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Reassessing the Millenium Development Goals

Six years & counting down

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DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Editor: James Gaede

Graphic Designer: Meaghen Simms

Photos by: Mehreen Khalfan and
Meaghen Simms

Correspondence:

Tel: 613-241-3535 ext 200
Fax: 613-241-7435
Email: casid@nsi-ins.ca

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A Foreward by the President

When world leaders met at the Summit of 2000 to approve the Millennium Declaration they laid the basis for the Millennium Development Goals. Some observers were skeptical about the scope and ambition of the MDGs. Nonetheless in the following years they became a useful means to measure global progress in tackling poverty in its various dimensions, to motivate people to get involved, and to hold governments and international organizations to account. The mid-term reports in 2007 suggested that there had been considerable achievements in some parts of the world and towards meeting some goals by 2015, though there were major concerns with the lack of progress in key areas such as maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS reduction.

Events in the last year, however, underline how fragile has been this progress towards the MDGs, raising fundamental questions about what can be achieved by 2015 and whether we are on the right track. In 2008 the sharp rise in food and fuel prices pushed some 150 million people back into poverty especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This reversal has been seriously compounded by the financial crisis and the first drop in world trade for almost 30 years. In early 2009 the World Bank warned that child mortality rates were likely to soar, and estimated that another 100 million people would fall below the poverty line. More recent projections suggest that the situation for many poor people will be even more severe.

Against this backdrop of deep concern about the mounting challenges of the MDGs, the six articles in this issue of Development Forum contribute many ideas as to how they might be reached. Jane Parpart, Shirley Thomson and Farzana Quddus, and Haroon Akram-Lodhi provide a gender analysis of the MDGs, focusing respectively on MDG 3, Bangladesh and the macroeconomic framework. Mark Fried and Vanmala Hiranandani consider MDG 1 – the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger – with Mark arguing that inequality must be addressed if poverty is to be reduced, while Vanmala suggests that food sovereignty is key to eradicating hunger. Finally, Javier Mignone and Brenda Wilson examine ways that local economic development may reduce HIV/AIDS (MDG 6) by decreasing villagers' need to migrate.

*Ann Weston
CASID President*

A Critical Evaluation of the Third Millennium Development Goal

Jane Parpart, Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of West Indies

At the dawn of the new century, the international development community, spearheaded by the United Nations, reflecting on its successes and failures concluded that development to date had not brought the promised improvement in equality around the world. In 2000 member states of the United Nations made a commitment to a set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that promised to produce a more equitable, tolerant world by 2015. The eight goals have been presented as “a blueprint for tackling the most pressing issues facing developing countries – poverty, hunger, inadequate education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation.” Moreover, each goal has been defined in a specific manner, with key targets and sub-targets. These concrete time-bound targets for action have been seen as offering “a glimmer of hope for change.”ⁱ

The third goal focuses on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. More specifically, it calls for the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. Unlike the other goals, this one was framed in the language of gender equality and empowerment so prevalent in development policies regarding women and gender. Indeed, the achievement of educational parity is seen as a prime means for enhancing women’s economic and political participation and their ability to defend their sexual and reproductive rights, their inheritance rights and to combat domestic violence and gender based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.ⁱⁱ

However, despite the ambitious and lofty discourse, the carefully crafted policies and the generous commitments of money and institutional support, the third MDG has been disappointing, both in the scope of its aims and the achievements of its goals. The Caribbean is a particularly appropriate place to evaluate the assumptions embedded in the third MDG. Female students outnumber and outperform male students at all levels of education in the Caribbean. Yet parity or better in education has “hardly been sufficient to ensure the full participation of women in the political and economic lives of their countries.”ⁱⁱⁱ The quality and nature of education, including career guidance goals, often steer girls and women into “feminized” fields with limited employment and income potential. Even the more highly educated women often receive less pay for the same job as a man – note the case of Belize, where the more educated female workforce has a higher unemployment rate and fewer well-

paying jobs than their male counterparts.^{iv} In Jamaica, despite women’s increasing presence on university campuses, gender biases against women are still intact. Despite enormous advances, and considerably increased economic and political participation, women generally have to be more qualified to get the same jobs as men and even highly educated and skilled women often have difficulty entering middle management.^v Moreover, despite greater female participation in parliament, laws outlawing the right to reproductive choice or alternative sexualities are widespread in the region. In addition, women’s presence in parliament has not been able to stop the dramatic rise in domestic violence and gender based violence in the region.^{vi}

Criticisms of the third MDG are beginning to surface in scholarly writings and to a lesser extent in the development literature. Naila Kabeer (2005)^{vii} acknowledges the power of patriarchal structures and ideologies for impeding women’s empowerment and gender transformation. For her, the answer lies in the mobilization of women, especially poor women, who have the analytical capacity and courage to question and challenge gender inequality. Noeleen Heyser also calls for making connections between the MDGs and global gender agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and more finance for women’s organizations pushing for gender equality and women’s empowerment.^{viii} Robert Johnson points out that women’s educational triumphs have not translated into a gender equitable society, nor to equality in economic and political spheres. Indeed, he points out that no society treats its women as well as it treats its men and that economic success is not a guarantee of gender equality. He concludes that while gender equality in education may be a necessary basis for tackling gender inequality, it is not sufficient for doing so. He calls for explicitly addressing the systemic barriers to gender equity, arguing that the MDGs avoid discussing “the systemic changes in global or national economic and political power relationships necessary to enabling real advances in gender equity.”^{ix}

Attention to women’s voices and organizations as well as systemic barriers to gender transformation are clearly needed if the third MDG is to make a difference. However, attention also has to be paid to *how* systemic blockages to gender equality and women’s empowerment operate and

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MDG3: amplifying voices and overcoming barriers

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maintain their grip on power. Nor do they investigate the resilience of the “common sense” equation between certain types of hegemonic masculinity and power, particularly in political and economic realms. Consequently educating women and marginalized men so they can enter the inner circles of power, at all levels, is often seen as a solution to gender inequality. Yet this “solution” has all too often merely reinforced the status quo, in households, communities and institutions. A deeper analysis of the masculinist operations of power reveals a need to move beyond the body count, to interrogating the way the “rules of the game” allow certain outsiders into the circle of the powerful without challenging masculinist assumptions – as long as they “play by the rules.” It is this detachment of gendered assumptions about masculinities and femininities and their link to power that provides the flexibility and resilience to masculinist power. This fragile and yet constantly reinforced and disciplined equation is at the heart of gender inequality and until this is recognized, bringing women and marginalized men into the centre of economic and political power will do little to destabilize the common sense belief that feminine traits/emasculatation are antithetical to power.^x The third MDG is a good beginning, but it will remain mere window dressing if its proponents ignore the operations of deeply held, intractable opposition to gender equality.

Jane L. Parpart is Professor Emeritus in International Development Studies at Dalhousie University and Visiting Professor at the University of West Indies in the Centre for Gender and Development Studies.

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CASID Congress 2009

Capital Connections – Nation, Terroir, Territoire

Carleton University, May 27 - 29, 2009

This year’s conference will explore a range of issues including poverty, inequality, food security, migration, sustainable development, humanitarian aid, conflict, cooperation and development alternatives. The Conference aims to bring together those IDS theoreticians and practitioners with an interest in these issues from different disciplines and sub disciplines – rural development studies, political science, international political economy, environmental studies, public policy, geography, economics, women’s studies, anthropology and sociology. See www.casid-acedi.ca for more details.

Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals in Bangladesh

Shirley Thompson and Farzana Quddus, Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

World leaders came together at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September, 2000. A new global partnership was formed towards the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include reducing extreme poverty, preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, gender equality, providing universal primary education, etc. by 2015. According to the Millennium Development Report of 2008, progress has been made in achieving MDGs. The overarching goal of reducing absolute poverty by half is within reach for the world as a whole but is far behind in countries like Bangladesh; in all but two regions, primary school enrolment is at least 90 percent and the gender parity index in primary education is 95 per cent or higher in six of the 10 regions. This article will discuss the role of gender equity in education and poverty reduction in reaching the MDGs, as well as the impact of non-government organizations (NGOs) and development funding on the promotion of gender equality and reaching the MDGs.

Bangladesh is committed to reaching the MDGs by 2015 yet poverty and hunger remain widespread, meaning the basic needs of the most vulnerable are still not being met. The proportion of people living on less than US \$1 a day has declined only about 9%, from 58.8% in 1990 to 49.6% in 2005.ⁱ The percentage of children under five that are underweight remains above half (51%), down from 67% in 1990.

A growing empirical literature suggests that gender equity in education promotes economic growth, decreases fertility, reduces child mortality, and prevents under-nutrition. Abu-Ghaida and Klassen (2004)ⁱⁱ predicted that by 2005, the countries that are off track on gender equality will suffer 0.1 to 0.3 percentage points lower per capita growth rates as a result, will have 0.1 to 0.4 more children per woman, and, by 2015, an average of 15 per 1,000 higher rates of under five mortality, and 2.5 percentage points higher prevalence of underweight children under five. Although primary education became compulsory in 1993 in Bangladesh, girls, children living in rural areas and urban slums, and children from socio-economically disadvantaged families and ethnic minorities often do not attend schools. In this patriarchal society, girls' education often depends on how education is valued in the marriage market; some parents limit their daughters' education

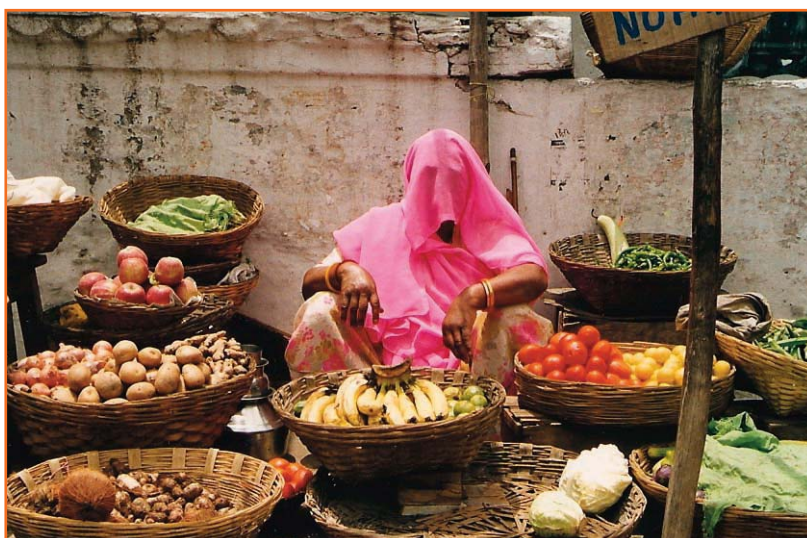


Photo by Meaghen Simms

because they are concerned that they will not be able to pay dowry for an educated groom.

The Education for All Assessments revealed startling gender inequalities with regards to achievement in countries with high rates of enrolment like Bangladesh.ⁱⁱⁱ Although Bangladesh's MDG goals were reached for gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2005, they were not reached for tertiary education (36% women, 64% men) or for literacy rates (55% for women compared to 71% for men). While gender equality has often been seen as an issue with regard to access, the MDGs recognize that gender inequality results in different learning outcomes in school. Since 1998, 2.6 million girls (75% of all girls enrolled at the secondary level) have benefited from the Female Stipend Program. As well, the Food-for-Education Program provides a food ration to about 20% of poor primary school children in rural areas, so that these children do not have to participate in the labour market to feed themselves and their families. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC) Non-Formal Schools Program increased participant children's basic competency in reading, writing, and arithmetic from 12% in 1992 to 24% in 1995.

Non-government organizations provide extensive support for reaching the MDGs in Bangladesh, by providing microcredit programs, primary education, reproductive

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The MDGs and microenterprise in Bangladesh

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healthcare, child immunizations, and portable water provisioning, diarrheal dehydration programs, prevention of environmental degradation, rural road construction, and voter education. NGO activities began in Bangladesh shortly after the war of independence in 1971, with efforts to provide war relief and rehabilitation. Of the 13,000 operational NGOs in Bangladesh, 549 (4.22% of total) are working directly with women.^{iv} The most famous NGOs in Bangladesh are the Grameen Bank and the BRAC. While NGOs in Bangladesh offer employment projects and sizeable loans to men as well, the microenterprise programs that provide microloans without collateral are aimed almost exclusively at poor women.

This focus on women for microenterprise was more a strategic decision than an altruistic one to empower women; women, more so than men in a patriarchal society, are easily pressured to repay and comply with training and other requirements, such as voter turnout.^v For example, BRAC requires that women recite each week the BRAC principles of healthy living when they pay their interests on their loan, but do not require this of men who receive larger loans. This recital text involves committing to treat their son and daughter equally, planting around their house, drinking only safe water and many other things. Women take out loans and comply as they have few other employment or livelihood opportunities, particularly in rural areas, and no other access to credit.

Despite the high interest rates, indebtedness, NGO manipulation and husbands often controlling the microcredit expenditures, microcredit programs for women have had positive results. A recent study shows that women involved with BRAC microenterprise programs for more than four years increased household expenses by 28% and assets by 112%.^{vi} Also, health outcomes and awareness for women and children are significantly better for participants in NGO-sponsored programs. Similarly, women in microenterprise projects with the Grameen Bank also enjoy 28% higher income than members of the control group who did not participate in similar activities. Women in microenterprise businesses also actively participated in the electoral process of the country: in the 1997 union council elections, 44,138 NGO-sponsored women contested for 12,894 seats, and out of these, 12,822 women were elected.^{vii}

As women educational attainment lowers fertility rates and an educated mother increases her children's education and health outcomes, education for women is key to attaining the MDG goals. Progress is being made in gender equality in education but more has to be done to ensure girls have better quality education and opportunities to attain literacy and tertiary education. However, a gender analysis of poverty reduction has not been undertaken. Development projects in Bangladesh are typically geared to

benefit men, in terms of increasing their livelihoods and employing men on projects. Poverty reduction of women does not seem to be a priority, although it is the key to achieving MDG goals. Few opportunities are available to women other than microenterprise projects, which are income generating for NGOs.

Microenterprise is providing some gains for women, which leads to better health and education outcomes for the entire family, but also result in women becoming indebted, subject to high interest rates, manipulation by NGOs and husbands often controlling how women's loans are invested. The unequal focus on women of development projects requires reconsideration and further investment in women. As well, governments and the United Nations should consider collecting statistics on the gender distribution of poverty and of development dollars for employment. As well, other projects that improve livelihoods, in addition to microenterprise, should be available to women to move towards the MDGs.

Shirley Thompson is an assistant professor at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba. She is currently involved in a five year CIDA project on Capacity Building on Environmental Governance in Bangladesh. She has also recently edited a gender and development book.

Farzana Quddus is a graduate of a Master of Education at University of Manitoba.

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Millennium Development Goals and World Hunger

The need to move from food security to food sovereignty

Vanmala Hiranandani, School of Social Work and Department of International Development Studies, Dalhousie University

The prevalence of hunger and malnutrition around the globe continues to threaten the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Already, the number of hungry people has increased from 800 million in mid-1990s to 830 million in 2004. Additionally, the recent global food crisis is estimated to further increase the number of the hungry by more than 100 million, according to the United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis. Food security is clearly central to the realization of the MDGs: malnutrition remains the world's most serious health problem and the single biggest contributor to child mortality and maternal mortality. However, several decades of research and efforts to attain food security have been unsuccessful in finding practical solutions to the problem of hunger around the globe. Since the continued reality of hunger around the globe remains an obstacle to the

achievement of MDGs, it is essential to reconsider the problem of food insecurity. This paper points to the limitations of the concept of food security as it has been understood and instead calls for moving towards the paradigm of food sovereignty, if the MDGs are to address the full scope of the problem of hunger.

The concept of food security

Food security, as defined at the 1996 World Food Summit, is said to exist "when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". However, food security is silent about the politics of food production and distribution regimes: it does not talk about who produces food, how and under what socio-economic conditions. As Raj Patel surmises in his book *Stuffed and Starved*, the concept of food security is congruent, for instance, with a market-oriented economy in which everyone eats McDonald's burgers, while the fast food chain extinguishes the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and ravages the planet by its ecological footprint. The paradigm of market economics views food as a commodity rather than a right. Millions of people are excluded from consuming this 'commodity' simply because they lack the purchasing power to buy it. Consequently, most existing research views hunger to be strongly correlated with poverty – we are told poverty is the main cause of food insecurity, while hunger leads to poverty. Yet, structural causes of poverty and hunger have received inadequate attention within the MDG discourse.

Moreover, proponents of



Photo by Mehreen Khalfan

Small-holder farmers ready tobacco seeds for planting in Tanzania.

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Food Sovereignty: a new depth of understanding

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international trade argue that the best way for poor countries to attain food security is to import cheap food from other countries, instead of producing it locally. As barriers to trade in agricultural produce have been dismantled by trade agreements, cheap and subsidized food products have flooded international markets, making it impossible for small-scale farmers to compete. Peasant farmers are, thereby, forced to leave their lands and migrate into already overcrowded cities in search of work. Food security, merely understood in terms of access to food, thereby, contributes to more poverty, hunger and deprivation.

It is imperative to note that the eradication of hunger in developing countries is closely associated with the state of agriculture. The pivotal importance of agriculture in the fight against hunger and poverty lies in the fact that around 2.5 billion people in developing countries are engaged in agricultural production - most of them as small-scale subsistence farmers. Agriculture employs 70% of the labour force and contributes 34% of GDP in low-income countries. Since agricultural resources play an indispensable role for the livelihoods of the majority in developing countries, any changes in agricultural policies can trigger an impact on rural livelihoods and food prices. In recent years, liberalization of trade in agriculture and the withdrawal of the state from intervention in domestic markets have led to forced migration, abject poverty and agrarian crises in many developing countries.

Moving Beyond Food Security: Towards Food Sovereignty

In 1996, Via Campesina, the largest international farmers' association, put forth the concept of *food sovereignty* in response to the increasing (mis)use of the term 'food security.' Via Campesina argues that cross-border trade in food and agricultural products only contributes to more poverty, marginalization and hunger. Food sovereignty asserts that hunger is not a problem of means, but of rights. Food sovereignty has been defined as the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, pastoral, labor, fishing, food and land policies, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food. Food sovereignty insists on agriculture whose central concern is human beings and recognizes the vital role of women and indigenous people in food production. Food sovereignty also asserts that national governments have a primary responsibility to feed people: access to food should not be a form of handout, but a basic right. Food sovereignty focuses on local

autonomy, local markets and community action. Via Campesina insists that family farmers in the global South and North do not need access to global markets; all they need is access to their *local* markets. To this end, the most important step to attaining food sovereignty is to protect farmers against dumping that benefits only agribusinesses that control free trade agreements. Food sovereignty advocates an alternative trade model where national trade policies enable farmers to access their own local markets and to trade only the surplus produce, rather than producing primarily for export. It calls upon governments to orient agricultural policy in support of family farmers and to protect the access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. Via Campesina does not conceptualize land reform narrowly as re-distribution of private property; rather it calls for recognizing farmers as 'guardians of the land'. It insists on agriculture whose central concern is the human right to food, rather than profit. Thus, food sovereignty is a much needed alternative to the current mainstream thinking on food production and food security.

Concluding remarks

While food security is vital to achieve the MDGs, this paper has contended that a limited focus on food security, in terms of economic access to food, is inadequate. Poverty and hunger are inherently political issues. Food sovereignty interrogates the political economy of food production, distribution and consumption – it scrutinizes how local livelihoods, food consumption, and health status are influenced by national and global policies, institutions and processes that shape agri-food systems. Making food sovereignty an integral component of the MDG agenda for the second half of the way to the 2015 goals, and for all post-2015 strategies, is both necessary and desirable. Food sovereignty addresses the structural causes of hunger and poverty. Until systemic causes of deprivation are addressed, genuine progress towards the MDGs remains a pipedream.

Vanmala Hiranandani, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, School of Social Work and Department of International Development Studies, Dalhousie University, 6414 Coburg Road, Halifax, NS B3H 2A7 Tel: 902-494-2094 Fax: 902-494-6709 Email: Vanmala.Hiranandani@dal.ca

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Photo by Meaghen Simms

As an expressway transports luxury goods from Bangkok's port, residents of the city's largest slum, Klong Tuey, use its on-ramp for shelter.

Reducing Inequality is Essential to Reducing Poverty

Mark Fried, Oxfam Canada

Oxfam and other NGOs have long highlighted the moral repugnance of the world's yawning social and economic divides. There is something deeply unjust about a system that allows 800 million people to go hungry, while an epidemic of obesity blights millions of lives in rich countries.

Extreme inequality provokes outrage and condemnation, because it violates the widely held notion that all people, wherever they are, enjoy certain basic rights. Addressing inequality is essential if countries are to live up to their obligations under the international human rights framework established by the UN.

Yet inequality and redistribution have been out of fashion with rich country decision-makers for many years and warrant barely a mention in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which emerged during the course of the 1990s. In sway to the Washington Consensus view that 'a rising tide lifts all boats', rich country leaders believed that economic growth alone would be enough to address poverty. By 2005, the manifest failure of that approach prompted a rash of high-profile publications from the World Bank, and the UN argued that tackling inequality is one of the most urgent tasks of our time.

Academic literature used to stress the positive potential for inequality to reward 'wealth creators' and so encourage innovation and economic growth. Now economists argue that it is *equality* that is good for growth and makes that growth more effective at reducing poverty:

Inequality wastes talent. If women are excluded from top jobs, half the talent of any nation is squandered. When banks refuse to lend to poor people, good economic opportunities are wasted.

Inequality undermines society and its institutions. In an unequal society, elites find it easier to 'capture' governments and other institutions, and use them to further their own narrow interests, rather than the overall economic good.

Inequality undermines social cohesion. 'Vertical inequality' between individuals is linked to rises in crime, while 'horizontal inequality' (for example, between different ethnic groups) increases the likelihood of conflicts that can set countries back decades.

Inequality limits the impact of economic growth on poverty. A one-percentage point increase in growth will benefit poor people more in an equal society than in an unequal one.

Inequality transmits poverty from one generation to the next. Most cruelly, the poverty of a mother can blight the entire lives of her children. Each year in developing countries around 30 million children are born with impaired growth due to poor nutrition during fetal

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Inclusive economic growth through active citizens

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development. Babies born with a low birth weight are much more likely to die, and should they survive, are more likely to face a lifetime of sickness and poverty.

Poverty, the human consequence of inequality

At the sharp end of the skewed distribution of power, assets, and opportunities are the billion people who live in extreme poverty. Poverty is about much more than a low income, something that becomes particularly clear when people living in poverty are asked to define it for themselves. It is a sense of powerlessness, frustration, exhaustion, and exclusion from decision-making, not to mention the relative lack of access to public services, the financial system, and just about any other source of official support.

Although a multi-dimensional view of poverty is widely accepted in theory, in practice, attention centres on income poverty, most commonly defined by the international 'extreme poverty' line of US\$1 a day, which forms the basis of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Anyone living below that line is judged to be unable to feed themselves properly. The \$2-a-day 'poverty line' is seen as the minimum required to provide food, clothing, and shelter.



Photo by Meaghen Simms

Impoverished children in Southern Tibet.

Worldwide, some 340–470 million people constitute the 'chronically poor', trapped below the poverty line with little immediate prospect of escape. Chronic poverty exists in all regions, but is heavily concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Chronic poverty particularly affects children, older people, and people with disabilities, who face layers of social discrimination, often based on ethnicity, religion, or language.

Multiple deprivations reinforce one other. Poor people are discriminated against, but many people are also poor because they suffer discrimination. Indigenous children sent to schools that use a language foreign to them fail to acquire the education needed to find decent jobs and earn their way out of poverty, even when racial prejudice does not deny them equal opportunities. For these people, reducing the extent of their social and political exclusion and their vulnerability to shocks is more pressing than economic growth (since many of them are jobless and are likely to remain so).

In recent memory, a combination of pressure from below and enlightened leadership from above has produced some remarkable exercises in redistribution. In several East Asian countries, for example, elites have embraced the long-term case for equality, to prevent social division and to stoke a thriving economy. Taiwan and Vietnam have combined astonishing growth with high levels of equity. Indonesia and Malaysia have managed to reduce inequality over an extended period through government-led redistribution and generation of employment.

In Brazil under the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, popular movements have carried business elites along in redistributing wealth and opportunity in a hitherto appallingly unequal society. In the past decade Brazil has managed to lower its world inequality rank from second to tenth, through a mixture of good economic management and redistributing income to poor people through various government schemes. Lula's first term saw the poorest 10 per cent of the population increase their incomes by 7 per cent a year, while the incomes of the richest 10 per cent stagnated.

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International influence and the effectiveness of states

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As a result, some five million Brazilians were lifted out of poverty. A similar story of progress built on popular pressure and state action could be told of South Africa since the end of apartheid.

Active citizens and effective states

Oxfam's analysis of these and other efforts finds that inequality is best reduced through a combination of active citizens and effective states. By active citizenship, Oxfam means that combination of rights and obligations that link individuals to the state, including paying taxes and exercising the full range of political, civil, and social rights. Active citizens use these rights to improve the quality of political or civic life, through involvement in the formal economy or formal politics, or through the sort of collective action that historically has allowed poor and excluded groups to make their voices heard.

By effective states, Oxfam means states that can guarantee security and the rule of law, and can design and implement an effective strategy to ensure inclusive economic growth. History shows that no country has prospered without a state than can actively manage the development process. The extraordinary transformations of countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Botswana, or Mauritius have been led by states that ensure health and education for all, and which actively promote and manage the economy. After twenty years of erosion by deregulation, 'structural adjustment programmes', and international trade and aid agreements, many states are weak or absent. But there are no shortcuts, and neither aid nor NGOs can take its place; the road to development lies through the state.

Most development practitioners acknowledge the centrality of citizenship and the state. However, in practice, for many NGOs development is about citizenship only, while for many official donor agencies and government ministries development is only about the state. The former elevate active citizenship to be synonymous with progress, while the latter reduce it to periodic elections and 'consultation' by government. Similarly, the latter elevate the state to the be-all-and-end-all of development, while the former eschew it as beyond their remit. In Oxfam's experience, both are central to the pursuit of any development worth the name.

The focus on active citizens and effective states underlines the need to grapple with the central role of politics in development. Too often, discussions about development are conducted on the basis of policies rather than politics. Advocates adopt an 'If I ruled the world, I would do X' approach, often portraying political leaders and movements in developing countries as

irritants or obstacles. At best, politics is reduced to the depoliticized issue of 'governance'. Yet it is such leaders and movements that change societies, for better or worse, and understanding and engaging with politics is essential.

The combination of citizens and state is not intended to be a blueprint, still less an intellectual straitjacket. But Oxfam's experience on the ground suggests that some such combination lies at the heart of most, if not all, attempts to build a humane and sustainable development path, and is likely to play a vital role in tackling inequality and poverty during the course of the current century.

Mark Fried is Public Policy Coordinator for Oxfam Canada and the editor of From Poverty to Power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world, a new book from Oxfam International.

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- ^v Robert Chambers talks of the world being divided into 'uppers' and 'lowers', a description that fits numerous aspects of poverty, whether women's subjugation by men, the power imbalances between ethnic groups, or those between social classes. R. Chambers (2005) 'Whose Reality Counts?'
- ^{vi} The Millennium Development Goals were agreed by the international community in 2000, and set a number of targets for improvements in areas such as health, education, and poverty. See: www.un.org/millenniumgoals.
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The Macroeconomics of the Millennium Development Goals: Why Gender Matters

A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, Trent University

As a rights-based approach to addressing the profound range of human insecurities which currently plague our planet, there can be no doubt that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have transformed the practice of development in the early years of the 21st century. Within the UN system development policies and programs reflect the concerns of the MDGs. At the same time bilateral donors structure their aid flows around the consistency of such assistance with the MDGs. National governments increasingly try to frame policies that are MDG-consistent. Finally, and crucially, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have incorporated the MDGs into the policy framework and monitoring arrangements used under Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which now must be MDG-consistent. As a consequence, the aim of global, national, and sub-national policies designed to tackle human insecurity, at least in the rhetoric employed by global political appointees, international and national civil servants, and the array of consultants employed in the 'development business', is now about achieving the MDGs.

In this light, it is very disappointing that the UN Secretary-General has, in *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, stated that 'we are not on track to fulfill our commitments'. I suggest, though, that this is not surprising, because the macroeconomic framework of the MDGs focuses upon the most cost-efficient way of achieving the MDGs within the prevailing macroeconomic orthodoxy espoused by the international financial institutions. This macroeconomic orthodoxy has policy objectives that replicate those that pre-dated the MDGs: macroeconomic stability based upon budgetary balance; an 'enabling' environment for the private sector based upon internal de-regulation and external trade liberalization; a 'realistic' exchange rate; and export-led growth. Thus, 25 years of disappointment in many countries, and in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, has not led outsiders to reconsider the basic macroeconomic framework used to understand development and developing countries.

I want to draw attention here to one glaring failure of macroeconomic orthodoxy that, in my view, helps explain why the MDGs are unlikely to be met on a global level: its inability to incorporate the role of gender relations in macroeconomic processes. Most macroeconomists use variables that are added up across the entire economy—



Photo by Meaghen Simms

A woman sells fruit beside a busy street in Ho Chi Minh City. The informal sector is an important source of income for many women in Vietnam.

variables such as consumption, investment, government spending, imports and exports—and the social identities that reflect and affect gender relations are not considered to be relevant in understanding macroeconomic relationships between these variables. This is incorrect, for two reasons.

First, orthodox macroeconomics assumes that the distribution of output—who gets what—is outside the domain of analysis. It is, in economic language, a 'given'. This is wrong. The distribution of output is the outcome of a series of explicit and implicit choices, and gender relations are an extremely important factor in those choices—and hence the distribution of output. Gender, as a system of power, affects the division of labour in the household and, as a consequence, the division of labour between paid work in the commodity-producing economy and unpaid work in the household. As a result, labour markets are 'segmented' on the basis of gender. This gender-based distortion is, in turn, transmitted into other macroeconomic processes, in that labour market segmentation affects production, productivity, and incomes. Thus, gender-based inequalities generate 'hidden' inefficiencies that affect production, investment, distribution and economic growth. Such inefficiencies are well-documented. This helps

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The 'missing' MDG: women and time poverty

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explain, I would suggest, macroeconomic performance that fails to sustain across-the-board improvements in the indicators that make up the MDGs.

Secondly, the behaviour of individuals reflects their identity as gendered individuals. When added up across a society, this has macroeconomic implications: there is plenty of evidence that shows that patterns of consumption, investment and savings are gender-differentiated. This too helps explain macroeconomic performance that does not produce the improvements necessary to meet the MDGs. Once again, gender relations act as a structure of constraint on macroeconomic performance.

In order to integrate gender relations into the macroeconomic framework that underpins the policies and programs designed to meet the MDGs, it is necessary to accommodate three propositions. The first is that economic institutions—international organizations, states, markets, and households—bear and transmit gender bias. The second is that the economy must be defined so as to include the unpaid caring labour that goes into household production. The third is that gender relations, by affecting the division of labour, the distribution of inputs, the distribution of employment, the distribution of income, the distribution of output and the distribution of wealth, also affect production, savings, investment, net exports, and thus macroeconomic processes.

Considering macroeconomics from a gender perspective thus challenges the underlying macroeconomic framework of the MDGs. However, it also suggests why achieving the MDGs is currently off-track. Simply put, the macroeconomic framework of the MDGs, by only recognizing commodity-producing economic activity, fails to take account of the gendered allocation of time in households. Time is central to understanding of macroeconomic dynamics: there is a biologically and socially-determined minimum of unpaid caring labour that must be performed before work in the commodity-producing economy can take place, and which thus serves as a precondition for commodity production. This is why women are subject to 'time poverty'.

Time is, in this light, the most important 'missing' MDG, cross-cutting the goals in ways that have clear implications for human security. Women supply their labour to household activities at no cost, often for relational and self-fulfilling reasons of care but also for socially necessary and indeed often obligatory work. This work limits the agency of



Photo by Meaghen Simms

Village women collected water in Rajasthan, India.

women in activities beyond the household. The constraint upon women's agency imposed by time poverty places fundamental limits upon the capacity of people to take advantage of the opportunities provided by MDG-consistent PRSPs, and in so doing compromises the ability to achieve the MDGs in a way that enhances both human equality and security.

If time is indeed the 'missing' MDG, targets and indicators, as well as policies and programs, should be reconsidered in light of their impact upon the gendered allocation of time. Moreover, the integration of time—and care—into the MDG framework might lead into a reconsideration of the macroeconomic reforms promulgated in the name of MDG-consistent PRSPs because such reforms are often not, from a macroeconomic perspective, gender-neutral. This in turn suggests that economic governance, of which the MDGs are now clearly a part, needs to be rethought so as to integrate unpaid work, enhance women's agency, and in so doing challenge the prevailing structures of power and privilege that place women in the most insecure strata within society.

A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi is Professor of International Development Studies at Trent University in Peterborough, Canada. He is a member of the United Nations Development Programme's Expert Group on Unpaid Work, Economic Development and Human Well-Being, and is co-author of the forthcoming Introduction to Gender and Economics: Foundations, Theories and Policies.



A sex worker waits for customers inside a beer shop.

Photo by Meaghen Simms

Village economic diversification and HIV in rural villages in Karnataka, India

Javier Mignone & Brenda Wilson, University of Manitoba

Stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS is one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. It is currently estimated that there are 3 million individuals infected with HIV in India.ⁱ Research in rural villages of Karnataka, India has suggested that proximate factors driving the epidemic are connected to the migration of vulnerable populations.ⁱⁱ Preventive efforts to contain the epidemic have focused on a series of interventions, many of them at the proximate level. More distal interventions, such as strengthening the economic diversification of villages, should be the focus of new initiatives. Processes that stabilize the economies of rural villages may decrease migration and strengthen villagers' livelihoods, consequently improving health in general and decreasing HIV transmission in particular.

Challenges of the poor and landless farmers

Agriculture is a major economic sector in India and plays an important role in the socioeconomic aspects of development. However, the weakening of the agricultural sector over the last few decades is a major cause of concern for the country. The state of Karnataka has 55 million people and approximately two-thirds reside in rural areas. Agriculture is the mainstay of the people in the state, with cultivators and agricultural labourers' forming 56% of the workforce.ⁱⁱⁱ

There have been serious ecologically-related setbacks for agricultural productivity throughout the last few decades. Some of Karnataka's natural regions have faced severe agro-climatic and resource constraints. For instance, successive droughts from 2001 to 2004 have caused food grains production to decrease substantially, and further

exacerbated water constraints. Karnataka is one of the states with the lowest proportion of cropped area under irrigation. Approximately 64% of land in Karnataka is cultivated,^{iv} but over 70% of the cultivated land is un-irrigated.^v Most farmers in Karnataka are small, marginal, or landless farmers, and have a high incidence of debt, deal with inadequate irrigation development, are environmentally unsustainable in practice, and lead in lower productivity compared to all India in pulses, oils seeds, coconut, and cashew crops.

Among agricultural labourers in Karnataka the percentage of women overrides the percentage of men (51.89% to 41.81%).^{vi} Although there has been some progress in gender equality by narrowing the economic gap, women continue to confront inequality in economic opportunities including restrictions in occupational choices and equal wages. For example, in 2004 agricultural wages, men earned 58 rupees per day, while women earned only 38 rupees per day.

The poor situation of the agricultural sector has cast a shadow over farmers in Karnataka. Over the years, the net income of farmers at constant prices has remained almost constant, whereas the consumer price index continued to increase. Further, it forces seasonal, periodic and permanent migration. Temporary male migration is a major feature, particularly in years of failed crops, and this seems to have an impact on HIV transmission.

In particular, the poor and landless rural farmers struggle the most in coping with the agriculture productivity which has left them in a state of socio-economic distress.^{vii}

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Migration, HIV and high-risk sexual networks

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The distress among farmers has manifested itself through a persistent number of suicides, occurrence of migration, and family instability. The increased rates of migration are a cause for alarm, because it is known as a high-risk factor for the spread of sexually-transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS.

Role of migration in HIV transmission

Migration has been cited as an important factor in the global,

regional and local spread of HIV. In many settings mobile populations have shown higher HIV infection rates than those who do not move, independent of the HIV prevalence at the site of migration origin or destination. Moreover, extensive migration can serve to expand HIV epidemics geographically by bridging high-risk sexual networks in multiple locations. The assumption is that male migrants are more likely than non-migrants to engage in risky sexual behaviour because of a preponderance of predisposing

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Table 1 — Policy and Programmatic Interventions

Area of Benefit	Investment Activity	Farmer Activity
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase water table • Soil health cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent run-off • Water retention ponds
Social support/Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Counseling • Micro-credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candle making • Doll making • Toy making • Organic fertilizer/worm composting
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasta/noodle making • Clothing production • Textile design
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and leadership training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Panchayat leadership • Women self-help groups
Farm inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved farm machineries • Crop loans • Innovative technologies (e.g., integrated pest management, integrated nutrient management) • Seed testing lab 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reclamation of problematic soils
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citiculture facilities • Establishment of seed banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry land agriculture (e.g., pomegranates) • Encouragement of dairy activities • Home made food preparation • Organically produced goods
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-marketing • Agricultural service centres (like agri-clinics) • Market connectivity (e.g., fair trade) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce farmers information centres, phone-in programs • Transport to get goods to market
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop insurance • Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community warehouses • Exhibitions, field days • Removal of salt from tanks, water recharging

Prevention by strengthening local economies

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factors such as isolation from their family and social supports, and increased opportunities and resources to find new commercial and non-commercial sexual partners.

Perhaps nowhere in India are the issues of mobility of men and female sex workers more consequential for the HIV epidemic than in the “migration corridor” of northern Karnataka and southern Maharashtra.^{viii} Evidence based on HIV surveillance data and other research suggests that the HIV epidemic is most severe in this corridor, from northern Karnataka up to Pune and Mumbai. The adult HIV prevalence in the northern Karnataka districts of Bijapur, Bagalkot and Belgaum is estimated to exceed 3%.^{ix}

Policy and programmatic interventions

Preventive efforts to contain the epidemic have focused on a series of interventions, many of them at the proximate level. While these efforts are important and may have already had a positive impact, more distal interventions, such as strengthening the economic diversification of villages, should be the focus of new initiatives. Processes that stabilize the economies of rural villages, thus making them less vulnerable to natural factors such as droughts or economic factors such as commodity prices, may decrease migration and strengthen villagers’ livelihood, consequently improving health in general and decreasing HIV transmission in particular.

A partnership between the University of Agricultural Sciences-Dharwad, Village Panchayaths of northern Karnataka, and the University of Manitoba, is developing a program to enhance the economic diversification and stabilization of villages. Table I outlines the diversification interventions that are viable and conducive for agro-ecological regions prone to drought to be developed in this partnership.

Javier Mignone is assistant professor with the Faculty of Human Ecology at The University of Manitoba. He conducts research on HIV prevention in India, and on Indigenous health in Canada and Latin America.

Brenda Wilson is a graduate student with the Natural Resources Institute at The University of Manitoba. Her topic of research is “Sustainability in Bijapur District in Karnataka, India: A case assessment of poor and landless dry land farmers’ future prospects.

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