



Converging the Strands

On the road to a sustainable development agenda

IN BRIEF

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which came into being in the context of the 2000 Millennium Development Declaration, are reaching their target date in 2015. By then a new global development framework should be in place at UN level. Historically there are two strands which are reflected in the present dichotomy of processes: The Post-2015-development agenda process, aiming at formulating new development goals, and the sustainable development process aiming at the formulation of sustainability goals / SDGs. However, from a Welthungerhilfe (WHH) perspective development and sustainability constitute first of all a conundrum which cannot be dealt with separately. Secondly it is not just about an updating of the MDGs or an elaboration of the set of goals: What is at stake is the drafting of a new global sustainable development agenda which - if taken seriously - entails a transformation of the ways we organize our living together on this planet, of economies, of production - and consumption patterns but which also deals with questions of governance, accountability and engagement for the poorest part of global population.

Apart from stocktaking with regard to the implementation of the MDGs so far the first *official* steps for this transformation will be taken during this years' 68th UN-General Assembly in New York during a one day „Special Event on MDGs“, September 25th. It remains to be seen, whether member states will reinforce the importance of this event by a high ranking representation on Minister - or Head of State level.

Welthungerhilfe and its European partnership Alliance2015 see the special significance of this „MDG-summit“ in its dual task of agreeing on a roadmap in the run up to 2015, which includes still outstanding implementation for some MDGs, particularly the MDG on hunger. The right to food, including nutrition security, needs to be at the centre of any new agenda. At the same time we want the summit to already send a clear political signal for the necessity of converging the two strands into a single universal transformational agenda. The challenge of this summit - and actually of the international community - lies in

ensuring the support for this endeavour from the developed countries as well as from the Global South and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).

What are the issues?

Basically the following issues are controversial amongst governments and stakeholders:

- the **dichotomy of the processes** and potentially of the agendas and thereby of the lacking insight in a conundrum of development and environment;
- the differing views regarding **the universality of a global agenda** (covering all countries, not just the developing ones) and thereby a just and equitable burden sharing with common but differentiated responsibilities and priorities (e.g. the ecological footprint) ;
- the **resistance to a convergence** of the agendas by **the emerging economies**;
- **the human rights** and **inequality** focus;

- the *transformative shift* (e.g. resource heavy lifestyles);
- the *(re-)regulation* of non-sustainable *economic systems*;
- the *reform of the global financial system*;
- the need for *better accountability*;
- the *financing* of and responsibilities for such a new global agenda;
- the design of a needed *much broader global partnership* - matching ODA and other financial flows - and the recognition of a wider range of responsibilities for richer countries;
- the *implementation and monitoring of a broader set of goals* on a global but especially *on a regional and national level*: For example striking the right balance between inclusion of necessary broader issues which were lacking or not sufficiently addressed in the original MDGs (i.e. human rights, democracy, climate adaptation) and the pragmatic implementability and measurability of sets of goals by means of a manageable number of indicators. The NYU/ Center on International Cooperation argues e.g. that a focus on absolute poverty means that many goals are not obviously applicable to high income countries. This would change, however, if the eventual agenda included goals on inequality, 'relative' rather than just 'absolute poverty' or more explicit language on sustainable production and consumption or planetary boundaries. It means in practical terms that a universal set of global goals will need to be supported by targets and indicators which are in line with the capacities of individual countries and can be adapted accordingly. A focus on the national level and 'relative poverty' and the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' does not mean, however, that donor countries can withdraw from their global responsibilities for poverty eradication;
- *reforming global governance systems* - which started at UN level with the introduction of the High Level Political Forum as well as a more just representation in global bodies.

New global structures in a Post2015-World: The High Level Political Forum

As successor body to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) which was regarded as a rather weak body and as a first step in the direction towards reforming global governance systems, governments agreed at the Rio+20 Conference (2012) to establish a high ranking political forum for sustainable development. Primary goal is to strengthen political leadership under the auspices of the UN for a coherent approach to environmental, social (developmental) and economic issues. It is also supposed to play a central role in the monitoring of the Post2015 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs). It will meet once a year at minister level and every four years at Heads of States level.

This high ranking representation is certainly helpful for its mandate. However, it is not yet quite evident why this new intergovernmental body should be more efficient than others. And it remains to be seen whether it can fulfil the expectations to represent i.a. an alternative to the G20. It depends - as usual - on the engagement of member states.

The first session of this new sustainability forum is scheduled for September 24th in New York, in conjunction with the annual UN General Assembly and the MDG/Post2015-Summit, which are expected to be attended by a number of heads of states and governments.

What happened so far - the process and highlights

The UN has begun efforts to define the global development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In contrast to the windowless rooms in the basement of the UN Headquarter in New York, in which the MDGs were drafted by UN staff at the time, the current process is marked by a multitude of consultations at UN level and with civil society worldwide. Results of these consultations are partly reflected in a number of reports, which form the basis for the report of the UN Secretary General for the „MDG summit“. The four most important reports,

which have been submitted by September 2013 are the reports of the

1. High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Post-2015 HLP)
2. UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
3. UN Global Compact (UNGC)
4. UN Development Group (UNDG): The Global Conversation Begins

Especially the HLP activities in the run up to the report were closely followed by Welthungerhilfe, which was facilitated by meetings with the German member on the panel, the former Federal President Prof. Horst Köhler, who boldly asked for nothing less than a transformational agenda, in which e.g. the occurrence of hunger and failing global financial systems are understood as being interlinked (of course not monocausally). Thus, Welthungerhilfe welcomes especially - apart from the demand for the abolition of poverty by 2030 - illustrative goal no 5 of the HLP-Report regarding the end of hunger and more nutritious food for poor people:

- End hunger and protect the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, affordable, and nutritious food;
- Reduce by x% stunting, wasting by y% and anemia by z% for all children under 5;
- Increase agricultural productivity by x%, with a focus on sustainably increasing smallholder yields and access to irrigation;
- Adopt sustainable agricultural, ocean, and freshwater fishery practices and rebuild designated fish stocks to sustainable levels;
- Reduce postharvest loss and food waste by x%.

The outcome of a *global Civil Society Beyond 2015 consultation* prioritises 5 issues: equality (on all levels incl. fair trade systems); climate justice (a sustainable environment); human rights and leaving no-one behind; the eradication of poverty and hunger; accountability and inclusivity mechanisms to measure

progress in those areas as well as the democratization of global governance structures.

Simultaneously the following intergovernmental processes offer opportunities for civil society to monitor and influence the design of the post-2015 development agenda, They were mainly established at the UN conference for Sustainable Development in 2012 to formulate the SDGs:

1. The *Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG)* is expected to propose goals and targets on major current and emerging sustainable development challenges. According to the outcome stipulated by Rio+20, these SDGs should address economic, social and environmental considerations in a balanced way, and be integrated into the Post-2015 development processes. A report will be submitted for the UN General Assembly 2014. Its 30 seats are shared by 69 UN Member States in regional groupings. Germany is in a group with France and Switzerland and represented by the Foreign Office. (For more information see: www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org)

2. The *High-Level Political Forum* (see above)

3. The *Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy*. This committee of 30 experts has just been established in June 2013. By 2014, the committee will prepare a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy, to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives. The committee must complete its work by September 2014. The 1st meeting, which took place recently, August 28-30th, was disappointing, however in so far as it turned out to be a closed-shop meeting, denying participation and input from civil society. On substance, some Southern civil society voices argue there should be more attention to encouraging domestic resource mobilization (DRM) rather than reliance on external financing such as aid and foreign investments (IBON).

4. *UN General Assembly Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda.* (see further down)

The MDGs - a success story?

In a nutshell: Yes, but Welthungerhilfe reported already on the 2010-MDG-summit „Global recognition, but only humble local impacts“ on the mixed results - regionally, between and within countries as well as goalwise. This still holds true.

This years' MDG report states that the MDGs “have been the most successful global anti-poverty push in history. Significant and substantial progress has been made in meeting many of the targets – including halving the number of people living in extreme poverty and the proportion of people without sustainable access to improved sources of drinking water. Remarkable gains have been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. There have been visible improvements in all health areas as well as primary education.”

It is true, that MDG target 1a (Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day) has been met and poverty rates have been halved between 1990 and 2010. In other words: The proportion of people living in extreme poverty has been halved at the global level. But 1.2 billion people still live in extreme poverty.

And it is true, that over two billion people gained access to improved sources of drinking water and there have been visible improvements in all health areas as well as primary education – but social inequalities e.g. in access to services are escalating on an enormous scale. But the report also states that the areas where action is needed most are hunger, maternal health, sanitation and environmental protection, and it confirms that the achievement of the MDGs has been uneven among and within countries.

Relating to the *hunger goal* the 2013 report states that:

- one in eight people still go to bed hungry, despite major progress;
- globally, nearly one in six children under age five are underweight; one in four are stunted;
- an estimated seven per cent of children under age five worldwide are now overweight, another aspect of malnutrition;

one quarter of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa.

This shows that Food and Nutrition Security and sustainable agricultural production patterns must be a central issue to any new development and sustainability agenda.

The MDGs are the first development framework that is globally accepted, a milestone in the international debate. It had weaknesses, too. In hindsight some of the major weaknesses of the MDGs were

- the reduction of a complex development dimension to a mere eight goals expected to bring about development (Minimal DGs);
- that those goals were mainly targeted at developing countries and only one - the partnership goal No 8 - at developed countries;
- the neglect of ecological and economic sustainability aspects as well as human rights approaches;
- that they did not deal with the causes of poverty and inequalities but with quantitative dimensions.

Clearly, their attraction was their simplicity and, measurability and they certainly had a mobilising effect and put poverty eradication back on the international agenda and their have been successes as explained above. Yet - the international community has to significantly increase its efforts for the outstanding implementations in the next two years. And a lot will depend on continuing efforts with regard to partnership goal No 8. Yes, economic and financial crises had an effect on donor commitments. However, especially the German government could do more given its economic situation in comparison to other European donors like the UK who are faring worse, but doing better.

What is happening at the Special Event and what can be expected?

According to UN sources the Special Event of the General Assembly will take stock of progress and gaps in achieving the MDGs, and will also provide guidance on the post-2015 process. The one day event will include two sets of parallel roundtables and an opening and closing plenary. Member States have yet to agree on the exact structure of this event, but it is expected to result in a brief outcome document, including a “roadmap” for the post-2015 agenda. Member States will be informed by the four above mentioned reports as well as by the recently published report by the Secretary General, building on these as well as on the civil society consultations. Member States are expected to start the designing of a Post-2015 agenda that builds on and goes beyond the existing MDGs.

We expect the ‘special event’ to lay the groundwork for the convergence of the Post-2015 agenda with the outcomes of Rio+20, into a universal single development framework with the eradication of poverty and hunger and the switch to sustainable development patterns at its core. Within that context, we expect food and nutrition security to be central. We expect all UN member governments (so - called developed, developing or emerging economies alike) to start designing and committing to a new partnership notion. This process should be i.a. based on the Busan development effectiveness partnership and the principles of ownership and enabling environments for development.. The allocation resp. generation - e.g. by more effective tax systems – of the necessary finances for the implementation of the unmet MDG targets and for a new global agenda from 2015 needs to go hand in hand with this. In brief – we expect the ‘special event’ not to be another talk shop!

Policy recommendations

The new report of the UN Secretary General for the General Assembly also calls for economic transformation and more coherence: *“This is a universal agenda that requires profound economic transformations and a new global partnership. It also requires that the international community, including the United Nations, embrace a more coherent and effective response to support the agenda.”* Ban Ki Moon in his report also calls for human rights at the core and with regard to food security to: *„End hunger and malnutrition. Addressing hunger, malnutrition, stunting and food insecurity in a world experiencing rapid population growth will require a combination of stable and adequate incomes for all, improvements in agricultural productivity and sustainability, child and maternal care and strengthened social protection for vulnerable populations.”*

Welthungerhilfe urges the German government in this context – resp. the EU and the UN where applicable:

1. to **strengthen the German and European role** in this important international context and to actively participate in the Special MDG event in September and in its preparations by a **high ranking representation**;
2. to support efforts for a **clear process roadmap** for a Post-2015 agenda in the next two years which aims at the **convergence** of the SDG- and MDG-Agendas and to push for EU-leadership in this context given its role as largest donor;
3. to support this convergence based on the **principles of common but differentiated responsibilities**;
4. to ensure that **sustainability** is dealt with in **all three dimensions**: environmental, economical and social.
5. to support a **human rights based agenda** - and the progressive realization of all human rights (**civic, social, economic and cultural**) - which focusses on the final eradication of poverty, hunger and escalating social inequalities in conjunction with climate and resource protection;

6. to **prioritize the right to food** and to support a better institutional and policy environment for food and nutrition security - as without it *"... not even the best health and education services can attain the desired development results. Food insecurity is a societal problem, not a technical one, and requires political leadership. If leaders want to build an inclusive and resilient society, they need to put food security high on the their agenda"*(European Centre for Development Policy Management);
7. to provide for more **coherent intra-ministerial implementation and accountability mechanisms** on the German national level;
8. to support in the new intergovernmental finance committee **country reforms of the global financial system** such as strong regulation of private capital flows to ensure stability, channel finance to productive sectors, and promote access for the poor and in parallel the scaling up of ODA, climate finance and other

forms of development financing based on common but differentiated responsibilities.

9. to seriously discuss the idea of **„growth“** - even inclusive growth - measured in terms of the GNP as *the* instrument of measuring social progress; economic alternatives with a focus on less-intensive use of resources must be promoted and **social progress be measured in other categories of well-being.**(„In business as in politics, what gets measured affects what gets done ...“ see www.stiglitz-senfitoussi.fr) Already Robert F. Kennedy remarked 45 years ago: *"... it (GNP) ... measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."*

Germany could play a lead role in demonstrating that a new kind of 'good living' will only be possible alongside a change of non-sustainable production- and consumption patterns!

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