

TOWARDS A GLOBAL MDG BREAKTHROUGH PLAN

An NGLS Civil Society Consultation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil society organizations are mobilizing around the world to make their voices heard in global discussions on how to accelerate and sustain progress in meeting the 2015 target for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the lead-up to the September 2010 MDG summit. Many of their concerns and proposals will be expressed in Hearings of the General Assembly with civil society and the private sector (14-15 June 2010). NGLS undertook a global

online consultation that was designed to scale up and deepen that engagement. This briefing gives an overview of the recommendations that came out of the consultation, to which over 160 international, national and local civil society organizations representing millions of people from around the world contributed. The following is the Executive Summary of a much larger report that compiles proposals ranging from measures to deal with the immediate expansion of effective initiatives to deeper reforms of the global development and economic system. The full report can be found at: www.un-nqls.org/mdgconsultation

I. The MDGs in Context

Most responses emphasized that the MDGs have proven to be a useful mobilization tool and an often unifying and powerful force in development. The contributions affirmed that strong and strategic social investment directly contributes to reductions in poverty and overall improvements in health, education, social protection and inclusion as well as for our natural environment. Contributors identified many examples of success in the implementation of initiatives that directly contributed to major progress in some areas (see Box on page 6).

These positive examples need to be replicated and scaled-up. But the overwhelming majority of contributors were also concerned about the limitations of the MDG framework if it was divorced from a broader transformational agenda, based on the need for new development paths that integrate the goal of full and productive employment, the transition to a greener economy and a much more explicit use of human rights in accountability frameworks.

For most contributors, the onset of the multiple global food, economic and climate crises was the latest wake-up call alerting the world to the many flaws of the prevailing development model of recent decades. The multiple crises only reinforced demands among many contributors for a major breakthrough in the “global partnership” embodied in Goal 8 on international economic and development cooperation, which is the only MDG without time-bound targets.

Many participants echoed the UN Secretary-General’s call for strengthened national ownership of policies to pursue more inclusive, equitable and environmentally sustainable development paths. This implied greater policy space to mobilize domestic resources and align forward-looking macroeconomic and sectoral policies with development goals – currently often still restricted by inappropriate external conditionalities, trade rules and the dictates of international financial markets.

However, a number of civil society groups insisted that the current failure to deliver on Goal 8 should not be used by national governments as an excuse to not better use existing policy space – such as redeploying excess military budgets to social and development programmes and undertaking courageous national re-distributional policies. For many, national ownership meant first and foremost breaking from a “dependency mentality.”

Thus the many proposals for new development paths discussed in Part II also place emphasis on much stronger and participatory national accountability frameworks based on fundamental human rights.



Many contributors welcomed the UN Secretary-General’s insistence on a holistic approach to the MDGs. A “sectoral” approach to the MDGs could lead to dysfunctional outcomes, such as young people having benefited from adequate health and education services only to face an economic system that does not provide enough productive jobs. Likewise, the MDGs have a number of targets designed to redress some of the most glaring gender inequalities – with much greater progress on access to education for girls than on reducing maternal mortality. But the focus on specific targets should not obscure the fact that overcoming gender inequality is a factor in achieving all the MDGs. In the same vein, biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes (under Goal 7) provide key building blocks for poverty reduction under Goal 1: their demise increases the vulnerability of the poor and seriously jeopardizes the chances of meeting the MDGs.

Understanding how all the MDGs are inter-related is essential for thinking on how to move forward. For instance it was suggested that calls for more investments to improve the position of the most off-track MDGs and regions should be backed by additional resources to avoid cut backs on continued progress on other MDGs (for instance, a choice between access to schools and access to water, between health care and food). A broader holistic approach means fully addressing the cross-cutting obstacles that undermine the realization of all MDGs (whether in relation to difficulties in mobilizing additional resources, unsustainable and inequitable development paths, or unaccountable governance structures at national and international levels) . In addition to the many MDG-specific proposals to scale up progress (see Part III of the full report) this was the principle outcome and value-added of this consultation. Proposals on cross-cutting priorities to accelerate progress are summarized below.

II. Proposals for the Way Forward

1. A Breakthrough Plan for Goal 8

- 1.1 **Live up to development aid commitments:** Donor countries should commit to interim targets between 2010 and 2015 to demonstrate how they will achieve their targets, as well as to Heads of State level reviews of progress from now to 2015. To strengthen national ownership, the summit should call for budget support to become the main vehicle for aid delivery to countries committed to poverty reduction and good domestic accountability systems.
- 1.2 **Align debt sustainability with MDG resource requirements:** Emergency support for counter-cyclical crisis mitigation should be in the form of grants not loans to avert a new debt crisis, which inevitably would entail regressions on most MDGs. Debt cancellation (not diverted from ODA) to the poorest countries should be part of the crisis response, while illegitimate debt should be audited and cancelled. The summit should agree to establish a fair and transparent debt workout mechanism under UN auspices and to redefine debt sustainability with the domestic resources required to meet the MDGs.
- 1.3 **Agree to implement a Financial Transactions Tax:** The summit should agree on implementing various innovative financing mechanisms – first and foremost a financial transactions tax to help generate the hundreds of billions of dollars needed each year to support developing countries in dealing with climate change and transition to more equitable and sustainable development paths capable of meeting all MDGs. The allocation of these funds should be managed within a UN framework.
- 1.4 **Step up international tax cooperation:** Various international measures to combat capital flight, tax competition, corporate tax evasion and transfer pricing are essential to enable developing countries to mobilize domestic resources to finance all MDGs and beyond. The summit should support the adoption of a multilateral agreement on automatic exchange of information, country-by-country reporting by multinational companies and give a strong political mandate to the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.
- 1.5 **Explore the development role of reformed SDR mechanisms:** The summit should agree that the UN should continue exploring the potential of extended and more equitable forms of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation as a new form of international liquidity that could greatly increase policy space in developing countries to mobilize resources to fight climate change and invest in more sustainable development paths - including through regional mechanisms, involving reserve pooling, regional currencies and public development banks.
- 1.6 **Reregulate global finance – especially in food and commodity markets:** The summit should recognize the right of developing countries to implement appropriate capital controls, not only for crisis prevention but to direct investments to meet development goals. It should give impetus to rein in financial speculation in general, and speculation in food and commodity markets in particular – given the major setbacks it has caused, especially on the hunger target under Goal 1 and child mortality under Goal 4.



- 1.7 **Promote fair trade rules to meet the MDGs:** The summit should agree to a review of the current Doha trade agenda and other trade agreements with a view to removing elements that could lead to further MDG regressions caused by inappropriate trade liberalization in developing countries. It should endorse the call by Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) for an “early harvest” of unilateral trade measures in favour of LDCs, and support the adoption of food and livelihoods safeguard mechanisms in all multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements – without *qui pro quo* concessions by developing countries - as an essential means to stabilize progress, notably under MDG 1. It should also support the right of developing countries to fully use the flexibilities with the TRIPs agreement to source affordable medicines, including for HIV/AIDS and malaria treatment.

2. A Breakthrough Plan for New Development Paths

- 2.1 **Fully implement the Global Jobs Pact within the next five years:** Among the most important decisions taken at the last global MDG review was the introduction of “full and productive employment and decent work for all” as a new target for MDG 1. This provides a powerful tool to better hold national and international economic policy making bodies accountable as to whether their policies are supporting or undermining the MDGs¹. The summit should agree to implement all the commitments in the 2009 Global Jobs Pact, including employment-intensive counter-cyclical measures, a universal social protection floor (see below) and reforms of international finance to ensure that it serves the real economy and decent work for all.
- 2.2 **Implement a universal “Social Protection Floor”:** The summit should agree on a set of national and international measures to rapidly ensure that an effective social protection floor is in place in every country, providing access to essential public services and a basic set of social transfers that establish a minimum level of income security and health care for all. The summit should agree that such a floor is only the first step to fulfilling Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The summit must also call for the elimination of policies that undermine this objective, including the elimination of user fees on all essential services. This would not only benefit Goal 1, but also MDGs related to education (when cash transfers are conditional on school attendance and user fees are eliminated) and to health (through access to a basic health care package). Such a floor of minimum income security would also help promote gender equality by reducing the burden of reproductive and unpaid work, as well as cope with climate change-induced livelihood disruptions, thus a relevant climate adaptation element pertaining to Goal 7.
- 2.3 **Support a “localization agenda” based on expanding productive employment and decent work for all:** The summit should agree that development strategies should be reoriented to rely more on domestic sources of demand growth, based on forward looking macroeconomic and sectoral policies that promote more employment-intensive growth, higher wages and incomes for working people, as well as domestic productive capacities to supply local and regional markets and generate green jobs. This would not only directly benefit poverty and hunger reduction under Goal 1, but also increase family incomes to send children to school or pay for health bills, and help empower women through non-discrimination at the workplace. The localization agenda would also contribute to reducing CO2 emissions under Goal 7 by reducing trade-related transport pollution costs of export-led models of development.
- 2.4 **Support and protect the livelihoods and capacities of smallholder farmers:** The summit should agree on an overhaul in agricultural policy that should not only be aimed at strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers to produce more staple foods for local markets, but also ensure that they get a higher share of income, that external support builds on indigenous knowledge, and trade and other policies protect their livelihoods from import surges, price drops and environmental disasters. This is an essential reorientation to support progress under Goal 1, but should not be a substitute to stepping up nutrition programmes as a necessary complement to fight hunger and child mortality.
- 2.5 **Mobilize greater domestic resources for the transition:** The summit should agree that developing countries should, where possible, use better their domestic policy space to improve progressive tax collection and redistribution to finance Goals 1 to 7, but this should be in tandem with the global breakthrough plan under Goal 8 to reverse a “race-to-the-bottom” in progressive tax revenue.



- 2.6 **Integrate human rights in new development paths:** The summit should agree to integrate human rights prerogatives in the pursuit of new development paths, as an essential foundation for a more inclusive and equitable political process of resource allocation between now and 2015. The application of human rights principles are fundamental for progress on MDGs related to gender equality, access to food, decent work, education, health (including universal HIV/AIDS care, prevention and treatment), water, sanitation, housing, environmental protection and also international economic and development cooperation. Progress on meeting MDGs for vulnerable groups such as women, children, the disabled and indigenous peoples should be integrated in the MDG monitoring frameworks. The summit should also explicitly reiterate that the MDGs rest upon the Millennium Declaration and ultimately, the international community and individual Member States are accountable to the full realization of all human rights. In this respect, much more needs to be done to operationalize the Right to Development.

3. Accountability frameworks 2010-2015

- 3.1 **Implement mechanisms for accountability to international policy coherence:** The summit should agree to establish and implement mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to ensure international policy coherence for development. These mechanisms (such as the EU's Policy Coherence for Development) should ensure that policies in areas such as trade, finance, investment, technology, energy and agriculture support and do not undermine development and progress towards the MDGs. All these policies should be assessed in terms of their MDG impact between now and 2012, with full participation of civil society and parliaments.
- 3.2 **Establish a public register of all development commitments:** The summit should agree that the UN secretariat establishes a public register of commitments for development that should inscribe commitments made by any government in any policy area with clear indication of aim, destination, conditions, targets, indicators and timetables.
- 3.3 **Step up accountability of the international aid architecture:** The summit should strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and mutual accountability between donors and recipient countries and greater coherence of development policy – within a participatory framework that ensures more balanced country representation. The UN's Development Cooperation Forum should thus be strengthened as the more legitimate and balanced forum to reform international development cooperation, in a manner that gives equal weight to the participation of civil society and parliamentarians and brings in all the major development actors.
- 3.4 **Democratize and hold international financial institutions accountable:** The summit must give further impetus to urgent democratization of the international financial institutions (IFIs), starting with national and international mechanisms to ensure that the IFIs future operations are free of harmful policy conditionalities that undermine the MDGs.
- 3.5 **Consider establishing an accountable global economic governance framework:** The summit should recognize that global economic governance cannot continue operating outside of an accountability framework, where global economic coordination and reform decisions are not subject to the test of coherence with development goals and the scrutiny of the wider UN membership and civil society. The summit should thus consider establishing within the UN system a leaders' forum (such as a Global Economic Council), that would be (a) inclusive of the poorest countries; (b) representative in composition; (c) transparent and accountable—and informed by expert groups from academia, civil society and relevant UN bodies; and (d) open to civil society by institutionalizing effective consultations ahead of and between summit meetings.
- 3.6 **Accelerate Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR):** The summit should agree to establish as soon as possible the new gender equality entity with adequate resources, to strengthen the various UN and Member State commitments to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment and hold them more accountable to these cross-cutting prerogatives. Women's organizations and grassroots women must have formal mechanisms of meaningful and systematic participation in the new entity at the global, regional and national levels.
- 3.7 **Step up the use of human rights accountability mechanisms:** The summit should ensure an increased role of existing national and international human rights accountability mechanisms, including by providing such institutions with legal authority to monitor and hear complaints on human rights violations. Governments should report on their MDG performance to such bodies and comply with their decisions. More specifically, Member States should ratify Optional Protocols to human rights treaties, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. They should systematically integrate reporting on national and international implementation of the MDGs in their reports to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council and to international human rights treaty monitoring bodies.

- 3.8 **Guarantee civil and political rights of participation and organization:** The summit should recognize that a meaningful accountability framework at national level requires all Member States to ensure rights to freedom of expression, information, assembly and association, and provide enabling conditions for the work of human rights defenders. This must include closing the “democratic deficit” in the participation of indigenous peoples and other cultural minorities, and ensure that all future development operations affecting their territories are subject to indigenous peoples’ “free, prior and informed consent.” The latter principle should also apply to protect small-holder farmers and local communities from the abuse linked to increased “land grabbing” in developing countries.
- 3.9 **A gender and social exclusion based audit of the MDGs:** The summit should call on governments to work with civil society in undertaking an audit to measure to what extent MDG achievements have reached marginalized and excluded communities. This audit must include an analysis of the adverse effects of the global economic and financial crisis on marginalized groups – in particular women and girls, migrant workers, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.
- 3.10 **Introduce more equity and human rights adjusted monitoring:** The summit should agree to introduce MDG targets and indicators that better disaggregate outcomes on vulnerable groups, including in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, inequality and regional disparities. National MDG targets should be established or revised and improved through public consultation at the national and local level.
- 3.11 **Strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders to engage:** The summit should agree that future MDG initiatives must set aside a percentage of funds to support civil society and parliamentary participation in policy, programme and project design, implementation and monitoring. This should include capacity-building on alternative (“heterodox”) economic and development strategies for both civil society and government officials. Local authorities have an essential capacity-building role as well.
- 3.12 **Make greater use of new and “traditional” media:** The summit should encourage all stakeholders, especially youth, to make much greater use of not only modern media to promote awareness about the MDGs, but also traditional media, such as radio, music, dance and drama, which are more effective at reaching remote villages, where a great majority of the world’s poor still live.

Other more MDG-specific recommendations to scale up and replicate success are summarized in a compendium of proposals in Part III of the full consultation report. These include sectoral proposals in the areas of hunger and nutrition, education, gender, health (including the treatment of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases), human settlements (including slums, urban development, water and sanitation) and environmental sustainability (including biodiversity and climate change).

III. Sustaining Progress amidst New Threats and Challenges

The world has experienced many transformations since the MDGs were agreed in 2000. Amidst this change, the MDGs have shown to be a useful anchor to mobilize for change and sustain policy dialogue.

Yet despite the strength and unifying force of the MDGs, and as acknowledged by the Secretary-General, the global economic crisis rolled back hard-earned MDG progress in many countries. The current inability to achieve food security for millions of citizens in developing countries, the growing challenges posed by climate change as well as entrenched gender and other inequalities question the prospect of the international community meeting the goals on time – at least without a dramatic change of course. Indeed, current systemic weaknesses within the current international economic system affect both rich and poor countries’ ability to mobilize resources for change. In fact, the current behaviour of international financial markets – calling for austerity measures even in advanced countries – is on a collision course with implementation of the MDGs and other international commitments.

This is why decisive progress on a global breakthrough plan for MDG 8 and to support new development paths must be a central priority of the summit, starting now and extending beyond the next five years.

As also discussed in Part III of the full report, the growth of armed violence as well as the growing incidence of non-communicable diseases are among other cross-cutting factors undermining MDG achievement which must be urgently addressed. The world cannot forget that the MDGs rest upon the full body of the Millennium Declaration and other international commitments to peace, security, human rights and inclusive and sustainable development.

The core message that emerged from the consultation is that achieving the MDGs requires a holistic approach that looks at the interconnectedness and systemic implications of the different challenges faced by the international community. To truly make the MDGs transformative and sustainable – beyond 2015 – more must be done to ensure that MDG implementation is accompanied by a stronger effort to address root causes and transition to more sustainable and equitable development paths.

Box: Making a difference

Abolishing user-fees

In 2006, when the government of Burundi announced free health care for maternal deliveries and children under five, births in hospitals rose by 61%. Nepal has abolished user fees to ensure universal, free health services. In just five years the under-five mortality rate has been reduced by around a third and since 1996 maternal mortality rate has fallen by 50%. In the past year an extra 60,000 women were able to give birth in health facilities. [Oxfam International]

Debt cancellation

Witnessing the impact of debt relief initiatives such as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) on countries such as Zambia, CIDSE has long argued that debt cancellation enables countries to invest significantly more in development, and in an economic crisis, gives them greater breathing space to design their own fiscal stimulus responses. In Mozambique, for instance, where poverty reducing expenditures has tripled from US\$792 million to over US\$2billion, partly as a result of debt reductions, 120,000 more women per year were able to give birth in a hospital or clinic. [CIDSE]

Budget support

To meet and exceed the MDGs, we need long-term, predictable funding in support of strong public institutions. Combining direct budget support with domestic resources, the government of Mali has been able to increase its spending on education in relation to GNP by more than a third since 1999 and recruit more than 20,000 new teachers. As a result the number of children going to primary school has risen 34% since 2001; more than half of children of primary age now attend school and more children are staying until the final year of primary school and completing their education. [Oxfam International]

A Basic Income Grant

Led by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), civil society groups decided in 2008 to implement a Pilot Basic Income Grant (BIG) based on a proposal of a government commission to provide every citizen with a monthly cash grant of not less than N\$100 (~13 US\$) as a right. In the pilot area the proportion of residents living below the food poverty line fell from 76 percent to 37 percent within one year of the BIG. Child malnutrition was reduced within a year of implementation from 42% to 10%. The average per capita income in the pilot area increased from N\$160 to N\$303, far exceeding the value of the BIG. Econometric calculations suggest it is affordable to implement BIG on a national scale. [Lutheran World Federation]

An employment guarantee

Measures (such as India's rural employment guarantee scheme) to support the purchasing power of low income earners, including single-earner households, which are predominantly female-headed, can assist in the eradication of poverty and hunger while increasing gender equality simultaneously. [ITUC]



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To download the full report, access all civil society submissions and other information on the consultation, visit:

www.un-ngls.org/mdgconsultation

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