

VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The organisation was founded in 1995 and consists of currently 115 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy. VENRO’s central goal is to contribute to global, social and ecological justice, with a special emphasis on eradicating global poverty. VENRO is committed to implementing human rights and conserving natural resources.

Together with our member organisations we are currently conducting a dialog on our priorities for a future development agenda. We aim to include the experiences of our member organisations in cooperation and dialog with civil society organisations in many parts of the world in the preparation of the future development agenda. We want the post-2015 framework to be meaningful and to make a lasting difference to the poorest and most marginalised people in the world. This submission highlights our key messages and should be seen as part of an ongoing process of positioning towards a post 2015 development framework.

A. The MDGs: benefits and limitations

Due to their **time-bound, comprehensive and measurable nature** the MDGs have had a strong **influence on the international development agenda** which has translated both into development policy and funding and mobilising aid flows at the EU and national level, especially with regards to sectors that have been **previously overlooked such as basic social services**. Examples include, the 2008 EU ‘MDG Contracts’; the 1 billion EUR MDG initiative targeting the most off track MDGs launched in 2011 at the EU level; and Germany MGDs-related programmes implemented not only by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) but also other ministries such as the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). In the national development contexts, MDGs have influenced domestic policy-making processes which resulted in the introduction of new national policies and strategies.

MDGs have also served as **advocacy and monitoring tools** in both global and country-level context rallying public and political support, providing useful leverage to argue for increased aid levels and comply with the primary objective of EU’s development policy, poverty eradication, as defined by Lisbon Treaty.

The MDGs framework was built on a set of concrete **goals and predominantly quantifiable targets** that are time-bound and easy to understand, explain and monitor. Therefore the MDGs framework has proven valuable in putting pressure on governments to see the importance of statistics for monitoring development progress and generating political debate about rising inequalities in the process of achieving the MDGs. As gender, rural, age ect.-disaggregated data show existing in-country discrepancies, this clearly illustrates the need for strengthening pro-poor policies and measuring well-being beyond income to reach the most vulnerable populations, in particular in fragile states and in sub-Saharan Africa, in order to tackle raising inequalities despite rather satisfying global results in poverty reduction.

However, the MDGs do not have a holistic understanding of inequality and neglect important factors that must be taken into account in order to bridge the inequality gap. This applies especially to the lack of a human rights perspective within the MDGs framework. Currently the MDGs do not include many marginalized and commonly overlooked groups who make up a high percentage of the world’s poor. For instance and contrary to prior commitments the 2012 MDG report does not mention at all people with disabilities, who make up 15% of the world’s population. Neither does the current framework allow analysis assessment for different age groups and the analysis of gender disaggregated data was only included in 2008.

Poverty reduction in the world is largely due to the rapid economic growth in China. Nevertheless, sub-Saharan African countries still show worrying indicators. According to UNDP Millennium Development report in 2012, Africa itself presents large intra-regional disparities between West, North, Central and Southern Africa. Inequality persists, with poor people remaining poor because the **root causes of poverty have not been addressed** in their complexity. Poverty eradication has been considered as a mere economic issue rather than a holistic deprivation of basic human rights.

Moreover, there is a need for an increased emphasis on the **'quality' of MDGs achievements**, rather than 'quantity'. As some country-specific examples indicate, a constant pursuit of achieving quantitative objectives might not necessarily result in increased quality of services. Some policies were implemented in 'silos', causing greater pressure on weak national systems without improving living conditions for the people in need. For example, in Sierra Leone, a basic package of health care for pregnant and lactating women and for children under five has been made free since April 2010. As a result, many more women and children attended clinics. However, increased demand has proved impossible to meet given shortages of staff, drugs and other equipment.

Last but not least, the weakness of the monitoring and follow-up mechanisms and instruments has been a major drawback in the MDGs framework. This is closely linked to a lack of accountability and transparency of national governments and international institutions, which are essential to secure an international order where rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, can be fully realised.

Benefits of existing MDGs framework:

- Time-bound, comprehensive and measurable
- Provided advocacy and monitoring tools
- Influenced development agenda and increased funding
- Strengthened focus on previously over-looked sectors

Limitations of existing MDGs framework:

- Lack of a strong human and women`s rights basis adhering to the principles of empowerment, participation, equality and non-discrimination, with a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. The goals have been treated separately, without enough consideration given to cross-cutting issues
- does overlook areas vital for poverty eradication and development (in particular (domestic) inequality, equity and social cohesion)
- one-dimensional understanding of poverty and development with an over proportional focus on material living standards
- Limited ownership of the framework, as vital stakeholders were not involved enough in the development of the MDGs
- Too strong focus on quantity rather than quality of outcomes
- Monitoring at global level does not allow for measuring progress within countries
- LICs-centric approach ignoring the needs and responsibilities of MICs and the Global North (one world approach)
- no coverage of contemporary challenges and global public goods (a.o. climate, energy and environment, peace and security, global health, disaster prevention and management, financial systems)
- Lack of accountability and insufficient commitments for the Global North

B. Feasibility of a future framework

Most problems addressed in the existing MDG framework have not yet been solved and important goals are unlikely to be achieved by 2015. In addition, there are new challenges on a global level that haven't been considered in the year 2000 but do require global solutions now, such as climate change or the global financial crisis. Therefore, in our view, a future framework that addresses old and new challenges to development after 2015 is urgently needed.

This framework should build on the positive elements of the existing MDGs framework. It should maintain in particular the time-bound, concrete and measurable character of the targets. However, a comprehensive review of the goals should be conducted with regard to its content while taking into account the points listed in chapter C and D.

Given the global nature of the problems we are currently facing, it is of major importance that this framework has a global scope and is developed in a participatory way including all relevant stakeholders. Any new global framework will be measured against its real impact on people's lives and whether it succeeded in addressing the main concerns expressed by people across the globe. Consequently, it has to be built as a fully inclusive process, providing space for people and institutions to dialog and eventually to agree on actions. This dialog process has to ensure full participation of everyone, making all efforts to open it up for those who are often voiceless (LICs, minority groups etc.). Such a participatory process at global level would constitute a major innovation which would also have a positive impact on its subsequent implementation. This could pave the way to a new global partnership for development that truly addresses rights and needs of citizens and promotes principles of mutual accountability and responsibility. A global framework will enjoy greater legitimacy and acceptance than one which is not. It would ensure global recognition of global responsibilities. And it would contribute to ending the outdated 'North-South dichotomy'.

As stated by the UN System Task Team, the future framework would need to be redefined towards a more balanced approach among all development partners that will enable the transformative change needed for an equitable and sustainable process of global development. A rights based approach is of utmost importance to reach this goal. It should recognise an obligation on all countries to address the challenges faced by people in low, middle and high income countries.

To have an impact on global governance, a future framework must deliver legitimate and adequate systems of global responsibility, accountability and transparency which apply to all countries and all actors and which will support the realisation of human rights obligations. This includes goals that encompass the impact of all actors' policies in areas such as trade, agriculture, tax and financial regulation.

Within this context, coherence between the future framework and other related international processes should be guaranteed. Here, the process to elaborate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which has been agreed at the Rio+20 summit in June 2012 is of special importance. The SDG framework and post-2015 discussions cover similar or arguably the same set of issues. For instance, the formulation of indicators to supplement GDP touches on all three pillars of sustainable development: environmental protection and economic and social development. Considering the many interlinkages it should be ensured that both objectives of SDGs and MDGs should be brought together under a clear and plausible reference frame. Thus, the development process of the SDGs should proceed in close cooperation with the process to the renewal of the MDGs.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the establishment of a new and conclusive complementary framework (of SDGs and MDGs) it is a matter of priority to address existing power imbalances at the international and

national level with the view to establish a truly inclusive and participatory decision-making process at every level. A new global framework should be truly global by ensuring that any new goals will equally address both industrialized and emerging countries. The Rio+20 outcome document explicitly links the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to the SDGs which should be *“universally applicable to all countries while taking in account differential national realities, capacities and levels of development.”* (Para 247). It is of crucial importance and of utmost urgency to prevent process duplication by setting-up a clear road-map specifying universal actions and time-tables is needed to define how both processes will link-up (or be joined together). Parallel processes pose additional challenges to civil society. Aside from requiring a stretch of limited resources, parallel processes would further cement divides between civil society that classically advocates on environmental themes and those that advocate on economic and social development themes. Considering the cross-cutting nature of both processes, the emphasis should thus be on designing cross-cutting participation opportunities.

The main advantages of a truly global development framework are efficiency in our work and a common understanding between organizations and partners, wherever they may be.

C. The potential scope of a future framework

The primary purpose of a future framework should be the creation of a just and sustainable world in which every human – including future generations – being can live free from poverty and realise their rights. This includes the closing of inequality gaps. The objectives must embody a commitment to human rights, poverty eradication, equality and equity, community resilience, environmental, economic and social sustainability, peace and security, good governance and policy coherence for development.

Based on the Millennium Declaration and informed by the strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs, the framework needs – to achieve this purpose – to articulate a set of clear, concrete, binding and measurable objectives which need to be agreed upon through a participatory process, which are time-bound and universal in nature, which have the capacity to capture and maintain appropriate and adequate support at public and political levels. The framework must have accountability at its core and the commitments must be measurable, with associated indicators which are both quantitative and qualitative. The framework must reflect a move towards the principle of ‘universality’ and must harness and build on commitments made at international fora by the international community which seek to address contemporary challenges faced – in particular – by the poorest and most vulnerable, notably climate change and malnutrition and food insecurity.

As already stated, the scope of the new framework must be global, recognising an obligation on all countries to address the challenges faced by people in low, middle and high income countries. It should be guided by the principle of common-but-differentiated responsibility whereby every country has obligations but they may differ to reflect the country context. However, all countries should agree to make development progress, both individually and collectively. People around the world continue to suffer poverty, inequality and insecurity and measures to resolve these challenges need to be aligned and coordinated at a global level. The fact of the future framework being global in nature will reinforce accountability. Based on the principle of democratic ownership countries must be accountable both to their citizens and to the international community. Quantitative and qualitative measures will need to be developed at a global level which can be applied nationally.

The framework should represent and reflect consensus across the international community that:

- Human Rights are universal. They must be realised both at national and international levels and they must be respected by all actors, including the private sector.
- Inequality within and between countries requires particular attention. Recognising its multi-dimensional nature, the post-2015 framework should provide a clear policy agenda to tackle inequality.

- Issues as biodiversity, climate, energy and environment or global health need global protection as global commons.
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation is essential at a global level.
- All countries have to make their policies coherent for development globally. High and middle income countries have obligations towards lower income countries e.g. in trade relations.
- A global framework will enjoy greater legitimacy and acceptance than one which is not. It would ensure global recognition of global responsibilities. And it would contribute to ending the outdated 'North-South dichotomy'.

A future framework should have a focus on the poorest and most fragile countries but it also needs to address appropriately and adequately development objectives in other countries. (e.g. production and consumption patterns, structural constraints).

However, two points should be made here. Firstly, VENRO interprets the notion of 'development objectives' broadly. In addition to issues of policy coherence and human rights being mainstreamed, we recommend that the future framework addresses the key global challenges faced by the world today, i.e. challenges that do not pertain only to developing, or even middle income countries alone, and that might not typically be considered as development objectives, such as governance.

Secondly, while a focus on the poorest countries is necessary, since the demographics of global poverty have shifted such that a majority of poor people now lives in middle income countries, and that in the future the poor are likely to reside about 50:50 in MICs and in LICs (including conflict affected and fragile states), it is outdated to imagine that a post-2015 framework should only apply to low income countries. Furthermore, extreme poverty is gradually changing from a question of poor people in absolute poor countries to questions of domestic inequality. Nonetheless, priority should be given to the poorest and most vulnerable people in any country, independent of the development 'status' the country has been attributed. A specific focus should be given to the most marginalised, disadvantaged and excluded, ensuring the risks and inequalities they face are comprehensively addressed and that their resilience at community, national and international levels is both strengthened and sustained.

A common feature of the poorest and most fragile countries is their higher levels of insecurity and violence, including gender-based violence. To be meaningful, a future framework must address the interlinked challenges of conflict, risk and vulnerability, insecurity and poverty since progress is fundamentally held back in countries where insecurity is high.

Since each society has unique dynamics that can lead to conflict, it is unlikely that a single goal can be formulated to uphold peace and tackle fragility. A new set of international development goals must respond to these differences in context, allowing more nuanced targets and enabling the prioritisation of goals that are most significant for those contexts. To enable the new international development goals to respond to context, contextualised targets should be set at national and sub-national levels and a goal around governance should be created, which would mandate building government capacity for service delivery, peacebuilding, justice and security as well as the development of relationships between society and the state. The new framework must address the common root causes of insecurity which have been identified in research, as well as those ingredients that help countries to transition out of fragility, such as decent livelihoods, domestic revenue and tax-raising ability etc.

A new global system of financial burden-sharing will need to go beyond ODA in overcoming the current aid recipient logic. Financing a future global development framework will need to draw on a variety of sources, both including domestic and foreign, official and private. However, within a Post 2015 framework Official Development Assistance (ODA) will continue to play a central role for financing bilateral and multilateral development cooperation even though innovative financial resources will play a greater role. The

industrialised countries need to take steps to achieve their aid commitment and it must be ensured that ODA is spent properly and expediently. Facing the recent budgetary constraints, for most industrialized countries it will be difficult to scale up funds for ODA to the necessary extent. In particular in economically challenging times there is need for innovative financial sources which have the potential on the one hand to scale up ODA-funds and on the other hand to increase predictability of ODA-flows (e.g. by implementing a financial transaction tax). Furthermore in a post 2015 debate it must be addressed that there is a necessity for a future distinction between ODA and international climate financing, because - according to the international commitment within UNFCCC-context – the latter should be provided as “new and additional” resources and not at the expense of ODA-funds.

D. The potential shape of a future framework

Any new and global development framework should not reinvent the wheel. It should rather be built upon past initiatives and fully take into account internationally agreed principles and rights.

Participation of civil society with the inclusion of the most vulnerable and those traditionally excluded groups within society - along with other interest groups - is at the heart of any process towards a new development framework. Because of its universal dimension a global development framework will comprise, engage, and provide guidance to a wide variety of actors whose activities are essential for the realisation of sustainable development; if developed through an inclusive and participatory process, this framework could also help trigger broad debate on future perspectives for development (for both developing and developed countries alike) and even help rethink the notions of growth and economic development as presently understood. Civil society participation towards a global development framework is thus a great opportunity to find collective solutions to the common challenges.

Beyond democratic ownership in decision-making on social policies, decision-making processes for economic policies, funding flows, budgetary and project expenditure, etc. also need to become **transparent and inclusive**. As mentioned above economic policy and financial regulation are important factors that have an impact on the capacity of countries to deliver on their development commitments. Policies in these areas are too often opaque and non-transparent. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to ensure that processes for their design are transparent and participatory.

Subsidiarity is a core principle that needs to be respected in this regard. According to this principle political decisions must always be taken at the lowest possible level – administrative and political – and as close as possible to the actors who will be impacted by them. In the development context, subsidiarity asserts that policies are more successful when they are designed and owned at the level at which they are implemented. The principle of subsidiarity needs to be reflected at the international level as well. Enabling participation of communities and peoples in local and national policy-making processes would be rendered meaningless if the policy space enjoyed by their governments at the international level is so limited as to prevent any effective policy debate among different options. Correcting imbalances in representation and participation in the spheres of finance, trade and macro-economic policy decision-making at the global level will therefore be as important as opening up spaces for participation at lower levels.

Accountability is central to democratic governance and respect for human rights as it defines the relationship between the state and citizen, and between the “rights-holder” and “duty-bearer” under human rights law. In order to fulfil this function, the post-2015 framework must put an emphasis on building effective mechanisms to ensure accountability at the local level in the first instance. Accountability should not just be upward, but also downward, to the people. A wider range of tools and communication channels for **informing people** about their rights and the commitments made by their governments is therefore necessary, as well as systems to allow civil society, and individual citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, to participate in the elaboration of national development policy and plans and to hold their

governments to account for decisions taken, progress or lack thereof and so on. Locally-led monitoring involving all population groups and sectors is indispensable. Emphasis within the post-2015 framework should be on strengthening accountability mechanisms, for instance by making their rulings more binding where appropriate. Existing accountability mechanisms include Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting, Peer Review Mechanisms, reports on implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements or best-practice examples (e.g. human rights commissions or courts).

Furthermore, the principle of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) must be placed at very heart of the post-2015 development agenda, because it will be fundamental to the success of the future framework, especially given the shifting nature of poverty and the links between and impact of all policy areas on the achievement of development objective. PCD potentially addresses the existing global “accountability gap” more than any other policy instrument by stressing that all decision-making processes – both in the North and South - must be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the world’s poorest people and must ‘do no harm’ to their human rights and development perspectives

As already stated, a new global system of financial burden-sharing will need to go beyond ODA in overcoming the current aid recipient logic. A fundamentally refashioned form of official development assistance (ODA) is important in this regard. While emerging economies have to take on more responsibilities, developed countries have to take the lead; the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must be applied on a per-capita basis. Financing a future global development framework will need to draw on a variety of sources, both including domestic and foreign, official and private. Mobilise financial resources, particularly for developing countries within the context of a post-2015 framework, is crucial in times wherein traditional donors are increasingly hard-put to fulfil existing and new financial commitments. To this end, we also welcome the decision by the UN Conference on Rio plus 20 to comprehensively examine mechanisms to finance sustainable development. In this context, questions remains crucial whether such an exercise should be extended to integrate the development finance needed for a post-2015 framework- especially in a situation of increasing national debt burdens and progressively lower levels of official development assistance.

Summing up, the top three most important elements for a future development agenda are in our view the following:

- Unlike the current framework, new MDGs must be negotiated in a **participatory and inclusive way**, involving all relevant stakeholders - including marginalized and vulnerable groups and the poor themselves and guaranteeing **ownership of development processes** and compliance with commitments made in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development.
- The notion of equity and human rights should be at the core of the future framework. The development agenda needs to be in line with existing international human rights accords and effectively apply a human rights approach to development planning, monitoring and reporting.
- The future framework needs to articulate a set of clear, concrete, binding and measurable objectives which are time-bound and universal in nature – yet allow for differentiation according to national circumstances while respecting international standards. Furthermore, they need to have the capacity to capture and maintain appropriate and adequate support at public and political levels. It should be tracked with data disaggregated by sex, age, race, religion, culture or geography. There is a need for indicators which measure inequality and inequity likewise, although the faces of inequity extend well beyond the data compiled from established indices.