THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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KEY POINTS

- African countries are engaged at the United Nations (UN) to determine the post-2015 framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- This brief examines suggestions in the Common African Position (CAP) on the post-2015 development agenda, published by the African Union. It compares them to goals developed by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) with the Korean Development Institute (KDI), and to goals in other UN reports.

- The CAP advocates 29 goals — too many. Some are either already being championed by other organizations, others are not measurable or not universally supported across Africa. Others will never receive global consensus. Using these four criteria, the CAP goals can be streamlined to produce 5 unique and measurable goals that the African Union can effectively champion.

We, the heads of state and government of the African Union … reiterate the importance of prioritizing structural transformation for inclusive and people-centred development in Africa.

— (African Union, 2014, 2)

INTRODUCTION

African countries are currently engaged at the United Nations (UN) to determine the post-2015 framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[1] The post-2015 goals matter because they will guide the priorities of UN agencies, the multilateral development banks, bilateral development assistance and civil society organizations. It is in Africa's interests to ensure the post-2015

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1   See www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ for information on the original eight goals.
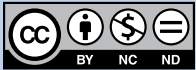
framework is congruent with African priorities. African Union negotiators must take a strategic approach in the current process to select the post-2015 development goals.

Several initiatives have recommended options for post-2015 development goals, including the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) (2013) and the UN High-Level Panel (2013) reports. Each initiative suggests a number of illustrative goals, which would, ideally, translate priorities into specific, relevant, measurable and time-bound targets that may also be used to promote debate and motivate action. In 2014, the African Union (in consultation with African countries) published a similar list entitled the "African Common Position (CAP) on the post-2015 Development Agenda."

This brief discusses these three post-2015 lists of illustrative goals. Several criteria are examined to determine which goals should be highlighted to effectively reflect the African position. After applying the criteria, five specific goals are recommended for African negotiators to promote, including goals with respect to diversification and industrialization, the services sector, desertification, domestic resource mobilization and innovative financing.

THE MDGs

The MDGs, established in 2000, broke down eight goals into 21 quantifiable targets measured by 60 indicators. They were adopted by 189 countries during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. They are to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs have helped, but progress is incomplete.[2]

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2   Even if the MDGs were met, one billion people would still be living on less than US$1 a day. For a summary of progress by goal and region, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/2013_progress_english.pdf.

FIGURE 1: THE EIGHT MDGs

Source: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

Some critics have argued the MDGs are flawed, that they were interpreted as one-size-fits-all national targets for all countries, resulting in relatively high performing countries that started at the bottom of the rankings being labelled as failures; furthermore, plausible indicators to measure progress were missing.[3] Others comment that progress toward the goals has been insufficient or uneven (that we should "finish the job" before introducing new goals) and yet others question the goals' relevance in terms of influencing development priorities and expenditures. The critique of the review by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (Lopes 2014) was that the MDGs:

- have limited focus on economic growth and transformation;

- do not sufficiently emphasize the role of domestic resource mobilization in Africa's development agenda;

- tend to neglect issues relating to the quality of service delivery;

- are silent on inequality including spatial and horizontal inequality; and

- disproportionately focus on outcomes with limited consideration of the enablers of development, thereby excluding the role of factors such as infrastructure and peace and security in facilitating socio-economic advancement.

Anticipating these criticisms, proponents for post-2015 goals broadened the scope beyond the MDGs' focus on poverty, education, gender, health, sustainability and "partnership," proposing a larger range of candidate goals.

ILLUSTRATIVE GOALS

To be effective, the number of goals must be limited. The current challenge is to respond to criticisms of the MDGs and focus — to the maximum extent possible — on outcomes that are globally relevant, have measurable indicators for targets, integrate equity concerns and generate both incentive structures and accountability.

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3   The executive summary of the High-Level Panel's report (UN 2013) noted the MDGs, "did not focus enough on reaching the very poorest and most excluded people. They were silent on the devastating effects of conflict and violence…good governance and institutions that guarantee the rule of law, free speech and open and accountable government was not included, nor the need for inclusive growth to provide jobs…and by not addressing the need to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production."

FIGURE 2: THE CIGI-KDI POST-2015 ILLUSTRATIVE GOALS

Source: www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/Post-2015%20
Goals,%20Targets%20and%20Indicators%20background%20
paper_WEB.pdf.

Noting the over constrained nature of selecting post-2015 goals, CIGI and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) led a consortium[4] to address the issues. This global process concluded with a conference in February 2013 in Bellagio, Italy that resulted in 10 goals. For example, the delegation presumed that, unlike the MDGs, a separate goal was required for food security and water (CIGI-KDI goal 2). Given the need to limit the number of goals to 10 at most, room was made for other goals by consolidating the three MDG health goals into one (MDG goals 4, 5 and 6 into CIGI-KDI goal 3). This allowed new goals for connectivity infrastructure (CIGI-KDI goal 6) (with targets for energy, information and communication technologies [ICT] and transportation) and for personal security and human rights (CIGI-KDI

goal 7). A "resilient communities" goal (CIGI-KDI goal 9) brought the humanitarian relief dimension into the picture.

In July 2012, the UN High-Level Panel, co-chaired by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and British Prime Minister David Cameron began an extensive consultative process that culminated in the May 2013 report containing illustrative goals and targets for the post-2015 agenda. The report proposed a structure of 12 illustrative universal goals and 54 associated national targets.

This list of 12 goals, as shown in Figure 3, highlighted ending poverty (UN goal 1) as a separate goal, in addition to job creation and equitable growth (UN goal 8). CIGI-KDI goal 2 was split into two goals here: food security (UN goal 5) and access to water (UN goal 6). The UN High Level Panel redefined connectivity infrastructure to the more narrow goal of energy (UN goal 7), dropping the infrastructure enablers of ICT and transportation. It also dropped the resilient communities goal, and split the MDG partnership goal (MDG goal 8) and the CIGI-KDI global governance goal (CIGI-KDI goal 10) into the UN goal 12, ensure good governance and effective institutions, and UN goal 10, create a global enabling environment and catalyse long-term finance. However, it may be that 12 goals are too many for effective communication.

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4   The other partners were the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Getulio Vargas Foundation, the University of Pretoria, the University of Manchester and the International Poverty Reduction Center in China. See the resources at www.cigionline.org/project/toward-post-2015-development-paradigm.

FIGURE 3: THE UN HIGH-LEVEL PANEL POST-2015 ILLUSTRATIVE UNIVERSAL GOALS

Source: www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf.

In March 2014, the CAP, prepared by African heads of state and government, was published by the African Union. Presented below, this approach groups post-2015 development priorities into six pillars, providing greater pride of place to goals for structural economic transformation and inclusive growth, science, technology and innovation and for peace and security. The difficulty is that 29 goals are definitively too many.

CRITERIA

Selecting goals involves trade-offs. Effective goals should reflect the complexity of the real world, but capacity for effective communication requires specifications that are concise and simple. Ideally, goals would be universal, but to be meaningful at the national level, they must be country specific. Because of the constraint in the number of targets, there are trade-offs between targets that are ends (outcomes) and means (processes). End targets are outcomes such as

graduation rates, health indicators or student assessment scores. Examples of means include indicators such as the number and proximity of schools, enrollment percentages or numbers of health professionals.

Negotiators for the African Union are faced with a difficult task — representing the priorities of 54 diverse countries. There are several criteria they should apply to maximize their effectiveness so the post-2015 product that ultimately emerges is as congruent as possible with the CAP.

Negotiators for the CAP should apply several "filters" or "screens" to select the goals to press for. It will be unnecessary to lobby for elements that will already be a priority of other major players, and determining what these are is the first screen. A second screen should be the availability of plausible indicators to measure progress and make comparisons.

COMMON AFRICAN POSITION (CAP) ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Pillar (i). Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth:
>   a. Inclusive growth that reduces inequality
>   b. Sustainable agriculture, food self-sufficiency and nutrition
>   c. Diversification, industrialization and value addition
>   d. Developing the services sector
>   e. Infrastructure development

Pillar (ii). Science, technology and innovation:
>   a. Enhancing technological capacities for Africa's transformative agenda
>   b. Building enabling environment for innovation
>   c. Increasing support for research and development
>   d. Optimal utilization of space and geospatial technologies

Pillar (iii). People-centred development:
>   a. The eradication of poverty
>   b. Education and human capital development
>   c. Universal and equitable access to quality healthcare
>   d. Gender equality and women's empowerment
>   e. Leveraging population dynamics for development
>   f. Harnessing Africa's youthful population
>   g. Improving access to sustainable human settlements

Pillar (iv). Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management:
>   a. Improving natural resource and biodiversity management
>   b. Enhancing access to safe water for all
>   c. Responding effectively to climate change
>   d. Addressing desertification, land degradation, soil erosion, flooding and drought
>   e. Natural disaster risk reduction and management

Pillar (v). Peace and security:
>   a. Addressing the root causes of conflict
>   b. Preventing the outbreak of armed conflict

Pillar (vi). Finance and Partnerships:
>   A. Finance
>   a. Improving domestic resource mobilization
>   b. Maximizing innovative financing
>   c. Implementing existing commitments and promoting quality and predictability of external financing
>   B. Partnerships
>   a. Promoting mutually beneficial partnerships
>   b. Strengthening partnerships for trade
>   c. Establish partnerships for managing global commons

Source: African Union 2014.

Given the diversity in Africa, a third criterion should be the degree of continent-wide relevance and if the goal is perceived as highly significant. The final criterion should be the prospect of convincing other countries that the selected African priority should be on the final list, and working to avoid wasting effort for something known to be unacceptable to other major players. The task then is to filter the 29 goals of the CAP against the criteria.

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

CRITERION 1 — NO NEED TO PUSH ON AN OPEN DOOR

Of the 29 goals within the CAP, it appears no effort need be expended by African proponents on any of the goals on the illustrative list of the UN High Level Panel. Goals that are already on the UN High Level Panel list may be safely supported and there is no need for active African lobbying. The 2015 outcome of the UN process will inevitably confirm three of the goals in pillar (i), "structural economic transformation and inclusive growth," and these are reduction of inequality (i.a), agriculture and food (i.b) and infrastructure development (i.e). In pillar (iii), "people-centred development," there is no need to lobby for inclusion of eradication of poverty (iii.a), education (iii.b), health care (iii.c) or gender equality (iii.d). In pillar (iv) "environmental sustainability, natural resources management, and disaster risk management," it would be a redundant effort to promote goals for resource management (iv.a), safe water (iv.b) or climate change (iv.c). Similarly, the two goals in pillar (v) "peace and security" will be successfully promoted by other influential countries, as will the goal promoting quality

and predictability of external financing (vi.A.c) in pillar (vi).

It can be safely assumed that others will champion the 13 goals listed in the preceding paragraph. For example, the Group of Twenty (G20) has made a big push on infrastructure since the Seoul summit in 2010. Australia is hosting the 2014 G20 summit and the prime minister, Tony Abbot, has expressed his ambition to be known as the "infrastructure prime minister" (Abbott 2013). Infrastructure will have enough supporters without any extraordinary African lobbying to ensure pride of place. African negotiators should be vocal about the goals they support given that, as discussed below, more than 12 goals are unlikely to emerge.

CRITERION 2 — AVAILABILITY OF INDICATORS

Ideally metrics, based on administrative data or surveys, should be available to allow measurement of progress and comparisons across jurisdictions.

FIGURE 4: ELEMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION RE: GOALS AND INDICATORS
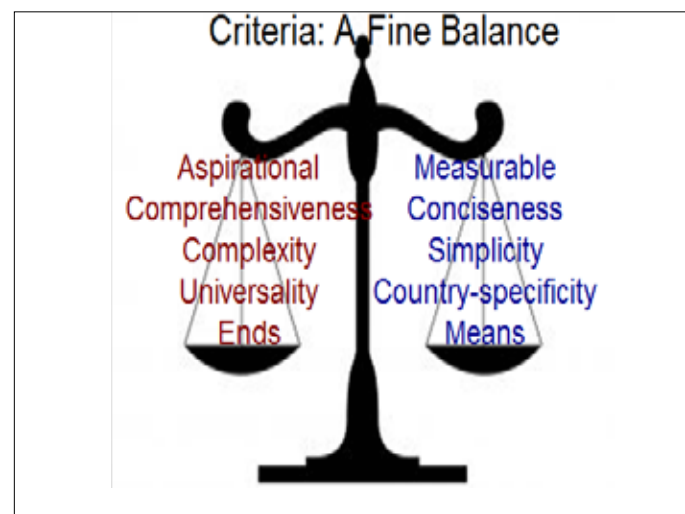
Source: Author

Some "aspirational" goals are unquantifiable, without reliable indicators to measure progress. In the CAP, the eradication of poverty (iii.a), education and human capital development (iii.b) and universal and equitable access to quality healthcare (iii.c), are all goals with accepted indicators. In contrast, aspirational goals such as natural disaster risk reduction and management (iv.e) and addressing the root causes of conflict (v.a) do not have readily available metrics. In any case, these latter two goals do not have the emotional resonance of a goal such as ending poverty to motivate commitment. It would be unwise to promote aspirational goals for which there is a lack of plausible indicators.

The inability to measure progress and make comparisons will handicap several of the goals of the CAP; critics will veto their inclusion. The burden will be on proponents to define indicators and identify data sources to convince skeptics that progress on these goals is measureable. These include proposed goals for optimal utilization of space and geospatial technologies (ii.d), leveraging population dynamics for development (iii.e), harnessing Africa's youthful population (iii.f), improving access to sustainable human settlements (iii.g), natural disaster risk reduction and management (iv.e), promoting mutually beneficial partnerships (vi.B.a), strengthening partnerships for trade (vi.B.b) and establish partnerships for managing global commons (vi.B.c). It is highly unlikely that a global consensus could be reached in the next year on the definition of targets for these goals or on persuasive indicators to measure progress.

CRITERION 3 — PAN AFRICAN SUPPORT

Some of the goals of the CAP are not crucial to all African countries; ideally effort should be focused on goals that are among the highest priority for every country.

Goals that may not have enthusiastic support across the continent include enhancing technological capacities for Africa's transformative agenda (ii.a), building enabling environment for innovation (ii.b), increasing support for research and development (ii.c) and improving biodiversity management (iv.a). While these goals are fine to include in a list of 29, they cannot make a list of just eight or 10. African countries suffering from conflict, terrorism, civil unrest and widespread poverty will see building enabling environment for innovation (ii.b) as a luxury that should not displace priority goals on peace and security, or the basic goals relating to poverty alleviation, inclusive growth, health and education. One option is to reframe some of the 29 goals as targets to be pursued under other goals.

CRITERION 4 — PROSPECTS FOR GLOBAL CONSENSUS

Some major developed countries will argue that a goal such as implementing existing commitments (vi.A.c) goes without saying, and has no place in post-2015 goals that describe the future development paradigm. The United States will oppose a goal for promoting quality and predictability of external financing. The US Congress forces many delays and compromises and the administration cannot deliver on predictability. In a multilateral process that involves decision by consensus, it is unwise to expend great effort on proposals doomed to be vetoed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The final post-2015 product should comprise no more than 10 goals, if it is to be effective compared to the MDGs. The African Union has prepared the CAP on the post-2015 development agenda, comprising 29

proposed goals. African negotiators should find the right pressure points and think strategically to maximize the probability that it influences the outcome of the UN process on post-2015 development goals. Four filters (no need to push on an open door, availability of indicators, pan-African support and prospects for global consensus) should be applied to its 29 goals.

There are compelling reasons to avoid investing effort in promoting two dozen of the goals that will not pass the filters. Some will be strongly supported anyway without African effort; there is no need to expend energy on goals that are understood to be strongly supported by many other influential countries. In a process operating by consensus, it is also prudent to not "waste ammunition" on goals that are negatively perceived and considered non-negotiable by many countries. It is unproductive to promote aspirational goals that will be rejected because critics will insist on measurability. A positive outcome is more likely with a higher degree of consensus among African countries about the significance of candidate goals, since some African countries will not enthusiastically support any they consider of secondary importance.

Applying the four screening criteria to the 29 goals in the CAP leads to the recommendation that African negotiators should focus promotion efforts on only five of the goals:

• diversification, industrialization and value addition (i.c);

• developing the services sector (i.d);

• addressing desertification, land degradation, soil erosion, flooding and drought (iv.d);

• improving domestic resource mobilization (vi.A.a); and

• maximizing innovative financing (vi.A.b).

These goals will not emerge from the post-2015 negotiation process without strong African support since they do not have enthusiastic proponents among the major countries. On the other hand, no countries are so opposed that they will veto their inclusion. Practical targets and indicators to measure progress can be devised for each of these goals. All five will be perceived as relevant by all African countries. Strategic focus by African Union negotiators will increase their chance of success.

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Le CIGI a été fondé en 2001 par Jim Balsillie, qui était alors co-chef de la direction de Research In Motion (BlackBerry). Il collabore avec de nombreux partenaires stratégiques et exprime sa reconnaissance du soutien reçu de ceux-ci, notamment de l'appui reçu du gouvernement du Canada et de celui du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

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