in their communities to learn what people need, and they partner with other organisations to provide information and services that meet those needs. Here are just a few of the thousands of examples that show how libraries accelerate development:

- **Advancing equity:** For women and other vulnerable populations, libraries offer a safe place to gather, to gain skills, and to access resources. A library in Bhutan involved the entire community in gender discussions and raised awareness about the contributions women can — and must — make in the public sphere.
- **Non-formal education:** Schools everywhere struggle to meet the practical needs of their constituents for life skills, financial literacy, and health information. One library in Nepal meets these needs by hosting women's health programs and a women's savings cooperative. The cooperative provides numerical and financial literacy training and has helped some members start their own businesses.
- **Distributing opportunity:** Near Cape Town, South Africa, Masiphumelele Library provides a range of services, including digital literacy and computer training, job readiness courses, tutoring and mentoring for young people.
- **Links to government:** Libraries in Georgia are working with the Ministry of Justice to transform existing public libraries into community gathering places complete with internet access and e-government services such as licensing and permitting. Libraries were even specifically included in Georgia's Open Government Partnership plan.

With so many overlapping goals in key development areas, we should not overlook the existing resources and expertise libraries can provide. There is ample opportunity for governments, NGOs, and other organisations to partner with libraries to implement projects and policies. This is how we can involve libraries in accelerating the MDGs up to and beyond 2015:

1. **Incorporate non-formal education as a tool for increasing access to primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of learning.** Libraries are already partnering on development projects to achieve this end.
2. **Support the technology infrastructure needed to make open data and governance work.** Promote affordable internet, connect institutions like libraries that serve all, and engage more countries in comprehensive Open Government Partnerships.
3. **Emphasise the role of safe community spaces.** Goals related to the education and empowerment of marginalised groups will hinge on safe access to information and training. Libraries are already safe access points in many communities, and are invaluable to underserved communities.
4. **Mainstream basic information and communications technology (ICT) in education and employment strategies.** Basic ICT skills are all but a prerequisite for those seeking employment, so it is essential to focus on increasing access to information and ICT skills in the Post-2015 development strategy.

If we include these approaches, we can realise greater progress on a host of development goals in a more equitable, sustainable way. And we can do so by partnering with libraries, a trusted, widespread, and sustainable asset for development ■

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Amber Ehrke is a program associate at IREX, one of the implementers of Beyond Access, an initiative of 11 development organisations that is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Beyond Access works to include libraries in development conversations globally and tests new models of library-driven development.

For more information, visit us at [www.BeyondAccess.net](http://www.BeyondAccess.net), or follow us on Twitter @Beyond\_Access.

# Accelerating progress through successful partnership on sustainable, low carbon transport

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Since 2009, the Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT) has brought together key stakeholders to advance related best practices that enable sustainable development.

Collectively, the Partnership has helped raise awareness on the need for sustainable transport and demonstrated that sustainable transport is a viable and cost-effective option to improve access to goods and services in both urban and rural areas.

These advances on sustainable transport make it more likely that the world will realise an ambitious post-2015 agenda as envisaged by the Rio+20 outcome document and the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, both of which call for the eradication of absolute poverty and the creation of sustainable prosperity.

From its initiation, SLoCaT has set out to promote sustainable, low carbon transport and its integration in global policies on climate change and sustainable development. These are both unfinished agendas but progress has been made.

Previously, transport was almost entirely missing in the international climate negotiations and instruments established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), such as the Clean Development Mechanism. Through persistent outreach activities – including those by the Bridging the Gap Initiative – the second largest sector for Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) submitted to UNFCCC or currently under development is now transport capacity building and pilot projects. The share of transport activities funded under climate change focus area of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is also increasing.

SLoCaT's efforts to influence global policies on sustainable development initially took a backseat compared to its efforts on climate change, however preparations for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) provided a timely global platform to pursue this broader objective. By then, SLoCaT and its members had coalesced around a number of common

messages on sustainable transport and SLoCaT helped convince the negotiating parties to expand coverage for sustainable transport and include it as a separate priority area for future action in the Rio+20 outcome document. SLoCaT worked with several of its members to develop a set of voluntary commitments on sustainable transport, including the unprecedented \$175 billion commitment for more sustainable transport made by eight Multilateral Development Banks. A forthcoming report by the Natural Resource Defense Council evaluating the implementation of the Rio+20 Voluntary Commitments concluded: 'The SLoCaT network is a model for other action networks because of its strategic vision and leadership that resulted in the major commitments on sustainable transportation at Rio+20. SLoCaT's recently developed major financing structure and its intent to engage in the post-2015 development agenda to mobilise resources are encouraging signs of progress for sustainable transport.'

The past three years have driven the message home that it is neither desirable nor possible to separate the climate change dimension from the wider developmental impacts of transport. Interventions to effectively address climate change in the transport sector require strategies that influence billions of actors – from vehicle manufacturers, fuel providers, and local governments and private operators providing transport infrastructure and services, to individual travelers and freight shippers. Climate-related policies and interventions in the transport sector usually have benefits other than greenhouse gas emission reductions, which almost always are more important in the eyes of decision makers than the climate change mitigation benefits.

To ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness, SLoCaT is considering whether and how to develop its loose institutional structure into a more formal one, which might help it better keep pace with the growing attention to sustainable, low carbon transport in the developing world and the global community ■

## MORE INFO

The SLoCaT Partnership on Sustainable Transport (SLoCaT) is a multi-stakeholder partnership of over 80 organisations (representing UN bodies, multilateral and bilateral development organisations, NGOs and foundations, academia and the business sector). SLoCaT promotes the integration on sustainable transport in global policies on sustainable development and climate change.

[www.slocat.net](http://www.slocat.net)

# Field Hearings provide a voice for economically precarious or socially excluded communities

Dr. Deborah S. Rogers  
Initiative for Equality

We welcome your involvement in the Equity & Sustainability Field Hearings, part of a rapidly expanding global movement with over 250 partner organisations in 67 countries.

We are bringing the voices of people in poor or marginalized communities into the global dialogue on equality and sustainable development, and in the process, establishing a network of organisations and communities working together to create equitable and sustainable development solutions.



pic: James Cridland

From fisherfolk in Sri Lanka to displaced farmers in Kunming; from tribal peoples in the Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to fruit vendors in Rawalpindi; from urban slum dwellers of Nigeria to indigenous hunters in the forests of Burundi; from Romani communities in an increasingly hostile Europe to economically struggling Black and Hispanic American communities in Gary, Indiana - this is an unprecedented movement. Never before have so many poor and marginalised communities around the world come together to speak out – collectively – to influence policy, and to take their rightful place at the table as solutions are developed.

We are acting because the people most in need of sustainable development – those living in poverty – generally have almost no opportunity to be heard in the global dialogue on development, inequality, and sustainability. Processes such as the UN's current Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) dialogue are intended to end poverty through promoting socially and environmentally sustainable development. But communities which experience the most difficult circumstances generally have no avenues to influence decisions or play a role in the search for solutions.

The Equity & Sustainability Field Hearings will solicit and amplify the voices of these communities in order to maximise their impact on the SDG process. Partner organisations around the world will conduct Field Hearings, gathering input from at least 600 poor or marginalised communities. We will bring these voices into the global SDG process with the help of our UN-connected partners Stakeholder Forum (UK) and Women Environmental Programme (Nigeria). We will deliver direct input from all the partners and communities, along with summaries and recommendations based on this input, to the General Assembly's Open Working Group – the body established to develop the new SDGs.

Primary partner organisations leading the initiative include CRESUNA-Africa (Uganda), New Integrated Collective Initiative for Poverty Alleviation (Cameroon), New Restoration Plan – (Malawi), Pan African Vision for the Environment (Nigeria), Save the Earth – Cambodia, Rural Women's Association – Alga (Kyrgyzstan), National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (Sri Lanka), National Forum For Advocacy (Nepal), Orissa State Volunteers and Social Workers Association (India), and Initiative for Equality (US-based global organisation). In addition to our 250+ Partners, we have a global Steering Committee, a global Advisory Committee, Regional Coordinators across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, and Country Coordinators as needed ■

## MORE INFO

Convenor of the Field Hearings Project, Initiative for Equality (IfE), is a global grassroots network under the fiscal sponsorship of FJC in the U.S. ([www.initiativeforequality.org](http://www.initiativeforequality.org)). IfE's goal is the development and implementation of collaborative approaches that foster increased socio-economic equality and justice. To achieve these objectives, IfE utilises community organising, networking, and a coalition-building "collective impact" approach. In March 2012, IfE initiated the Equity and Sustainability Field Hearings in 34 communities across Asia and Africa, and presented preliminary results in June 2012, both at the Rio+20 Summit and in a report based on interviews with over 2700 individuals. Now the project is scaling up to have a truly global impact on how development is approached.

Contact: Dr. Deborah S. Rogers, Director,  
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# Distributed leadership and a multi-stakeholder platform for SDG and MDG convergence: The Peoples' Sustainability Treaties

Uchita de Zoysa and Ashwani Vasishth,  
Peoples' Sustainability Treaties

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In 'The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organisations', Brafman & Beckstrom (2008) makes a powerful argument for distributed leadership. There are two reasons why this model is useful to us in thinking through the issue of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as they follow on from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Complex systems depict multiple realities, and, as such, demand the deployment of multiple perspectives in the creation of meaningful depictions. And, organisationally, any structure with multiple leadership nodes is likely to be more robust and agile, than one with a rank hierarchical structure.

Differently, in their seminal article, 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', Rittel & Webber (1973) argue that complex systems are best defined as 'wicked problems' – that is to say, ones that defy singular characterisation and that demand a problem management approach rather than a problem solving approach.

These two structures, distributed leadership and wicked problems, form the basis for our effort to generate a multi-stakeholder platform designed to grow a set of sustainability goals that represent multiple perspectives within a coherent organising framework. This framework is The Peoples' Sustainability Treaties (PST).

We know very well that humanity faces multiple, complex and daunting crises that will inevitably impact billions of people in the next few decades. In addition, research is showing us that our actions are very likely going to cause us to transgress multiple planetary boundaries, while at the same time crashing through the social justice floor. Despite the unprecedented increase in the size of the global economy since 1992, governments are still viewing limitless growth, with its unsustainable and inequitable consequences, as the remedy to problems that economic globalisation itself has caused. The post-MDG and SDG processes need to converge to provide the world with a new common agenda for a sustainable 21st century. Such an agenda building exercise needs new common partnerships.

The PST commenced as an initiative by global civil society organisations to develop an interdependent, collective outcome for a sustainable future beyond Rio+20. The Treaties are a forward looking process and together generate a new common narrative and agenda for the

transformation to a sustainable world order. The common narrative and agenda will provide a unified platform for the convergence of the SDGs and MDGs.

In this emerging common narrative and agenda, **equity** shows itself as the overarching supra-system, and must be the foundation of a collective global response; equity within generations, equity across generations, and equity between humans and nature. For this we need to revert back to making individual and societal decisions based on equity and ecological factors and not merely for monetary reasons. A different sort of economics, a new approach to learning and education, a revised understanding of ethics and of spirituality then become the ways in which we can work towards a more equitable society; one that recognises our integral relationship with the natural world.

**Localising** our economic systems, decentralising governance, and advancing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods become the new social orders of sustainable societies. Localism is the theme emerging across the board which is linked to the principles of devolution, decentralisation and subsidiarity. Turning localism into a world-wide movement becomes the key to unpacking many of the complexities we face, whether in the case of sustainable consumption and production, or of radical ecological democracy. Protecting the rights of Mother Earth and of humans, transforming our governance systems through radical ecological democracy, respecting cultural diversity, and strengthening sustainable economies is the way towards sustainable futures for all. It is thus essential that we create a more effective, responsible and democratic system of global governance.

A **global peoples' movement** is the collective response to the challenges of transitioning to a sustainable world. All sections of society must thrive to converge upon their visions and convictions and find common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure the wellbeing of all on the planet - nature as well as humans. Such a global peoples' movement would catalyse a peaceful and prosperous new world that generates widespread happiness and contentment – thus propagating widespread practices of mindful intentional action. For this, a new sense of ethics, values and spirituality must be seeded within current and future generations through a redesigned system of learning, education and enlightenment ■

# Youth priorities for the post-2015 development agenda

Sarah Gold

International Women's Health Coalition

This week is an important one for children and young people around the world, as Member States gather to assess the gains and remaining gaps of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Young people are looking to governments for leadership in championing their sexual and reproductive health and rights within the post-2015 development agenda, recognising their diverse needs and experiences, and upholding their autonomy and ability to participate at every level. In a recent letter responding to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's recent report, 'A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations agenda beyond 2015', young people outlined some of their priorities for the post-2015 agenda.

Noting that the MDGs furthest from being met are the two goals focusing on women and girls, young people have urged Member States to redouble efforts between now and 2015 to achieve gender equality and universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and to capitalise on this momentum in ongoing efforts to shape a transformative post-2015 agenda. The letter explicitly called for a post-2015 agenda which advances young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights, including universal access to comprehensive, youth-friendly, and rights-based sexual and reproductive health information, education, and services. This must also include evidence and rights-based comprehensive sexuality education.

Young people also stressed the need for a gender analysis in relation to issues of critical importance to them. Food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, jobs and sustainable livelihoods, natural resource management, and other priority thematic areas all impact young women and adolescent girls in different ways. While access to employment and decent livelihoods are key youth priorities, young people have also stressed that they cannot be viewed as commodities or economic investments. They have called for a development framework which includes

gender-sensitive targets throughout and which commits to upholding their rights to health, education, decent work, and meaningful participation, without qualification.

In addition to calling upon Member States to advance gender equality and the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, the letter outlined clear suggestions for ensuring meaningful youth participation in shaping the post-2015 agenda. Young people have suggested the establishment of a Youth High Level Panel as per the calls of original High Level Panel members Tawakkol Karman and John Podesta; clearly-defined mechanisms for civil society and youth participation within the regional post-2015 consultations in Europe, Africa and Latin America; and ongoing opportunities for civil society and youth engagement in the General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the Secretary-General's report states, 'A new era demands a new vision and a responsive framework.' The largest generation of young people the world has ever known is poised to inherit and champion our next development agenda. If the post-2015 framework is to be truly grounded in human rights and the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and if young people are truly the custodians of this agenda, Member States must commit to a transparent and participatory political process that enables the broad and meaningful participation of young people, especially young women and girls. Young people are eager to work in partnership with governments and UN agencies to ensure that their rights are given the highest priority in efforts to achieve the MDGs and within the post-2015 agenda ■

## MORE INFO

The youth response to the Secretary-General's report can be found at [www.iwhc.org](http://www.iwhc.org)



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# Summary:

## Major Groups and other stakeholders briefing days

Dan Coviello

UN DPI/NGO Youth Representative, Tarumitra, India

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In response to the changing landscape of the UN system, there is a growing need to facilitate dialogue between Major Groups and other stakeholders, UN bodies and Government representatives, in order to develop joint advocacy strategies for the post-Rio+20 and post-2015 processes.

The UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA), in partnership with Stakeholder Forum and CIVICUS, organised two briefing days, on 20 and 22 September 2013, for Major Groups and other stakeholders in preparation for the high-level segment of the opening of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly.

The first event, held on 20 September, was titled, 'The post-Rio+20 processes: Opportunities for sustainable development governance', assessing the progress of the Rio+20 outcomes and entry points for stakeholders in the follow-up processes. In particular participants reviewed lessons learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), proposed new models of stakeholder engagement for the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and were briefed on how the high-level week of the 68th General Assembly will advance the processes emanating from Rio+20.

It was noted that more than 1400 voluntary commitments for action, amounting to about US\$636 million, made during and since Rio+20, are seen as a way for the spirit of the conference to live on. Participants praised the dedication of the entities that had made commitments, however there was a resounding view that accountability frameworks are needed that to ensure the involvement of all actors and make sure that both voluntary and negotiated commitments are fulfilled.

During the discussion on post-Rio+20 processes, Ambassador Gálvez of Chile, speaking as a member of the Expert Committee on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy, provided some candid remarks about how hard he was personally working to ensure that the Committee produces ambitious recommendations on how new money for the implementation of sustainable development can be leveraged, despite hinting that its meetings would likely remain behind closed doors.

In addition, the participants agreed that an open discussion on the format of the Major Groups with respect to the inclusion of additional groups was needed. With the creation of the new HLPF, which will likely be the institutional home of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there was a consensus that an official space for equal North and South stakeholder engagement needs to be created, building on the participation mechanisms that existed for the CSD.

The second event, held on 22 September, was titled, 'The Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda' and focused on the current state of the SDGs process, what happens next, including the planning of the stakeholder intersessional events and morning meetings with the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs, and advocacy planning for the February-September drafting process of the OWG's SDGs report. In addition, the event explored linkages between the post-MDGs and SDGs processes, and their ultimate need for convergence, together with the likely implications this will have for Major Groups and other stakeholders.

Ambassador John Ashe, President-elect of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly, addressed participants at the start of the second briefing day, outlining with his Office's plan to foster debate and discussion to meet the challenges of humanity. He emphasised that the framework for the post-2015 development agenda is yet to be created and now is the time for stakeholders to promote their interests and influence its conception. The response from the audience was that they were ready to take up the challenge, but that formal and meaningful avenues for stakeholder engagement at the General Assembly level are needed to ensure effective participation by all actors.

Opportunities for Major Groups and other stakeholders to get their voices heard include: participating in the morning sessions of the OWG, providing inputs to the SDGs e-Inventory, and interacting with other stakeholders through the World We Want Platform. OWG Co-Chair Ambassador Körösi who participated in this session strongly encouraged those present to utilise each of these entry points to make sure he and his OWG colleagues know exactly what stakeholders want the new framework to look like.

The second day ended with rousing closing remarks from Kumi Naidoo, the Executive Director of Greenpeace, who, using the words of Albert Einstein, emphasised that "we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

The participants of the events agreed that an understanding of the past, together with mutual cooperation and an ambition to reach a shared vision in the present, is the path to a more inclusive and sustainable future ■

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dan Coviello is a UN DPI/NGO Youth Representative for Tarumitra, a youth-led NGO that focuses on energy and forest conservation in India. He has a degree in Environmental Engineering and is pursuing a Masters degree in Environmental Policy Design at Lehigh University.



# UN General Assembly events calendar

Date	Time	Location	Event	Host
Monday 23 September	09:00 - 12:00	Church Center, 2nd Floor conference room	Civil Society Dialogue on Shaping the Development We Want: Voices from the Global South	Wada Na Todo Abhiyan and Global Call to Action against Poverty
	09:30 - 12:30	501 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017 (Roger Smith Hotel, @ Solarium room)	Financing for Human Rights and Sustainable Development in the post-2015	The Righting Finance Initiative
	11:00 - 12:30	Conference Room 6 (NLB)	Launch of the Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment	Canada and UN Women
		www.empowerwomen.org; knowledge.gateway@unwomen.org		
	13:15 - 14:30	UNHQ, Conference Room 1 (CB)	Civil Society Voices on Post-2015: Messages from the National Level	Beyond 2015, CIVICUS, GCAP and the IFP, co-sponsored by Colombia and Sweden.
		Please RSVP to <a href="mailto:laranatabeyond2015@gmail.com">laranatabeyond2015@gmail.com</a> by Monday, September 16th.		
	15:30 - 17:00	UNHQ Conference Building CR2	Discussion about findings from the Global Conversation on the Post-2015 Agenda: A Million Voices: The World We Want	The World We Want; UN Development Group
		Contact <a href="mailto:post2015events@undg.org">post2015events@undg.org</a> for a special events pass, which will be necessary to enter		
	16:00 - 19:00	Permanent Mission of Turkey to the UN	HLPF Side event on Sustainable cities	UN DESA/DSD with Local Authorities Major Groups
		Online registration: <a href="http://bit.ly/163pwp">http://bit.ly/163pwp</a>		
17:00 - 19:00	Harvard Club	Launch of first Investments to End Poverty report.	Development Initiatives	
18:00 - 21:00	Church Center	What kind of a post-2015 development framework will bring about the real change we need?	CIDSE	
	Contact : <a href="mailto:Jean.Saldanha.saldanha@cidse.org">Jean Saldanha saldanha@cidse.org</a>			
18:30 - 19:30	African Union Mission, 305 East 47th Street, 5th Floor	The Role of Science & Higher Education the Post 2015 development agenda: the African context	The Planet Earth Institute and the African Union	
		RSVP required: <a href="mailto:valentina@planetearthinstitute.org.uk">valentina@planetearthinstitute.org.uk</a>		
Tuesday 24 September	08:15 - 09:45	International Youth Voices on Post-2015	Westin Grand Central Hotel	German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development with support from UNICEF
	Contact: <a href="mailto:youthvoices@worldwewant.de">youthvoices@worldwewant.de</a>			
	09:30 - 11:30	Shaping coherent and collective action in a post-2015 world: how policy coherence for development can help improve global food security?	CR1, UNHQ	Italy and OECD
	10:00 - 13:00	Tackling the unfinished business: Accelerating MDG progress	CR2, UNHQ	UNDP and the World Bank
	Contact: <a href="mailto:Renata.Rubian@undp.org">Renata Rubian - renata.rubian@undp.org</a>			
	13:00 - 14:30	The Right to Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda	Open Society Foundation, 224 West 57th St, New York	ICAE, GCE, EI, LACRE, ANCEFA, ASPBAE, ACEA, EAEA, ActionAid, IBIS, GMACL, OSF, Oxfam, DVV.
		RSVP by 20 September. Contact: <a href="mailto:sherry@campaignforeducation.org">sherry@campaignforeducation.org</a> or <a href="mailto:awilson@gce-us.org">awilson@gce-us.org</a>		
	13:15 - 14:30	Multidimensional poverty and Multidimensional Measurement of the Post 2015 development agenda	CR-6, UNHQ	Germany, Colombia, CONEVAL, Mexico, and GMPP Network
		Contact: <a href="mailto:John.Hammock@tufts.edu">John Hammock john.hammock@tufts.edu</a>		
	14:00 - 15:00	MDG Countdown 2013: Girls and Women Transforming Societies	Ford Foundation, 320 East, 43rd Street	UKAid and USAID
15:00 - 20:00	Global Partnership for Effective Development	CR2, UNHQ	Indonesia, Nigeria and UK	
17:30 - 18:30	Reinforcing Momentum to End Acute Malnutrition	Bohemian National Hall, 321 E 73rd St.	Action Against Hunger, ACF Int. and UNICEF	
	RSVP to <a href="mailto:Camille.cgbender@actionagainsthunger.org">Camille cgbender@actionagainsthunger.org</a>			
18:30 - 20:30	Visions and Voices for Human Rights: Integrating human rights into the post-2015 sustainable development agenda	Conference Room 7, NLB, UNHQ	CESR, IBON Int. and Amnesty Int., in partnership with Mission of Finland to UN and Mission of Argentina OHCHR	
	No longer accepting RSVPs. Contact: <a href="mailto:Luke.Holland@cesr.org">Luke Holland, lholland@cesr.org</a>			

# Reflections from the GA: CSD terminated – NGOs silenced

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Stakeholder Forum

Amid glossy words of praise the dark past rears its ugly head

There was solemnity in Conference room 2 on Friday the 20th of September. The final session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was about to begin, a session that would close the CSD after 20 years of hard work. Delegates found their seats in the newly renovated room. The old nation flags were gone, substituted by electronic name plates. Electronics were at the hands of the chair who by the push of a button could give the floor to those who wished to speak. "It is quite fitting," mused a delegate – "a brand new room, and a brand new era. The new High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will take over from the old CSD and direct sustainable development into the future – in a modern way."

The Chair called the meeting to order. We all listened attentively respecting the modalities of the meeting. The procedure was clear, and surprisingly no time limit was set for statements. Governments, including the Group of 77 and the European Union, started by congratulating the accomplishments of CSD. Many spoke for a long time, emphasising positive sides of the CSD. They all agreed that the integration of the Major Groups and civil society had been a major accomplishment. "Listening to the voices of the people, to Major Groups, is paramount" they said.

Lumped together at the end of a session, the chair gave the floor to the Major Groups; Women, Children and Youth, Business and Industry and the NGOs – only four of the nine got to speak. In the midst of the NGO statement, in an Orwellian gesture conjuring images of Big Brother, the Chair cut the microphone. In the middle of the statement without being allowed to conclude, the NGOs were silenced.

It was a first – or a CSD last. No speaker had ever been so rudely cut off in the history of the Commission. Many had been admonished to conclude, but always allowed to finish in a dignified manner. Would the chair have silenced a government this way? But "we the peoples" seem always to be treated with less respect by governments. At least by some governments.

Free speech is a human right. So is the right to be listened to, to be heard. These are basic principles of democracies, entrenched values of good governance, fundamental elements of human dignity. Our history is revealed as much by what we destroy as by what we preserve. Abrogating the right to speak by electronically controlling the microphone is a sinister way of undermining governance. Let the sour ending of the CSD era not set the tone for the beginning of a modern HLPF ■

## A New Global Platform for Women's Economic Empowerment to launch at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly

Women make significant contributions to the economy, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs, employees, or by performing unpaid care work at home. Yet, they remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation.

On **Monday 23 September**, UN Women and the Government of Canada will launch a new initiative: The Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment. Hosted at [www.empowerwomen.org](http://www.empowerwomen.org), the Knowledge Gateway is a new online platform for resources, advocacy, innovation, partnerships and collaboration around women's economic empowerment. The beneficiaries of the Knowledge Gateway range from national to

local governments, large corporations to micro-entrepreneurs, international NGOs to women's grassroots organisations, and institutions that work toward the amelioration of women's economic situations. The event will be webcast live starting at 11:00am EDT from the Knowledge Gateway website. For further information about this initiative please contact: [Knowledge.gateway@unwomen.org](mailto:Knowledge.gateway@unwomen.org).

Outreach is made possible by the support of



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