CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Goals in a Post-2015 Development Framework: Options and Strategic Choices

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*We… renew our commitment to **sustainable development** and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.*

__Poverty eradication__ is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. In this regard, we are committed to freeing humanity from poverty and hunger as a matter of urgency.

RIO+20
the future we want

At Rio+20, world leaders renewed their commitment to **sustainable development** ("an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet"). They also emphasized that **freeing humanity from poverty** remains the world's most urgent global challenge.

After Rio, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda was asked to:

- Design a post-2015 development agenda that will **end poverty**, while setting out principles for reshaping the **global partnership** for development.

- Integrate its work with the intergovernmental Open Working Group, which is designing a set of **sustainable development goals**.

In the Rio outcome document, **goals, targets and indicators** were described as "valuable in measuring and accelerating progress." This paper explores the role that goals could play in a post-2015 agenda.

Its objectives are to:

- Explore what different types of goals can (and cannot) **achieve**.

- Set out **options** for integrating poverty and sustainable development goals.

- Clarify the **choices** that must be made if the post-2015 development agenda is to end poverty within a generation.

This paper does **not** advocate a particular option. Instead, it aims to contribute to a more informed post-2015 debate, by ensuring that all participants understand areas of potential agreement and disagreement. Its main focus is on poverty, given the early stage of debate on the development of a comprehensive set of SDGs.

Designing Goals and Targets

- Goals for people, systems, and planet
- What makes a good goal?

Understanding Goals and Targets

The Millennium Development Goals are a framework of eight **goals**, twenty-one **targets**, and sixty **indicators**.

- The goals express ambitious commitments to "freeing the entire human race from want" (for example, *eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*).

- Targets are used to quantify each goal (*halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day*), while indicators enable progress against these targets to be measured.

Most of the MDGs focus directly on delivering outcomes for **people** across multiple dimensions of poverty. Meeting these goals would fulfill the commitment to freeing all "men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty."

The Millennium Declaration also aimed "to **create an environment**… which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty." The right to development can only be delivered through "good governance within each country," for example. Specific action is also needed to protect civilian populations from natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies. The MDG framework, however, largely excludes targets for building the effective **societies** on which poverty reduction depends.

Some **global** targets are included in the framework, with potential benefits that stretch far beyond the poor. *An open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system* is important to "ensur[ing] that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people." The target on *biodiversity loss* aims to protect both this, and future, generations "from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs."

GOALS FOR PEOPLE

Universal goals and targets for changing the
lives of the world's poorest people

Primary focus of
the MDGs

GOALS FOR SOCIETIES

Building national and local systems that
support poverty reduction

Covered by the
Millennium Declaration,
but not by the MDGs

GLOBAL GOALS

Goals and targets that deliver or protect public
goods that benefit this and future generations

Lesser focus of
the MDGs

*The Millennium Declaration contains a vision for creating a global and national environment that would end poverty,
while ensuring development could be sustained for future generations.*

*The MDGs, however, are composed primarily of people-focused goals, and have few targets that cover the factors
enabling poverty reduction.*

What Makes Goals Effective?
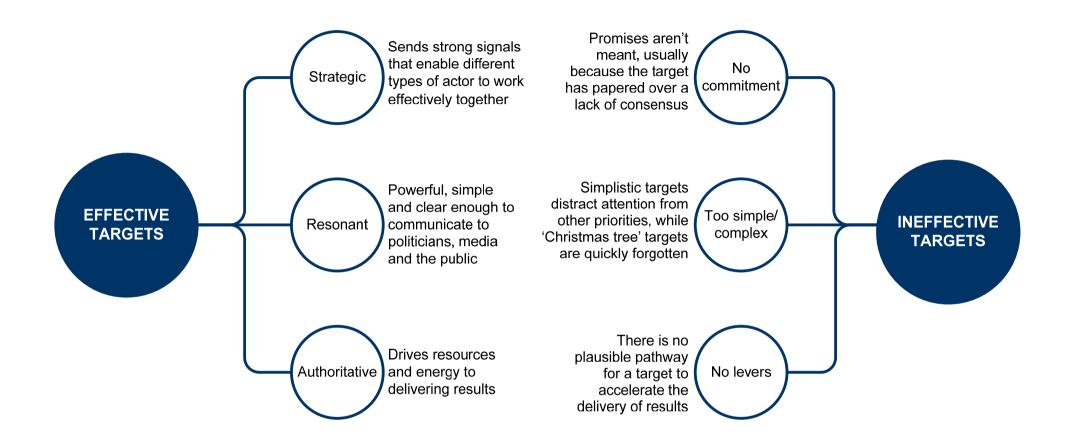
Goals and targets have two primary functions:

- They provide a yardstick that enables us to **monitor** whether a desired result has been (or is likely to be) achieved.

- They can themselves become tools that **drive** progress towards achieving that result.

Although data quality is sometimes problematic, the MDGs have been extensively monitored, allowing the UN Secretary-General to report "results [that] represent a **tremendous reduction in human suffering** and are a clear validation of the approach embodied in the MDGs."

However, we lack robust evidence on the extent to which the MDGs are responsible for accelerating this progress. Clearly, much poverty reduction would have happened without global development goals, but has there been an incremental impact on the speed with which people are escaping poverty? And if so, **which goals and targets have been most effective, and why?**

In the absence of a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the MDGs, it seems likely that normative goals can achieve three distinct types of impact. First, they can provide a focus for **debate**, **advocacy**, and **policy development**. Second, they offer a **common strategic language** that allows different types of actor to understand and work with each other. And finally, they can attract and direct **resources**, and drive higher standards of **delivery**.

Targets inevitably have **costs** as well as benefits, however. Development is complex, but goals and targets must be limited in number and relatively simple. The result is a trade-off. Simpler targets are more likely to be useful, but can distort incentives. More sophisticated targets may be more technically appealing, but risk being quickly forgotten.

EFFECTIVE TARGETS

Strategic — Sends strong signals that enable different types of actor to work effectively together

Resonant — Powerful, simple and clear enough to communicate to politicians, media and the public

Authoritative — Drives resources and energy to delivering results

INEFFECTIVE TARGETS

No commitment — Promises aren't meant, usually because the target has papered over a lack of consensus

Too simple/complex — Simplistic targets distract attention from other priorities, while 'Christmas tree' targets are quickly forgotten

No levers — There is no plausible pathway for a target to accelerate the delivery of results

The MDGs have retained their relevance to global policy and strategy for a decade. It is important to select goals and targets that will be equally effective after 2015.

To summarize, when designing goals and targets, we need clarity on…

….the overall mission

Is the framework designed to achieve a single mission for a clearly defined target group, or does it have multiple objectives?

…the role played by different types of goal

What is the right blend of goals for people, goals for societies and systems, and goals for global public goods?

…the hard choices inherent to effective goals

How do we balance the need for effective advocacy with goals that drive strategy and implementation? And what is the right trade-off between simplicity and complexity?

Integrating Poverty and Sustainable Development

- Goals for 1 and 7 billion people
- Options for integrating poverty into a broader SDG framework
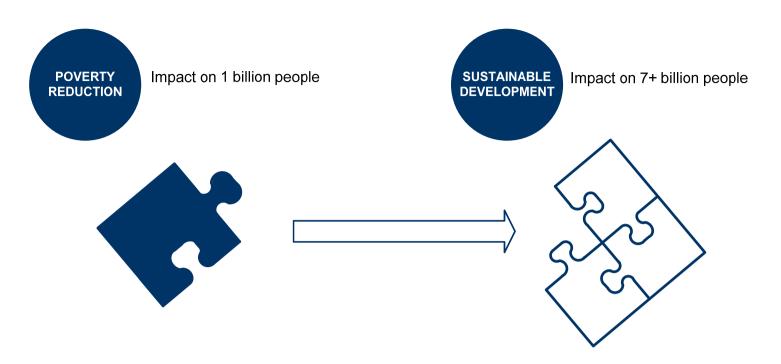
SDGs and Poverty Goals

In designing goals to replace the MDGs, the most **fundamental question** is how to integrate goals for poverty eradication into a broader sustainability framework.

The MDG framework is primarily focused on poverty, but includes a small number of broader sustainability goals. This is an **unsatisfactory compromise**. Why include biodiversity, but not climate or energy? And why include global goals for the environment, but not for the economic and social pillars of sustainable development? The Rio+20 outcome document sets much more ambitious criteria for SDGs, which it says must cover **all three dimensions** of sustainable development and their '**interlinkages**'.

It describes poverty eradication as one of the 'overarching objectives' of sustainable development, along with:

- Sustainable **production and consumption**, and the related challenges of inclusive and equitable economic growth and creating greater opportunities for all.

- Equitable **social development and inclusion** – for all the world's citizens, and not just for those living in absolute poverty – and the related objective of reducing inequality.

- Managing the **resource base and ecosystems** on which economic and social development depends, while increasing resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.

It is therefore clear that **poverty reduction is an essential part of sustainable development, not the other way around**. Poverty reduction will not happen, or will only be temporary, if the world continues on its current unsustainable trajectory.

POVERTY REDUCTION — Impact on 1 billion people

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT — Impact on 7+ billion people

Fewer people:

- Group shrinks if poverty reduction is successful

Sustainable lifestyles:

- Negligible contribution to unsustainable consumption

Low resilience:

- Most vulnerable to environmental/manmade disasters; resource shocks

More people:

- Population expected to grow throughout century

Unsustainable lifestyles:

- Aggregate levels of consumption increasingly unsustainable

Some resilience:

- Some members have limited insulation against consequences of unsustainable development

The High-Level Panel has been asked to make recommendations on a post-2015 development agenda that will end poverty, while ensuring its work feeds into that of the Open Working Group. The eradication of poverty can only be sustained if there is a broader commitment to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

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Options for Integrating Poverty into the SDGs

There are three broad options for integrating poverty into the SDGs. Under the first, **a set of poverty goals would be an important component of the broader SDG *framework***. These goals would sit alongside economic, social, and environmental components that pick up the key objectives set out at Rio+20, although they could also stand alone. This approach:

- Fulfills Rio+20's commitment to **focused and urgent action** to tackle the challenges facing the world's poorest people, while allowing poverty goals to be agreed well ahead of the expiry of the MDGs.

- Offers a logical **division of responsibility** between the High-level Panel and the Open Working Group, while ensuring compatibility between the work of the two bodies.

The second option builds on the approach developed by the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, which has three targets, the first of which is specifically tailored to ending energy poverty. Under this option, **poverty targets would be integrated into each sustainable development *goal***. This would:

- Allow for a family of SDGs to be constructed around the "priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development" identified at Rio+20.

- Ensure that poverty is **fully integrated** into a broader approach to sustainable development, but could risk **diluting the focus** on the vision of ending poverty.

While these options offer strategic clarity, a third approach could see the adoption of a **hybrid** that included elements of options 1 and 2, probably as the result of an attempt to find a compromise that satisfies demands from different interest groups. The potential shape of this compromise is considered in more detail on page 14.

OPTION 1 — Integrate poverty goals into a sustainable development **framework**

Economic	*Social*	*Environmental*
Sustainable **production and consumption**	Equitable **social development and inclusion**	Managing the **resource base and ecosystems**

Poverty

Ending **absolute poverty**

✓ Fulfills part of the vision set out at Rio

✓ Ensures continued focus on the poorest, and provides continuity with MDGs

✓ Poverty consensus could provide foundation for broader SDG agreement

✓ The HLP's work supports the OWG's broader mandate

✗ Inevitable overlap between goals for 1bn and 7bn people

✗ Many are skeptical about whether consensus can be built around comprehensive SDGs
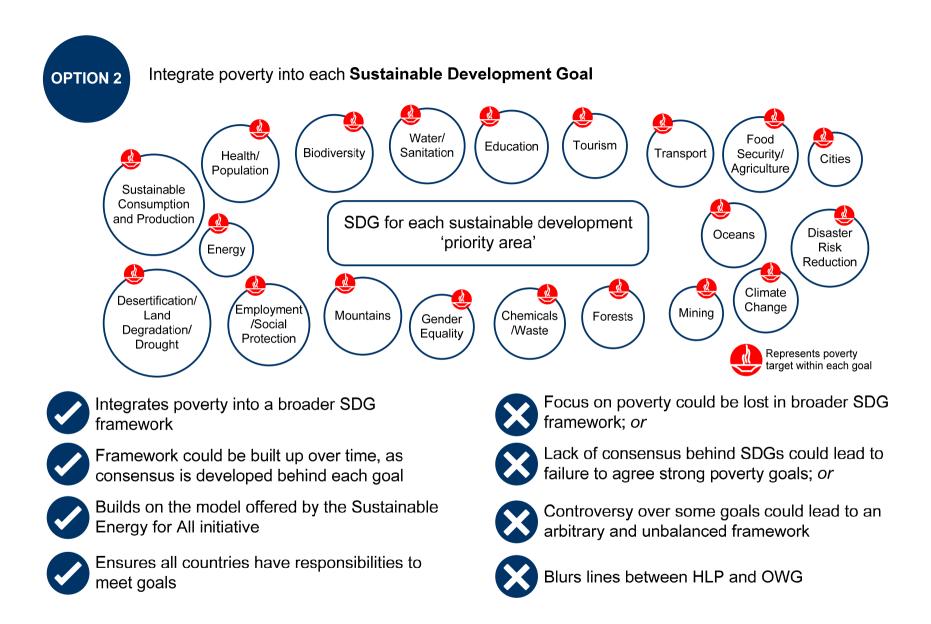
✗ Poverty goals will be incomplete if the sustainable development framework is weak

✗ May leave rich countries with few responsibilities if SDGs are not agreed

Under this option, a set of poverty goals is agreed first and in a format that allows them to slot into a broader sustainable development framework that could include economic, social, and environmental goals. They can be implemented immediately after 2015, even if the full sustainability framework is still being discussed.

OPTION 2 Integrate poverty into each **Sustainable Development Goal**

Sustainable Consumption and Production

Health/ Population

Biodiversity

Water/ Sanitation

Education

Tourism

Transport

Food Security/ Agriculture

Cities

Energy

SDG for each sustainable development 'priority area'

Oceans

Disaster Risk Reduction

Desertification/ Land Degradation/ Drought

Employment /Social Protection

Mountains

Gender Equality

Chemicals /Waste

Forests

Mining

Climate Change

Represents poverty target within each goal

✓ Integrates poverty into a broader SDG framework

✓ Framework could be built up over time, as consensus is developed behind each goal

✓ Builds on the model offered by the Sustainable Energy for All initiative

✓ Ensures all countries have responsibilities to meet goals

✗ Focus on poverty could be lost in broader SDG framework; *or*

✗ Lack of consensus behind SDGs could lead to failure to agree strong poverty goals; *or*

✗ Controversy over some goals could lead to an arbitrary and unbalanced framework

✗ Blurs lines between HLP and OWG

Under this option, each sustainable development goal includes one or more targets for reducing poverty.
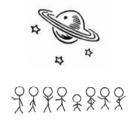
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OPTION 3 Create a **hybrid** Sustainable Development Goal/poverty framework

3a
Sustainable Poverty Reduction

Poverty remains at the core of the framework, with sustainable development elements included that have the greatest impact on poverty reduction

3b
Social Floor, Planetary Ceiling

Framework includes two elements: a 'social floor' that defines a minimum threshold for the poorest and a 'planetary ceiling' that aims to protect the world's resource base and ecosystems

3c
Politics of the Possible

Framework includes only those poverty and sustainable development elements that are not vetoed by one or more key states, or by a regional bloc

Many different hybrid options can be imagined. Three illustrative examples are set out.
The first has the same strengths and weaknesses as the original MDGs.
The second brings together planetary and social goals, but may not be politically feasible.
The third may lead to an unsatisfactory compromise, but could emerge from a difficult negotiation.

Integration of poverty and sustainable development goals…

….can be approached in three ways…

A set of poverty goals could be included in a broader sustainability framework, each SDG could have a poverty target, or various hybrids could be created.

…with each option having strengths and weaknesses…

Goals for the world's billion poorest people are inevitably related to, but distinct from, goals for 7 billion that have comprehensive coverage of economic, social and environmental issues.

…while no solution will be perfect and it could take time for a new framework to be agreed

It is possible that only parts of the new framework will be in place in 2015, with new elements being added over time.

Designing Poverty Goals

- Goals for people
- Goals for societies
- Global goals

Post-2015: Goals for People

In whichever way poverty eradication is integrated into a broader sustainability framework, people will remain at its center. Like the MDGs, most or all headline goals will describe outcomes for people across multiple dimensions of poverty. However, the nature of these goals will be distinct from the MDGs for four reasons:

- First, **many or all of these goals will be zero-based**, with an objective of ending poverty, not just reducing it. These goals will act as a global social floor and all poor people will have the right to expect help to meet them. National governments, global development partners, and other responsible actors will face a powerful obligation to meet minimum standards of equity and social justice.

- Second, **every success will make the remaining mission harder to achieve**. Poverty reduction will proceed at multiple speeds, as economic growth means some people will move fairly swiftly above the absolute poverty line. Those that are left behind will face the steepest barriers to escaping poverty, experiencing high levels of violence and conflict, and social and economic exclusion.

- Third, **the post-2015 framework will be most important for the 'last poor'** – those who remain in poverty the longest. Goals will direct global attention to their needs, while focusing the efforts of all development partners towards creating the conditions in which human and economic development reaches the world's most vulnerable people, and changes their lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

- Finally, **technology will change the way that post-2015 goals are set, monitored, and implemented**. We will soon live in a world where it is possible to know the names, addresses, and mobile phone numbers of every poor family. Better, and more open, data will allow near 'real time' measurement of results. The combination of new goals with new technologies will make it increasingly easy to offer social protection floors for all citizens.

After 2015, people-focused goals should…

1 Be **zero-based** – ending poverty, not reducing it

2 Have **equity 'wired in'** – establishing the right of every man, woman, and child to live above a social floor

3 Address **multiple dimensions of poverty** – capturing what people believe to be most important to their quality of life

4 Meet the needs of the **poorest and most vulnerable** – recognizing they will need a post-2015 framework for longest

5 Offer these people **real outcomes** – better and more secure lives for them and their families

6 Catalyze **better strategies for tackling poverty** – enabling a broader range of actors to work together

7 Encourage **fresh opportunities and approaches** to be captured – through better targeting and faster monitoring of results

Post-2015 goals should be designed to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs. However, the mission to end poverty in a generation, and a changing global context, means that the new goals will need to be significantly different from the ones agreed a decade ago.
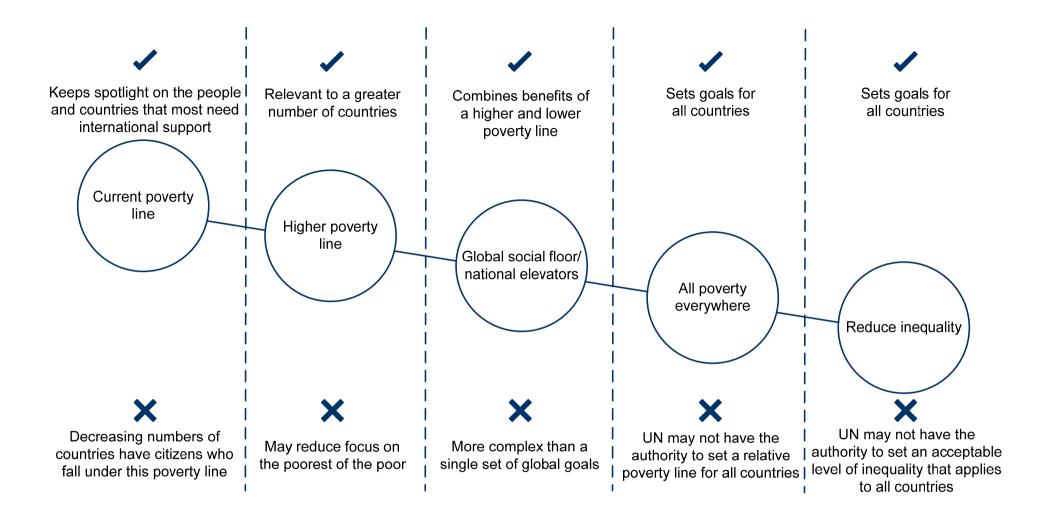
Is Dollar a Day Poverty Enough?

The MDGs focus on **indicators of absolute poverty** – income ($1.25/day), nutrition (hunger), education (primary schooling), health (maternal/child mortality; major infectious diseases), resources (water/sanitation). Gender (educational inequality; access to reproductive health services) adds a 'rights' dimension to the MDGs.

After 2015, some argue that the world should complete the 'unfinished business of the MDGs' with a strengthened focus on absolute poverty. Others, however, believe that the post-2015 framework should adopt **a broader definition of poverty**, making it relevant to the lives of poor people in a greater number of countries.

Options include:

- **Ending absolute poverty** – use the definition of poverty used for the MDGs to construct a global social floor, with appropriate refinements (for example, basic learning outcomes, rather than attendance at school).

- **Move the poverty line up** – use $2 or $5 a day income poverty, with more stretching thresholds for non-income dimensions of poverty (for example, completing secondary schooling).

- **Global social floor, national elevators** – use the current definition of absolute poverty to set a global social floor for all countries and all people, but encourage countries or regional groups to build on this minimum by setting their own tougher targets.

- **All poverty, everywhere** – aim to reduce poverty in all countries, using a poverty line that is relative to their wealth and development status.

- **Reduce inequality** – instead of focusing on poverty, set targets that reduce the gap between rich and poor.

Current poverty line	Higher poverty line	Global social floor/ national elevators	All poverty everywhere	Reduce inequality
✔ Keeps spotlight on the people and countries that most need international support	✔ Relevant to a greater number of countries	✔ Combines benefits of a higher and lower poverty line	✔ Sets goals for all countries	✔ Sets goals for all countries
✖ Decreasing numbers of countries have citizens who fall under this poverty line	✖ May reduce focus on the poorest of the poor	✖ More complex than a single set of global goals	✖ UN may not have the authority to set a relative poverty line for all countries	✖ UN may not have the authority to set an acceptable level of inequality that applies to all countries

Goals for reducing poverty will be very different in ambition, focus, and potential impact, depending on the definition of poverty that they are based on.

Post-2015: Goals for Societies

At Rio+20, leaders acknowledged that "democracy, good governance and the rule of law, at the national and international levels, as well as an **enabling environment**, are essential for sustainable development." Three broad clusters of issue are at stake:

- **Strengthening societies** – can targets contribute to building the stable, peaceful and predictable governance environment needed to promote human development?

- **Transforming economies –** can targets create conditions under which economic transformation is possible or increase the rate at which growth is translated into sustainable, equitable human development?

- **Tackling conflict and violence** – can targets help address the challenges of countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, and reduce the violence that poor people are subjected to?
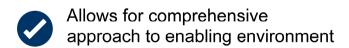
After 2015, **should goals and targets be set for these enablers** or should they be included in the broader framework, but **not quantified**?
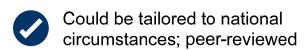
On the one hand, sustained action on the enabling environment will become increasingly important as the remaining poor become concentrated in societies with the greatest need to strengthen institutions, revitalize their economies, and build the infrastructure needed to support poverty reduction. **On the other hand**, objectives in these areas are not easily quantified. National circumstances, capacities and priorities also differ markedly between countries.
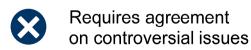
There are three options: (i) **exclude** enablers from post-2015 goals and targets; (ii) **integrate** the most important enablers into the headline goals; (iii) **split** targets for societies from targets for people, and treat them differently.

OPTION 1 **Exclude from goals/targets**

✓ Keeps focus on a small number of headline goals

✓ Avoids controversial issues (governance, conflict etc.)

✗ Framework less relevant to countries with greatest need

✗ Reduces strategic alignment between development partners

OPTION 2 **Integrate into headline goals**

✓ Highlights the most important enablers

✓ Maintains simplicity of goals

✗ Important enablers will be excluded, *or*

✗ The headline goals will become increasingly complex

BUILDING SOCIETIES ABLE TO END POVERTY

OPTION 3 **Split out enabling layer**

✓ Allows for comprehensive approach to enabling environment

✓ Could be tailored to national circumstances; peer-reviewed

✗ Requires agreement on controversial issues

✗ Creates additional complexity

Three options for dealing with goals/targets for creating an enabling environment for poverty reduction.

Designing Goals for Societies
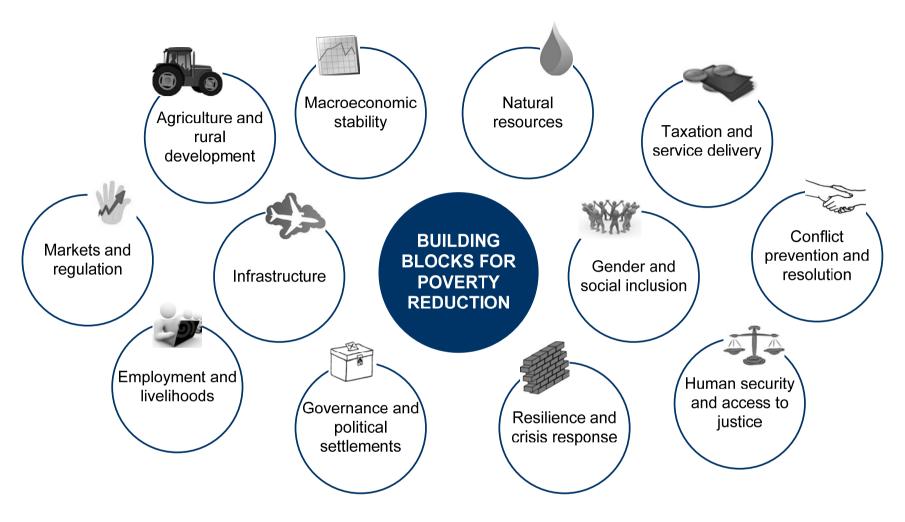
Options 1 and 2 (excluding enablers from the post-2015 goals, on the one hand, or integrating them on the other) are relatively simple on a conceptual level. In contrast, the third option – splitting targets for societies from targets for people – creates a number of **design challenges**.

It would be likely to lead to a post-2015 framework with:

- A set of headline goals/targets for people that were **simple, powerful and easily measurable** – and that could be broadly communicated to a non-technical audience.

- Targets for societies and economies that could be **tailored to national circumstances**, in ways that would support the delivery of global goals.

However, it is still likely to lead to **contentious debates** about the extent to which international norms can be created for core areas of national sovereignty such as security and justice, taxation and public services, politics and governance, and property rights and market regulation. Clarity may be provided by:

- Focusing on those enablers that can be shown to make the **most difference** to the lives, and future potential, of the people that the headline goals aims to help.

- Experimenting with **different types of goal and indicator** (more qualitative, for example) and different ways of measuring progress against these goals (periodic peer review, for example).

- Offering countries or regional groupings the **flexibility** to define their own standards, based on their own analysis of the obstacles most likely to deliver improvements in the quality of life of poor people.

Building Blocks for Poverty Reduction

- Agriculture and rural development
- Macroeconomic stability
- Natural resources
- Taxation and service delivery
- Markets and regulation
- Infrastructure
- BUILDING BLOCKS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION
- Gender and social inclusion
- Conflict prevention and resolution
- Employment and livelihoods
- Governance and political settlements
- Resilience and crisis response
- Human security and access to justice

Various international agreements and plans have addressed the 'constraints and structural impediments' that impede poverty reduction. This indicative list – drawn from the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the work of the g7+ group of conflict-affected countries – shows the areas that might be included in a post-2015 framework. It is also illustrates the political challenges that must be confronted if agreement is to be reached in this area.
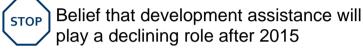
Post-2015: Global Goals

If a broader sustainability framework is agreed, most global goals will be included in that (see pages 8-15). However, it will also be necessary to directly address **global drivers that have the most impact on the poorest people and countries**, and to set out the **obligations of the international community** to support and sustain poverty reduction.
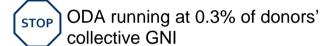
This requires:

- Concerted action to **reduce the marginalization of poor people and countries in the global economy**, with commitments to increase trade and market access, integrate poor countries into financial markets, and increase investment in agriculture and industry.

- **Reduction of their vulnerability** to economic, natural and environmental shocks and disasters, and to the impacts of climate change, combined with support for adaptation to climate and other environmental changes over the medium and long-term.

- External assistance to help societies **escape from cycles of conflict** through political and peacekeeping missions.

- Tackling **adverse impacts** of globalization on vulnerable societies, such as transnational crime, corruption and money laundering, and the damage caused by poorly regulated resource extraction.

- Mobilization of the **finance** needed to end poverty, including development assistance, debt relief, foreign direct investment, and remittances.

BLOCKING DEBATE

STOP Belief that development assistance will play a declining role after 2015

STOP Failure of rich countries to meet obligations under MDG8

STOP ODA running at 0.3% of donors' collective GNI

STOP Unsustainable development models of developed countries

STOP Slow progress in reducing Annex 1 carbon emissions

STOP Loss of trust if consensus cannot be built behind full SDGs

CATALYZING DEBATE

GO Mission to end poverty will be impossible without international assistance for the poorest of the poor

GO Essential role peacekeeping and conflict prevention play in the poorest countries

GO Increased potential to target resources directly at the poorest through social protection programs

GO Growing influence of South-South cooperation

GO Rise of new types of public-private partnership

GO Greater direct involvement of citizens, and especially of young people

Global goals will be difficult to agree and quantify, while the construction of a new global partnership for development is likely to divide opinion. However, there are factors that can catalyze a more constructive debate – especially as it is highly unlikely that the mission to end poverty can be accomplished without effective and targeted international assistance.

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Poverty goals…

….will have three dimensions…

They must deliver change for poor people, by building robust societies and economies, and addressing the global drivers of sustained poverty reduction.

…with each dimension posing different challenges…

'People' goals are easiest to define and communicate, but will be different from the MDGs in important ways. 'Society' goals may have to be tailored to national circumstance, while 'global' goals will raise contentious geopolitical questions.

…if the promise of ending poverty is to be fulfilled

An imperfect framework – or a failure to reach agreement – would both be a betrayal of the poor and a clear sign that the world is no longer able to tackle the most important global challenges.

Related Publications:

Beyond the Millennium Development Goals: Agreeing a Post-2015 Development Framework
Alex Evans and David Steven, Brookings Institution and CIC

Climate, Scarcity and Sustainability in the Post-2015 Development Agenda
Alex Evans, CIC

Hitting Reboot: Where Next for Climate Change after Copenhagen?
Alex Evans and David Steven, Brookings Institution

Power and Responsibility: Building International Order in an Era of Transnational threats
Bruce Jones, Carlos Pascual and Stephen John Stedman, Brookings Institution

Confronting the Long Crisis of Globalization: Risk, Resilience and International Order
Alex Evans, Bruce Jones, and David Steven, Brookings Institution and CIC

More information about these and other recent publications can be found at http://cic.nyu.edu.

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