

# **Universal Agenda on the Multiple Dimensions of Poverty**

**BACKGROUND RESEARCH PAPER**

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# Universal Agenda on the Multiple Dimensions of Poverty

Background Research Paper for the Report of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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## **Abstract**

On September 8, 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit concluded with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, followed by the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the MDGs' expiration fast approaching, the world community is focussed on devising a post-2015 agenda. Most of the proposals made thus far urge that this new development agenda should be universally applicable to all countries.

This paper is among the first to address the problems such a framework is likely to face. We provide evidence that it is possible to specify a sharable and meaningful conception of poverty across all contexts which provides the requisite basis for any universally applicable goal framework. We suggest different ways of deriving national targets that are ambitious and yet fair in their respective national contexts. Finally, we suggest how such a universal agenda should not lead to a scaling-back of assistance to developing countries in favour of addressing domestic problems.

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## Towards a new Development Agenda

*'We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people.'*

Millennium Declaration

The United Nations Millennium Summit concluded with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration as a global vision for the future.<sup>1</sup> In an effort to prevent the Declaration from sliding into oblivion, a so-called Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators (IAEG) was established in order to extract key targets from the Declaration (Vandemoortele, 2011b; Martens, 2013). Their work resulted in the initial Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework that was introduced as 'Road Map' in General-Secretary Kofi Annan's first follow-up report to the outcome of the Millennium Summit in September 2001 (Annan, 2001). Welcomed as a useful guide, the MDGs were not formally endorsed by the General Assembly until 2005 (Manning, 2009: 11; Hulme, 2010: 19; Manning, 2010: 7; Sumner and Lawo, 2010: 4; Langford, Sumner and Yamin, 2013: 2).

By the time the MDGs were finally endorsed, the initial framework had evolved from 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators to 8 goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators. They were distilled from the resolutions of 23 international conferences and summits held between 1990 and 2005.<sup>2</sup> Though the job regarding the MDGs is far from finished and efforts need to be made to accelerate progress, the MDGs' expiration date of 2015 is fast approaching and it is high time to think about a post-2015 agenda. One of the main subjects of discussion relates to the process that should lead to such a new agenda.

The source of one of the main weaknesses of the MDGs has undoubtedly been the process through which they were formulated. The IAEG consisted of experts from the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) (Manning, 2009: 11; Manning, 2010: 7;

Vandemoortele, 2011b: 4). Neither had this group a mandate from the General Assembly nor were governments and civil societies of the South in any way involved in the process. The result was a donor-driven agenda, with numerous clearly defined targets for developing countries and few, very vague targets for developed countries.

This was clearly a step backwards in international negotiations. Already in 1992, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development had acknowledged that *'States have common but differentiated responsibilities,*<sup>3</sup> a statement that was further elaborated at the World Summit for Social Development (1995) declaring that *'profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion [...] affect every country.'*<sup>4</sup>

The formulation of the MDGs by a small group of unrepresentative officials and their consequent focus on assigning poverty reduction tasks mainly to the developing countries led to the initial reluctance of the General Assembly to endorse the MDGs and also severely undermined their acceptance and the commitment to achieve them. The new post-2015 development agenda should avoid the flaws of its predecessor. Excluding the developing countries from the formulation of the goals and assigning them the bulk of the implementation work is neither justifiable nor politically realistic in light of their rapidly increasing economic and political power. It thus comes as no surprise that almost all proposals for a new post-2015 development agenda urge that this agenda be formulated through a thoroughly participatory process, which cannot be expected to result in a goal framework that applies only to developing countries. In fact, it now appears likely that any new development agenda will not merely give increased attention to the role the more affluent countries should play in facilitating development in the poorer countries but will also focus on the development tasks that remain unachieved in the developed countries themselves. If this expectation were to be fulfilled, the new development agenda would be a *universal agenda* — one that assigns clear-

cut tasks to every country and also assesses every country's progress by a single, common standard of development achievement.

Such a universal agenda also raises concerns. One prominent worry is that the formulation of a universally applicable framework with concrete goals assigned also to the developed countries is very ambitious, courting the real danger that no agreement will be reached — just as has recently been the case with a number of global summits. In response, some proposals seek to avoid the problem by suggesting goals that, though universal in form, make real demands on only a subset of countries. This strategy is exemplified by 'Getting to Zero' goals which claim to be universal, stating that: '*Global goals become de facto national goals too, since getting to zero worldwide directly implies getting to (or near) zero in every country.*' (GAC, 2012: 15). Such goals *appear* to make demands on all countries and yet effectively exempt those that are already at or near zero.

But the worry does apply to proposals that feature truly universal goals, i.e. goals that involve a fair and reasonable assignment of genuine tasks to all (or at least the great majority) of countries and require every country to report on its progress in regard to its assigned tasks. We believe nonetheless that agreement on such a universally applicable framework is politically possible; in fact, there are a couple of international agreements and declarations to build upon.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, while a universally applicable framework is indeed ambitious, we believe that agreement on a framework that lacks genuine universality is no more likely to be achieved. Consequently, rather than reject the idea of a universally applicable framework, this paper is among the first to address the problems such a framework is likely to face.

Overall, there seem to be three major concerns. The first arises from existing broad agreement that the fight against poverty ought to take centre stage in any new development agenda. The difficulty then is to formulate a universally applicable conception of poverty. Poverty in its severest forms, universally recognized as a grave evil, substantially affects only a minority of

countries, and it is often assumed that poverty perceptions in developing and developed countries are too diverse to allow distilling from them a conception of poverty that is both substantial and universally applicable.

Second, the clarity — and thus communicability — of the MDG targets and indicators might get lost as universally applicable goals have to be variable according to each country's specific conditions, resulting in national targets and indicators that are not easily comparable. In addition, national targets are likely to be watered down as national governments tend to seek targets that they can easily meet.

Finally, in a time of budget austerity, there is a real danger that a universally applicable framework might be used as an excuse for developed countries to scale back assistance to developing countries in favour of addressing their own domestic poverty problems. Given a choice between fighting poverty domestically or in the developing world, politicians in the developed countries will naturally prefer to invest at home. In what follows we will address these concerns, starting with global patterns of poverty.

## Poverty around the Globe

In 1990, the baseline year of the MDGs, the poverty singled out for concern by the international community was almost exclusively confined to poor countries. Fully 79% of those living in extreme poverty, i.e. on less than \$1.25 PPP (purchasing power parity) per day,<sup>6</sup> lived in Low Income Countries (LICs). The world could be easily divided into poor and non-poor countries.

But the world has changed considerably since that time. A combination of rapidly increasing per capita incomes and rising inequality has fundamentally changed the global patterns of

poverty. Today, 73% of the world's extremely poor live in Middle Income Countries (MICs) (Rippin, 2013: 12).

This does by no means imply that poverty has become less of an issue merely because some very populous countries crossed the artificial threshold that differentiates LICs from MICs. The situation of the poor didn't change overnight only because their native country has changed classification. But the crossing of the threshold nonetheless changed the way the world community tended to regard the world poverty problem and its candidate solutions.

The fact that it is no longer possible to regard poverty as a problem of the poorest countries has raised a lot of questions and induced fundamental debates on the future direction of development co-operation. As a result, there has also arisen a new and different awareness of long-familiar realities, such as, for instance, the existence of poverty in some of the most developed countries.

#### *Signs of Extreme Poverty in Affluent Countries*

Shaefer and Edin (2012) provide evidence for a steep increase in poverty in the United States, due to the impact of the Great Recession (2007–2009) as aggravated by the 1996 welfare reform which had limited eligibility for welfare and replaced most cash assistance by in-kind benefits. As a result of the welfare reform, cash assistance caseloads declined precipitously from 12.3 million per month in 1996 to only \$4.4 million in June 2011. The authors estimate that the number of households in the United States living on \$2 or less per person per day (constant 2005 dollars) has increased by 67 percent, from 475,000 in 1996 to 800,000 in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

In order to get an impression of the extent of extreme poverty in the European Union, Bradshaw and Mayhew (2010) have utilized purchasing power parities to translate inter alia the \$1.25 poverty line into thresholds for the European countries. They then utilized the EU

Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) data sets for 2008 in order to estimate the existence of extreme poverty in the European Union (Bradshaw and Mayhew, 2010: 30). As expected, poverty rates are very low, but interestingly, with the exception of Slovenia, still not below 0.1 percent. Romania has the highest rate at 2 percent. A comparison with the World Bank estimates for the same year reveals for example that the estimated poverty rates for Greece (0.9%) and Italy (0.8%) are higher than the World Bank's estimates for Albania (0.62%), Azerbaijan (0.43%), Jordan (0.07%), Thailand (0.37%) and Uruguay (0.26%).

Unfortunately, to the best of our knowledge, comparable estimates for other developed countries, like Australia or Canada, have not yet been made. However, a study of UNDESA demonstrates that the living conditions of Australia's indigenous population resemble those of the poor in many developing countries. For instance, the score of aboriginal communities on the Human Development Index (HDI) is similar to those of Cape Verde and El Salvador. The life expectancy of aboriginals is around 20 years lower than that of other Australians. They frequently cannot afford adequate food, water and housing and have only poor access to basic services and infrastructure. For instance, in 2001, 46 percent of all aboriginal communities with a population of 50 or more were not connected to a town water supply (UNDESA, 2009: 23–24).

These facts may not be new. But in a time when fundamental debates challenge the historic perception of poverty they contribute to the realization that poverty is, after all, a global issue and raise awareness that poverty must be fought wherever it exists. This change of attitude is clearly noticeable in affluent countries.

#### *A Change of Attitude in Affluent Countries*

Approximately at the same time as some of the most populous countries crossed the threshold that separates LICs from MICs, a profound change of attitude took place in the majority of

developed countries regarding poverty within their own borders. Although the outcome document of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) declared that ‘*profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion [...] affect every country*’, this was at that time more lip service than a widely shared view. Apart from few exceptions — prominently including the United States<sup>8</sup> — most developed countries had not defined an official poverty line nor developed any kind of official action plan to reduce poverty within their own borders.

A textbook example is Germany. As a ratifier of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, Germany committed to issue national poverty reports. Nevertheless, the federal government was reluctant to comply with its commitment: ‘*[...] the existence of poverty in Germany was denied by a Federal Government pointing out to a well-functioning social security system. That is in line with the fact that the Federal Government believed there was no need for a national report on poverty.*’ (Kemming and Borbach, 2003: 3). It took about six years for this attitude to change: the German government’s first *Poverty and Wealth Report* was published on 25 April 2001.

This attitude change was not a solitary case. For instance, in 2003, EU-SILC was launched in an effort to trace income, poverty, social exclusion and other living conditions in the European Union. On 17 June 2010, the European Council agreed on their first concrete poverty reduction target as one of five headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, requiring that ‘*until 2020 at least 20 million people were to be lifted out of poverty*’.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of Australia, Langford (2012: 4) makes the interesting statement that ‘*[E]ven in a developed country like Australia, there has been a recent demand to set “MDG-like” targets for different poverty outcomes*’, referring to an October 15, 2012, *National Times* article that reports: ‘*Prominent Australians including Tim Costello and Janet Holmes a Court have called for Australia to set a target, similar to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, to*

*reduce poverty.*<sup>10</sup> The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) published its first ‘Poverty and Inequality in Australia’ report in 2012 (ACOSS, 2012).

The Government of Canada has not yet adopted an official definition of poverty nor developed a national strategy to reduce poverty. A recent report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities points out that six Canadian provinces,<sup>11</sup> starting with Québec in December 2002, have released specific action plans to fight poverty. The Committee calls on the federal government to follow the examples of the provinces and to adopt an official poverty line and to develop an action plan to reduce poverty (Hoepfner, 2010: 3).

Summarizing, even extreme poverty exists in some of the most developed countries and if left unattended, there is ample reason to believe that it will increase further. In fact, there are some serious trends that give reason for concern. Global trends such as migration, demographic transition and climate change threaten human development even in the more affluent countries, as do recession, financial crisis, budget austerity and social cuts.

Relatedly, and despite some notable exceptions especially in Latin America, inequality within countries is on the rise, and evidence suggests that it will continue to rise unless actively counteracted (e.g. Kanbur, 2011). Surveys conducted in the United States as well as Australia indicate that income inequality is already not only higher than respondents would prefer it to be, but also considerably higher than they guessed it would be (Neal et al., 2011; Norton and Ariely, 2011; Rippin, 2013). The poorest segments of the population are being left behind, a serious social problem that is exacerbated by the fact that the poor have little political voice even in some of our most renowned democracies (Dahl, 1961; Bartels, 2005).

The fact that poverty is increasingly perceived to be a global issue as well as the recent and profound attitude change in the majority of developed countries regarding poverty within their own nation’s borders supports the call for a universally applicable development agenda. But is

there sufficient overlap among the poverty perceptions in different countries to enable the formulation of a universally applicable poverty concept? In an effort to answer this question, the following sub-sections focus on a comparison of poverty perceptions in developed and developing countries.

### ***Poverty Perceptions in Developed Countries***

A theoretical starting point in the discussion of poverty is provided by Martha Nussbaum's (2003) work, often considered the most influential theoretical conceptualization of multidimensional poverty. She identifies the following ten rough categories:

1. Life Expectancy,
2. Bodily Health, Basic Needs (Housing, Food etc.)
3. Freedom from Violence,
4. Education, Opportunities
5. Emotional Health, Freedom from Fear and Anxiety
6. Mental Health
7. Social Inclusion, Freedom from Discrimination, Self-Esteem
8. Healthy Environment/Nature
9. Leisure
10. Political Participation, Decent Work, Ability to Hold Property

It is important to mention that the philosopher draws heavily on the work of Aristotle and it is not clear whether her list (fully reproduced in the appendix) would actually receive broad cross-cultural consensus. But in Germany, for instance, her list was utilized as a basis for the roundtable discussions of public advisors and scientific experts involved in the development of the German Poverty and Wealth Report (Arndt and Volkert, 2007).

But what are the poverty perceptions in developed countries? Unfortunately, there are thus far only a limited number of surveys on this topic. The surveys we do have reveal, however, that

poverty is rarely perceived to be an issue of income deprivation alone. Income deprivation is seen to be an important aspect of poverty, to be sure, but it is far from being the only one. Rather, respondents describe a multidimensional phenomenon that comprises economic, social, physical and psychological issues.

One study is the ‘*Poverty Pulse: Low-Income Survey*’ by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) in the *United States*. It has been conducted four times, starting in 2000, and includes only low-income respondents (CCHD, 2005).<sup>12</sup> One survey question asks them about their perceptions of poverty: ‘*What does it mean to be poor in the United States? How would you describe being poor in the U.S.?*’ The following table provides an overview of the spontaneous responses (responses with less than 4% in 2004 are ignored).

Table 1: Poverty Perceptions in the United States

<b>Poverty Perceptions</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Inadequate housing/homeless/no home	23%	19%	23%
Jobless/underemployed	10%	18%	19%
No money/not enough money	18%	13%	17%
Can't meet basic needs	18%	15%	13%
Hungry/no food/inadequate food	13%	10%	12%
No health care/inadequate health care	9%	10%	10%
Depressing/hard/bad/terrible/hell	10%	7%	8%
Lacking education/uneducated	8%	9%	7%
Ignored/rejected/left out/invisible	4%	3%	6%
Can't make ends meet	1%	3%	5%
Unable to support self/family/provide for family	8%	9%	5%
Degrading/feeling inadequate/worthless	6%	4%	4%
Uncertainty/worry how to pay/fear	2%	4%	4%
On welfare/need assistance/hand out	2%	3%	4%
Looked down upon/discriminated/blamed	7%	3%	4%
No opportunities/choices	3%	3%	4%
Number of respondents	399	442	457

Source: CCHD (2005: 8)

Another study is ‘*The Invisible Australians: Conceptions of Poverty in Australia*’ by Johnson and Taylor (2000). The results are based on group discussions with 170 participants and 400 random telephone interviews. Respondents are differentiated by income into lower and upper socioeconomic groups with ‘lower’ meaning that respondents were recipients of government

benefits. Interestingly, consensus exists with regard to the core aspects of poverty, i.e. no home, poor clothing, unemployment, poor water quality, no food on the table.

However, when it comes to additional aspects of poverty, considerable differences exist between the responses of the two groups. The poor themselves identify very much the same issues as the respondents in the US survey. In particular they refer to poverty as a lack of choices as well as emotional aspects such as stress, anxiety and hopelessness. The upper socioeconomic group, by contrast, tends to connect ‘blameworthy’ aspects to poverty, such as addiction, inertia and gambling. The following table provides an overview of the responses.

Table 2: Poverty Perceptions in the United States

<b>Core Aspects</b>	<b>Lower Socioeconomic</b>	<b>Upper Socioeconomic</b>
No Home		
Poor Clothing		
Unemployment		
Poor Water Quality		
No Food on the Table		
	No choices	Low Self-esteem
	Uncertainty	Lack of Opportunity
	Stress/ Anxiety	Poor Education
	No Networks	Inter-Generational
	Lack of/ No Access to Services	Addiction
	Illness	Inertia
	Hopelessness	Gambling

Source: Johnson and Taylor (2000: 4)

In Europe, the European Commission conducted three special surveys on ‘*Poverty and Social Exclusion*’, the so called Eurobarometers, in 2007, 2009 and 2010 (EU, 2007; EU, 2009; EU, 2010), the latter two include questions about poverty perceptions.<sup>13</sup> We focus on two questions.

The first question asks respondents directly about their understanding of poverty: ‘*There are different ways of defining when people are poor in (our country). Which of the following statements would best correspond to your definition of being poor? People are poor when...*’

The following table provides an overview of the responses to this question.<sup>14</sup>

Table 3: Poverty Perceptions in the European Union

<b>Poverty Perceptions</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
They cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in	24%	26%
They depend on charity or public subsidies	21%	24%
They have less than the national poverty threshold to live on	18%	18%
They cannot afford the basic goods they need to live (food, shelter, clothes, etc.)	22%	17%
They have a very low social status in our society	8%	9%
It is impossible to define poverty by just one statement (spontaneous)	5%	4%
Other (spontaneous)	1%	1%
Don't know	1%	1%

Source: Special Eurobarometer 355 (2010: 9)

The second question relates to the perceived implications of poverty, asking: ‘*In (our country) nowadays, would you say that being poor hampers very much, somewhat, not very much or not at all people's chances of ...?*’ The following table provides an overview of the responses ‘very much’ and ‘somewhat’ to this question.

Table 4: Perceived Implications of Poverty in the European Union

<b>Perceived Implications of Poverty</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Having access to decent housing	87%	86%
Starting up a business of their own	85%	85%
Getting higher education or adult learning	80%	80%
Finding a job	74%	76%
Having access to means of communication, such as a telephone or the internet	72%	72%
Eating at least one hot meal a day	68%	70%
Having access to a basic bank account	65%	64%
Having medical care when needed	62%	61%
Getting good basic school education	60%	60%
Maintaining a network of friends and acquaintances	54%	55%

Source: Special Eurobarometer 355 (2010: 62)

The answers to the two questions do not really make clear which deficits are part of the definition and which are implications of poverty. For instance, the fourth answer on the definition of poverty lists lack of food and shelter, which is also mentioned as an implication of poverty (‘*eating at least one hot meal a day*’ and ‘*having access to decent housing*’). In the same way, the first answer on the definition of poverty (‘*they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in*’) is somewhat reflected in the implication of poverty

*'maintaining a network of friends and acquaintances.'* Taken together, the responses seem to provide a more holistic picture of what the first two surveys identified as poverty perceptions.

A comparison of the different survey results reveals that there is considerable overlap of the responses (see also table 7). This is remarkable, indicating that people from quite diverse geographical backgrounds have a rather similar understanding of the different aspects of poverty. Let us now turn to poverty perceptions in developing countries to examine the extent to which they, too, resemble the poverty perceptions found across the developed countries. Such a resemblance would support the case for a universally applicable goal framework.

### ***Poverty Perceptions in Developing Countries***

There are many more studies on poverty perceptions in developing countries than on those in developed countries. Here one study stands out as the most influential and comprehensive analysis of poverty perceptions in the developing world. It is a study the World Bank conducted in 1999 titled *Voices of the Poor*, comprising 78 reports conducted in 47 developing countries (Narayan et al., 1999: 18). In order to get a better understanding of the differences and similarities of poverty perceptions across countries, this section will compare the results of the *Voices of the Poor* study and the results of a multi-year research project on poverty perceptions in six poor countries which one of the authors has just concluded.

To begin with the last-mentioned, "Assessing Development: Designing Better Indices of Poverty and Gender Equity" was a participatory research exercise aimed at developing a new, multidimensional measure of deprivation based on the perspectives of poor men and women. The project aimed to move beyond household measures of poverty to identify a tool for measuring poverty at the individual level which, among other things, would allow for revealing gender disparity.

The project worked with men and women in 18 communities across Angola, Fiji, Indonesia, Malawi, Mozambique, and the Philippines. In the first phase of research, participants engaged in a range of deliberative activities to discuss how poverty and related hardships are best understood, to what extent they are gendered, and also to identify specific dimensions of deprivation which are most relevant to identifying whether a person is living a life free from poverty and hardship. In the second phase of research, participants were asked to rank deprivations from most to least important in identifying a life free from poverty and related hardships.

Participants unsurprisingly held a wide range of views and many diverse opinions existed on the best way to understand poverty. However, a common core of findings emerged from each of the research sites.

First, poverty is understood to be scalar — there are different levels and degrees of poverty, sometimes characterized by very different features. Second, poverty is understood to be multidimensional — although employment, income, and wealth were all widely identified as key components of a life free from poverty, nearly all participants identified dimensions related to social relations and individual agency that were deemed as constitutive of poverty. These included the more familiar dimensions of health, education, sanitation, and shelter, but also less commonly recognized dimensions including voice in one's community, access to contraception, freedom from violence, and the ability to have control over one's decision making. Third, participants were concerned about both biological and social needs. Fourth, participants' views reflected their particular social and economic positions. Finally, participants rejected simple narratives regarding the intra-household distribution of deprivation — for example, that women and children tended to be more deprived than male adults.

Based on these participatory exercises, individual deprivation was measured in the following dimensions: financial status, nutrition, water, shelter, health care, education, energy, sanitation, control over decision making and access to supportive personal relationships, adequate clothing and decent personal care, freedom from violence, contraception, a clean environment, voice in the community, adequate leisure time, and decent work status. A pilot study measuring poverty on a 5 point interval scale has recently been completed in the Philippines using these dimensions.

Table 5: Poverty Perceptions from Angola, Fiji, Indonesia, Malawi, Mozambique, and the Philippines

<b>Core Aspects of Poverty</b>
Inadequate Income/ Wealth
Insufficient Nutrition
Insufficient Water
Lack of (Adequate) Shelter
Inadequate Access to Health Care
Lack of Education
Lack of Access to Energy
Inadequate Sanitation
Lack of Control over Decision Making
Lack of Supportive Personal Relationships
Lack of Adequate Clothing and Decent Personal Care
Violence
Insufficient Access to Contraception
Unhealthy Environment
Lack of Voice in the Community
Insufficient Leisure Time
Indecent Work Status

The study confirms conclusions that have also emerged from the much larger 47-country study that the World Bank has conducted in 1999 under the title *Voices of the Poor*: an important part of the experience of being poor concerns a person's lack of standing within her or his community.

Table 6: Poverty Perceptions of *Voices of the Poor*

<b>Core Aspects of Poverty</b>
Lack of Income/ Wealth/ Assets (including land)
Lack of (Adequate) Housing
Insufficient Food
Lack of Adequate Clothing
Insufficient Access to Water, Sanitation, Energy, etc.
Inadequate Access to Health Facilities

Lack of Education
Un- or Underemployment/ Indecent Jobs
Violence
Lack of Access to Financial Services
Lack of Voice/ Power/ Independence
Lack of Opportunities/ Choices
Humiliation/ Inhumane Treatment
Social Exclusion
Vulnerability/ Exposure to Risk
Dependency on Charity
Depression/ Fear/ Insecurity
Hopelessness
Shame/ Low self-esteem
Lack of Time ('the Poor are always tired')

Source: Narayan et al. (1999)

The poor are those who lack a decent regular job with adequate pay, those who lack friends or relatives from whom they can obtain help in an emergency, those who lack influence in the community that would enable them to work for social change, those who lack the education, wealth and time to transform their lives, those who lack effective means to resist violence and mistreatment. *'Experiences of ill-being include ... exhaustion and poverty of time; exclusion, rejection, isolation and loneliness; bad relations with others, including bad relations within the family; insecurity, vulnerability, worry, fear and low self-confidence; and powerlessness, helplessness, frustration and anger'* (Narayan et al., 2000: 21). These social dimensions of poverty are entirely continuous with the poverty encountered in much richer countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

To be sure, severe poverty also has material dimensions: deficits in income and assets, food and water, medical care, clothing, housing and shelter — with consequent experiences of hunger, pain, disease and discomfort. But as societies have become considerably richer in aggregate, even these material problems are increasingly rooted in low social standing and social exclusion. And as societies have become considerably more unequal, these material problems have begun to reassert themselves in many of the high-income societies. To be sure, starvation and lack of access to clean water are exceedingly rare in high-income societies, but

many of their citizens find themselves compelled by economic necessity to purchase unhealthy diets and to avoid seeking medical care — with serious consequences for the health and life expectancy of themselves and their families. And many people in these affluent countries cannot afford to dress in socially acceptable ways and must make do with sub-standard housing. Significant numbers have no fixed home at all, effectively living on the streets. This is reflected in the following comparison.

Table 7: Global Comparison of Poverty Perceptions

Topics	AUS	EU	USA	Developing Countries	Martha Nussbaum
Lack of (Adequate) Housing	x	x	x	x	x
Un- or Underemployment/ Indecent Jobs	x	x	x	x	x
Lack of Basic Needs (Clothing, Water, Sanitation etc.)	x	x	x	x	x
Inadequate Food	x	x	x	x	x
Inadequate Access to Health Services	x	x	x	x	x
Lack of Education (Basic and Higher)	x	x	x	x	x
Social Exclusion/ Lack of Networks/ Relationships	x	x	x	x	x
Discrimination/ Inhumane Treatment/ Humiliation <sup>15</sup>	x	x	x	x	x
Lack of Opportunities/ Choices/ Control <sup>16</sup>	x	x	x	x	x
Hopelessness	x		x	x	x
Low Self-esteem	x		x	x	x
Worry/ Fear/ Anxiety/ Insecurity	x		x	x	x
Lack of Income/ Wealth/ Assets (e.g. Land)		x	x	x	x
Dependency/ Vulnerability/ Lack of Resilience		x	x	x	
Lack of Access to Financial Services		x		x	x
Violence				x	x
Unhealthy Environment/ Nature				x	x
Lack of Voice/ Political Participation				x	x
Lack of Access to Information and Communications Technology		x			
Lack of Access to Energy				x	
Insufficient Access to Contraception				x	
Lack of Leisure Time				x	

Crosses indicate areas that have been mentioned by the respondents. The list of Martha Nussbaum has been included in order to provide an impression of the differences and similarities between theoretical and empirical approaches.

Source: Based on Johnson and Taylor (2000: 4), Special Eurobarometer 355 (2010: 9; 62), CCHD (2005: 8), Narayan et al. (1999), and Nussbaum (2003: 41–42)

Summarizing, though there are obviously differences between the poverty perceptions in developed and developing countries, there is nevertheless a rather high level of congruence. This undermines the first concern about a universal development agenda mentioned at the outset: the worry that poverty perceptions in developing and developed countries might be too

diverse to allow distilling from them a conception of poverty that is both substantial and universally applicable. Despite all differences, there clearly is a conception of poverty that is widely shareable across present human life contexts and thus can provide the basis for a universally applicable goal framework. But is it possible to formulate a unified goal framework that is adaptable to national circumstances while yielding suitably ambitious targets for both developed and developing countries? The following section will address this second concern.

## Global Goals, National Targets

The MDG framework consisted of goals, targets and indicators. The goals summarized a specific objective, for instance, ‘reduce child mortality’ (MDG4). The targets specified this objective, in the example, ‘reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate’ (Target 4). The indicators, finally, provided means to monitor progress towards the goal, in the example the under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), the infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) and the proportion of 1-year old immunized against measles.

A serious problem arose, however, when the global goals and targets of the MDGs were translated into national tasks. For instance, in order to meet the target of reducing the global under-five mortality rate by two-thirds, every developing country was assigned the task of achieving such a two-thirds reduction domestically — regardless of national circumstances. Such an assignment of tasks is highly unfair to the poorest countries which, starting from the worst baselines, are given the most onerous tasks even while they also labour under the most severe resource constraints.

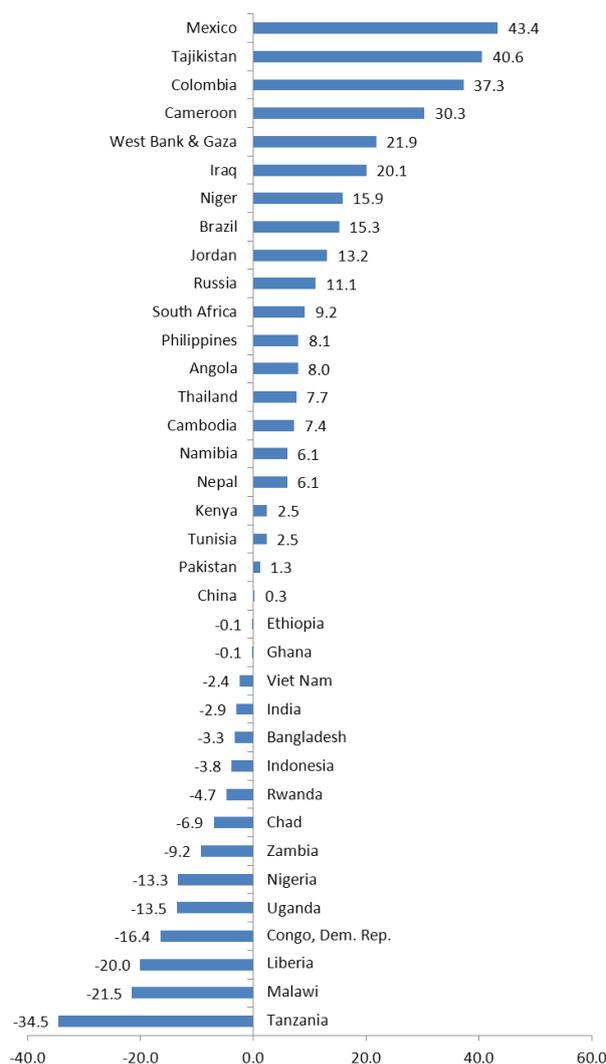
For instance, a very poor country might be asked to reduce the prevalence of extreme poverty from 70 to 35 percent while a much richer country need merely achieve a reduction from 6 to 3 percent. This unequal treatment is diametrically opposed to the whole idea of results-based management (RBM) which requires targets to be ambitious yet achievable. The formulation of targets that are obviously unachievable reduces ownership as well as accountability at the country-level. Moreover, such unfair treatment can easily fuel aid fatigue in donor countries by supporting there the view that the least developed countries have once again failed to make adequate progress (Meyer et al., 1992; Clemens, 2004; Clemens et al., 2007; Easterly, 2009; Klasen and Lange, 2012).

Consequently, almost every proposal suggesting a universally applicable goal framework requires goals to be defined globally and targets to be set nationally. However, it is not clear what a national formulation of targets actually means and what caveats it might imply. In particular, there are two pitfalls to be avoided. The first is that national targets might be insufficiently ambitious as national policy makers seek to make them easily achievable. This pitfall must be avoided by ensuring that national targets are ambitious enough so that, if they all get achieved, the global target is certain to be met as well. The second pitfall is that developed countries might scale back assistance to developing countries in favour of addressing their own domestic poverty problems. The developed countries must of course meet their domestic targets. This is the point of a universal development agenda: that developed countries just like developing countries are to be held accountable for achieving their national poverty targets. But the developed countries must also acknowledge their additional responsibilities abroad. To eradicate severe poverty in the poorer countries, substantial collaboration by the more affluent countries is necessary. Without such collaboration, the scandal of massive extreme poverty in the poorest countries will be perpetuated for many more decades.

A good way to illustrate the problems is to consider the example of the current MDG1 to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty and the respective target, to halve by 2015 the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 per day. This example is especially perspicuous as domestic and international definitions of extreme poverty exist side by side: the *domestic* poverty lines maintained by the various countries and the *national* poverty lines calculated by converting the \$1.25-per-day international poverty line into the various local currency units.

Gentilini and Sumner (2012) have used Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) to convert domestic monetary poverty lines for 160 countries into US dollars and have then compared the resulting poverty rates with those derived from an application of the international poverty line. Some of their results are presented in the following figure.

Figure 1: Percentage Points Difference between Domestic and International Poverty Rates, Selected Countries



Comparison of domestic poverty rates and international poverty rates, negative values indicating that the domestic poverty line yields a lower poverty rate than the international poverty line (i.e., that the international poverty line is higher than the domestic one).

Source: Based on Gentilini and Sumner (2012: 30)

Two major facts become obvious from the graph. First, a country's poverty rate can vary substantially depending on which poverty line is used. In the poorest countries, the international poverty line yields substantially higher poverty rates than the domestic poverty lines do, while in the less poor developing countries the reverse is true. This illustrates the fact that national targets have to be formulated so that they are *meaningful* at the national level. Only if national targets are meaningful will they boost ownership as well as accountability at the country-level. In addition, national agents are much more easily mobilized when targets are defined in a way that makes sense in the respective national context (Gentilini and Sumner, 2012).

Second, quite a number of domestic poverty lines are considerably lower than the (already very low) international poverty line. Various African countries (such as Tanzania; Malawi; Liberia; Congo, Dem. Rep.; Uganda; Nigeria; Zambia; Chad and Rwanda) show considerably lower poverty rates when the domestic rather than the international poverty line is applied. This may raise intuitive concerns about the ambitiousness of these poverty lines. It is difficult to address these concerns insofar as domestic poverty lines are defined in different ways (based on diverse definitions of adequate nutrition, consumption baskets, etc.): if poverty lines are not comparable, each country may rightfully claim that its specific poverty line is appropriate and sufficiently ambitious in its national context which is very different from that of any other country.

Such autonomy on the part of governments is problematic on the assumption that national policy makers will have a tendency to set easily achievable targets. In a way this already became obvious during the negotiations over the last round of development goals. The 'B-

*group*<sup>17</sup> and the ‘G-77’<sup>18</sup> were unable to reach agreement as their ideas of an appropriate level of ambition were too far apart. The former requested levels of ambition that the latter refused to accept. In an attempt to nevertheless ‘*create the semblance of consensus*’ (Vandemoortele, 2011b: 5), member states deliberately omitted the specification of the baseline and, in consequence, the level of aspiration.

The baseline year 1990 was finally set by the IAEG when formulating the MDGs, thereby choosing the way of least resistance: some targets clearly fall short of already existing agreements. For instance, at the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996, the assembled governments agreed to ‘*eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the **number** of undernourished people to half their **present level** no later than 2015.*’<sup>19</sup> This agreement is clearly substantially more ambitious than the related MDG target 1C, to ‘*halve, between **1990** and 2015, the **proportion** of people who suffer from hunger*’ (Pogge, 2013).

One target even falls short of the agreement of the Millennium Declaration itself: ‘*By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their **current rates**.*’<sup>20</sup>

Transferred to a future universally applicable goal framework, this poses a threefold challenge: First, goals and targets have to be formulated so that they are meaningful at the national level. Second, targets should also be comparable in order to ensure that they are (i) fair yet ambitious and (ii) easily communicable to the public in order to generate a momentum similar to the MDGs (generating political momentum was considered one of their main achievements). A goal that asks countries to reduce income poverty as defined by their respective domestic poverty lines fails both tests: it is insufficiently ambitious and not easily communicable. And third, while the targets assigned to the poorest countries must be fair (i.e. achievable), it must also be ensured that the greatest problems of humanity such as starvation,

preventable deaths etc. are solved as quickly as possible. These are the challenges we will address in what follows.

### *Meaningful yet comparable*

The first challenge is to formulate goals so that they are both meaningful at the national level and comparable across nations. In order to achieve this, global goals need to be based on outcomes and be truly universal in the sense that they are measuring exactly the same variable.

To reduce extreme income poverty qualifies as such a global goal but only if it is accompanied by a clear and meaningful definition of extreme income poverty. For instance, extreme income poverty could be defined as the failure to satisfy the most basic needs, whereby these basic needs again have to be clearly specified (e.g. housing, clothing, water, food). Obviously, the income that is needed to meet these basic needs will vary hugely across countries and yet the fact that it would be calculated in exactly the same way would ensure its comparability across countries.

Such an approach would avoid what Gore (2010: 71) called a '*Faustian bargain*', i.e. the shift from a time in which development meant catching up of the poorer countries to the richer countries to targets that define certain minimum standards for all countries. Regarding the international poverty line, Gore argues (2010: 71):

‘This minimalist approach is apparent, for example, in the MDG Target of reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1-a-day by half, by 2015. This identifies the typical standard of minimally adequate consumption in the poorest countries in the world as the global standard of poverty eradication. But it would be equally valid, and also more ethically defensible, to adopt the typical standard of minimally adequate consumption in the richest countries as the global standard.’

The same argument applies to other dimensions of poverty. For instance, universal access to services, be it education or health or anything else, does not qualify as a meaningful and comparable goal. Being an input factor rather than an outcome, access is not comparable across countries as it neglects the whole aspect of quality. For instance, universal access to education does not ensure high quality learning outcomes. What is needed is a goal that is based on international learning standards, for instance, MLA (Monitoring of Learning Achievement), PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), SAQMEQ (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) ensuring that the achievements in all countries are measured against the same high learning standards. Likewise, universal health coverage does not ensure that everyone gets access to the best possible medical treatment. Additional goals are needed in order to ensure everyone's access to high quality health services, like for instance goals that are based on health outcomes, such as Healthy Life Expectancy (HALE) (Salomon et al., 2012).

The latter provides a good example for a meaningful and comparable global goal: to increase HALE. The respective target would be to increase HALE by a certain percentage, depending on what is fair and yet ambitious at the national level. After determining the respective percentages, they can be utilized to estimate the overall progress towards the goal, something that is much easier to communicate to the public.

In addition, being based on outcomes, such goals and targets do in no way neglect national realities and priorities. In order to increase HALE, some countries will have to focus on non-communicable diseases, others on specific diseases like HIV/AIDS or malaria, others again on some forms of neglected tropical diseases. Still others will have to focus on access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation or vaccination programs. Thus, the subsequent question is which possibilities exist to derive targets that are at the same time fair and ambitious.

### *Fair yet ambitious*

In order to derive national targets that are fair and yet ambitious, some form of comparability across countries needs to be ensured despite the obvious fact that each country is different. So far, there exist two main proposals for how this objective might be achieved. The first one suggests forming clusters of countries according to their capacity, the second suggests utilizing the astonishingly robust pattern of historical progress to determine what is feasible at the country level.

### *Adjustments to State Capacity*

One way of ensuring comparability in translating global goals into national targets works by estimating state capacity and then dividing countries into groups on this basis, setting targets for each group. The target could then be formulated by either utilizing the highest rates of progress achieved within a group (i.e. the benchmark) or, alternatively, the respective average progress (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2009; Randolph et al., 2010; Langford, 2012; Anderson and Langford, 2013).

Whereas Fukuda-Parr et al. (2009) and Randolph et al. (2010) utilize GDP per capita as the indicator for estimating state capacity, Anderson and Langford (2013: 10) utilize six indicators all of which are beyond government control – at least within the timeframe over which performance is assessed (Anderson and Langford, 2013: 10):

- GDP per capita (constant prices, at PPP exchange rates);
- the ratio of ‘disposable national income’ (DNI) to GDP;
- total population (millions);
- land area (km<sup>2</sup>);
- urbanization (% of total population);

- the dependency ratio (the share of population aged 15-64 to the sum of the shares aged 0-14 and 65+)

A calculation based on only GDP per capita is easier to conduct; however, Anderson and Langford (2013: 24) argue that this indicator alone might be imprecise. Regarding water performance, Zambia, for instance, ranks 89th out of 114 countries if GDP per capita is utilized as the only indicator. However, if all six indicators are utilized, Zambia ranks 37th. The authors state that one of the reasons for the difference lies in the fact that Zambia's disposable national income is far below its GDP, mainly due to repatriated earnings on foreign direct investment (Anderson and Langford, 2013: 24).

Whatever indicators are chosen in order to cluster countries according to state capacity, this is a viable and rather easily explainable approach to set national targets that are ambitious and yet fair at the country level.

### *Transition Paths*

Another approach to derive national targets has been suggested by Klasen and Lange (2012). Their suggestion builds on the concept of a transition path, i.e. the path that a country embarks on in its progress towards a goal. The typical transition path is S-shaped so that the initial position of a country alone explains a lot of the progress that the respective country is able to achieve (Meyer et al., 1992; Clemens, 2004; Clemens et al., 2007; Klasen and Lange, 2012) – which is why the current MDGs, when interpreted at the national level, have been highly unfair to those countries with the worst starting conditions, especially those of Sub-Saharan Africa (Easterly, 2009).

Two lines of argument exist for the S-shape of transition paths. The first explains that investments in countries with very low levels of human development take some time to reach a level where they actually pay off because expensive and sustained investments in

institutions and infrastructure are required. It is only after a considerable time that the investments start to pay-off and progress is speeding up. Later, however, once low-hanging fruits have been harvested, progress slows down again. So progress follows an S-shaped curve with slow progress in the beginning and fast advances in the middle which is followed by deceleration (e.g. Vandemoortele, 2009: 361).

The second line of argument is that once a country starts to make progress, initially only the most privileged parts of a society have access to social services like education and health systems and progress in these areas is lagging. Then, with increasing wealth, progress accelerates as more and more households of the upper and lower middle class gain access. However afterwards, progress slows down again as access problems remain only for the poorest members of society who are especially difficult to reach (Clemens, 2004).

Whatever the explanation, empirical evidence strongly suggests the existence of S-shaped transition paths. The following figure provides an illustration of such a transition path for under-five mortality rates, based on World Development Indicator (WDI) 2010 data (Klasen and Lange, 2012). The results of the transition path are strikingly robust. The same paths evolve if only data for Middle Income Countries (MICs) and Low Income Countries (LICs) are utilized instead of data for all countries or if Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data are utilized instead of WDI<sup>21</sup>.



communicated. It could justify a specific percentage target in a country by explaining that this specific target requires the respective country to speed up expected progress by a certain percentage.

The global goal could either be formulated as (i) an acceleration of progress, for instance to reduce under-five mortality rates  $x$ -times faster than hitherto, or (ii) by deriving a numerical value for the world by utilizing the weighted average of these national targets (CIGI and KDI, 2012: 5).

### ***A Dual Commitment***

The previous subsection introduced two concepts that could be utilized to derive national targets that are fair and yet ambitious for the respective countries. Yet it cannot be neglected that poverty in its multiple, devastating forms is an issue of global concern. Poor countries with their limited resources should not be left alone to deal with the crucial problems they face. Since poorer countries left to their own devices cannot realistically be expected to catch up with more affluent countries, it would be immoral today to leave a very poor country to its own devices, especially in view of how badly the poorest countries have been hurt by colonialism, slavery, and other wrongs and injustices continuing into the present. There has to be a dual commitment: as a nation to address national problems and as a world to help the poorest nations catch up.

An ambitious goal formulation must envision that, over time, the developmental differences among countries will diminish. While it has to be ensured that developed countries continue to progress, the least developed countries should receive special resources and breaks from richer countries so that they can catch up very rapidly in a way that does not overstrain their own tight resources. Such improvement must be achieved through international collaboration,

including not just efforts funded by foreigners but also less onerous terms of cooperation, less facilitation of corruption, and so on. Foreign resources might go directly to goal-relevant agencies e.g. vaccination and treatment programs, schools, income support, micro-insurance subsidies – and foreign breaks analogously might be directly targeted to benefit vulnerable populations (e.g. special export privileges for produce grown by small farmers, special tax breaks for job outsourcing from rich countries, special administrative training and support for social welfare agencies etc.).

An interesting formulation in this regard can be found in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) in which developed countries acknowledged their responsibility with regard to environmental issues summarized in Principle 7:

‘In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.’<sup>23</sup>

In the same way as developed countries acknowledged their responsibility with regard to environmental issues, they should in one way or another accept that they bear a great deal of responsibility for the severe poverty persisting in the rest of the world.

One way to implement a dual commitment could be to introduce additional targets that form a kind of ‘global flooring’. For instance, in the case of HALE, such an additional target could be to ‘ensure that every person has a healthy life expectancy of at least xx years at birth’. All countries are called upon to achieve these additional targets.

Another way could be to ‘speed up’ progress. Thus, once one has identified a specific percentage target that is fair and yet ambitious at the country level, this percentage target should be increased through international collaboration in order to enable the catching-up of poorer countries and to eradicate the most severe forms of poverty as quickly as possible. For

instance, in case a certain percentage reduction in the under-five mortality rate has been identified as a fair and ambitious national target, the international community is called upon to enable an additional percentage reduction in collaboration with the national government to accelerate progress in a joint effort.

Both methods, either separately or in combination, seem to provide a viable way to operationalize a dual commitment. Whichever way is chosen, it has to be ensured that the most extreme forms of poverty are eradicated everywhere as quickly as possible — with the more affluent countries supporting those with limited resources.

## Conclusions

The year 2015 is quickly approaching and the world community is focusing on the development of a post-2015 agenda. Most of the proposals made so far agree that any new development agenda should be universally applicable, with a goal framework that applies to all countries, developing and developed. However, few studies exist so far that address the multiple challenges that such a universal development agenda inevitably incurs. This paper sought to contribute to closing this research gap by pointing out the three main challenges that a universal development agenda will face and by suggesting solutions to these challenges.

The first challenge is to provide a conception of poverty that can be applied to all countries in a meaningful way. The paper provided empirical evidence to demonstrate that, despite all international differences, there exists a sharable conception of poverty that can indeed provide the basis for a universally applicable goal framework.

The second challenge results from the fact that, considering the differences among countries, the targets of a globally applicable framework have to be formulated in a way that is

meaningful at the national level. The challenge will then be to ensure that these national targets are not watered down, a danger that is quite real considering the fact that national governments tend to seek targets that they can easily meet. This paper suggested two different methods facilitating the formulation of national targets that are reasonable and yet ambitious regarding national circumstances.

Closely related to the second, the third challenge arises from the fact that ambitious but realistic targets at the national level might be taken to imply that poor countries must rely on their own limited resources in order to deal with the massive extreme poverty they face, suggesting that the world's most pressing problems are to be perpetuated for many more decades. Thus, the third challenge consists in ensuring a dual commitment of affluent countries: they must fulfil their obligations (i) at home as captured by the national targets and (ii) abroad, ensuring that poor countries are not left alone with their limited resources to deal with the crucial problems they face so that the greatest problems of humanity are solved as quickly as possible. This paper offered a possibility how such a dual commitment could be implemented in a post-2015 development agenda.

## Appendix

Table 1: International Conferences and Summits leading to the Millennium Development Goals

World Summit for Children	New York	1990
World Conference on Education for All	Jomtien	1990
International Conference on Nutrition	Rome	1992
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	Rio de Janeiro	1992
World Conference on Human Rights	Vienna	1993
Global Conference on Small Island Developing States	Bridgetown	1994
International Conference on Population and Development	Cairo	1994
World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction	Yokohama	1994
4 <sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women	Beijing	1995
World Summit on Social Development	Copenhagen	1995
2 <sup>nd</sup> Conference on Human Settlements	Istanbul	1996
World Food Summit	Rome	1996
World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth	Lisbon	1998
World Education Forum	Dakar	2000
3 <sup>rd</sup> United Nations Conference on the Least Developing Countries	Brussels	2001
World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance	Durban	2001
World Summit on Sustainable Development	Johannesburg	2002
2 <sup>nd</sup> World Assembly on Ageing	Madrid	2002
International Conference on Financing for Development	Monterrey	2002
4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Ministerial Conference of Landlocked Developing Countries	Almaty	2003
World Summit on the Information Society	Geneva	2003
World Conference on Disaster Reduction	Kobe	2005
International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States	Port Louis	2005

Martha Nussbaum's list of '*central human capabilities*' (Nussbaum, 2003: 41–42):

1. **Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily Health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily Integrity.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. **Senses, Imagination and Thought.** Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind

in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.

- 5. Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.
- 6. Practical Reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
- 7. Affiliation.** A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.) B. Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.
- 8. Other Species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
- 9. Play.** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
- 10. Control Over One's Environment.** A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.'

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

<sup>2</sup> An overview of the international summits and conferences that led to the MDGs can be found in Table 1 in the Appendix. For a more detailed overview of which targets and indicators were derived from which summit or conference please refer to Rippin (2013)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/774futurewewant\\_english.pdf](http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/774futurewewant_english.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Copenhagen Declaration Annex I.2, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>

<sup>5</sup> A holistic review of international agreements and declarations on this topic would go well beyond the scope of this paper. But in addition to the already mentioned Rio Declaration on Environment and Development that acknowledged ‘*common but differentiated responsibilities*’, and the World Summit for Social Development (1995) that declared that ‘*profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion [...] affect every country*’, there was the 2012 Rio Declaration that requires a future framework to be: ‘*[...] global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.*’ The joint Communication of the European Commissioners for Environment and for Development (presented on 27 February 2013 in Brussels) fully embraces the message, claiming: ‘*Poverty eradication and ensuring that prosperity and well-being are sustainable remain the most pressing challenges for the future. To be tackled successfully, they must be tackled together, within a new overarching framework that is universal and directly relevant to all countries, while recognising that different countries are affected to varying degrees and that their responses and contribution to global goals will vary.*’

<sup>6</sup> Maintained by the World Bank, this international poverty line counts as poor all persons who live in households whose daily per capita income or consumption falls below what \$1.25 could have bought in the United States in 2005. This MDG target was initially formulated in terms of a substantially higher poverty line referring to what \$1.00 could have bought in the US in 1985. For this reason and others, this target has been exceptionally controversial (Saith, 2005; Kanbur, 2009; Reddy and Pogge, 2010; Fischer, 2010). We only use it for illustrative reasons.

<sup>7</sup> Data are taken from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and include ‘labor market earnings, pension and retirements’, cash income from public programs including estimated in-kind transfers from SNAP (but neglecting all other forms of in-kind benefits), monetary support from friends and relatives and informal sources as well as asset income (i.e. dividends, rents and interest).

<sup>8</sup> The official poverty line of the United States was already developed in the early 1960s and adopted in 1969. Poverty trends are carefully monitored, see for instance:

[www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/07/11/poverty-in-the-50-years-since-the-other-america-in-five-charts/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/07/11/poverty-in-the-50-years-since-the-other-america-in-five-charts/)

<sup>9</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/more-than-two-million-living-in-poverty-20121014-27kpc.html>

<sup>11</sup> Québec (2002), Newfoundland and Labrador (2006), Ontario (2008), Nova Scotia (2009), Manitoba (2009), and New Brunswick (2009) (Hoepfner, 2010: 63).

<sup>12</sup> Household size of 1 with income < \$15,670; 2 with income < \$18,850; 3 with income < \$22,030; 4 with income < \$28,390; 5 with income < \$37,930; 6 or more with income < \$44,290.

<sup>13</sup> Please note that the questions provide predefined answers with no room for spontaneous reactions. Thus, regarding our objective to compare poverty perceptions across countries, the results of these surveys are less meaningful than the previous two.

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, a substantial percentage (4 in 2009, 5 in 2010) of respondents complain about the way the question is posed by claiming that ‘it is impossible to define poverty by just one statement.’

<sup>15</sup> As the differentiation between the poverty perceptions of the lower and the upper socioeconomic groups in Australia illustrates, the poor tend to feel discriminated against whereas the non-poor tend to believe that attitudes such as laziness, addictions and gambling are characteristics of the poor which led them into poverty in the first place. In a way, these are two sides of the same coin which is why we decided to combine them in one category.

<sup>16</sup> We decided to summarize the responses ‘starting up a business of their own’ as well as the observation that poverty is ‘inter-generational’ under the category ‘lack of opportunities/ choices’.

<sup>17</sup> Members of the OECD are in UN-jargon sometimes referred to as ‘B-group’ (Baehr, 1995: 283; Vandemoortele, 2011b: 5)

<sup>18</sup> The Group of 77 (G-77) was established on 15 June 1964 by seventy-seven developing countries, today the group comprises 131 countries: <http://www.g77.org/doc/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Note also that, while the poverty and hunger goals in the Millennium Declaration are stated in terms of a proportion of the “world’s people,” MDG1 states them less ambitiously in terms of the population of the developing countries. This matters, because population growth in the developing countries is faster than that in the world at large, so more work gets done by population growth in the denominator.

<sup>21</sup> Klasen and Lange (2012) demonstrate that similar transition paths can be generated for other targets as well, for instance vaccination rates or completion and enrolment rates. However, as they point out, under-five mortality rates are outcome measures and therefore particularly suitable.

<sup>22</sup> The formulation of such targets can take into account that international cooperation may enable less developed countries to progress faster than the most advanced countries could at a similar stage of their development. Accountability must then be shared between the country in question and the international community. Even in this case, however, the formulation of national targets would be influenced by each country’s current position on the S-shaped standard development trajectory.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/774futurewewant\\_english.pdf](http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/774futurewewant_english.pdf)