

## NCD ALLIANCE BACKGROUND BRIEFING DIALOGUE ON THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The NCD Alliance united to put non-communicable diseases (NCDs) on the global agenda. Since its inception in 2009 one of its key demands has been the inclusion of NCDs in the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the UN High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases in September 2011, Member States affirmed NCDs as one of the major challenges for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the world begins to review the current MDGs and plan for the new framework after their expiry at the end of 2015, we have a unique opportunity to build on the momentum from the Summit, and ensure that NCD prevention and control is central to future health and development planning. This background briefing provides some context for NCD advocates on the current dialogue around the MDG Review and outlines some key issues that will inform the post-2015 development framework.

### Lessons from the Past: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

#### *The History and Context*

There is general agreement that the current MDGs were the product of a specific context.

- **History:** The MDGs are derived from the Millennium Declaration, a statement agreed by all 189 UN Member States during the Millennium Summit in 2000. The Declaration includes an Annex with a basic structure of specific targets to be met by 2015 (or in one case, 2020). This structure of 8 Goals, 18 Targets and 48 Indicators constituted the MDG framework. It was updated following the UN Summit Session in 2005 to incorporate 21 Targets and 60 Indicators.
- **Political context:** The MDGs are the product of a unique and favourable political and economic climate. The 1990s were characterized by the end of Cold War, a prolonged period of prosperity in OECD Countries, public attention on economic globalization and international development issues, and a strong core group of individuals and championing countries (UK and US).
- **Key Actors:** The MDGs were based on a review of development policies by OECD with recommendations, formed on the need for greater donor financing. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee formulated, in the interest of its partners, the International Development Goals which were the inspiration for the MDGs. Clare Short the Minister of the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) in the late 1990s with the Utstein Group (Women Development Ministers from the Netherlands, Norway and Germany) were primary advocates and supporters for the International Development Goals which drew the attention of the UN, specifically Kofi Annan. Kofi Annan and a handful of UN experts developed the Millennium Declaration from which the MDGs were created.

#### *The Strengths*

- **Clear and concise:** The MDGs have political appeal and popular power in part because of their brevity. They are simple and have narrative power with eight goals that provided a clear vision toward universal poverty eradication. They are intuitively understood and communicated easily to a general audience.
- **Mobilised public and political support:** The MDGs raised awareness and build a constituency for development, reflected by increases in aid pledges, the growth of broader campaigns such as 'Make Poverty History', greater political priority for poverty reduction in developing countries, and the development of popular movements against poverty in many countries.

- **Improved Monitoring:** Increased national capacity for monitoring development, particularly around statistics, has been cited as one of the foremost achievements of the MDGs. Through the data a clearer picture was formulated on the state of development in the countries. It was an important tool to assess the successes and drawbacks of the MDG initiatives.

### ***The Criticisms***

- **Donor-led:** The process to define the MDGs has been criticized for not being inclusive of all Member States. This resulted in a development framework that is largely donor-driven and pays little attention to the national and local context. The MDGs were developed by a small elite group behind closed doors, and without developing country participation or engagement with other stakeholders.
- **Reductionist:** Critics identify many missing dimensions of the MDGs, claiming they are oversimplified by focusing on poverty reduction rather than the broader development agenda. Development in the MDGs largely reflects a basic needs agenda, but this fails to capture the broader dynamic of development in the Millennium Declaration– including human rights, environment, democracy and governance. In turn, donors have utilized the MDGs to develop a narrow focus on funding. This has had adverse effect on health showing that diseases that specified in the MDGs did not receive adequate funding.
- **Unfair:** Some argue the MDGs penalize and stigmatise the poorest countries where achieving the goals is a greater challenge. In other words, the goals were unachievable from inception. The architects claim the MDGs are being misinterpreted as one size fits all.
- **Hide inequality:** Progress toward achieving the MDGs is based on national and global averages. This methodology for measuring success hides inequality within countries. It has been widely stated that vulnerable populations such as ethnic minorities and those living in remote countries i.e. landlocked states, small island states, have been excluded from MDG progress.
- **Unequal progress:** Progress on goals and targets has not been equal. Whilst there has been major progress, MDG 5 (reducing maternal mortality) is the most off-track. Additionally, there has been specific criticism of MDG 7 (environmental sustainability) for not reflecting previous climate change agreements and frameworks, and of MDG 8 (global partnership) for being a combination of many issues ranging from trade to debt to youth employment.

## **Directions for the Future: The Post-2015 Development Framework**

### ***The Current Development Landscape***

The poverty and development context has changed dramatically in the past two decades. Global trends and patterns of inequality, demography, migration, urbanization, consumption and production are creating new challenges that threaten to derail development. The focus will have to be on stable, equitable and inclusive growth.

- **Definition of poverty:** Inequality levels have risen especially in middle-income countries, rather than low-income countries. Structural and imbedded inequality is preventing the most vulnerable and marginalized achieve MDG progress. While current MDGs define progress in terms of social indicators (e.g. health and education), new poverty thinking centers on a more comprehensive and holistic approach to poverty – focusing on complexity; how the poor define themselves; and new measures of progress such as ‘human wellbeing.’
- **New and emerging issues:** Changes in the current development landscape, new and emerging issues such as climate change, armed conflict, good governance food security and equitable

growth with a strong attention to employment are gaining traction to be prioritized in the upcoming framework. Potential themes include the three pillars of Sustainable Development: environmental, economic and social. These issue categories illustrate some of the misgivings of the MDGs. To alleviate the adverse effects of these challenges is an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive approach to development.

- **Political context:** The global political context has undergone a major shift with emerging economies such as the BRICS increasing power in global negotiations on the economy, trade and climate change. Former recipients of aid countries are emerging as potential influential donors with a different perspective on the development agenda. Their influence would re-prioritize development issues important to them as donors.

### ***The Structure***

Discussion on reforming the current structure is broadly focused around the three options:

- **Retain the current MDGs:** One camp argues that many of the MDGs will not be achieved by 2015, so it makes sense to retain the current set of goals and extend the timeline. Some suggest a deadline of either 2020 or 2025, others suggest no timeline at all – although there is danger that by removing the time-bound targets would weaken the incentivising power of the MDGs.
- **Retain the framework and add new goals:** The core set of MDGs in the area of poverty reduction and social development will continue to be of relevance after 2015. But it would be supplemented by additional goals or targets filling gaps in the existing MDG catalogue. Others argue to collapse some of the goals – for example the three health-related goals – into one overall healthgoal to make room for new issues.
- **An alternative development paradigm:** The MDGs are firmly embedded in the human development paradigm of development. Other development paradigms are now competing for space, including sustainable development, well-being and a human rights-based approach. Uniting economic, social and environmental policies into the ‘Sustainable Development’ framework is dominating international discussion on development. The forthcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) is likely to result in the development of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), which may take the place of the MDGs or alternatively be meshed with elements of the existing MDGs.

### ***The Principles***

It has been suggested that a more comprehensive concept to development should form the basis of the future development framework, based upon five guiding principles - holism; equity of opportunity; sustainability; ownership of goals; and global obligation. To include specifically those below:

- **Holism:** Avoid gaps in a development agenda and realize synergies between its different components. Rather than assembling specific, independent goals to make a development agenda, as was done for the current MDGs, the formulation of goals needs to start by identifying the elements that deliver most human, social and environmental development, and recognize and accommodate as best as possible for gaps through interconnected dimensions.
- **Equity and fairness:** The UN has decided to revisit the Millennium Declaration and attempt to incorporate the core values into achievable development goals. The values are stable, equitable and inclusive growth through a human rights lens. The principles of equity apply across generations, and within generations.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability was not addressed in the MDGs, apart from MDG 7 from the perspective of environmental sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainable wellbeing is broader, and is an important feature of the different development dimensions.
- **Ownership:** Focused approach on national ownership so that individual states can adapt the MDGs to their current development context. This would incorporate the disparity that is beginning to arise in donor countries as well when it comes to poverty.
- **Global obligation:** The difficulty of establishing global agreements regarding obligations beyond national boundaries, as has been shown with legally binding agreements on climate change. The challenge of taking forward the MDGs entails developing normative language of shared obligation, based upon values of human rights of all citizens.

## Useful Resources

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