

FOREWORD

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set for the target year of 2015, have brought human development issues to the global centre-stage. The MDGs, which address issues ranging from poverty and hunger, health, education to environmental sustainability and global partnership, have provided a roadmap to governments to address the development priorities, in the hope for a better future for the world. The international development discourse is presently focused on the new development framework that will replace the existing set of eight Millennium Development Goals in 2015. As we arrive at the target year, the global conversation is slowly crystallising around a new set of goals, being termed as ‘Sustainable Development Goals’.

A major cause for concern — articulated not only by the United Nations, but by academic experts and civil society worldwide — is the lack of effective participation of countries of the Global South in this conversation. Since the MDGs were drawn up in 2000, Southern countries, and especially many South Asian countries, have emerged as key players on the world stage. China and India, in particular, have emerged as drivers of economic growth around the world. Brazil, a country from the Global South, has taken major strides in terms of progress in human development. Most recently, the BRICS nations have come together to form a new development bank, offering an alternative to the existing international financial system headed by the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover, these are also the countries with major human development deficits. Of the 868 million undernourished people at the global level, 852 million are in developing countries. According to IFPRI’s Global Hunger Index, many South Asian and African countries fall in ‘Extremely Alarming’ and ‘Alarming’ categories. Again, out of the global 102 million underweight children, 55 million are in India.

It is imperative, therefore, that Southern voices are heard and have a leading role in setting the agenda for development in the post-2015 years. In order to strengthen the recommendations for a Southern-led, Southern-focused post-2015 development agenda globally, momentum needs to be built around shaping the agenda by engaging a diverse set of stakeholders. In this regard, the academic community and civil society play a critical role as a key voice.

In this background, the Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi and Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), a coalition of over 4,000 civil society organisations in India, jointly initiated a dialogue on the post-MDG 2015 development perspective involving leading academic scholars and experts from the Global South. As an important activity under this partnership, perspectives from leading development researchers were brought together, through a set of papers and commentaries, at a high-level international symposium titled “Human Development in the Global South: Emerging Perspectives in the Era of Post-Millennium Development Goals” which was held in New Delhi during 28–29 April 2014. The UNESCAP also collaborated in organising this symposium.

Around 200 resource persons and delegates participated in the symposium and enriched its deliberations. A number of insightful and extremely relevant papers were presented during the symposium by the scholars attending from various Southern countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Brazil, Turkey and, of course, India. The present volume is a collection of papers that broadly reflect these deliberations. The increasing concern regarding escalating inequality in the wake of the MDGs is a theme which has found echo in many of the papers in this volume. The volume starts with an Introduction, followed by papers discussed under the overarching theme of Human Development in the Global South. This is followed by papers grouped under the five major themes: (i) Poverty and Social Protection; (ii) Employment; (iii) Food security and Nutrition; (iv) Education; and (v) Health and Health care. The final section concludes with an overall perspective on the post-MDG framework for development for the Southern countries.

The papers provide rich insights into the challenges that many of the Southern countries face due to human development deficits in many areas, notwithstanding reasonable growth rates for some of them. Overall, there is an urgency to look at the post-2015 framework with a fresh approach or a new paradigm of development, since the world economy has witnessed a lot of changes in the last two decades, with countries in the South emerging with a strong presence. The broad takeaways from the array of rich and stimulating papers would be as follows:

- The challenge of reducing inequality is a key issue in the post-MDG framework.
- The post-MDG scenario needs to reflect the changed multi-dimensional perspective of poverty which would also encompass a need to incorporate issues of access to decent work, improve the quality of jobs in the informal sector, etc.
- A rights-based approach is needed in many of the development areas.

- There is a need to unpack aggregate goals since these averages disguise unequal progress at the disaggregated level. When goals are disaggregated by gender, social groups, location, etc. a more nuanced picture emerges which would help to address an issue more effectively.
- The synergy between various goals must be recognised.
- There needs to be a focus on processes instead of just setting goals.

We hope the ideas and arguments presented in the papers in this volume will lead to more clarity in thoughts and action regarding the response of the countries of the Global South to the development priorities in the post-MDG years.

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