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DESIGNING THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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The United Nations produced the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, recognizing a collective responsibility to work toward “a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.” The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reaffirmed this vision and launched an ambitious global partnership for development. The MDGs set specific targets for 2015, using numerical indicators to measure progress.

Goals matter. The MDGs focussed attention and mobilized resources to reduce poverty, achieve basic education and health, and promote gender equality. Despite substantial progress since 2000, more needs to be done. The United Nations is now formulating post-2015 goals to succeed the current MDGs. The MDGs were criticized for omitting enabling factors and for being one-size-fits-all, and for being imposed top-down.

What should government authorities call for during the process of establishing these new goals to ensure they reflect national priorities, can be measured and are achievable, not purely aspirational?

The complexity of selecting a limited number of goals must be reduced to the essentials by:

- limiting the number of goals to allow for effective communication and mobilization of the resources;
- anticipating future priorities when setting post-2015 goals;
- tailoring global priorities to individual national contexts;
- selecting indicators from a list of the most appropriate inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes; and
- using the best available data or new surveys to measure progress and compare results.

The simplicity of the MDGs should be retained. The current MDGs are a powerful and effective tool at the country level because they are easily understood. The new agenda should include goals that can be explained and understood by all members of civil society everywhere. To achieve the goal of a peaceful, prosperous and just world, UN member states should insist the post-2015 goals include:

- universal “one-world goals” that apply to developing, emerging and developed countries;
- the merger of Rio+ 20’s Sustainable Development Goals into the post-2015 exercise;
- a structure with goals for: essential individual endowments; collective human capital; as well as enabling environment and institutions;
- changing the MDG’s poverty eradication goal to “inclusive growth”;
- new goals for food security and water; communities resilient to natural and man-made disasters; security and rights; global governance; and connectivity infrastructure (energy, transportation and communication);
- target selection, which will motivate and mobilize, is left to individual countries; and
- relevant indicators are selected by each country and adapted to local contexts, to ensure ownership.

Although post-2015 goals should be able to be explained easily, the results should resolve some challenging difficulties:

- Promote the idea of global minimum standards, below which no country should fall. Select indicators with the ability to disaggregate, by income, gender and other relevant characteristics.
- Choose “summative indicators,” correlated with whole sector outcomes, such as maternal health, which is an effective indicator for the public health system.
- Press for new surveys to measure indicators of desired goals that don’t have administrative data sources.

To square the circle in this over-constrained exercise, the following 10 post-2015 development goals are recommended:

1. Inclusive growth for dignified livelihoods and adequate standards of living.
2. Sufficient food and water for active living.
3. Appropriate education and skills for full participation in society.
4. Good health for physical, mental and social well-being.
5. Gender equality for enabling women and men to participate and benefit equally in society.
6. Connectivity for access to energy, transportation and communications.
7. Good governance and rule of law for citizen participation and personal and community security.
8. Sustainable management of the biosphere for people and planet to thrive together.
9. Resilient communities for reduced disaster impact from natural and man-made hazards.
10. Equitable rules for the governance of global institutions and cooperative partnerships.

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