

Commonwealth perspectives:

Ideas for a new development agenda



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2015
millennium campaign

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A civil society review of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in Commonwealth countries.

This project aims to encourage and articulate civil society analysis of: progress towards the MDGs; the usefulness of the MDG framework for civil society; the contribution of civil society to the attainment of the MDGs; issues for a post-2015 agenda to consider.

A series of national reports document the outputs of a two-stage process: desk research to review UN, government, civil society and other multilateral reports on national progress towards achieving the MDGs; and national consultation workshops with civil society, which tested the findings of the desk research and enabled a deeper discussion on MDG progress, utility and post-2015 agenda setting.

This project was undertaken as part of a programme with the UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC), which supported country-level research by civil society organisations in 20 countries.

The Commonwealth Foundation led this process for the following 14 countries: Cameroon, Ghana, Grenada, Jamaica, Malawi, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Zambia. The UNMC led in the following six countries: India, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and South Africa.

Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation is a development organisation with an international remit and reach, uniquely situated at the interface between government and civil society. We develop the capacity of civil society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives. We strive for more effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation, which contributes to improved development outcomes.

UN Millennium Campaign

The UN Millennium Campaign was established by the UN Secretary General in 2002. The Campaign supports citizens' efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 world leaders from rich and poor countries, as part of the Millennium Declaration which was signed in 2000. These leaders agreed to achieve the Goals by 2015. Our premise is simple: we are the first generation that can end poverty and we refuse to miss this opportunity.

Commonwealth perspectives: Ideas for a new development agenda

1. A vision of a future Commonwealth development framework

This project gave civil society an opportunity to reflect on its experiences of the MDGs and articulate its aspirations for a future development landscape. The process, involving extensive consultations in 2012 and 2013 with a diverse range of civil society across 14 countries, enabled analysis of progress on the MDGs and the extent to which civil society has been able to participate in, influence and benefit from MDG attainment. The intent was to generate recommendations to influence the new development frameworks being shaped for the post-2015 era. For the Commonwealth Foundation, with its focus on participatory governance, the extent to which the MDGs have created opportunities for civil society, and the learning this generates for future inclusivity in development agendas, are crucial.

An overall critique of the MDGs

While the consultations naturally brought to light a diversity of views, both within and between countries, when viewed as a whole, remarkable areas of consensus emerged.

The consultations revealed deep dissatisfaction with the extent of civil society's opportunities to engage with the MDGs at the national level. In the view of many consulted, inadequate civil society involvement has hindered progress, and so this must be enhanced in future processes. While some progress is acknowledged, unevenly across different countries, on the whole the consultations assessed that most countries will fall short of meeting most MDGs. Key reasons put forward are that the MDGs are seen as: (i) not always appropriate to national and sub-national contexts, (ii) having insufficiently engaged citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs), and (iii) having been constrained by other global agendas and institutions.

An alternative vision

Based on the critiques and recommendations made in the consultations, a clear alternative vision emerges of what a future development framework could look like. In this vision:

- Development goals still speak to globally agreed themes but are sufficiently adaptable to address national and sub-national priorities
- Global themes and national and sub-national priorities, targets, indicators and measurement tools are arrived at through broad-based, open and inclusive processes, explicitly designed to enable and support the participation of citizens and CSOs

- Governments and donors invest more in supporting the conditions that enable citizens and CSOs to participate in development processes more fully, proactively and effectively, including by introducing more enabling laws and policies
- Partnerships with CSOs are built into development agreements, and the status and success of partnerships are evaluated alongside development outcomes, with indicators to measure success agreed, measured and reported
- New development frameworks include widespread campaigns of public awareness raising to promote the understanding that citizens have a right to participate in their development
- A greater range of data on the progress of development initiatives is collected and published, with citizens and CSOs taking part in data gathering, monitoring and evaluation, and measurements going beyond quantitative measures to include those of quality and citizens' experiences
- Donors meet their commitments, are consistent and predictable, and provide part of their support directly to CSOs

2. Critiques of current development practice and proposals for the future

Make development goals adaptable, domesticated and localised

While some consultations highlighted the value of headline global commitments for holding governments to account and shaping advocacy, a widely shared critique is that the MDGs are not sufficiently flexible to allow for localisation and customisation to different country contexts. Some goals and targets lack relevance in some contexts, while consultations drew attention to significant areas of omission, such as youth unemployment, and goals to address issues of transparency, accountability and governance. There were also concerns about poor synchronisation with national development plans.

A related and widespread concern was the inability of nationally set development frameworks, including those linked with the MDGs, to properly reflect and address sub-national differences and inequalities. Even when national MDG headline figures point to good performance, this often conceals considerable localised disparity. Most consultations pointed to sub-national regions or distinct groups that are not well reached by development initiatives and tend to experience below average development outcomes. It was suggested that part of the reason for this is that development processes are insufficiently participatory and inclusive, and so do not take meaningful account of the needs of different groups.

The implication of this is that future goals, while retaining a global relevance, should have greater flexibility to allow adaptation to meet national and sub-national needs, so that they will be more relevant, effective and wide-reaching. Goals, targets, indicators and intervention and measurement methods should

all be adaptable. Localisation necessarily requires broad-based and inclusive processes in which citizens and CSOs can participate in order to ensure that local priorities are served, local assets utilised, and local capacities built.

Address inequality and marginalisation

Inequality, particularly income inequality, was raised as an issue in most consultations. In some focus countries, gaps between the richest and poorest parts of the population have grown, and there are countries where poverty gaps have increased. This comes despite strong economic growth in some cases. The broader critique this supports is that, while GDP growth can have positive impacts on people's incomes, any automatic connection between growth and the movement of people out of poverty is quite weak. While some decision-makers appear to see economic growth as a panacea, the view from the consultations was that growth alone is not a sufficient engine for people's development, and renewed attention therefore needs to be paid to mechanisms of income distribution, social safety nets and measures to improve employment conditions. Further, recent global economic setbacks, experienced at the country level through such phenomena as food and fuel price leaps, have pushed people back into poverty in several countries, suggesting that earlier gains in reducing poverty did not run deep, and many people remain vulnerable to falling back into poverty.

Many consultations observed an interaction between social inequality and income inequality, drawing attention to marginalised groups that, as well as being under-served by development efforts, are economically disadvantaged and remain disproportionately vulnerable to economic setbacks and crises, including natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Marginalised and disadvantaged groups include those marked by location (with urban/rural divides important in many contexts), ethnicity, gender, age and other facets of identity. However, the MDGs do not address inequality. Development goals that are blind to the distinct needs of different groups are likely to run up against entrenched patterns of inequality.

These deficits suggest not only a need for more inclusive processes, but also more fundamentally, for new development frameworks to adopt a renewed social justice focus and promote a rights-based approach, such that citizens, including those in marginalised groups, can mobilise to demand their rights to development. It also requires disaggregated data to enhance knowledge about how different groups are faring in development initiatives, and suggests a need to agree on a way of measuring whether inequality is increasing or decreasing. As many CSOs are best placed to connect with marginalised and disadvantaged groups, often having their origins in such communities, this also suggests that improving the conditions for CSOs will help to enhance mobilisation by marginalised people.

Move from supply side development to demand side development

This vision for a different way of doing development is based on a critique of current practice, particularly as it has been organised around the MDGs, as essentially being driven by supply rather than demand. The MDGs have focused attention on a narrow range of quantitative targets, agreed at the global level largely without the input of the citizens of countries expected to realise them, and have arguably encouraged a technical, top-down approach to development, rather than a rights-based, demand driven approach. In this critique, citizens are reduced to beneficiaries, with their role one of receiving development services that they did not necessarily ask for and can exert little influence over. In most cases consultations reported that MDG-related initiatives have been framed with less participation than previous domestic poverty reduction strategies, with corresponding lower ownership.

A related criticism of the MDGs frequently made in the consultations is that citizens are largely unaware of them. This implies weak demand: if citizens are unaware of development goals, they cannot demand their right to the resources and interventions that emanate from the goals. Nor can citizens adequately take part in the exercise of accountability over development efforts, particularly if, because of a lack of prior consultation and customisation, they do not see them as particularly relevant. Awareness raising initiatives are in danger of appearing as an afterthought if citizens have not been adequately involved in the design of development frameworks; if public indifference results, it is perhaps not surprising.

Take better account of global realities

A further level of inequality identified in the consultations comes at the international level, particularly between developed and developing countries. The MDG framework treats developed and developing countries differently; only the catch-all Goal 8 applies to developed countries, and there was considerable dissatisfaction about its imprecise definition. This means the MDGs fall short of a genuine partnership between countries, and there is a corresponding imbalance in the exercise of accountability over MDG progress. Most scrutiny is asserted over the question of whether developing countries are meeting quantitative targets; in comparison little accountability seems to be practised over Goal 8, even though official development assistance (ODA) remains far short of the long-established target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income of donor countries, and has recently fallen on average. Criticisms were further expressed about conditions donors attach to funding, the influence on ODA of the changing priorities of donor governments, and the volatility of aid.

The MDGs were also criticised for not taking account of structural global power imbalances, such as the impact of an unfair global trading regime on developing countries, or the external influences on a country's development. The MDGs have not demonstrated the flexibility to adjust to changing global power realities, such as the rise of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) group of countries, and there is a sense that other agendas, such as trade, have cut across them.

This suggests that a new development framework needs to acknowledge such global realities, and be sufficiently flexible to adjust to them as they change. It also needs to place more emphasis on unpacking the notion of partnerships for development and making these truly mutual, and on improving accountability of donor commitments.

Improve the data

Most consultations drew attention to challenges with data, which can be outdated, incomplete, over-aggregated, inaccurate, or open to accusations of bias. In some contexts, CSOs questioned official assessments of progress and disputed data. These limitations make it harder to exercise accountability and target interventions towards areas of greatest need.

More disaggregated data is needed to support better localisation and to enable development initiatives to adjust more quickly. Data should be democratised to improve accountability and build consensus over its accuracy. New technology offers tools that would help to stimulate more citizen participation in generating data and exercising accountability.

Look beyond numbers at quality

A critique from several consultations was that the MDGs have encouraged too narrow a focus on trying to push numbers up or down – for example, on getting higher percentages of people into education or healthcare. In most countries covered by this analysis, the most tightly and narrowly defined goals on numbers in school and healthcare are the ones with the greatest successes reported. While the benefits of this are acknowledged, a further challenge, beyond the considerable disparities between different groups that broad numerical indicators can overlook, is that quantitative measures alone cannot sufficiently take account of how citizens experience poverty and development.

For example, consultation reports suggest that the apparent assumption that education automatically drives empowerment needs to be more strongly interrogated, particularly in the context of high youth unemployment that characterises so many Commonwealth countries. While a country may report 100 per cent enrolment in schools, this may be undermined by huge class sizes, absent teachers, inadequate teaching methods, materials and curriculum, and a scarcity of jobs to follow education. If the transformative potential of education is to be realised, this implies that focus now needs to fall on the content and quality of education.

Further, several consultations critiqued the narrowness and inappropriateness of the US\$1.25 a day standard measure of extreme poverty. Given growing current discourse about concepts of well-being, non-income measures of poverty and the value of local resources, this again suggests a need to adopt more flexible measures that can encompass more ways of assessing the quality of citizens' experiences.

3. Enabling conditions for civil society as an underpinning development need

The structural absence of civil society in the MDGs

CSOs believe that the energy, ideas and public trust they offer mean they have an essential role to play at all stages of the process for initiating and realising future development goals. This is because they are often close to and understand particular communities with which they have worked for many years, and can play multiple roles beyond service delivery – including promoting accountability, undertaking research, analysis and public mobilisation, and advancing solutions and alternatives.

An overarching problem for civil society that has hindered engagement with the MDGs is that the current framework privileges governments, including donors, as the deliverers of development. When the MDG framework mentions partnerships, it means government-to-government partnerships, between developing country governments and developed country donors, along with some private sector partnerships entailed by Goal 8. That the MDGs do not mandate a proper role for CSOs is more than symbolic: it means that CSOs are not enabled to demand a full role as development partners by right, and as such, CSO inclusion comes on a concessionary basis. When partnerships with CSOs are at the discretion of governments, the risks are of favouritism, co-option, ad hoc and volatile relationships and lack of equal voice; when partnerships with CSOs come in response to donor demands, the principle of the autonomous voice of civil society can be compromised and the critique some governments make of some CSOs as foreign agents unintentionally reinforced. At the same time the MDGs are silent on the conditions for civil society, and issues of governance, accountability and participation, meaning that these have become disconnected from notions of development.

Based on these critiques, an essential principle of new development frameworks should be that CSOs are explicitly included as partners, and that development frameworks should address the question of how to enhance and invest in conditions that enable full and systematic CSO participation and the exercise of their multiple roles. The understanding of roles and partnerships should go beyond service delivery to encompass other valuable CSO functions.

An enabling environment and improving relationships between civil society and government

Yet CSOs, during the consultations, drew attention to several disabling factors that prevent their full participation in the MDGs and national development frameworks. In many countries consultations identified deficits in the legal, regulatory and political conditions for CSOs, including in the key freedoms of association, assembly and expression. In some countries, the lack of adequate freedom of information legislation was mentioned as hampering civil society attempts to play an accountability role. In several countries attention was drawn

to laws, often introduced recently, that give governments power to intervene in legitimate CSO activities, for example by scrutinising funding and blocking the holding of events. A view frequently expressed was that while there tends to be government support for or tolerance of CSO roles in delivering services, this frequently turns to hostility when CSOs attempt to mobilise citizens to make demands, advocate for policy shifts or exercise scrutiny.

While some new CSO connections were reported as resulting from the focus on the MDGs, including with donors and governments, and between CSOs, concerns were also expressed about instances of superficial and selective consultation. The fear in such cases must be that civil society finds itself in the position of conferring legitimacy on processes where it lacks genuine voice. The danger in a disempowering context is that civil society's role is relegated to one of gap-filling in development frameworks agreed by others, rather than being a source of alternatives, creative solutions and reality checks.

CSO resourcing

Adequate resourcing for CSOs should be seen as part of the enabling environment. Yet as the MDGs did not stipulate a partnership role for CSOs, systematic and specific funding to support their contributions to the MDGs did not follow. While some new opportunities were noted as resulting from a focus on the MDGs, consultations suggested that much of this came as a result of donor intervention, raising concerns about perceptions of the autonomy of CSOs, and with donors sometimes criticised for treating CSOs in an instrumental manner.

While CSO concerns about limited funding are perennial, a trend identified in several countries was a growth in the provision of direct budget support by donors to governments, and of basket funding approaches that combine the resources of several donors. In such circumstances, the potential source of support for civil society effectively becomes a national government rather than a donor. In countries where the relationship between civil society and government is weak, this is a disempowering scenario.

4. Suggested areas of focus for a future Commonwealth development framework

Despite the limitations outlined above, opinion was broadly that there remains some value in having headline goals around which political will and advocacy can be exercised. At the same time, consultations identified many development priorities that have not been adequately addressed, or which have emerged over the lifetime of the MDGs, that could be addressed in future goals. At the Commonwealth level, it is necessary to focus and prioritise, to make best use of the Commonwealth's track record, resources and strategic advantages. On this basis, the following emerge as priorities from these consultations for a post-2015 Commonwealth development framework.

Gender empowerment

The Commonwealth has long been recognised as a leading agency in gender empowerment, for example, by pioneering concepts and methods of gender budgeting. While most focus countries have performed well on improving the number of girls in school, on other indicators for Goal 3, such as increasing the proportion of women in non-agricultural labour and women in parliament, performance was mostly poor. This could in part be attributed to time lag between increasing enrolment and the benefits that may accrue, but consultations in some countries that have long achieved gender parity in education, such as those in the Caribbean, reported that this has not translated into equality in the labour market or at the household level. There does not appear to be a routine connection between getting girls into education and changing gender power dynamics, suggesting a need for more actions beyond education, including those that increase the potential for women to hold leadership positions in public and private institutions.

Young people, decent work

Most of the countries covered by this project have a high youth population, and as a whole people under 30 make up about 60 per cent of the Commonwealth's population. Almost all the consultations suggested that insufficient attention is being paid to the needs of young people. Concerns about young people particularly included unemployment, underemployment, reliance on the informal economy – which is hard to reach through policy intervention – and the lack of decent work. These are identified as pressing issues for the population as a whole, but particularly as they relate to young people, including educated, urban youth, and also women. This was perhaps the single largest cluster of concerns assessed as not adequately covered by the MDGs, suggesting that this should be a key priority area for the future.

Small states and vulnerabilities

Thirty-two of the Commonwealth's 54 member nations are classed as small states, and many of these are also classified as least developed countries. Small states, as the consultations made clear, continue to share challenges such as high vulnerability - including to global economic shifts, and the disproportionate impact of natural disasters and climate change - absence of economies of scale, structural trade disadvantages and high rates of migration. The particular needs of small states are inadequately served by their current mention as part of Goal 8. Given its composition, a Commonwealth imperative is clear.

Non-communicable diseases

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) were identified in the consultations as a growing problem in most countries. Heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and conditions associated with obesity are rising as causes of death, linked to poor quality diet and changing lifestyles. Even as some gains are being made in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and improving the treatment and prevention of TB and malaria, NCDs are offering a new emergency. A Commonwealth advantage here is that there is already high level political acknowledgment of the problem of

NCDs in Commonwealth countries, as set out for example in the 2009 Statement on Commonwealth Action to Combat Non-Communicable Diseases.¹ This represents a relatively non-controversial area on which close collaboration could be established between governments and civil society.

Education

Education represents another area where much prior work has been undertaken to define Commonwealth priorities. Stakeholders at the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Partners' Forum, August 2012, helped define key recommendations for a post 2015 education development agenda.² Three core concerns - access, quality and equity - were raised,³ recognising that:

- Access to education means little without quality
- The limited competencies of many people who receive basic education implies that greater attention should be paid to learning outcomes
- Improving the quality of school leadership results in improvements in teacher quality
- There is need to eliminate differences in educational outcomes associated with household wealth, gender, special needs, location, age and social group
- The inclusion of health education in the curriculum helps increase awareness of and combat challenges such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, poor diet and drug use
- The development of skills for employment and entrepreneurship, including IT and technology skills, particularly for young people, can contribute to resilient, flexible and adaptive economic development

5. Looking forward

The above priorities have the potential to foster cooperative partnerships between civil society and governments. In addition, the Commonwealth strength of sharing good practices and solutions between different countries can be realised. In leading in these areas, there is an opportunity for Commonwealth countries to take the lead in modelling good practice in development in these particular spheres.

At the same time there is a need to avoid repeating a central problem with the MDGs, of focussing mostly on what thematic goals should address, to the detriment of identifying ways of working through which greatest progress can be achieved. The consultations have shown that the practice of development needs to change. Development frameworks should stipulate inclusive processes, not least so that goals can be appropriate, interventions relevant to different groups, accountability exercised and partnerships formed. This implies in turn that improving the environment for CSOs so that they can respond fully to new opportunities should be an integral part of new development goals.

¹ Available at <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/press/31555/217483/291109ncds.htm>

² Stakeholders' Recommendations on Post-2015 Education Development Agenda, October 2012. Paper prepared by the Commonwealth Foundation with input from education specialists who participated in the 18CCEM Stakeholders' Forum. Available at <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/project/18ccem>. Date accessed: 20 March 2013

³ Recommendations of the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Framework for Education. Paper available at <http://www.ukfieth.org/cop/2013/recommendations-of-the-commonwealth-ministerial-working-group-on-the-post-2015-development-framework-for-education>. Date accessed: 20 March 2013

National report executive summaries

Executive summaries of the national reports are included in this publication. Full reports are available at www.commonwealthfoundation.com

Cameroon	13
Ghana	16
Grenada	19
Jamaica	22
Malawi	25
New Zealand	28
Pakistan	31
Samoa	34
Sierra Leone	37
Sri Lanka	40
Tanzania	43
Trinidad and Tobago	46
Uganda	49
Zambia	52
Appendix: Millennium Development Goals and targets	55

Cameroon

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Cameroon on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Cameroonian civil society organisations (CSOs) have made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

Initial research and consultation, led by the African Development Interchange Network in the first half of 2012, consisted of: a review of reports and documentation, including government data; interviews with CSOs, government representatives and development agencies; and a focus group meeting. Collectif des ONG pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et le Développement Rural (COSADER) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation then convened a national consultation in December 2012 to verify and enrich the research findings and make further recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Cameroon

The assessment of CSOs is that progress on the MDGs has been uneven since the last civil society review in 2005, with different levels of achievement in different parts of Cameroon. The areas in which most progress has been made are Goals 2 and 3, while Goals 7 and 8 are assessed as unlikely to be achieved. The achievement of other goals is viewed as uncertain; on the issues covered by some goals, particularly Goal 5, there seems to have been regression in recent years. Obstacles to achievement identified by civil society include disconnected sectors, a lack of transparency among political actors, economic exclusion and a tendency to concentrate resource inputs at the top of structures, eg in healthcare. More broadly, CSOs believe that economic growth has not brought about clear and sustained improvement in the living conditions of many. They point to continuing unemployment and heavy reliance on the informal sector, particularly among young people.

CSOs feel the MDG framework's principal value is as a tool for holding government to account, rather than as a direct driver of CSO development interventions. The framework means that government has clearly based some policies around MDG attainment, making monitoring of government development initiatives easier than if the framework did not exist. Perception of the MDGs as a legitimate framework for implementation and monitoring of development seems to have strengthened over time. Cameroonian CSOs assert that since the previous civil society review, they have shown more visibility in engagement on the MDGs, and increased their work in the field, advocacy activities and networking.

The MDGs were acknowledged to have offered CSOs a platform to press claims that they should be full partners in development, and as such to have improved the legitimacy of CSOs and their negotiation opportunities. CSOs also believe the MDGs have created new scope for them to fundraise from donors. CSOs feel that the principle of the value of civil society partnerships for development is now more accepted within government, and that the debate has moved on to the question of the degree of co-operation.

Challenges identified include the accuracy and reliability of official data and difficulties in access to information. Further, while CSOs acknowledge recent government efforts to tighten laws on corruption, they still see corruption as an intrinsic part of the political landscape that hampers attainment of the MDGs, and feel the governmental system remains opaque, hindering proper oversight of progress on the MDGs. Another persistent challenge for civil society monitoring is attracting sufficient financial resources for sustained and comprehensive sensitisation of the public and for advocacy initiatives.

CSOs therefore suggest that any new development framework should pay attention to improving access to information and tackling corruption. They also stress the importance of focusing on issues beyond economic matters, and of placing human rights at the centre of the realisation of the MDGs. Among other topics identified as needing to be addressed in any new development framework are land-grabbing, which has emerged as an issue where law reform is needed, and addressing youth

unemployment, including through the promotion of youth entrepreneurship opportunities. Recent decentralisation, with the transfer of some areas of competence and financial resources from central government to municipal councils, also suggests a changed context that offers new opportunities for engagement, and this needs to be taken into account in any new national development framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations made by CSOs to accelerate progress on existing MDGs include:

- Prioritising infrastructural development, particularly of roads and social housing.
- Improving clean water provision to reduce incidence of water-borne disease.
- Enhancing access to credit for small farmers.
- Providing tax incentives for the import of computer equipment.
- Disaggregating MDG data to enable better targeting.
- Publishing full details of official development assistance (ODA) supplied to Cameroon for the MDGs.

Recommendations made by CSOs to improve future development frameworks include the following:

- Institute a civil society development observatory as a citizen-owned and led monitoring and evaluation mechanism, parallel to official efforts. This would connect with the decentralisation process to capture and convey assessments of development achievements by communities at a local level.
- Ensure that a portion of financing for development flows directly to local communities, through CSOs, to mitigate against corruption and avoid the delays that can characterise projects solely controlled by government.
- Prioritise linking civil society across all stages of socio-economic policy design and strengthen the fundraising capacities of CSOs.
- To encourage these positive changes, international actors, including UN and Commonwealth agencies, should engage in more dialogue with the government to encourage it to improve its level of co-operation with CSOs.

Ghana

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Ghana on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Ghanaian civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

For this review, in the first half of 2012, the Ghana Integrity Institute conducted interviews with key informants, held focus group discussions and reviewed assessments made by government, CSOs, UN agencies and donors on MDG progress. The Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation then convened a national consultation in December 2012 to verify and augment the research and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Ghana

CSOs see a mixed picture of progress on the MDGs. They consider that Goal 2 will be achieved and Goal 1 is likely to be achieved by 2015, while there has been significant progress on Goal 3, but all its targets may not be met. CSOs consider that it is unlikely that Goals 4 and 5 will be achieved by 2015 and that there has been a mixture of progression and regression on Goal 7. They assess Goal 8 as off track and Goal 6 as having regressed. CSOs point out that national headline figures mask considerable geographical inequalities, with Ghana's three northern regions remaining the country's poorest areas; many communities and districts in these regions in particular are lagging in relation to poverty levels and access to services.

CSOs report that they have found the MDG framework useful partly as a common reference point to bring together different actors. The MDGs have for some time existed alongside Ghana's national development frameworks, but an aspect of the added value of the MDGs is their status as a global agreement on which the government seeks to demonstrate it is making progress.

Part of the civil society response to the MDGs has been the formation of new CSO coalitions, such as the Ghana Civil Society Coalition on the MDGs, which has the objective of building Ghanaian citizens' capacity to hold government accountable for the delivery of the MDGs. There is also considerable CSO presence on national level committees that work on thematic aspects of the MDGs. For instance, in the health sector, there is a strong CSO presence in meetings and committees, although there remains the challenge of CSOs having the necessary capacity to make the most of the space

and the opportunities for making an input. CSOs still face challenges in their capacity to undertake policy advocacy, although they believe there have been some recent improvements.

CSOs consider that participation in MDG processes has helped to build their legitimacy, and that the MDGs have provided a platform for enhanced engagement with government and international organisations. The latter are seen as useful for stimulating co-operation and funding. CSOs feel, however, that donor funding can drive the civil society agenda, compelling CSOs to focus on funding agencies' priority areas, risking neglect of important issues that fall outside immediate donor priorities. CSOs also fear loss of donor support as the result of the economic crisis in Europe and Ghana's attainment of middle-income status.

One area of apparent donor reluctance reported by CSOs is in the provision of sufficient funding to enable CSOs to play their monitoring role to its full extent. Other identified barriers to CSOs exercising oversight include lack of a right to information legislation and delayed, out-dated and highly aggregated data.

In looking to the future, CSOs involved in this review see a need for continuing work even after targets are achieved, as most targets, even if attained, leave room for improvement. They also believe that continuing interventions are needed to ensure that achievements are not reversed. For these reasons, and because they believe some headway has been made in raising awareness about the MDGs (although they acknowledge a need to improve media engagement), some CSOs caution against the adoption of new frameworks and accompanying

new jargon to supplant the current MDGs. Regardless of which goals are decided upon, CSOs suggest that to accelerate progress will need stronger accountability and greater focus on addressing regional imbalances within Ghana.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Among civil society recommendations to accelerate progress are:

- Strengthen CSOs' capacity to understand and identify the most effective policies, entry points and interventions to increase progress towards the MDGs; bolster their capacity to undertake research; and further strengthen coalitions for stronger co-ordination between CSOs.
- Alongside donor support for civil society, government support is needed, through an independent funding mechanism specifically for CSOs working on the MDGs. This would help bring about more effective civil society engagement on the MDGs, and would strengthen partnership between CSOs and the government.
- Attention needs to be paid to the enabling environment for civil society. A right to information law is needed to help monitoring, evidence-based advocacy and constructive participation in development planning.
- Related to this, data should be brought up to date and released more quickly so that they can more realistically reflect what is happening in communities and guide interventions and oversight better. There is also a need for more disaggregated data.

Key civil society recommendations for shaping a future development framework include:

- A greater focus on equity issues, and new indicators to measure progress in infrastructural development.
- Processes towards development goals should complement those that address governance gaps.
- There is a need for stronger sub-national structures, including district assemblies, that can play a bigger role, and for the representation of women in these to be strengthened.

Grenada

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Grenada on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Grenadian civil society organisations (CSOs) have made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The first stage of the review process, led by the Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA) in the first half of 2012, included a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data from local, regional and international sources, and interviews, focus group discussions and workshops, involving representatives of civil society, government, statutory bodies and members of the public. In a second stage in December 2012, the Agency for Rural Transformation (ART) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation convened a national consultation to verify and augment the review findings and make further recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Grenada

In their review of achievements, CSOs believe there has been significant progress on Goals 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, while there has been less progress or regression on Goals 1, 6 and 8. CSOs identified continuing poverty as a challenge: there are persistent pockets of poverty, and social and economic exclusion affects access to services, eg in education and health. Youth unemployment and youth poverty were also identified as a major challenge. CSOs report that external shocks have hampered progress on the MDGs, showing the vulnerability of national development policies to outside forces such as the global economic crisis and the long-term impacts of natural disasters, which have affected employment and income.

Overall, CSOs consulted viewed the MDG framework as a useful mechanism in theory to focus efforts and interventions, but it was generally considered that in practice the framework has only been used to shape activities to a limited extent, both by government and civil society. CSOs assess that the budget for the MDGs has not been sufficient; that the mechanisms for the integration of the MDGs into planning have been inadequate; and that the absence of reliable and timely data has hindered monitoring. They also believe inadequate attention has been paid to localising the MDGs to make them relevant to the national context.

While a Millennium Development Goals National Committee (MDGNC) was established in 2010, with civil society representation, many view this as inadequate, with long gaps between meetings and no visible commitment to improving its functioning, meaning that it is not seen to provide a useful

forum for information sharing, encouraging collaboration or exercising accountability. CSOs also believe that there is an ongoing lack of public knowledge about the MDGs.

CSOs do not believe that MDG processes have led to the instigation of a significant number of new partnerships between government and civil society, and within civil society itself. However, they believe the potential for this remains, and there are generally positive views about the possibility of increasing long-term co-operation. The majority of CSOs consulted also stated that they did not obtain any major direct benefit from the MDGs, for example in increased financial support or networking. Only a minority of CSOs reported that the MDG framework has greatly influenced their priorities, although this suggests an increase from the previous study in 2005, when no CSOs reported this.

CSOs believe more could be accomplished with additional support for civil society and the adoption of a more focused approach among civil society actors to achieving influence. Many, however, report facing a recent decline in finances, and need financial support to sustain their operations and capacity building to strengthen their competencies. CSOs also acknowledge that they could do more to integrate MDG targets into their programmes and plans.

CSOs suggest that a number of issues have come to prominence that should be addressed in any new development framework. These include non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, which are exacerbated by the relationship between poverty and poor diet, and the quality and content of education,

with a suggested need to focus beyond the attainment of school enrolment targets on such matters as the inclusion of children with disabilities, early childhood development and the role of secondary education in preparing students for work opportunities. CSOs also raised the need for land titling reform: difficulty in obtaining legal title to land that has been passed down through families hinders people's ability to participate in entrepreneurial activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations to accelerate and build on progress include:

- In areas where good progress has been made, such as Goal 2, new targets should be set that build on successes and are more relevant to local needs.
- More reliable data systems are needed to aid monitoring, while disaggregated data are necessary to guide accurate analysis and targeted intervention.
- The Millennium Development Goals National Committee should be enhanced, with more frequent meetings and a stronger role in outreach, monitoring and improving connections between government and civil society initiatives on the MDGs..

Looking to the future, suggestions for shaping new development frameworks include:

- Goals should integrate fully with national development plans and help serve the overarching issue of building a more resilient economy. This means there should be greater local adaptation of development goals, including taking on board the needs of small island developing states (SIDS).
- Localisation of goals requires processes, championed by civil society, that enable citizens' participation in defining goals, targets and indicators.
- To support civil society's optimal role in development policy, planning and delivery, there may be need for more enabling legislation for civil society, and the development of co-operation agreements between ministries and civil society.
- Future goals should address equity and participation issues, including issues of marginalisation and access to services for the poorest.

Jamaica

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Jamaica on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Jamaican CSOs have made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

In the first half of 2012, the Women's Resource and Outreach Centre undertook key informant interviews, a focus group discussion and an online survey, as well as background research and participation in assessments of key MDG targets by state agencies. This was followed by a national consultation held in December 2012 by the Association of Development Agencies and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to verify and enhance findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Jamaica

CSOs assess Goals 2 and 3 as achieved, although on Goal 3 they feel that more still needs to be done beyond MDG targets to enhance women's empowerment. They assess Goals 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 as off target, although they acknowledge some achievements on each.

CSOs and government agree that progress on the MDGs has been derailed by the economic downturn, which means resources now go into servicing debt that could go towards meeting the MDGs. CSOs believe the downturn has underlined some structural economic problems in Jamaica, and fear that a return to borrowing from the International Monetary Fund will bring increased austerity through conditions imposed. Economic contraction has seen poverty and unemployment increase, meaning that progress has been reversed since 2009, when the government reported the Goal 1 target as met; this shows how fragile progress on poverty can be.

CSOs feel that while in theory the MDGs should provide a platform for shared understanding and collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector, in practice they have not been fully involved in planning and policy development, due to the larger challenge of government and CSOs operating mostly in separate spheres. CSOs believe a climate of constant monitoring and evaluation is needed to drive implementation of the MDGs, but they do not report playing a role here.

CSOs report positive recent signs that the government is recognising the need to involve them and is showing greater willingness to engage in a structured manner, but a framework is yet to be formalised. Power imbalances remain in relationships, and CSOs are often

restricted to observer status in official processes. New coalition structures formed by civil society, including the Jamaica Civil Society Coalition and the 51% Coalition on women's representation, demonstrate fresh civil society willingness to work together for greater consultation.

A further challenge is that the MDGs are reported to be largely unknown among many communities, including some CSOs. Some CSOs' work relates to, but does not refer to, the MDGs, so that their contributions are not always well-captured or understood. Much more reference is made to Jamaica's national development frameworks, particularly the long-term development plan, Vision 2030. There is also felt to be insufficient information dissemination about the MDGs, while CSOs assert that a weakness of the MDGs as a whole is in the disconnect between targets and financing mechanisms.

Those CSOs that make reference to the MDGs report doing so mostly to help access funds or to link to international spheres. To some extent this has driven an increase in results-based monitoring in CSOs that receive funding. However it has also sparked debate about the accountability of CSOs that are seen to rely on international donor funds. Resourcing is an enduring constraint for CSOs, a challenge exacerbated by the economic downturn and a shift in the provision of most official development assistance (ODA) to direct budget support, which largely excludes civil society.

A further reason advanced for limited CSO engagement with the MDGs is the view that the MDGs do not correspond well with Jamaican reality or take into account its cultural nuances and norms, and the effects of its geographic location

and status as a small island developing state. CSOs identify key nationally-specific current issues which the MDGs do not properly cover as including crime and corruption, ballooning debt, continuing gender inequality despite high achievement by girls and women in education, the affects of emigration, rural poverty related to land ownership inequalities and the growth of non-communicable diseases. Other key development issues assessed as unaddressed by the current framework include early childhood education, the status of people with disabilities, and sexual and reproductive rights. The MDGs also cannot take into account the ways in which crime cuts across development initiatives. Further, lack of attention to inequality and the absence of a human rights vocabulary make the MDG framework problematic for many in civil society. A related critique is that the MDGs can encourage an isolated and technocratic approach to challenges such as diseases and child mortality, when in fact these have complex, multiple economic and socio-cultural influencing factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to accelerate progress on the MDGs include:

- Emphasis on the creation of jobs and equitable growth, and the promotion of decent work and labour standards.
- A renewal plan for every rural and urban community that includes basic goals such as addressing chronic poverty and securing water and sanitation, along with greater promotion of rural and urban development, including addressing land ownership inequalities.
- More focus on issues such as:
 - Non-communicable diseases, particularly obesity, diabetes and hypertension
 - The status of people with disabilities
 - The impacts of migration, including promoting the contribution of diaspora remittances to development

Recommendations from CSOs for new development frameworks include:

- Participatory governance should be promoted as a right, and political reform implemented at all levels to realise this, with a guarantee of CSOs' independent presence in social partnerships.
- Civil society should be strengthened, to encourage strong, effective partnerships, coalitions and cohesive voices.

Malawi

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Malawi on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Malawian civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The review draws from semi-structured interviews with key informants, two small focus group discussions, one with street children and one with CSO leaders, and desk research carried out by the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) in the first half of 2012. CONGOMA and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation then partnered to convene a national consultation in December 2012 to verify and augment the research findings and develop further recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Malawi

CSOs assess that the most significant progress has been made on Goals 2 and 6, while they believe Goal 4 could be brought on target with increased effort. They see Goals 1 and 3 as unlikely to be achieved, as with Goal 8, although here progress is mixed, and view Goal 5 as being off track and performance on Goal 7 as very poor.

The review drew attention to the vulnerability of Malawi's economy to external shocks that can adversely affect employment and development, including recent food and fuel price rises and corresponding high inflation and foreign currency shortages, which have prompted public protests. These vulnerabilities mean that people can very easily slip into poverty. CSOs believe there is ample evidence from their work with communities that hunger is increasing, and that official poverty statistics do not fully reflect recent deterioration. There is also a growing debate about inequality. The poorest parts of the population are most affected by limited job creation capacity, weak or sporadic cash transfers, poor targeting methods and inadequate distribution of economic gains.

CSOs point to a recent fall in official development assistance (ODA) as a limiting factor in future progress, suggesting that while there is a recent global decline in ODA, there are also specific Malawian dimensions: some funding, such as support from UKAID, was withheld over concerns about governance and human rights. The government's resulting 'zero deficit budget' led to higher costs of living. CSOs assert that this shows the need for civil society to be able to play a monitoring role to help avoid such donor reactions in future.

Other reasons for slow progress on the MDGs suggested by CSOs are insufficient commitment of resources, lack of visibility in the national budget, poor public service delivery, inadequate political will and limited public awareness of the MDGs. Other challenges identified include the lack of a law to regulate access to public information, unreliable data and what civil society sees as short-term development initiatives linked to electoral cycles. CSOs suggest factors that limit their own role in the MDGs include shortage of resources, lack of alignment with MDGs and low prioritisation. CSOs believe they are also seeing a longer-term trend of donors turning away from supporting civil society to directly transferring resources to government, further inhibiting CSOs from playing a full role.

CSOs recognise the MDGs as having offered a new advocacy tool, given that they established development benchmarks against which progress could be checked, and feel that they have value as a driver of solidarity, networking and partnerships. Yet they assess that efforts to mainstream the MDGs have been mixed, as they did not fully align with national priorities, such as those on infrastructure development.

Many CSOs believe that Malawian governments tend to regard civil society with mistrust. From a low starting point, they feel the MDGs have helped to improve the atmosphere by offering new ground for collaboration. Cooperation between civil society and the government has however remained somewhat ad hoc and by invitation. CSOs participate in government sector working groups, but also raise problems such as opaque selection processes and unclear mandates.

A significant civil society critique of the MDGs is that they do not properly address the root causes of poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The MDG framework also does not pay explicit attention to the roles to be played by civil society, and so does not necessarily drive CSO engagement. Further, CSOs assess the relative inflexibility of the framework to encompass localisation as a limiting factor in implementation. A related critique is that the MDGs were to some extent imposed on Malawi without sufficient debate and consultation, and so there is limited participation at the community level in policy formulation and implementation.

CSOs suggest that future processes need to ensure that systematic measures are taken to reach the marginalised, such as people with disabilities, the urban poor, and Malawi's many young people. Thematic areas that future frameworks should address include unemployment, underemployment and decent work, particularly for young people and women; food security, which has recently emerged as a more significant issue; and the expansion of social protection programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- There is a need to develop more structured mechanisms for engagement, and to expand the arenas where engagement occurs, such as parliamentary liaison and with the Office for Advisor to the President
- Donors should designate that a proportion of any funding goes to civil society

Civil society recommendations for a future development framework include:

- Existing MDG targets should be reviewed so that they can change to reflect new conditions and needs that have become more evident
- Donors should renew their commitment to make available 0.7 per cent of their GDP to developing countries to meet new goals, and provide predictable funding, and make available a proportion of grants to civil society
- More inclusive processes are needed: future development goals will be more successful if the process that develops them is locally grounded, broad-based and genuinely consultative, thereby developing greater trust and ownership
- New goals should have clear mechanisms for monitoring, checking progress on good governance and identifying emerging trends

New Zealand

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in New Zealand on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society's relations with government. Based on their reflections, New Zealand civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The review primarily considered New Zealand's progress on Goal 8, and so took a different form from reviews carried out in other countries, focusing particularly on New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (ODA) arrangements and New Zealand CSOs involved in international development. In the first half of 2012 the Centre for Strategic Studies produced an initial report. The Association of NGOs of Aotearoa (ANGOA) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation then collaborated to convene a workshop and a series of discussions with stakeholders in CSOs, youth groups, the political sphere and academia in December 2012 to verify and augment the research findings, discuss domestic poverty issues alongside international concerns, and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in New Zealand

CSOs recognise that New Zealand has made critical contributions towards the achievement of the MDGs, particularly in the Pacific and Asia, including through ODA and active participation by civil society in international development organisations. However, CSOs in this review consider that New Zealand's commitment to development means it should provide sufficient ODA to help developing countries, particularly in the Pacific, make progress on the MDGs, and model good donor practice in doing so. Here they see New Zealand falling short of the long-standing target of giving 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) to ODA; they see New Zealand achieving less than half of this, and report that a plan to advance on this seems to be lacking. While a slight rise was recorded from 2010 to 2011, they point out that New Zealand contributes one of the lowest percentages of ODA among members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Beyond concern about the amount of ODA, many New Zealand development-oriented CSOs have reacted negatively to changes in the country's development programme, NZAID. They noted that this previously semi-autonomous agency has been brought into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and has had its focus switched from poverty eradication to sustainable economic development. CSOs critiqued this as a return to more top-down development practice, which had the effect of making it harder for civil society to monitor development progress. Concerns were also expressed about the potential loss of specialisation and long-term planning capability, given that NZAID had enjoyed bipartisan support since its previous restructure in 2002.

CSOs noted the abolition of the Strategic Policy Framework, which had guided largely positive relationships between NZAID and civil society partners, and believe they are beginning to experience a corresponding loss of funding support, some of it long-standing, which could hinder their ability to engage with the MDGs. They also stated that while in May 2012 the government announced the formation of an International Development Advisory and Selection Panel to offer advice, it has no explicit CSO representative, fuelling criticisms that private sector partnerships are now favoured ahead of CSO partnerships.

More positively, in 2012 the New Zealand Aid Programme launched a new initiative, the New Zealand Partnerships for International Development Fund. 17 applications had been approved to proceed to the design stage, with an approximate value of NZ\$15.2 million, 59 per cent of them taking place in the Pacific and 61 per cent of them involving charitable organisations.

CSOs feel that as a commitment, the MDGs offer civil society a baseline against which government actions can be monitored. But they believe they have insufficient opportunity to help ensure transparency of ODA decisions, which they believe are vulnerable to influence by foreign policy interests and could be in danger of focusing too narrowly on economic development and market-oriented policies. They also feel that many development interventions are project oriented rather than strategic, and that Pacific CSOs are insufficiently involved in NZAID funded projects in their countries.

Additionally, CSOs identify a further issue for the region as being that the MDGs do not explicitly address the need for civil society to form, function and have a voice as a fundamental part of development,

and so do not help to stimulate action to support Pacific civil society.

CSOs believe that the MDGs have little visibility in government, parliament and among the public. For example, recent Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade reports have made hardly any reference to the MDGs. That said civil society acknowledges that there is potential to capitalise on the positive signals offered by the New Zealand Foreign Minister in April 2011, who is interested to do more work in partnership with the NGO sector.

The MDGs remain a niche issue, and it is hard for CSOs to mobilise public opinion to seek greater influence. The challenge as identified by CSOs that participated in this review is how to encourage domestic mobilisation on the MDGs when there is a disconnection between global development goals and national priority social issues, particularly in countries such as New Zealand where the MDGs are seen as only relating to relations with other countries.

One potential connection identified is with the debate on inequality and exclusion - an issue that is gaining prominence in developed as well as developing countries. For example it was said that some communities in New Zealand tend to experience higher levels of child poverty and worse access to services, an issue that shares common ground with the views of developing country CSOs on inequality. The implication being that future development goals could have domestic relevance to developed countries if they are flexible enough to address issues of sub-national imbalances and inequalities. This may also offer a way to encourage developed country CSOs that are already mobilised on domestic issues of poverty and inequality, to make stronger connections with international development agendas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key civil society recommendations for improving the participation of CSOs include:

- Relationships between CSOs and government agencies should be strengthened, which includes enabling greater engagement by CSOs in policy development. More opportunities should be provided for wider sharing and learning between government, the private sector and CSOs to improve development practice and results.
- Dialogue should be supported between government, CSOs and the private sector with the aim of increasing development partnerships for the Pacific, particularly in Pacific countries that are far behind on MDG targets.

Key civil society recommendations for shaping future development frameworks include:

- Regional multi-stakeholder dialogue should explore how to make economic development in Pacific islands people focused, equitable and rights-based.
- Future frameworks should place more emphasis on enabling participation and upholding human rights, and support the networking and building of platforms between CSOs.
- A timetable should be developed to increase New Zealand's ODA to 0.7 per cent of GNI. Political dialogue should be instigated to develop a cross-party approach to aid and development priorities for New Zealand.
- Reporting and evaluation of aid expenditure, activities and effectiveness should be enhanced.

Pakistan

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Pakistan on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Pakistani civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

This process began with a desk review of government, UN agency and donor MDG progress reports, and consultations with development professionals, conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in the first half of 2012. The Pakistan NGOs Forum and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation then convened a national consultation in December 2012 to verify and expand on the research findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Pakistan

CSOs in this review agreed that it is not possible to achieve the MDGs in Pakistan by 2015. Pakistan has committed to apply 37 out of 48 available MDG indicators, but this review assesses that only four of these are on track. There are some improvements in poverty reduction and access to improved sources of water, but CSOs consider that even these are at risk. CSOs see some progress on Goals 5, 6, 7, although lack of data makes assessment of Goal 7 challenging. There are mixed results on Goal 4 and more limited progress on Goal 3, but these are still off track. Goal 1 is considered unlikely to be met, Goal 8 off track, and CSOs believe there has been regression on Goal 2.

After recording some initial successes in the early days of the MDGs, during a period of relative economic and political stability, CSOs assess Pakistan's progress as having halted in recent years. Events have shown the capacity of external shocks, including food and fuel crises, natural disasters and the human, economic, social and political costs of the campaign against militancy, to derail national development efforts and push vulnerable groups into poverty. In the opinion of CSOs, these external setbacks have underlined enduring challenges of governance, corruption and a difficult environment for civil society.

Conditions have remained challenging and sometimes dangerous for CSO workers, with recent violent attacks on CSO personnel involved in service delivery. Relations with government tend to be volatile, and many in civil society feel that they have worsened. Typically, CSOs believe government has been content for CSOs to help deliver services, but is suspicious of CSO

advocacy. The new NGO Law allows the government to oversee foreign funding received by CSOs.

While the attainment of the MDGs was declared as a national objective, CSOs believe that they were not embedded in a sufficiently robust institutional framework or strong enough institutions. CSOs assess the MDG secretariat in the Planning Commission as not sufficiently high powered. Attainment of the MDGs is not specifically monitored by Cabinet or a parliamentary committee, suggesting a broader lack of political will. CSOs express doubts about the quality of data produced on the MDGs, and see few attempts to promote ownership of the MDGs among the public and CSOs, which has fed a lack of engagement.

CSOs suggest that another constraining factor is the new approach of the Planning Commission towards growth, which appears to treat poverty and vulnerability as residual challenges, making an apparent assumption that they will be addressed by a concerted push towards headline growth. CSOs also suggest that the granting of greater autonomy to provincial governments offers a further short-term setback to the MDGs. CSOs feel that provisional governments lack the capacity and capability to handle public service delivery, given that federal government has historically played this role. All recent provincial government reports state that they are off track on the MDGs.

CSOs believe that an imprecise definition of Goal 8 limits the accountability of donor countries. They have observed a lack of co-ordination among donors and an absence of accountability

mechanisms for their interventions. Donor focus on the MDGs has helped some CSOs access funding, but CSOs assess that little has been done to help develop their limited capacity for advocacy. CSOs feel that they tend to be treated as service gap fillers.

Prominent issues identified in this review as being inadequately covered by the MDGs include energy access and costs, food security, sexual and reproductive health rights and unemployment, particularly youth unemployment and other livelihood and security challenges faced by young people. CSOs believe that future goals need to be shaped by an understanding of Pakistan's political infrastructure, the new context of devolution, the impact of natural disasters, the 'war on terror', and law and order problems. CSOs state that the MDGs were never adequately localised and should have been revisited after 9/11, when developed countries' engagement with Pakistan changed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations made by CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- A more enabling environment is needed so that CSOs can more easily undertake advocacy and lobbying. This needs to enable the enjoyment of human rights, such as freedom of expression and association.

Recommendations made by CSOs for a new development framework include:

- Intensive co-ordination is needed between government, civil society and the private sector, overseen by a more effective MDG secretariat, including a more efficient system for monitoring and reviewing progress. Overall, weak governance mechanisms need to be strengthened.
- There should be provision for broad-based localisation of the goals to drive greater local ownership and achievement, and closer connection with national development needs and plans.
- Youth groups should be targeted for involvement in planning and monitoring to ensure that goals better serve them and, in particular, stimulate youth employment.
- Adequate provincial systems for development should be put in place in the wake of the recent devolution of powers.
- Goals should be accompanied by financing and taxation reforms to improve the availability of funding to meet goals and reduce reliance on international donors.

Samoa

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Samoa on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Samoan civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The first phase of the review, conducted in the first half of 2012 by a researcher from the University of the South Pacific, entailed an analysis of current literature, semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions. Interviews were held with 38 key informants from CSOs, government, donors and the United Nations, while four interviews were conducted with families in a poor and vulnerable community and six with school principals in rural and peri-urban areas. Four national focus groups were then convened by the Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in January 2013 to follow up on key issues arising from the research: gender-based violence, inequality, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the role of tradition.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Samoa

CSOs assess Goals 2 and 4 as on track, see mixed results on Goals 3, 6, 7 and 8, and view Goal 5 as off track. On Goal 1 they believe much progress has been made, but that there is recent regression, with a growing number of people living below the poverty line. While Samoa is acknowledged to be performing better than most Pacific island nations, it remains vulnerable to external shocks, such as those caused by recent natural disasters. Other continuing challenges identified include sizeable school drop-out rates for male students, high rates of gender-based violence and heavy prevalence of some sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Unemployment, including youth unemployment, has risen and food prices are high. CSOs see evidence of an emerging pattern of disparities in development outcomes across the population.

CSOs believe that the MDGs provide a useful framework for lobbying. They believe the MDGs have encouraged the government to pay greater attention to micro-level development experiences and their impact on national development, and acknowledge that government planning draws heavily on the MDGs, which are often cited by government as a reason for the introduction of policies. MDGs are reflected in national planning frameworks and ministry plans, policy documents and reports, while CSOs reference the MDGs in many of their plans and feel that donors have also taken the MDGs seriously.

CSOs believe that development collaboration has improved between themselves and government, donors and UN agencies, although there are still disagreements on some strategies and practices. However, the MDG process was compared unfavourably with the

preparation of the Samoa Development Strategy, which is seen as being more consultative and participatory. In comparison, the MDGs are viewed as more of an externally imposed framework, with a clear distinction between government as the lead agency and all other actors. On that basis, and given a lack of mechanisms for citizen monitoring, CSOs feel that the MDGs fall short of offering a participatory framework for citizen involvement.

Collaboration with government on the MDGs is assessed by CSOs as strong at the level of formal consultation, but less so at the implementation and monitoring stages. Partnerships vary across different ministries. There is concern that consultation is superficial and implies co-option, and on some projects there are worries about trust levels and competition to claim ownership of projects and space. Lack of communication is assessed as a challenge, as is CSOs working in isolation without making connections with government and other CSOs. A further challenge is that the circle of consultation may be quite small, with low CSO capacities meaning that a small number of CSO representatives are frequently involved in development consultations.

CSOs suggest that some MDGs are not entirely relevant to Samoa as a lower middle-income country, and that standards set by the MDGs could be too low in areas such as education and child health, raising the danger of creating complacency. A significant deficit identified in the MDG framework is its failure to take account of culture and tradition, important and complex social forces in Samoa. CSOs also identified inequality as an omission to be addressed in a post-2015 framework:

combating poverty should focus not only on increasing income, but should also acknowledge that the most vulnerable are enduring victims of unequal systems of access to resources and services. CSOs suggest that the links between poverty and issues such as gender-based violence also need to be better understood, and that continuing attention should be paid to NCDs. Other gaps identified by CSOs include climate change, which has a particularly strong influence on Samoa and other small island developing states (SIDS); the related issue of disaster risk reduction; how it can make a gendered analysis and serve the most vulnerable; and access to land, a rising area of contention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- The research capacity of CSOs should be improved to enable better evidence-based advocacy and informed contributions to public debate.

Recommendations made by CSOs for future development goals include:

- A new development framework should include the creation of a multi-stakeholder committee, involving civil society and the private sector, to oversee the process, monitor and report on progress, and offer resources and technical advice.
- Any new framework must better understand the relationship between development and democracy. Improving governance is a key to making progress and improving equity, yet this was a major omission from the MDGs.
- There needs to be a stronger human rights approach: Samoa still lacks a national human rights commission.
- Indicators should be localised to enable the setting of country-specific targets and ambitious indicators. This would enable indicators to look beyond material measures, including setting indicators to measure aspects of human happiness. New development frameworks should also take better account of positive and negative aspects of culture.

Sierra Leone

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Sierra Leone on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Sierra Leonean civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

In the first half of 2012 Fourah Bay College (FBC) Department of Economics and Commerce, University of Sierra Leone produced a draft research report, which formed the basis for a national consultation convened by the Campaign for Good Governance and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in December 2012 to verify and enhance the research findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Sierra Leone

CSOs consider that the most significant progress has been made on Goals 3, 4 and 5, which they believe could be met by 2015 with increased efforts, and also note progress on Goal 2 and, to a lesser extent, Goal 8. They view progress on Goal 6 as mixed, and assess Goals 1 and 7 as unlikely to be met. While CSOs are sceptical about the likelihood of attainment of the MDGs by 2015, they recognise that efforts have been made from a low starting point, given Sierra Leone's still recent experience of devastating war. They view the MDGs as having been overly ambitious in the context of Sierra Leone. While recognising that advances have been made, CSOs also state that some social service ministries could have done more, but have seen allocations from central government reduced, leading to an erosion of earlier gains.

Sierra Leone's post-war economic performance has been strong, and improved post-war governance enabled some of this growth to result in an increase in standards of living, but CSOs believe there remains a clear need for infrastructural, institutional and human capital development, while Sierra Leone continues to be vulnerable to localised disasters that heighten food insecurity. The youth unemployment level is considered one of the highest in West Africa.

CSOs believe that part of the value of the MDGs is that they have directed attention to key development issues. They consider that the MDGs have led to more collaborations and dialogue opportunities on national development priorities for CSOs, previously rare in Sierra Leone. But they express concern that the MDG framework was not explicitly connected to systems of

accountability and resourcing, and did not make links to civil society. They also assess MDG processes as being less inclusive than those put in place to develop the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). For these reasons it was suggested that many CSOs are unable to identify with the MDGs, and to a large extent this has not changed over time. Further, limited knowledge, particularly among local level CSOs, means that while many CSOs have played a significant role in addressing the MDGs as a result of overlap with their existing work areas, they have been much less active in monitoring and advocacy.

Other reasons suggested by CSOs for the limited monitoring role they have played include a lack of specialised knowledge and research capacities, an absence of processes to capture good practices and data, and scarce public documentation. They also draw attention to the lack of freedom of information legislation, which restricts access to essential information.

That the MDGs are assessed as unrealistic and inappropriate for the national context suggests a need for targets to be set locally. In considering more locally appropriate goals, CSOs suggest that priority should be given to making agriculture a leading source of more sustainable livelihoods, encouraging more local economic development activities, improving social protection and social safety nets, designing programmes that meet the needs of young people and advancing gender equity. An overarching theme suggested for improving income and reducing poverty, including by tackling youth unemployment, is decent work. It is acknowledged that this implies an understanding of better connections

between poverty eradication, job creation and decent work. CSOs suggest that education, health and gender equity should also be key principles of new development pillars. In addition, CSOs assert that there is a continuing need to promote the needs of excluded and vulnerable people, who experience the worst poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CSO suggestions for actions to accelerate progress on the MDGs include:

- Robust social protection with minimal gaps should be established to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups and provide a minimum living standard for citizens.
- Basic education should be expanded, accompanied by increased school feeding programmes, and adult education should be provided in workplaces.
- Labour market policies such as on-the-job training and job placements for qualified but unemployed young people should be instituted

Underpinning CSO recommendations for future development goals include:

- Government should explore a range of financial measures to generate further development funds, including reforming taxation policy, for example, regarding taxes on income, property and foreign investments, particularly in extractive industries, and seeking to put in place a financial transactions tax. At the same time, greater attention should be given to domestic debt sustainability and to ensuring that development spending is tracked and published in a transparent way.
- Government should actively raise awareness about development plans and establish mechanisms that enable CSOs and the public to participate in discussions on development goals and strategies.
- Donors should assist the government in formulating a freedom of information bill and encourage the government to pass it into law.
- Donors should sign up to and deliver on new aid targets, including by providing grants and highly concessional loans. Any new version of Goal 8 should promote fairer relationships for Sierra Leonean CSOs with foreign corporations that operate in Sierra Leone and with international CSOs that are active in the country.
- CSOs should improve their outreach to the private sector, and encourage parliament to engage more in oversight of development processes.

Sri Lanka

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Sri Lanka on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Sri Lankan civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

Alliance Lanka undertook an initial analysis of existing documentation on the MDGs and held focus group discussions, consultations and interviews with representatives of CSOs, government, UN agencies and donors in the first half of 2012. Alliance Lanka then worked with CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to convene a national consultation in December 2012 to verify and enhance the research findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Sri Lanka

CSOs assess that Goals 2 and 5 are achievable by 2015, as is Goal 4 with additional efforts, along with portions of Goals 3 and 6. However, they consider that Goal 1 is not achievable by 2015 and Goals 7 and 8 are off track. While Sri Lanka has made impressive progress on poverty since 2000, CSOs see that hunger remains a problem, perpetuated by rising food prices, and call attention to youth unemployment and underemployment. CSOs further suggest that it is not possible to live on the poverty line amount of US\$1.25 a day.

Sri Lanka is a recent post-conflict country, and CSOs called for further progress regarding the restoration of law and order and the judicial system, the development of a more inclusive and democratic political process, reconstruction of infrastructure in areas most affected by conflict, and integration of former combatants and people who were internally displaced. In addition, Sri Lanka was severely hit by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Different parts of the country were affected in different ways by the war and the tsunami, resulting in marked inequalities between regions, for example in income, employment and access to services.

CSOs suggest that limited progress has been made towards some MDGs because of weaknesses in service delivery systems and the inadequate involvement of civil society during planning and implementation. Other challenges identified include data gaps, particularly in the most conflict-affected areas in east and north Sri Lanka, an absence of disaggregated data and inadequate knowledge of the MDGs among key government and civil society personnel. A further barrier is the environment for civil society, which

CSOs believe is not sufficiently enabling, particularly in conflict-affected areas, where strict regulations and approval procedures remain. Further, CSOs working with some vulnerable groups, such as sex workers and men who have sex with men, report that laws criminalising the behaviour of these groups have hindered initiatives such as HIV prevention.

By including the MDGs in its 2006–16 development framework, the government has recognised their importance. CSOs, however, believe there is still too much working in isolation, with insufficient attempts to involve civil society and the private sector. CSOs feel that their expertise from engagement on the ground is not sufficiently tapped into as a source of development intelligence.

Over time, CSOs believe they have made some inroads into challenging this fragmentation, partly as a result of the support of donors, which show interest in facilitating closer joint working. Some CSOs now participate in national level development forums alongside their government counterparts. In general, donors have adopted the MDGs as essential components of their development frameworks, which has helped drive civil society engagement with the MDGs.

CSOs acknowledge that the MDGs have presented new opportunities and enhanced clarity on how and where interventions can best be made. They believe that their engagement with the MDG agenda has increased since the previous review in 2005. CSOs report that the MDGs have been used as a tool for setting operational objectives and measuring performance. Many CSOs report that they have incorporated the

MDGs into strategic frameworks and goals. However, there are also many CSOs that work on MDG-related issues, such as poverty reduction, health and the overarching theme of governance, without explicitly using the MDG terminology.

CSO activities on the MDGs usually depend on funding availability; challenges identified include delays in obtaining approvals, government bureaucracy, and taxes and tariffs. A related concern expressed is the influence of current donor priorities in shaping CSO programmes, which may mean that important issues are overlooked.

Among priorities identified for future development frameworks are the mainstreaming of climate change and 'green growth' initiatives, and addressing social exclusion. Projects to address skills gaps, water scarcity, energy inefficiency, poor transport connectivity, and resettlement and reintegration in conflict-affected areas are suggested, along with more emphasis on peace-building and post conflict matters. CSOs believe a special focus is needed on young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations made by CSOs to accelerate progress on existing MDGs include:

- A national level co-ordinating body for development programming, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation should be established as a separate unit within government; it should involve civil society, the private sector and donors to ensure that goals, targets and indicators are framed with reference to community priorities.
- The government should ensure that the legislation and regulations on development administration and finance are accountable and transparent.

Recommendations made by CSOs to improve future development frameworks include the following:

- Any new framework must place emphasis on communication and co-ordination between different stakeholders.
- New development frameworks should address governance issues. Links should be made with international treaties and other national development processes, rather than attempting to achieve development goals in isolation.
- Development policies should allow for sub-national specification.
- Goals, targets and indicators should be gender sensitive, and take into account the causes and consequences of marginalisation and discrimination.
- Data should be disaggregated, easy to access and kept up-to-date.
- Development frameworks should address subject areas that are relevant to people's needs, such as sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods, and the role of young people.
- Goals in Sri Lanka should encompass peace-building and conflict transformation.

Tanzania

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Tanzania on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Tanzanian civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The review process, led by the Tanzania Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO) in the first half of 2012, included interviews with representatives of CSOs, national and local government and donors; focus groups; and analysis of government, civil society and donor reviews. This was followed by a national civil society consultation convened by TANGO and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in December 2012 to verify and enrich the research findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society in this review assessed Goals 2, 4 and 7, where it relates to water, as demonstrating most progress, with some progress acknowledged on Goals 3 and 6. They saw little progress on Goals 1, 5 and 8. CSOs assert that poverty persists despite official reports of improvement. While gross domestic product (GDP) has increased, so has inflation, and there is high population growth. Many CSOs believe the gap between rich and poor is growing. One reason they put forward for this is the government's preference for private sector-led growth. CSOs suggest that poverty also needs to be understood as a multi-faceted phenomenon with dimensions that go beyond income, such as the availability of freedom and choices.

CSOs feel there has been retreat from achievements on some goals, eg Goal 2, due to failures to sustain earlier funding commitments. They believe that donor support has fallen partly due to high profile reports of corruption. They also suggest that even when there has been progress, access to development outcomes is still patchy, with typically marginalised groups such as young people, older people and people with disabilities less well served.

CSO and government representatives agree that the MDGs offer a relevant framework for creating a shared vision of success in development and poverty reduction. CSOs also feel that the framework has potential for expanding the civil society agenda and creating new entry points for engagement with government and donors. However, a key weakness is the lack of an enforcement mechanism to ensure that government, CSOs and donors honour commitments.

In practice, according to CSOs, there are few multi-stakeholder partnerships,

which implies missed opportunities to realise comparative advantages. Collaboration between government and civil society on the MDGs tends to be ad hoc and at the behest of government, and sometimes at the request of donors. CSOs also state that relationships between government and CSOs are characterised by mistrust and misconceptions on both sides, while they see CSO legislation as unduly restrictive: the seven laws that regulate CSOs of different types forbid some forms of campaigning, when such activities are assessed as not in the national interest, but there is no clear definition of what this means.

Child health was offered as an example of an area where there has been progress, with success factors including significant donor attention and strict monitoring of funds; donors supporting CSOs to exercise accountability through skills development and financial resources; and donors supporting local government. However, CSOs also believe there are examples of donors imposing additional conditionalities and making late disbursements of commitments. CSOs fear that due to changes in donor practices, donors are channelling more financial support through government systems and this is impacting negatively on CSOs' capacity to engage effectively in MDG processes.

CSOs report that many development policies and strategies are not well known among poor people, hampering the potential to foster a demand-driven approach to development, and that development jargon also offers a barrier. CSOs believe Tanzania faces a broader challenge of low citizen participation in governance. CSOs also feel that parliament is not able to exercise proper

scrutiny over development, due to lack of access, and insufficient budget analysis and aid management skills.

Looking towards the focus of future development frameworks, CSOs suggest that more attention should be given to key environment-related areas such as water, sanitation and health, food security, and sustainable agriculture and its connection to sound environmental management. Improving adaptation to climate change was also underlined, while non-communicable diseases are acknowledged to be rising in importance. Cross-cutting issues include enhancing access to services for marginalised groups, improving employment opportunities for young people, and setting targets on reducing corruption and improving accountability and transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to accelerate progress on the MDGs include:

- On specific goals, there should be a better balance between access and quality in education; capacity of health systems should be strengthened to provide quality maternal and post-natal care; and enhanced agricultural productivity and incomes should be targeted to help combat poverty.
- There should be greater concentration of poverty eradication resources at local level, to match the fact that many poverty reduction actions take place there.
- Alternative, donor-free funding sources for civil society development efforts should be explored, including greater focus on remittances from the Tanzanian diaspora.

Recommendations from CSOs for future development frameworks include:

- Development frameworks in Tanzania should enable greater participation by CSOs and the public, and include them in development design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There also need to be stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- Greater efforts need to be made to understand and respond to the entrenched causes and drivers of poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Attention should also be paid to making the distribution of key development assets more equitable, including land, agriculture and finance.
- Development frameworks should foster localisation of goals and measurements. As part of this, indicators should assess quality as well as quantity, and there should be non-income measures of poverty and wealth.
- To underpin development commitments, the government should sign, ratify and implement international human rights agreements.

Trinidad and Tobago

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Trinidad and Tobago on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Trinidadian and Tobagan civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

An initial research report was prepared in the first half of 2012 by the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD), based on an analysis of published data and focus group discussions with secondary and tertiary students, young people, women's community groups, church groups and academia. This formed the basis of a civil society consultation convened by the Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation in December 2012 to verify and expand upon the research findings, and to make further recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Trinidad and Tobago

CSOs consider that the strongest achievement has been on Goal 2, while there has also been progress on Goals 3 and 4, and to a lesser extent on Goals 5 and 6. Goals 1, 7 and 8 are assessed as unlikely to be achieved by 2015. While Trinidad and Tobago's gas and oil production has to some extent cushioned the country from the worst effects of the global financial crisis, CSOs believe that persistent poverty and hunger remain: despite the country's high income status, more than one-fifth of people live below the poverty line, and CSOs further question the appropriateness of current measures of poverty.

CSOs report that in general they have not placed much new programmatic focus on the MDGs. They tend to address MDG areas only where they overlap with existing work themes. They are more likely to refer to national development frameworks, which only intersect with the MDGs to some extent. However, CSOs feel that the attention international donors give to the MDGs has offered new opportunities to connect with international conversations, develop legitimacy and access international funding.

A common civil society critique of the MDGs is that they were imposed in a top-down manner, and it is suggested that this partly explains the lack of response and lack of synergy between civil society and the government, with the government seen as the main actor for addressing the MDGs. This suggests a challenge in understanding the potential role of civil society in MDG processes. Given this, CSOs report that there is no systematic co-operation, although there has been some collaboration on specific areas, such as sexual health and community poverty projects.

CSOs acknowledged that they should more consciously define their role in the MDGs, and to articulate that role to government in actively seeking increased participation. At the same time, CSOs acknowledge a need to build up collaborations within civil society and to develop their own sources of data to aid analysis.

CSOs critiqued the MDGs as having been insufficiently adapted to the national context. Areas such as education (where issues should include quality and access for people with disabilities), gender (where women's access to education is strong but empowerment in workplaces and the home is an issue) and health (where non-communicable diseases present a major health problem) were identified as among those that would benefit from more locally specific goals. Other emerging issues identified as needing attention in future goals include: addressing the impacts of climate change, mainstreaming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights within a human rights framework, and addressing emerging male marginalisation in spheres such as education.

CSOs also suggest that there is a need to focus on employment and livelihood issues, and to undertake wide-ranging work to redefine poverty and combat exclusion. Here CSOs believe that it is time to initiate a national discussion on well-being that goes beyond economic dimensions. CSOs also feel that national development plans need to be consistent over more than one political administration to achieve impact, instead of changing with each change of administration, as has happened recently.

CSOs suggest that there is a need to explore the benefit of collaboration across the Caribbean. Shared challenges across the region include increasing debt and decreasing development assistance. Stronger Caribbean networking offers one way to build up resistance to shocks and address the vulnerabilities of small island developing states (SIDS), but the value of regional networking for civil society and governments has still not adequately been explored.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- Intergovernmental organisations with programmes in Trinidad and Tobago should do more to promote the role of civil society and build in space for civil society in activities they support, to demonstrate the value of civil society inclusion.
- Any new development framework should set indicators for civil society and government co-operation.
- New legislation may be needed to help systematise and expand co-operation.

Key recommendations from CSOs for future development frameworks include:

- There should be greater localisation of goals, enabled through participatory processes. Localised goals should then be promoted through culturally relevant and locally appropriate awareness raising.
- The development of new goals should be underpinned by a wide-ranging national discussion on redefining well-being, reducing inequality and improving the inclusion of marginalised groups.
- To improve monitoring, there should be civil society shadow reporting on development goals at UN meetings and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). As part of this, civil society would need to develop its own sources of data to aid independent assessment.

Uganda

This summary presents perspectives from Ugandan civil society on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Ugandan civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The review process included an analysis of government and civil society reports, interviews with government officials, CSO representatives, political leaders, representatives of bilateral and multilateral agencies and members of the public, and the convening of focus group discussions and a consultative workshop, facilitated by Nakawa Blessed Cooperative Savings and Credit Society in the first half of 2012. This was followed in December 2012 by a national consultation to verify and augment the findings and make further recommendations, convened by the Uganda National Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Forum and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Uganda

Overall perspectives from CSOs are that only two Goals – 3 and 8 – are on track, while progress towards the others is slow, stagnant or regressing. A common opinion is that recent economic deceleration has pushed many people back into poverty, so that there is a gap between official reports of progress on Goal 1 and experience on the ground. This suggests that the benefits of the strong growth of the second half of the previous decade were not adequately shared. There are also considerable disparities in poverty levels between different regions of Uganda.

The lack of a clear connection between individual goals and adequate financing mechanisms was suggested as one reason for slow progress on the MDGs, while a number of constraints against the full involvement of CSOs in helping to achieve the MDGs were identified. These include the feeling on the part of many CSOs that they had little engagement with the MDGs, which were variously criticised as offering inappropriate and generic targets or as being imposed by donors or other external agencies. A related constraining factor was CSOs' limited knowledge about the MDGs, both among the public and local level civil society leaders, which prevented demands being made with reference to the goals.

Further, CSOs consulted believed that, while the MDGs could in theory provide a platform for more sustained civil society interaction with government to advance development efforts, the opportunity had been missed because there was no clear framework for such engagement. One barrier against closer collaboration identified by participating CSOs was the current NGO law, seen as bureaucratic and onerous in its

requirements. CSOs also reported that recent calls in the political sphere for more regulation and supervision of CSOs have encouraged antagonism, and so are not conducive to stimulating co-operation.

While many examples of CSO projects to address aspects of the MDGs were acknowledged in the review, the MDGs are not always very visible in this work, and a need was identified for more systematic mechanisms of knowledge sharing and learning within civil society. Examples of civil society efforts to monitor the provision of public services were also identified, but these are not systematic, and it was suggested that lack of capacity and an insufficient enabling environment for civil society are key factors that hamper civil society from playing its accountability role to monitor progress on the MDGs.

Key national challenges, such as high unemployment and lack of decent work, and continuing gender inequality within households, despite good performance in getting girls into education and women into parliament, were identified as not being adequately covered by the MDGs. While progress has been made on putting more children into school and, to some extent, on reducing child mortality, CSOs suggest that there is now a need to look at the quality of health and education provision, given, for example, the problems of low quality of free education and high teacher absenteeism.

CSOs feel that continuing basic poverty and hunger show there is a need in any new development framework to address the structural causes of poverty and entrenched sources of inequality more closely. High levels of population growth were also noted as a factor that should

be taken into account in framing future development goals. Developments that have become more pressing since the MDGs were launched include a more unpredictable climate, with changing rain patterns affecting agriculture, environmental degradation and the discovery of oil, which presents an opportunity to accelerate development, but is also a reminder of the need to uphold transparency and accountability in governance, and enable civil society to play a role in accountability, given the experiences of worsening corruption in other countries due to oil.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- Encourage the formation of civil society coalitions focusing on key issues, such as governance and accountability, that impact on all goals.
- Improve working relationships between civil society and government, including through fostering a constructive dialogue on the legal and regulatory environment for civil society and by revising Uganda's NGO Board to include civil society representation. These steps would enhance civil society's capacity to monitor the MDGs and future goals.

Recommendations from CSOs on a future development framework include:

- A future development framework should have an overarching focus on equity, transparency and governance. Goals should establish a minimum social protection floor and should make reference to human rights, including women's rights.
- Future development goals, targets and indicators should be localised for the Ugandan context. Extensive consultations with relevant actors, including the intended beneficiaries of development, would be needed to increase shared ownership and buy-in of goals, and ensure greater local relevance of goals, targets and indicators.

Zambia

This summary presents perspectives from civil society in Zambia on progress made and challenges experienced in relation to the national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the extent to which MDG processes have provided opportunities to enhance participatory governance and civil society relations with government. Based on their reflections, Zambian civil society organisations (CSOs) made a number of recommendations to accelerate progress on the MDGs and improve future development frameworks.

The review process included interviews with key informants, secondary research and the development of an initial report by the Foundation for Democratic Process in the first half of 2012, followed by a national civil society consultation, convened in December 2012 by the Zambia Council for Social Development and CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation to verify and augment the findings and make additional recommendations.

Civil society review of the MDGs in Zambia

CSOs acknowledge that significant progress has been made on Goal 2, and to a lesser extent on Goals 3, 4, 5 and 6, but see uneven progress on Goal 8, regression on Goal 7 and little progress on the crucial Goal 1. Further, a critique to emerge is that the focus to date has been mostly on quantitative targets, rather than issues of quality, for example in education, where investments in teachers and infrastructure have not kept up with school enrolment.

The review noted that the economy has seen significant changes since the previous civil society review in 2005, with high economic growth, relatively low inflation and heavy investment by Chinese institutions, particularly in mining, although there have been some impacts of the global economic crisis on unemployment and civil society has expressed concern about debt levels. CSOs also assert that an apparent increase in international political goodwill towards Zambia has not brought about a significant change in the lives of poor people.

The key concern raised is how to translate national economic growth into social progress and a change in the unequal pattern of wealth distribution. Many CSOs believe Zambia's wealth remains in the hands of a small elite and, increasingly, foreign investors, without tangible benefits for poor people. Unemployment and the lack of decent work, particularly sparse employment opportunities for young people, are concerns. Social protection programmes and poverty eradication initiatives were seen as inadequate by CSOs.

CSOs suggest that the two goals where they have seen strongest progress, Goals 2 and 6, share a set of common factors: a supportive policy

environment, adequate financing, timely disbursement of funds, prudent and effective utilisation of funds, and meaningful partnerships between government, civil society and donors. On other goals, they believe the absence of these factors has prevented progress.

There seems to be a high level of consensus across different actors that the MDG framework remains relevant in Zambia and could continue to be so after 2015. But CSOs believe the potential of the framework as a tool to hold government to account has not been realised. Barriers identified include a lack of data and doubts over their accuracy, restrictions in access to information, limited CSO capacity to undertake analytical work and the reality that civil society participation in government-led initiatives remains at the discretion of government. Donor agendas can influence whether CSOs are involved, and sometimes at their request CSOs are brought into processes. CSOs also point to a lack of co-ordination between different stakeholders, and suggest that a new legal framework may be needed to enable better co-ordination.

CSOs feel that there is little public awareness of the MDGs, even among target beneficiaries, which contributes to a lack of a demand-driven approach. The introduction of decentralisation is, however, perceived to have had some success in bringing development closer to people, for example through district education boards and increased funding flows to district level initiatives, and to have provided some new opportunities for civil society engagement.

CSOs believe there would be value in domesticating the MDGs to make them more relevant, but consider there is

currently a lack of national capacity to do this, and that the need to adhere to donor priorities and the linking of much donor funding to MDG targets also inhibit this.

In looking towards future goals, CSOs suggest that new frameworks need to take more account of prevailing structures of power and apparently entrenched patterns of unequal wealth distribution. They also suggest that access to information should be expanded, consistent with a rights-based approach. Setting better standards for international investors, particularly to encourage decent work and technology transfer, also emerged as something that could be addressed in new goals.

A number of environment-related issues came out of the consultation that could be addressed in future development goals, including deforestation, pollution, and displacement of people by mining expansion, land-grabbing and loss of farmland. More broadly, CSOs suggested there is a need to make better connections with Rio+20 processes and make new development goals sustainable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from CSOs to improve the participation of civil society include:

- There should be better co-ordination and institutionalisation of civil society participation, including a proper structure to feed civil society recommendations into policy-making. This may require changes in the NGO Act and freedom of information legislation to make the environment for civil society more enabling.
- CSOs should create a platform to monitor and track the government's performance on the MDGs and future goals. As part of this, there should be strong civil society linkages between national and local levels.

Recommendations from CSOs on a future development framework include:

- There should be closer integration between national development plans and development goals, not least to help improve social protection programmes and address unemployment.
- Decentralisation should be fully implemented to ensure better citizen participation and more accountable development delivery.
- A legal framework is needed to enforce socio-economic and cultural rights, including affirmative action on women's empowerment.

Millennium Development Goals and Targets

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger

- Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day
- Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
- Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

- Target 4.A: Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio
- Target 5.B: Achieve universal access to reproductive health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
- Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
- Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Target 7.D: Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
- Target 8.B: Address the special needs of least developed countries
- Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states
- Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries
- Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

