

Millennium Development Goals

from the endogenous development perspective

Editorial

Box 1 Millennium Development Goals and targets for 2015

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Reduction of 50%.
2. Achieve universal primary education. 100% for boys and girls.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women. Eliminate gender disparity in education.
4. Reduce child mortality. Reduce by 66% the mortality rate among children under five.
5. Improve maternal health. Reduce by 75% the maternal mortality rate.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Halt and begin to reverse.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability. Reverse loss of environmental resources; reduce number of people who have no access to safe drinking water by 50%; significant improvement of the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
8. Develop a global partnership for economic development. Several specific targets.

In this editorial we would like to contribute to the discussion about the Millennium Development Goals from the perspective of endogenous development. At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the world leaders accepted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve extreme poverty by 2015 (see box 1). Governments of aid receiving countries, ideally in dialogue with various groups within civil society, are now in the process of formulating and implementing the national Poverty Reduction Strategies. In many western countries campaigns are being organised to raise awareness about the urgency to eradicate poverty, and to support the MDGs.

In January 2005 a report on the achievements of Millennium Development Goals, 'Investing in Development: a Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium development Goals', was presented (Sachs, 2005). Written by an independent advisory body to the United Nations Secretary-General, the report indicates that progress so far has been spotty, and extreme poverty is, in fact, rising. The rich countries are urged to spend more money on cutting hunger and poverty in the developing world, according to a practical action plan. This plan includes global initiatives related to governance, opening of markets for developing country exports, and a focus on private capital and civil society organisations. It aims to pool aid and spend the money more locally and strategically. A series of 'quick wins' are also recommended, which vary from eliminating school uniforms and fees, to community nutrition programmes, and launching national campaigns for reducing violence against women.

An infinitely complex world

Although the MDGs are applauded widely as a minimum set of tangible development goals, they are at the same time subject to serious criticism. *"It seems that the MDG process is taking a top-down, technocratic, if not bureaucratic, approach to an infinitely complex world.(...) The MDGs could be a good occasion for the United Nations to break away from its highly limiting government-to-government game, notably by trying to link up with civil society. But this is not happening. (...) Officials leading the MDG process are not listening to what and where people are becoming excited and engaged."* (Hartcourt, 2005)

Many of the MDG initiatives focus on the material and human aspects of development, and are primarily aimed at the monetary market system. Moreover, civil society, which includes local groups and organisations engaged in development, needs to be involved fully in the process. It is essential, therefore, to put peoples' own engagement, organisations, economy, and strategies for poverty alleviation at the centre of the development efforts.

MDGs from the endogenous perspective

Endogenous development, or 'development from within', includes the local community, its economy, livelihood and culture. It aims to create multi-dimensional well-being as defined by the local population. Endogenous development initiatives can be found enhanced and supported everywhere, including Europe, as indicated by the experience in the Abruzzo region in Italy (de Rooy, p. 30). But endogenous development seems to be especially important in sit-

uations of marginal economies and vulnerable ecological conditions, which can be found in large parts of the world. In the following section we identify 14 specific contributions of endogenous development for reaching the MDGs (sequence does not necessarily indicate priority).

1. Give voice to the poor

The perceptions of poverty and well-being by the poor themselves may deviate from those of the planners, policy makers and development agencies. Listening to the voices of the poor, and understanding their meanings and values, is essential for any programme that aims to achieve the MDGs. In this issue (p20) the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the local communities have identified ten basic needs for human well-being. The poverty reduction programmes of this organisation include these elements. On p.34, Berman presents the views of grandmothers from various ethnic backgrounds on the way forward.



2. Identify the resources of the poor and possible solutions

Many issues related to poverty, education, health and governance are defined from a technological or economic perspective, and solutions are sought in the application of technologies and economic measures. The cultural dimensions of development problems are often little understood and often poorly addressed by policy makers and development agencies. Support in the problem definition and in the identification of possible solutions that include the technical, the economic as well as the cultural domains is essential. In this issue, Kumara et al (p.40) present an example of a process of community diagnosis in India, which resulted in water conservation and organic agriculture programmes.

3. Acknowledge faith, religion and sense-giving.



The roles of faith, religion and sense-giving are often not understood by development professionals, while these often determine the decision making processes of the poor on issues related to agriculture, health, community organisation, migration and conflicts. Development is not only a matter of efficiency and material progress, to be achieved through the application of technocratic solutions. Religious values can be strong motivators for poverty reduction and sustainable development. For example, Tyndale (p.7) shows how the concept of sharing and individual transformation is part of most religious traditions. Based on Buddhist values, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka (Ariyaratne, p.20) emphasises development as an 'awakening process for all'. Shanker (p.8) describes how many religious texts prohibit usury and stress the importance of just and equitable development.



4. Fine-tune options to context

The definitions of and solutions to the problems of the poor cannot be the same in all contexts. They need to be placed in the socio-cultural context, which may vary from ecosystem to ecosystem, from economy to economy, and from (sub) culture to (sub) culture. They may be time bound and depend on the political environment. Various examples in this issue show the potential of locally specific solutions (De Rooij, p.30; Upawansa, p.14).

5. Establish civil society partnerships

Co-operation for development could well imply the participation of local leaders in policy debates and develop-

ment programmes. This would result in revitalised local leadership and a new balance between traditional and state governance. Alvarez and Caceres (p.12) provide an example of the role of local leaders of the Chorotega population in northern Nicaragua in their process of endogenous development. Intercultural dialogue is also being fostered at an international level. Through awareness raising and policy dialogue, these partnerships can contribute to the creation of alliances that favour more just relations. The recent workshop on Endogenous Livestock Development in Cameroon (van 't Hooft and Millar, p.38) is part of an international initiative that aims to enhance people-centred livestock development networks.



6. Empower women and promote gender equality

The role of women is central in any development effort. Women play a vital role in the informal sector, as well as in traditional institutions and decision making processes. A western bias needs to be avoided when considering gender equality. In many traditional societies men and women are not equal, but have complementary roles of equal importance. Moreover, female cosmovision concepts, especially related to the Earth and to reproduction, are important in local perceptions. In this issue, the role of women is highlighted by Millar and Aniah (p.23), Sureshchandra (p.36), Ollo (p.16) and Berman (p.34).



7. Strengthen local economies

Most of the rural poor in the South function within informal local economies. They depend on local resources, and their products are often used locally. Local (market) exchange often includes reciprocity mechanisms,

family and ethnic relations, and takes place within a specific context of sense giving. Ollo (p.16) describes the activities of a women's group in Nicaragua that manufactures high quality pottery for local, national and international markets. Ariyaratne (p.20) describes the economic activities of the value-based development approach of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka. Calderon and Van Kessel (p.10) compare the concepts of Andean and western economic development. Development based on these concepts does not imply fencing off from the global world, but connecting to it in such a way that local qualities and values remain, and become the point of reference.



8. Build on organic practices

In many endogenous development efforts people build agriculture on organic practices, ecological principles and biodiversity. They try to find new balances between production for local consumption and the wider market. External knowledge and limited amounts of external inputs are used strategically. In this issue, Upawansa (p.14) demonstrates the effectiveness of rice cultivation in Sri Lanka based on natural cycles and traditional practices. Vélez (p.27) shows how traditional agriculture in the Caribbean region of Colombia is based on biodiversity conservation, and the resistance of indigenous groups against the introduction of transgenic crops. Van 't Hooft and Millar (p.38) report on how farmers and NGO staff in a workshop in Cameroon discussed the ins and outs of endogenous development related to livestock.

9. Enhance environmental sustainability

Maffi (p.18) shows that for environmental sustainability it is essential to accept the cultural dimension of biodiversity. Traditional resource strategies are often resource conserving. Kumara et al (p.40) show, for example, how traditional water conservation systems were used in development efforts concerning availability of drinking water and ecological rehabilitation. Van Rooij (p.30) provides an example of integrat-

ed mountain development: how multi-functional farming and traditional environmental strategies revitalised rural life in Italy.



10. Balance traditional and modern practices

In endogenous development people try to find a balance between modern and traditional practices. Traditional health care, for example, is regaining status. Local health practices are being documented and revitalised, and steps towards their improvement are being taken. In this way it may be possible to create a cheaper and more effective health system. Sureshchandra (p.36) reports on the achievements of a traditional midwife in Southern India, clearly demonstrating the effectiveness of specialised traditional health workers who have been supported with training about modern practices.



11. Education for endogenous development

In most countries, formal education (from primary school up to university) is mainly intended to prepare students for urban and modern life. We need to ensure that primary education also respects and strengthens local identity, including the use of indigenous languages and cultural assets. This requires intra- and intercultural learning, and stimulates the students' capacities to live and improve village life and ecology. Elderly and wise people are highly valued for their role in traditional knowing and education. Berman (p.34) reports on the importance of indigenous grandmothers in education. Maffi (p.18) points at the importance of indigenous languages for biocultural diversity, and the role of education in their conservation. Haverkort (p.47)

reports on the recent indigenous curriculum development initiative in Southern Africa. Millar and Aniah (p.23) stress the importance of rehabilitation of traditional music and instruments, and used them in endogenous education.



12. Engage in personal transformation and responsible well-being

Human Rights are now a widely accepted entry-point to development. In a similar way Chambers (2004) is calling for a Declaration of Human Obligations, in line with the Declaration of Human Rights. Obligations are the other side of the coin, and apply most to those with wealth and power. Structural poverty reduction should be an integral part of development towards 'responsible well-being', by all and for all. Responsible well-being recognises obligations to the quality of life of others, both to those alive today and to future generations. Tyndale (p.7) shows that the concept of sharing and individual transformation is part of all religious traditions. Through serving others and working together for the common good we develop deep spiritual insights, which in turn help us to realise that all human beings are inter-connected as members of one body. Ariyaratne (p.20) describes how students work in villages and learn to give time and labour as a gift, which is part of the Buddhist tradition.



13. Reshape sciences, policies and practices

The disciplinary approach to development needs to be broadened into a trans-disciplinary approach, and the link between science, policies and practices needs to be strengthened. This implies that an internal debate and re-orientation of the professional field may be necessary in order to identify

the best mix of professional expertise relevant for the purpose of development.

14. Include cultural development goal

The UN Development Report 2004 provides ample material for the inclusion of *cultural diversity and identity* as an important development goal. Putting this into practice, in terms of objectives, strategies and output indicators, could be allocated to a task force.



Open attitude required

Addressing the cultural dimension of development in a pragmatic way can increase the relevance of development programmes. But this requires a mind-shift: opening up to local strategies, local markets, local leadership, environmental sustainability, culture, and local forms of education and learning. This people-centred approach requires an open attitude of all stakeholders. The Compas network strives for further understanding of practical ways to address poverty in an inclusive and culturally specific way.

In this issue of Compas Magazine we contribute to the discussion with a series of articles. We invite the readers of Compas Magazine to share their insights and experiences in this field, and to join us in the efforts to address the questions that need further attention.

References

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