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BACKGROUND STUDY
FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM

*Mainstreaming global goals into
development strategies and policies*

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Contents

Introduction	1
The concept of internationally agreed development goals	2
Policy agenda	2
Normative framework.....	4
Role and links to national planning frameworks.....	4
Analysis of national strategies	6
IADG priorities in PRSPs.....	7
IADG ambition in PRSP targets.....	11
The use of IADGs in policy formulation.....	12
Analysis of donor policies	13
IADGs and donor priorities	13
Partnership commitments and donor policies	15
The use of IADGs in donor policy formulation.....	15
Conclusions	15
Process gaps - Linking IADG with national policy making processes.....	16
Priority gaps – neglected goals and principles.....	17
Annex 1: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers	20
Annex 2: IADG priorities in PRSPs	21
Annex 3: IADG priorities in donor policy statements	22
Bibliography	23
Donor policy statements.....	24
MDG Reports	26
PRSPs	27
PRSP progress reports.....	29

Tables

PRSPs reviewed by region.....	7
IADG and PRSP priorities compared (number of countries)	10
PRSP Targets compared with IADG ambition (% of PRSPs)	12
Most commonly selected priorities (number of donor programmes).....	14

Introduction

As part of the substantive preparations for the first biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum in July 2008, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations is undertaking a review of recent trends and progress in international development cooperation. This will inform the analytical report of the Secretary-General, which will serve as the main background document for the Forum. The present study, which is part of this analytical effort, conducts a review of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and development cooperation policy statements to assess the degree to which the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs) are being mainstreamed into these strategies and policies.¹

Never before has there existed a stronger global consensus on a common vision of development and an agenda for common action. The historic Millennium Declaration, adopted by the largest ever gathering of heads of state, reiterated and reinforced by the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Action, and once again by the 2005 World Summit Declaration, includes not only a visionary set of objectives for the world framed in ethical values but also a set of specific and concrete goals with time bound quantitative targets: the IADGs. Originating from the series of global conferences held since 1990, the IADGs are a product of broad-based processes of consultations that involved civil society, government and multilateral organizations at country, regional and global levels.

This consensus is matched by an unprecedented political commitment; the IADG commitments contain an explicit commitment to ‘partnership’ that spells out the role of rich countries. Moreover, these rich country commitments have been reaffirmed by the G-8 summits, notably by the Gleneagles summit of 2005 which further strengthened their commitments, for example by committing to doubling development assistance to Africa by 2010 (2005). Finally, there has been an unprecedented institutional mobilization of the UN system for follow-up and implementation, including annual monitoring at global, regional and country levels, civil society outreach and mobilization, policy research to define policy priorities, and programmes to support government and civil society efforts at the country level.

Yet, it is also often noted that these IADG endorsements have been stronger than action towards their implementation. For one thing, progress towards meeting the quantitative targets by 2015 at the global level is on track only for the goal to halve income poverty (UN 2007; World Bank 2007). Implementation of the partnership goals has lagged, with significant progress visible only in debt reduction. Reforms in the international trading system to favour integration of poor countries have not gone forward as the Doha round process has stalled (UN 2007, World Bank 2007). Aid flows have begun to stagnate after an initial increase starting in 1997² and only five countries (Denmark, Luxembourg,

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² Net disbursements have been increasing since 1997 following a decade of decline and ‘aid fatigue’ in donor countries. After disbursements peaks in 2004, the 2005 data show a decline (drop of) by 5.1% to \$103.9 million with prospects

Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) have reached the agreed target of providing 0.7% of GNI in development aid. Despite the pledge at the 2005 Gleneagles G-8 summit to double aid to Africa by 2010, disbursements to countries of that region have increased only 2% between 2005 and 2006 (OECD 2008).

These gaps in implementation are often attributed to weak commitment. As the background paper for the 2007 launch of the Development Cooperation Forum notes ‘the degree of action by developed and developing countries in response to these global agreements has depended on: i) their ownership of the IADGs; and ii) the specificity of the partnership goals set in these agreements or in more detailed agreements reached in other fora.’ (Martin and Stever, 2007; p.2) The paper goes on to suggest that some developing country policy makers place growth ahead of poverty reduction priorities of IADGs while some donor countries have not implemented their commitments since they were ill-defined.

The purpose of this paper is to explore this issue of ‘ownership’ by examining the extent to which national development strategies and donor policies are aligned with IADG priorities. The paper analyses PRSPs of 22 countries and development cooperation policy statements of 21 bilateral aid programmes. The most salient findings are that while there is a high degree of commitment to the IADG agenda, some priorities are emphasized while others are neglected. The neglected agendas include inequality between and within countries, environment, hunger and nutrition, democratic governance, and the links between development and armed conflict. The international community should also reach a more complete consensus on the mechanisms for integrating or linking global goals into national planning frameworks in which ways that do not bypass national processes and builds on analyses of country specific needs and constraints.

The paper is structured in four parts. Part I explains the IADGs and the concept of global goals as defining a normative framework, an evaluative framework and a planning framework. Parts II and III present the analysis of PRSPs and donor policy documents respectively. Part IV concludes with suggestions for strengthening the links between global goals and national policy making, and attending to the neglected IADG priorities.

The concept of internationally agreed development goals

Policy agenda

The IADGs are a set of specific goals, many with concrete time bound quantitative targets of the United Nations Development Agenda. They summarize the major commitments of the 34 global summits and conferences held since 1990 on different aspects of global development challenges. These commitments are combined in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the 2000 Summit. This agenda addresses not only

for further declines. Furthermore, increases to the poorest countries have stalled since 2003 (UN DESA 2007) ODA now represents 0.3% of GNI, falling well short of the commitment to reach 0.7% set decades ago, and reiterated in the 2002 Monterrey consensus.

the conventional challenges of economic growth, social progress and sustainable development but also extends to systemic issues. At the national level the agenda includes governance, human rights and the importance of national ownership. At the international level, the agenda includes challenges of global economic governance such as international finance, debt, aid, trade, technology and migration.

The IADGs incorporate, but are broader than, the better publicized Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are focused on poverty. The goals can be grouped into the following areas:

- Income poverty and hunger (MDG1);
- Employment, including decent work, full employment, women and youth (MDG 1);
- Education and literacy including gender equality (MDG2);
- Gender equality and empowerment of women including violence against women (MDG3);
- Health services, disease and mortality including maternal and child health, reproductive health, access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS orphans, (MDG4-6);
- Environmental sustainability including environmental protection and conservation, water and sanitation, slums (MDG7);
- Good governance, democracy and human rights including the rule of law, minority rights, free media (Millennium Declaration Chapter 5);
- Social integration and protection of vulnerable groups including principles of social justice, respect for cultural and racial diversity, human rights of migrants (Millennium Declaration Chapter 6);
- Science and technology including ICT and access to medicines (MDG8)
- Countries with special needs including LDCs, small island and landlocked countries, Africa and issues of trade, debt, ODA, FDI and technology (MDG 8)
- Partnership with aid donors as well as national and international civil society and private sector (MDG 8, Monterrey consensus, Johannesburg).

In contrast to previous UN goals, several features of the IADGs are unique and unprecedented:

- Their comprehensive scope – the IADGs together constitute a set of mutually reinforcing goals covering all of the important dimensions of development challenges, including not only economic and social challenges but also national and international systemic dimensions as described above, and action by rich countries;
- Their ambition – the quantitative targets and goals reach beyond historical trends and set an agenda to substantially accelerate or ‘scale up’ effort;
- The consensus on human poverty as the central objective of international development action - while recognizing the importance of economic growth, the IADGs single out human outcomes such as child survival (UN DESA 2007); and

- The mobilization for implementation – the UN system has itself organized and led both the international community and developing country governments to take action.

Normative framework

These goals that are important in themselves, but as the UN publication *The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All* (UN DESA 2007) explains, the UN Development Agenda is an attempt to define a concrete agenda to achieve the goals of the UN as defined in its Charter. This agenda seeks to promote economic and social progress ‘in larger freedom’, and includes pursuit of full employment, solutions to common international (rather than national) problems, and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all (UN DESA 2007). The IADGs are thus selected benchmarks of progress within a normative framework for steering global development, as articulated in the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration starts with a statement of the shared values and principles that should underlie all international efforts, namely: human freedom; equality; solidarity in sharing burdens and benefits of global challenges; tolerance for diversity in culture, language, belief; respect for nature; and shared responsibility for worldwide development, peace and security (UN 2000).

The ethical motivation of the IADGs to seek global solidarity, social justice and respect for human rights are also reflected in the documents adopted subsequent to the 2000 Summit including the Monterrey Consensus, the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the 2005 Summit Declaration. As Jose Antonio Ocampo writes in the Preface to *The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All* (UN DESA 2007. p.iii), ‘Two elements have permeated the content and character of the Agenda since its inception. First is a fundamental concern for equity and for equality of all persons, as human beings and as citizens.... [and] the second essential element: partnership. The conference process has engaged all the key stakeholders: governments, United nations system organizations, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector.’ These two commitments are fundamental because they are at the heart of the purpose of the UN (UN DESA 2007).

Role and links to national planning frameworks

The history of goal setting as a means to promote global development agendas dates back to the 1960s. Since then, there have been recurring debates about their effectiveness; some have dismissed UN goals as overambitious and unrealistic, while others have argued that global goals distort national priorities. Historically, it is true that many have been failures, such as the commitment to health care for all people by 2000 or primary education for all children by the same date. However, in his study of the history of global goals, Jolly (2004) shows that there have been more success stories than is often recognized; many goals have been achieved, such as the eradication of smallpox in 1977, immunization of infants against childhood diseases by 1990, achieved in 70 countries by 1990; cutting child deaths from diarrhea by half by 1990 and several others. Substantial progress has been made towards other goals even if they have not been fully achieved. Jolly points out that in these cases, time-bound and quantitative goals have helped focus

attention on critical areas for action and have resulted in the creation of more rigorous evaluation processes more rigour to evaluating progress. These success stories indicate that global goals are only meaningful if they effectively mobilize international and national action for implementation. Plans for national action with locally adapted strategies focused on doable and achievable targets for different stakeholders have been the most effective at the local level (UNDP 2003).

Conceptually, IADGs are a tool that can use the power of numbers to achieve three objectives: first, to focus attention on important policy issues that may have been neglected as key development objectives; second to mobilize effort with ambitious targets – to scale up effort - to accelerate progress; and third, to introduce a ‘results oriented’ framework to bring consensus among different stakeholders around common goals.

The IADGs have generated impressive mobilization including policy research to set implementation priorities, annual monitoring, country support and global public outreach campaigns – but this is almost entirely focused on the MDGs. Current policy debates about IADGs thus also focus on almost entirely on the MDGs. Like with earlier UN goals, there are many controversies about the MDGs. Regarding their design and structure, economists of IMF, World Bank, and governments have raised concerns that the goals are over-ambitious and would raise unrealistic expectations (IMF and World Bank 2002³), and undermine support for development aid (Clemens, Kenny and Moss 2007). Concerns have also been raised that the MDGs leave out human rights values and principles of equity and participation and are weak on gender equality (Nelson 2007; Saith 2007), that they are too narrow and leave out systemic issues of global governance, and that they are weak on donor accountability (Bissio 2003, Nelson 2007).⁴ Such debates have led to some revisions, notably the inclusion of goals for employment and reproductive health by the 2005 Summit.

While there is consensus on the MDGs as priorities for national development and for international aid programmes, there are controversies on a number of points of policy and interpretation. A large literature has been developed on these and many other wide ranging issues. The sources referenced here are only a few of the many published papers and conference proceedings on the issue. Some of the key policy debates have revolved around the implementation strategy led by the UN Millennium Project to cost resources needed to achieve the MDGs so that aid resources can be mobilized for the purpose. Some of the key issues concern costing and macroeconomic policies such as: whether the large mobilization of external resources required will have a destabilizing impact on macro-economic balances (IMF and World Bank 2002); whether the economic policies that are conventionally prescribed are too restrictive (McKinley 2007; Weeks and McKinley 2007); whether MDGs as a strategy will create growth and development momentum (Roy and Heurty 2005); and whether the constraints to accelerating progress – scaling up - are institutional and policy based rather than rooted in a lack of resources (de Renzio 2005), and whether development stagnation can be explained by a theory of

³ 2002 review <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prspgen/review/2002/comm/v1.pdf>

⁴ For review of these controversies, see UNDP 2003 and more recently Nelson 2007.

‘poverty traps’ (Sachs 2004) or whether a strategy of ‘big push’ to break out of this trap can be an effective solution (Easterly 2006).

A central issue is whether the *MDGs are global or national targets* – whether the quantitative targets are meant to apply as aggregates at global, regional, country or sub-national levels. While numerous initiatives for progress monitoring and policy planning (e.g. costing) use the global targets as country-specific goals, there is an active debate on whether they are applicable to each country, regardless of history and starting point in 1990, constraints and level of financial and institutional capacity. Many argue that the goals were both designed on the basis of global historical experience (Vandemoortele 2007), and intended to set benchmarks for average global progress (Vandemoortele and Roy 2004). They argue are not intended to be ‘adopted’ but to be ‘adapted’ to national contexts and re-defined in the form of *country specific targets*. Further, these national targets can be further disaggregated to subnational targets. However, others strongly oppose adaptation on the grounds that this is ‘watering down’ commitments made to ambitious goals (Sachs 2003).

There is an inherent contradiction between adopting globally defined goals and the principle of ‘national ownership’ which consensus opinion considers both desirable and necessary for effective implementation. National planning and programming processes are deeply entrenched institutional mechanisms with established procedures and a history of commitments and achievements. National and local authorities have been planning in the IADG/MDG domains for decades on the basis of some kind of assessment of local constraints and possibilities. How can national and local authorities take ownership of an agenda without relating it to this context? Considering the broad and comprehensive nature of the IADGs, even where governments were committed to the full IADG agendas, there would be choices to be made regarding sequencing and resource priorities considering the broad and comprehensive nature of the IADG agenda.

These policy debates reflect different perspectives on the role of global goals in national planning and programming. Costing exercises implicitly adopt the MDG goals as *targets in resource planning and allocation* at the national level. Others who view the MDGs as global goals are implicitly using them as *benchmarks for evaluation*. Finally, there are yet others who use MDGs as a normative framework in setting *overall policy priorities*. These are three different ways in which the role of the MDGs – and IADGs – in national planning processes can be conceptualized. The paper assesses national strategies and donor policies with reference to all three concepts.

Analysis of national strategies

In order to assess how governments are implementing the IADGs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) of 22 countries were analyzed with respect to their alignment with the IADG priorities. PRSP are a key policy vehicle for national poverty reduction efforts that set out national priorities, policies and action plans and often include numeric targets and monitoring frameworks. They were introduced in 1999 to serve as a framework for negotiations with most major bilateral and multilateral donors in

mobilizing resources and coordinating these inputs within a set of national priorities. The 22 PRSPs are all ‘second generation’⁵ strategies and reflect some experience with developing these documents. They were prepared since the 2000 Millennium Declaration, with 16 of them dating from 2005. Together they cover a third of all low and middle income countries. All but three are low income countries, countries that are most aid dependent for financing national strategies to achieve the IADGs.

Table 1

PRSPs reviewed by region

	SSA	LAC	CIS	Asia	Arab States	Total
PRSPs reviewed	14	2	2	3	1	22*
Total number of LICs and MICs	32	7	12	11	2	64
% reviewed	44	29	17	27	50	34

Note: 19 from low income countries (17 of which are LDCs) and 3 from middle income countries

Three aspects of implementation were analyzed:

- *IADG priorities* – which of the IADG priorities were reflected in the PRSPs. Each PRSP was coded for policy commitment to an IADG agenda item as a priority; a strategic priority such as a ‘pillar’ or one of the several key objectives; whether there was a defined action plan; and whether quantitative outcome targets were defined.
- *Ambition of IADGs* - whether the PRSP quantitative targets were in line with the ambition of the IADGs. A statistical analysis of the quantitative, time bound targets in each of the PRSP compared implied rate of progress with what it would take to achieve the goals, and historical rates, assuming a linear progression to determine whether the PRSP targets were in line with, exceeded or under-shot the IADG targets and historical trends.
- *IADG linkages to national planning* - which of the three ways the PRSP was using the IADG targets: as a *normative framework of broad priorities*; as *benchmarks in an evaluative framework*; or as *targets in a planning framework*.

IADG priorities in PRSPs

The PRSPs reviewed reflected strong ‘ownership’ of the IADGs to the extent that almost all stated commitment to the MDGs (while none mentioned the broader IADG framework) and almost every one of the key IADG priority areas was included as a priority with the exception of only one or two countries for one or two priorities. However, there was considerable variation in the degree of commitment to the different

⁵ Second strategy prepared in a given country.

priorities and to the specific agendas within the priority areas. Some ‘commitments’ are rhetorical in that they are only mentioned as priorities without an accompanying implementation plan nor monitoring targets defined. Others were mentioned not only as priorities but as one of the handful of core and over-arching objectives constituting a strategic ‘pillar’, for which action plans and monitoring targets were developed. Curiously, for some objectives, monitoring targets were included but action plans were not explicit.

As documented in Annex B and summarized in Table 2 below, major trends that emerge are as follows:

- Strong commitment to income poverty, basic education, and health which in many cases included the environmental priorities of water and sanitation. Almost all the PRSPs emphasize these goals as core objectives and include implementation plans and monitoring targets.
- Employment (full employment), Health (HIV/AIDS) and Governance (rule of law and eliminating corruption) were core priorities in more than two thirds of the PRSPs, backed up with significant action plans and monitoring targets. But these priorities do not cover all the dimensions of IADG agendas: employment focuses on reducing unemployment but not full employment and decent work and women and youth, health priorities focus on HIV/AIDS (and less explicitly on child survival and maternal health), and the governance agenda focuses on the rule of law and eliminating corruption, not democracy, free media and human rights. Less than a third of the PRSPs include action plans and monitoring targets on these issues.
- In addition to these, the most neglected priorities, reflected in less than a third of the PRSPs among priorities or action plans and monitoring targets – and in fact, virtually absent from the (priorities of the) PRSPs reviewed - are hunger, gender equality (education, political representation and violence), human rights (especially minority and migrant rights, social integration including migrants and respect for cultural diversity), and partnership with civil society and private sector. Some of these were sometimes mentioned rhetorically (such as gender empowerment and partnership) but often without explicit action plans.

Attention to the two over-riding principles of equality and partnership were strikingly weak in most of the PRSPs analyzed. Most of the PRSPs reviewed refer to regional, rural-urban or gender inequalities. Only one (Bolivia) refers to exclusion of ethnic minorities. Only one PRSP (Tanzania) identifies equity as an objective in itself. Equality and non-discrimination are central principles of human rights which are also weak or entirely absent in the PRSPs. This was particularly evident in the absence of attention to ending violence against women as part of the gender equality goal, and decent work as part of the employment goal, reproductive rights under maternal health, and equal access under the education goal. While social integration is a priority in more than a two third of the PRSPs, and more than half the strategies included some action plans, most addressed issues such as accommodating the handicapped rather than addressing historically

entrenched discrimination against racial and cultural groups; specific goals for respect of cultural diversity, minority rights and migrant rights were addressed by just 3 countries.

All the PRSPs emphasized economic growth as the principal means to achieving the overall objective of reducing poverty, but not all elaborate policies for pro-poor growth. The literature on linkages between economic growth and income poverty in the last decade shows the important role of economic growth in reducing poverty, but it also indicates the need for attention to fostering pro-poor growth. The impact of growth on poverty reduction is by no means automatic, and GDP growth may only lead to more increases in the incomes of the highest quartiles than the lowest⁶. The 22 PRSPs varied in attention to the distributional consequences of growth; some emphasized pro-poor growth and efforts to accelerate growth in lagging regions while providing protection for vulnerable or marginalized groups (e.g. Tanzania, Uganda, Viet Nam) while others (e.g. Yemen, Nicaragua, Madagascar) emphasized economic growth as an objective without differentiating it from reducing poverty, or mentioning agricultural development without emphasis on hunger (e.g. Malawi), implicitly assuming an automatic trickle down. Moreover, attention to employment was similarly weak given its critical role in linking growth to household incomes and consumption.

The weak attention to the equity agenda is also reflected in the neglect of the human rights based approaches in economic, social and cultural areas such as gender equality in education, which was not always emphasized, or in provisions for decent work to qualify employment objectives. Agendas for democratic governance and human rights based participatory approaches are also rarely prominent in these PRSPs; governance is a priority in 17 of the 22 PRSPs, but these agendas focus on decentralization, and the rule of law. Only a few (e.g. Tanzania, Senegal) refer to democratic governance and the participation of people in the process of development.

Lack of attention to partnership is even more striking, especially with respect to the civil society and private sector. Almost all PRSPs mentioned their roles but rhetorically, without elaborating on what their roles could be and an action plan to strengthen their roles.

PRSPs are also weak on international partnership, on the MDG Goal 8 issues of aid, trade, and technology access. Surprisingly these issues tend to be mentioned rhetorically. With a few exceptions (e.g. Benin) that refer to the importance of regional integration and to references to donor support for financing development, there is not much mention of the need for international partnership to work towards the reform of systemic issues such as international financial instability, agricultural export subsidies of rich countries, and the use of compulsory licensing facilities of the TRIPS agreement.

⁶ See for example UNDP 2003

Table 2

IADG and PRSP priorities compared (number of countries)

	Important objective	Core strategic objective	Action plan	Monitoring targets
More than 15 countries (two thirds of total reviewed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Hunger • Employment • Education (Primary with gender equality) • Health (maternal, child, HIV/AIDS) • Gender empowerment • Environment (natural resource protection and conservation, water and sanitation), • Governance (rule of law and corruption), • Social integration • Science and Technology • Partnership (aid, trade, private sector, civil society) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Education (primary schooling) • Health (general) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Education (primary schooling) • Health (HIV/AIDS) • Gender empowerment • Environment (water & sanitation) • Governance (rule of law & corruption) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income poverty • Education (primary schooling with gender equality) • Health (maternal, child, HIV/AIDS) • Gender equality (political representation) • Environment (water & sanitation)
7-14 countries		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Health (HIV/AIDS) • Governance (rule of law, corruption) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunger • Employment (general, through growth) • Education (equal access to all levels) • Health (child) • Governance (democracy, media) • Social integration (general) • Science & Technology (general, new technology) • Partnership (aid, trade) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment (general) • Education (equal access to all levels) • Gender equality (general, political representation) • Health (HIV/AIDS access to treatment) • Environment (natural resource protection) • Science & Technology (electrification)

<p>6 countries or less</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Governance (free media, minority human rights) · Social integration (cultural diversity, migrants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hunger · Employment (decent work, women and youth) · Education (gender equality in primary schooling and equality of access to all levels) · Gender equality (general, political representation, violence) · Health (maternal, child, HIV/AIDS orphans) · Environment (natural resource protection, water and sanitation) · Governance (democracy, free media, human rights) · Social integration (general, cultural diversity, migrants) · Science & Technology (general, new technology, access to medicines) · Partnership (aid, trade, civil society, private sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Employment (decent work, women and youth) · Education (gender equality) · Gender equality (political representation, violence) · Health (maternal, HIV/AIDS orphans, HIV/AIDS access to treatment) · Environment (natural resource protection) · Governance (human rights, minority rights) · Social integration (cultural diversity, migrants) · Science & Technology (access to medicines) · Partnership (civil society, private sector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hunger · Employment (decent work, women and youth) · Gender equality (violence) · Health (HIV/AIDS orphans) · Governance (governance, democracy, free media, human rights, minority rights) · Social integration (vulnerable groups, cultural diversity, migrants) · Science and Technology (new technology, access to medicines) · Partnership (aid, trade, civil society, private sector)
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IADG ambition in PRSP targets

In addition to focusing attention on neglected policy priorities, global goals are intended to challenge all stakeholders to scale up effort to meet ambitious targets and to go beyond ‘business as usual’ (Millennium Project 2004; UNDP 2003). This is especially important for most of the 22 countries analyzed which have some of the highest levels of poverty, lowest levels of GDP per capita in the world. With a few exceptions, continuing historical trends would mean continued high levels of income and human poverty for generations to come⁷. Business as usual in these countries would not be enough to implement the vision of the Millennium Declaration and the IADGs. Annual MDG monitoring reports from the UN DESA (UN DESA 2007), the World Bank (World Bank 2007), and other agencies,

⁷ Important exceptions include Vietnam and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

including regional commissions, all consistently show that MDGs would not be met in most low income/low human development countries if historic trends were continued.

Quantitative targets are not set for all IADG priorities. More than ¾ of the PRSPs set targets for income poverty, primary schooling, gender equality in primary schooling, maternal mortality, and water and sanitation but not for hunger, employment, child survival, environment, governance, social integration, science and technology and partnership.

Overall, most PRSPs set targets that exceed the ambition of the IADGs as well as historic trends as shown in table 3. Almost all of the PRSP targets exceed IADG targets as well as historical trends. In part this is explained by the fact that the PRSPs aim to achieve the IADG targets in a shorter period of time; IADG targets are set to be achieved over 25 years (1990 to 2015) while many PRSPs aim to achieve the same target in 10-15 years, starting at the IADG year. Among the 22 PRSPs, however, there are a handful which set targets well below the IADG framework, and more disturbingly, below historical trends. These findings are consistent with the analysis of World Bank staff that covers 44 PRSPs (Harrison, Klugman and Swanson, 2005).

Table 3

PRSP Targets compared with IADG ambition (% of PRSPs)

IADG priority	Exceeds IADG targets (historical)	In line with IADG targets (historical)	Falls below IADG targets (historical)	Countries with targets and available data
Income poverty	80 (65)	10 (10)	10 (20)	19 (17)
Hunger	94 (42)	0 (21)	1 (37)	16 (14)
Primary schooling	81 (42)	5 (50)	14 (7)	21 (19)
Gender equality in primary schooling	100 (14)	0 (28)	0 (56)	10 (7)
Maternal mortality	68 (71)	5 (0)	21 (29)	19 (7)
Reproductive health	72 (78)	1 (0)	18 (22)	11 (9)
Child survival	61 (61)	6 (6)	33 (33)	18 (18)
HIV/AIDS & other diseases	43	7	14	14 (3)
Water & sanitation	95 (88)	5 (0)	0 (12)	21(16)

The use of IADGs in policy formulation

All but four of the 22 PRSPs make emphatic statements of commitment to the MDGs – rather than the IADGs - thus using them as a global normative framework. They also use the MDGs as evaluative and planning frameworks in as much as they are integrated into the planned and monitoring targets as shown in the previous section. However, this is not done systematically since not all IADG targets are included in the PRSP planning and monitoring targets.

The process by which PRSPs utilized the MDG targets in policy formulation seems to vary. One country, Cambodia, systematically adapted the numeric targets and developed ‘Cambodia MDGs’. Yet others used MDG targets in combination with other strategic frameworks such as ‘Vision 2025’ in Tanzania and ‘Vision 2020’ in Rwanda. Others appear to have adopted the MDG targets without adaptation; as already explained, many PRSP targets exceed the MDG targets because of the shortened time frame.

In many of the countries reviewed, governments with UN Millennium Project support engaged in estimating the cost of investments needed for achieving the MDGs that depend on public investments in social services such as education, health, water and sanitation. None of the PRSPs referred to these cost estimates. These estimates were not adopted fully in the planning and budgeting process of the country because resources could not be mobilized but also because of concerns about the reliability of the estimates themselves as well as their potential macroeconomic impact on public expenditure ceilings and on aid dependence.⁸ Thus while these analyses must have provided useful informational input into PRSP formulation and budgeting, the potential of MDGs/IADGs for mobilizing necessary resources to accelerate progress and achieve the MDGs has not been fully exploited.

Analysis of donor policies

Policy statements of 20 bilateral and 1 multilateral (EU) aid programmes were reviewed, including general policy statements which indicate priority development objectives supported in developing countries and the MDG reports which indicate action being taken to implement the partnership commitments of the IADG. As with the PRSPs, documents were coded. Since these policy statements do not consistently include indications of resource allocations, quantitative analysis of allocation and disbursement priorities was not undertaken.

IADGs and donor priorities

While PRSPs are intended to set a comprehensive agenda for poverty reduction in a country, donor priorities are intended to provide support to a selected set of priorities because external resources are not intended to support the totality of development agendas. Donor priorities depend not only on the perceived priorities for global development but on where a given donor can do most to contribute.

As with the PRSPs, aid policy statements of major bilateral donors align with the IADG priorities, but only partially and in varying ways. Annex 3 provides a listing of IADG priority objectives that were included in policy statements. The priorities most commonly selected by more than half of the donors are listed in table 3 below.

⁸ There is much controversy about the costing exercises that have been carried out in almost all countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 4

Most commonly selected priorities (number of donor programmes)

IADG priority	Core priority	Included
Environment-general	19	
Human rights	17	
Education –general	15	
Governance	15	1
Peace and Security	15	4
Health-general	14	
Democracy	14	
Income poverty	13	1
HIV/AIDS & global diseases	12	1
Countries with special needs (Africa)	12	
Water & sanitation	10	1

While multidimensional poverty – including income poverty, education and health - is the stated central policy objective of almost all the bilateral aid programs, some objectives such as maternal mortality and child survival receive surprisingly limited emphasis in donor priorities. There are also some contrasts with recipient priorities:

- Environment, governance are top priorities for more than ¾ of the donors. In contrast to the PRSPs, environment and sustainable development priorities do not focus primarily on water and sanitation, but on environmental protection and conservation with the more recent statements mentioning climate change, and governance does not focus on rule of law but also prioritizes the promotion of human rights and democracy.
- Promoting peace and security is another strategic priority for more than ¾ of the bilateral donors, an objective that is not included among the IADG according to the current definition of IADGs (UN DESA 2007). On the other hand, it is a central objective of the Millennium Declaration and is grounded in the UN Charter. Historically, peace and security have not been part of the ‘development’ agenda, but there is a strong case for bringing these objectives into this agenda for the simple reason that violent conflict is a major source of poverty and poverty raises the risks of violence.
- IADG priorities that are underemphasized – for which significant action plans are defined - include employment, hunger, maternal mortality, child survival, gender equality, social integration, and science and technology.

The two principles of equality and partnership including global solidarity are included in about half of the donor policy statements, more consistently than in the recipient PRSPs. But as in the PRSPs, there is strong emphasis on growth as the principal means to reducing poverty without much attention to the impact of economic policy choices on distribution of benefits, creation of employment and other pro-poor concerns.

Partnership commitments and donor policies

One of the most significant achievements of the IADGs process was to include specific commitments to ‘strengthen partnership’, or action by the international community and donor countries alongside efforts of the developing country governments to end global poverty. The scope of these efforts goes beyond the obligations to provide development aid and extend to issues of reforms in the world trading system, dealing comprehensively with debt relief, and expanding access to new technologies in cooperation with the private sector, especially in areas of information telecommunications technology and pharmaceuticals.

These MDG Goal 8 agendas do not receive much attention in the donor policy statements reviewed; less than half of them mention the international systemic reforms in trade, aid, debt and technology.

The donor MDG reports elaborate further on these issues. Almost all reiterate support for the Doha development round agendas to expand developing country integration in world trade and aid for trade, and support for the HIPC debt relief initiative. In the area of aid quality, these reports reiterate support for the Paris declaration agenda. Half of the countries report their support for enhancing access to technology but in most cases without much explanation of a specific action taken.

Thus, not surprisingly, these documents reflect the prevailing international consensus positions. However, there are some interesting exceptions to this pattern where policy statements include positions to push the agenda further to accelerate progress; for example, Denmark and Ireland advocate stronger debt relief provisions beyond HIPC, Netherlands and Sweden include policy support for expanding access to essential medicines through the use of compulsory licensing provisions of TRIPS.

The use of IADGs in donor policy formulation

IADGs are strongly used as an overall normative framework for global development from which donor policies emphasize poverty reduction as an overall objective. Beyond this, there was little evidence that aid donors use the IADGs as a planning framework for allocating resources and for programming more generally. The UK makes more systematic use of MDGs as a monitoring framework in setting public accountability for its aid programme (DfID 2007).

Conclusions

This analysis has found PRSPs and aid policy frameworks being used as important vehicles for implementation of the IADG agendas, but with many gaps. The documents show most governments have a high degree of commitment and ‘ownership’ of the IADG agenda but there is no consensus on what this means, how global goals can be integrated into or linked with national planning processes, nor on what policies would be most effective for achieving the goals.

Process gaps - Linking IADG with national policy making processes

Most PRSPs and policy statements reflect consistent use of the IADGs as a common global normative framework that defines desirable objectives that deserve priority attention. But countries make limited use of these goals as evaluative or planning frameworks. Donor policy statements reaffirm commitment to the MDGs but there is no evidence that the goals and targets were used to in a planning framework, to guide resource allocation and programming priorities at the national and global levels. There is also no evidence of the goals being used in the evaluative framework except in highly aggregate levels to advocate for action against global poverty. Most PRSPs do not contain analyses of whether and why the country may be on track or off track to achieving the targets.

Of the 22 PRSPs examined 13 used MDGs as a planning framework in a limited way. The UN has introduced the idea of ‘MDG based PRSPs’, or PRSPs that “link systematically with the MDGs, goals, targets and timelines and are based on an assessment of public investment strategies needed to achieve the MDGs (UNDG 2008⁹)”.

The UN Millennium Project approach has been to start with costing of the resources required to achieve the quantitative targets. Costing studies have been undertaken with UNDP/UN Millennium Project support in almost all the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and a number elsewhere. But it is unclear how these estimates have effectively been used in the formulation of the PRSPs. The draft Ethiopia PRSP under preparation and the most recent Benin PRSP include estimates of cost requirements for recurrent and capital expenditures based on MDG needs. The final budgets are far lower than the initial estimates. An important reason for costing was to enable the government to mobilize the resources necessary to meet the MDG targets. However, there is no consensus in the donor community on the use of these costing exercises; there are controversies over both their methodology, utility in making estimates that are ‘unrealistic’ to achieve because of both capacity and resource constraints. Yet the point of the MDGs is to set ambitious goals and to mobilize the required resources.

Another approach to using the MDGs as a planning framework has been to use the MDGs and relate them to national priorities and define nationally adapted targets. Cambodia has developed ‘Cambodia MDGs’, Malawi developed adapted targets on some goals, while Rwanda, Tanzania, Senegal have linked the MDGs to 2010 vision targets. In many countries, ‘MDG implementation plans and actions’ may not be reflected in PRSPs, as they do not necessarily involve aggregate planning strategies.

Realizing the potential of MDGs towards ending human poverty can be pursued with more vigorous efforts to use them as an evaluative framework on the basis of which nationally owned and locally specific action plans are developed. Costing would be an important step in this direction as a diagnostic step to estimate what financial resources would be needed to achieve the goals. These evaluative assessments can be used not only by governments in planning but by civil society groups to hold governments, donors and other actors to account for achieving the targets by 2015.

⁹ UNDG website: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=81>

Historical analysis (Jolly 2004) of the experience with global goals shows that some have had little effect in moving the agenda forward while others were instrumental in accelerating progress; the immunization goals and campaigns that led to dramatic increases in immunization rates for childhood diseases and largely met the goals is a case in point. This analysis concludes that where they have successfully accelerated the pace of progress, they have involved mobilization of local, regional and national actors in action that is nationally owned. Strategic action plans with doable and achievable sub-objectives was an essential ingredient.

More research and analysis is needed to develop a coherent methodology for incorporating IADGs into national priority setting and policy formulation processes and instruments. It is not immediately obvious what role global goals should play in the formulation of national priorities. Conceptually, IADG targets do not constitute a strategic model for development that can be defended as an effective policy set. They are a normative framework based on a politically negotiated set of common global objectives that commands global consensus. As a process, it would make no sense for each and every country to adopt the IADGs in their entirety as their national development priorities, bypassing national priority setting processes. Each country at any point of time faces a unique set of challenges and resources, the policy and resource allocation priorities would differ from one country to another and from one point of time to another. Each country also has an established tradition of priority setting and resource allocation that integrate analysis of priorities and needs with political negotiations. In fact, one of the major critiques of global goals is that they can distort national priorities and weaken national ownership of development management.

On the donor side, the use of IADGs as an evaluative or programming framework is even more limited. Experience of DfID in more systematic use of this framework could provide important lessons.

Priority gaps – neglected goals and principles

The key issue is *which* of the IADG agendas are adopted as priority policy objectives and which are neglected and *what strategy* is pursued to implement them. Almost all PRSPs focus on 3 central priorities: i) economic growth for reducing income poverty, ii) social sector (education, health, water and sanitation) investments, and iii) in most PRSPs, governance reforms to strengthen the rule of law including eliminating corruption. On the other hand, IADG priorities that are neglected in most PRSPs reviewed include: i) employment; ii) hunger and nutrition; iii) democratic governance including democracy and human rights; iv) environmental protection and conservation; v) science and technology. Most PRSPs do not include strategies with respect to the three central themes of the IADG agenda: i) global environment in trade, debt and aid; ii) partnership with civil society and private sector in development; iii) equity as distinct from poverty; iv) social integration of the marginalized and vulnerable; and v) democratic governance including universal human rights.

Another key issue is not whether governments place economic growth ahead of poverty reduction as a priority but *how* growth would reduce poverty.¹⁰ Almost all PRSPs emphasized both as priorities. Most of the 22 PRSPs did not contain a strategy for increasing productivity and employment, nor for generating growth that benefits the poor, or ‘pro-poor growth’. The implicit assumption is that that poverty reduction would happen by a ‘trickle-down’ process when the overall economy grows and investments are made in the social sectors. Neither PRSPs nor donor statements explore the constraints to poverty reduction posed by the global market environment and initiatives required to move the trade and aid agendas forward.

Finally, the PRSPs are almost silent on the two fundamental themes that run across the IADG agenda: concern for equity and equality, and commitment to solidarity and partnership.

Donor priorities are similarly unbalanced. Almost all emphasize the same central priorities of growth, social investments and governance. They also place greater emphasis on the environment and democratic governance as well as peace building and conflict prevention. Donor priorities also seem to miss some of the same forgotten agendas including: i) employment; ii) hunger and nutrition; iii) science and technology; and iv) trade.

What explains these trends? In part they reflect normative choices made by governments around the world about important ends of development. But these trends are also shaped by the institutional mobilization around the IADGs which has focused on the MDGs. The neglected priorities are mostly those that do not have clear numeric targets in the MDGs or are not on the MDG agenda at all. Developing numerical targets for reducing inequality, strengthening democratic governance, expanding employment, environmental threats, science and technology and human rights could generate more attention to these priorities.

The institutional mobilization around the MDGs has marginalized the IADG priorities that are not explicitly included in the MDGs. The peace and security agenda needs to be more explicitly incorporated into the IADGs since peace is not only an end in itself but is also necessary for poverty reduction. There is an important nexus between poverty and violence that needs to be built into policies of conflict prevention and peacebuilding and be recognized as part of a development agenda.

The IADGs provide an important normative framework for international development cooperation. It needs to remain open to new challenges that emerge. Designing, implementing and monitoring policies to address issues of inequality and disparities between and within countries, global warming and the food crisis need greater attention within donor and national frameworks.

¹⁰ There is no reason for growth and poverty reduction to be alternatives since it is well known that growth is necessary for poverty reduction. Moreover, there is no contradiction between social investments and growth either since social investments create human capital which is essential for growth.

This paper has focused on the policy priorities of PRSPs and development aid policy frameworks. It has not explored resource allocations in national budgets and aid programmes. Such quantitative analyses are needed to further explore gaps between IADG commitments and implementation.

Annex 1: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

Country	Income Group (WB)	Aggregate / Region (UN)	Year(s) of PRSPs	PRSP progress reports
Benin	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2003	2005
Bolivia	Middle	Latin America & Caribbean	2000 (interim), 2001	
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Middle	CIS	mid-term development strategy only 2004, 2006	
Burkina Faso	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000, 2005	2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007
Cambodia	Low	LDC / East Asia and the Pacific	2000 (interim), 2002, 2006	2004
Ethiopia	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002	2004, 2006
The Gambia	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002, 2007	2006
Ghana	Low	Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2003, 2006	2004, 2006
Laos	Low	LDC	2001 (interim), 2004	
Madagascar	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2003, 2007	2004, 2006
Malawi	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002, 2007	2003, 2005, 2006
Mauritania	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000, 2002, 2007	2003
Mozambique	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2001, 2005, 2007	2003, 2004, 2005
Nicaragua	Middle	Latin America & Caribbean	2000, 2001, 2006	2002, 2004
Rwanda	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002, 2008	2004, 2005, 2006
Senegal	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002, 2007	2005, 2006
Tajikistan	Low	CIS	2000 (interim), 2002	2004, 2006
Tanzania	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2000, 2001, 2006	2003, 2004, 2008
Uganda	Low	LDC/Sub-Saharan Africa	2000, 2005	2001, 2002, 2003
Vietnam	Low	East Asia and Pacific	2001 (interim), 2002, 2004	2004, 2006
Yemen	Low	LDC / Arab State	2000 (interim), 2002	
Zambia	Low	LDC / Sub-Saharan Africa	2000 (interim), 2002, 2007	2004, 2005

Annex 2: IADG priorities in PRSPs

IADG priority	Policy priority	Action plan defined	Targets defined
Poverty & Hunger (MDG1)			
- income poverty	18 (15)	18	21
- hunger	17 (2)	14	
Employment (MDG1)			
- general	21 (9)	14	7
- decent work	7 (0)	4	0
- women and youth	12 (1)	3	0
Education and literacy (MDG2)			
- primary schooling	22 (20)	21	21
- gender equality	17 (1)	6	18
- access to all levels	14 (0)	9	12
Gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG3)			
- general	20 (4)	16	8
- political representation	10 (0)	2	7
- violence against women	12 (1)	0	2
Health (MDG 4-6)			
- general	21 (19)	20	20
- maternal health & reproductive rights	18 (1)	6	22
- child survival	17 (1)	9	21
- HIV/AIDS & other diseases	19 (7)	15	17
- HIV/AIDS orphans	8 (0)	2	2
- access to treatment	9 (10)	4	8
Environment (MDG7)			
- natural resources protection/conservation	17 (4)	2	7
- water & sanitation	20 (6)	18	21
Democracy, good governance & human rights (MD 5)			
- governance (rule of law, corruption)	21 (11)	18	3
- democracy	15 (0)	7	0
- free media	6 (0)	7	1
- human rights protection & promotion	15 (0)	6	5
- minority rights	4 (0)	2	0
Social integration and vulnerable groups (MD VI)			
- social integration & vulnerable groups	19 (6)	13	0
- cultural diversity	6 (2)	3	3
- migrants	5 (0)	1	0
Science & Technology (MDG8)			
- S & T general	17 (2)	9	9
- new technology	13 (0)	9	2
- access to medicines	9 (0)	1	4
Partnership (MDG8, MD, Monterrey, Johannesburg)			
- aid	21 (3)	13	1
- trade reform	21 (3)	8	6
- civil society	18 (2)	2	0
- private sector	20 (1)	2	1

Note: (..) pillar/core objective

Annex 3: IADG priorities in donor policy statements

IADG priority	Core priority	Included
Environment-general	19	
Human rights	17	
Education -general	15	
Governance	15	1
Peace and Security	15	4
Health-general	14	
Democracy	14	
Income poverty	13	1
HIV/AIDS & global diseases	12	1
Countries with special needs (Africa)	12	
Water & sanitation	10	1
Primary schooling	8	
Gender equality and empowerment of women	8	
Trade	8	5
Hunger	7	3
Reproductive rights	7	2
Natural resources	7	
Private sector	7	7
Civil society	7	10
Social integration and vulnerabilities of social groups including cultural diversity and minorities (MD VI)	5	
Employment	3	4
Violence against women	3	6 (trafficking)
Science & Technology (MDG8)	3	5
Decent work	2	1
Gender equality in education	2	2
Child survival	2	2
Free media	2	1
Women's political representation	1	
Maternal health	1	3
Employment: women and youth	0	2

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