

POVERTY WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

A CHRISTIAN AID REPORT



‘We are clear about what we must do... in a way that protects the poorest and the most vulnerable in our society, in a way that unites our country rather than divides it, and in a way that demonstrates that we are all in this together’

UK Prime Minister David Cameron, June 2010¹

‘As a champion of the Millennium Development Goals, I recognise that working for their achievement is our collective responsibility’

Irish Minister of State for Overseas Development Peter Power, June 2008²

‘It’s very difficult for me as president to call on the American people to make sacrifices to help shore up the financial system if there’s no sense of mutual obligation and mutual help... We’re all in this together’

US President Barack Obama, March 2009³

‘The changing climate makes living at the margins of the world economy even more precarious. However, we should not be tempted to look upon these afflictions with the artificial distance of relative wealth, nor from the arrogant sanctuary of denial, because we are all in this together’

Former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, December 2009⁴

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Christian Aid launched its Poverty Over vision with the publication of a report that set out our belief that global poverty can be eradicated. We recognised the enormous scale of the task, but argued that this should not detract from our pursuit of the aim. Indeed, poverty's pervasiveness makes it all the more important that the global movement of those committed to its eradication redouble their efforts to bring about fundamental change.

Since then, the prospects for progress on poverty eradication have arguably deteriorated. First, the financial crisis is beginning to impose serious constraints on government spending in the richer countries of the world, with their economies continuing to languish, and unemployment to rise. Second, the hopes of a fair, ambitious and binding global deal to address climate change, which is exacerbating poverty in many parts of the world, received a major setback at the United Nations (UN) climate summit in Copenhagen in December 2009. At the end of two weeks of barracking and brinkmanship, the chances of such an agreement seemed more remote than ever. Above all, however, attempts to address poverty have foundered due to a lack, across the board, of the political will necessary to deal with poverty's structural and systemic causes.

Many of the world's richest countries, including the UK and Ireland, are responding to falling tax revenues and rising fiscal deficits by cutting spending. As governments seek to build and sustain national support for these measures, the common refrain is that 'we're all in this together'. For there is a broad cross-party and international consensus that as countries cut their cloth, they must, if they are to take the people with them, do so *fairly*. The goal cannot be a return to stronger economic growth at all costs, nor a simplistic focus on cutting deficits. Somehow, governments must pursue economic recovery at the same time as ensuring the conditions are in place to maintain – or create – a good life for all their citizens.

At a global level, there is a parallel problem – that of limited resources – but in this case, it is of a natural, rather than a fiscal, kind. Today, there is a growing realisation that we cannot continue to use the planet's resources as we have done in recent centuries. Environmental as well as financial factors are forcing us to recognise that we must become better at generating economic activity from resources that are limited. However, we cannot expect poorer countries to sacrifice their right to development because of the past mistakes made by richer nations. The improvement of people's lives must therefore encompass the lives of those in all, not just the wealthier, nations on the planet.

That commitment was formalised 10 years ago, when 189 countries signed the UN Millennium Declaration to eradicate extreme poverty.⁵ To blaze the trail, the Declaration established a set of eight short-term targets called the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These required progress in certain specific areas by 2015 – including halving the number of people living on less than one US dollar a day, the most basic determinant of extreme income poverty.

This year, on the 10th anniversary of the Declaration, world leaders will gather at the UN in New York to consider progress to date. Successes will be trumpeted, but they will be outweighed by some key failures. The summit, however, need not necessarily end on the kind of sour note that marked Copenhagen. Some progress has been made, and the international community will be presented with a chance to marshal its forces and refocus on the efforts necessary to achieve more.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Addressing the UN General Assembly at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: 'I am struck by the remarkable convergence of views on the challenge that faces us. And by the urgency of your call to action. You have said that your first priority is the eradication of extreme poverty. You have set specific targets related to that goal, and you have prescribed measures for achieving them. If the measures are really taken, we all know the targets can be reached.'⁶

The MDGs have, in fact, driven significant and very welcome progress, and raised the profile globally of the international commitment to eradicate poverty. It is clear, however, that several are not on target. These shortfalls provide the critical focal point for our efforts to see poverty over. Those who share the vision of ending poverty must ask why a number of MDGs are not on track. The answer may be unpalatable – but as each year passes, it becomes more obvious.

Under-performance is primarily due to flaws in the understanding of poverty. Such flaws were implicit in the MDGs from the outset, and have resulted in the failure to translate the full ambition of the Declaration into operation.

Poverty is not simply a lack of income, or other material attributes such as housing, food, access to fresh water or consumer goods. Such needs are, of course, fundamental symptoms of what it is like to be poor, but poverty has far wider dimensions; poverty is a lack of opportunity, a lack of power over one's own life and prospects, a lack of human dignity. Addressing poverty cannot then simply limit itself to treating the symptoms, important though that is. Real progress will be made when the systemic and structural causes of poverty are challenged. Those in poverty must be supported to take power over the constraints they face; those in power must be held accountable.

With the MDGs focusing primarily on seeking to reduce (but

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not eradicate) some basic symptoms of poverty, the ambition of the Millennium Declaration was lost or weakened. An emphasis on empowering those in poverty was translated, somehow, into telling poor countries what their priorities should be; an emphasis on the powerful meeting their responsibilities was translated, somehow, into mechanisms that largely exempted rich countries from accountability for their critical part in determining the global structures and systems that fuel poverty.

There are three key aspects to this lost ambition. First, the emphasis on issues of **inequality**, and gender inequality above all, has been inadequate and failed to deliver the type of progress needed. To take one simple example, twice as many of those living on less than one US dollar a day are women as are men. This is not by chance, but rather the result of known and predictable power dynamics that the MDGs have failed to challenge with sufficient force.

The second aspect is that of **sustainability**. Here, the MDGs are a product of their time, because in 2000, a broadly shared understanding and recognition of the full importance for development of climate change and wider environmental sustainability was arguably lacking. In 2010, it is vital that global efforts to combat poverty take full account of this.

The third aspect of the Millennium Declaration that was lost in translation when the MDGs were set is that of **democratic and participatory governance**. Where the Declaration clearly emphasises the need for citizens to be engaged and have power in the development process, the practical application of the MDG framework has failed to deliver this. The approach must go beyond what states do (for example, deliver education) to how they do it – through greater transparency and participatory policy making leading to real political accountability.

CHRISTIAN AID'S APPROACH

Our analysis of the structural causes of poverty reflects an approach to international development that is based on relational theology. This has a twofold origin: the statement in Genesis in the Bible that we are made in the image of God, and the Old Testament tradition of a special 'covenant' relationship between God and his people. Both of these are developed in the teaching of Jesus recorded in St John's Gospel, which talks about a 'oneness' between the Father, the Son and those who believe in him.

This is necessarily reflected in the way human beings behave toward one another. As the Bishop of Oxford puts it, in his preface to our 2010 publication *Theology and International Development*, 'God has entered into a relationship with human beings, embodying his nature of both love and justice. God expects that human beings will reflect those qualities

of relationship in their dealings with each other, and these relationships can be properly framed in terms of human rights and responsibilities.'⁷

The causes of poverty can be seen as having their roots in unjust behaviour of humans, the breaking of some of the relationships that link us together – such as those between rich and poor, men and women, and people and the state – and the violation of human rights. Such fractured relationships go hand in hand with injustice – the loss of developing countries' tax revenues, the stigmatisation of people living with HIV, unfair trading relations and so on. The challenge to an international development organisation is to enable such relationships to be repaired, and, once restored, monitored to ensure their future good order.

The essential purpose of our Poverty Over approach commits us therefore, in addition to exposing the outrage of poverty and taking practical steps to root it out, to challenging and changing the structural and systemic causes of poverty.

Only by addressing the causes of poverty can we ultimately eradicate it, and at this time of fiscal tightening in rich countries, this is an essential part of ensuring that development efforts deliver results. As the new Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, has said: 'It is a fact that money spent... dealing with the causes rather than the symptoms, is very well-spent money.'⁸

Christian Aid works by empowering partner organisations and people in some of the poorest countries in the world. This report shows some of the successes that are possible when we work together. And it shows examples of the way that global movements can challenge and change structures that embed injustice – such as the apartheid regime that existed in South Africa (see Box 1, p4).

Christian Aid's approach is based on our understanding of poverty as a lack of power. In practical terms this means that we operate in developing countries by supporting local partner organisations that work to empower the people of their communities – especially those who are most marginalised and vulnerable.

In this report we draw out what this means for the importance of addressing inequality, between individuals, between groups and between nation states, with a particular focus on gender inequality. The most pernicious forms of disempowerment are those that are based on a person's identity, since they question the very value of that person in society's, and in his or her own, eyes.

This applies to gender inequality at every level from the global to the household, and additionally to inequalities based on identities that reflect caste, race, ethnicity, geographic origin and religion.

For example, dalits, a major marginalised group in India

and elsewhere in south Asia, suffer exclusion in multiple spheres, and so tend typically to have lower incomes and among the worst results in all key poverty indicators, with dalit women systematically scoring lower than dalit men. Similarly, in Brazil, men and women of African descent are far worse off compared to white Brazilians, with parallel patterns seen in many other parts of the world.⁹

Whether or not you share Christian Aid's view that humankind is created in God's image, continued injustice based on identity is an insuperable obstacle to poverty eradication – an impossible barrier to people's empowerment and escape from poverty. More than 60 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted to help create a brave new world after the horrors of the Second World War. That declaration spoke of an end to the persecution of, and discrimination against, people simply because of who they are. Today it is clear that this declaration has failed to live up to its promise.

That people's life chances should be so strongly shaped from birth, systematically determined by a few

characteristics, is an offence. If we do not fundamentally reject valuing an individual's worth on the basis of elementary aspects of his or her identity, we condone it. And if we do not demand that any UN instrument that succeeds the MDGs in 2015 has a much clearer focus on inequality, then our apparent neutrality will continue to allow systematic bias. We should not be surprised, for example, that women make up two-thirds of those in extreme income poverty; but we should be ashamed if it remains true.

In addition to the moral argument, there is a purely practical reason for ending this kind of inequality. Put simply, poverty breeds poverty. The overwhelming marginalisation and exclusion of women, along with whole groups such as the dalits, is not only a symptom of their poverty, but a fundamental cause. Inequality also breeds conflict and instability, as research funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) has demonstrated so powerfully.¹⁰ In addition, it directly hampers efforts to reduce poverty – by, for example, undermining economic growth, as the World Bank has shown.¹¹

Box 1: How movements can deliver: the anti-apartheid movement

Christian Aid's drive for Poverty Over is based on the recognition that global movements of the committed – which include individuals, organisations, churches, governments and the private sector – can deliver astonishing change in the world.

Few, if any, movements for justice in the last 100 years have had the impact of the international anti-apartheid movement (AAM). It was the international AAM, as a coalition of anti-apartheid organisations and individuals, as well as a growing number of governments, that in the 1960s was able to secure the active involvement of the UN, the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement,

the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the World Council of Churches and many other international organisations in calling for change. As a coalition, it grew to encompass the world and consisted of international, regional, national and local bodies.

The AAM developed a broad range of actions from public boycotts to calls for UN sanctions, from the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees to military and non-military assistance to the liberation movement. Indeed, without it, support for South Africa's black majority might have been confined to non-aligned and Communist countries, which would have made the struggle much harder and required

even greater sacrifices.

'I can think of no other coalition of this scope, of no other campaign that was carried on so long and with such persistence, and no other cause for which so many people in so many countries made such sacrifices. This broad coalition played a crucial role in the liberation of South Africa from apartheid'

ES Reddy, former head of the UN Centre against Apartheid¹³

It was the impact of the international AAM, manifest in the United States as the Free South Africa Movement, that resulted in the only political defeat suffered by Ronald Reagan during his two

terms in office, when his attempt to veto the Anti-Apartheid Sanctions Act of 1986 was overruled by Congress. That rebuff was not the result of intense activity by black lobbyists; it happened because of a worldwide surge of opposition against the apartheid regime.

Sanctions were a lynchpin of the international AAM's strategy. Economists will argue over the extent to which they damaged and distorted the South African economy, but the decision of one US bank to call in its loan to South Africa because of shareholder pressure, which led other banks to scramble to follow suit, was a crucial death knell of apartheid.¹¹

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CALL TO ACTION

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We therefore call on all those who share our vision of Poverty Over to commit to supporting two major actions during the next five years.

First, we must use our understanding of the shortcomings of the MDG process to demand key changes now, which can drive better outcomes by 2015. Second, on the basis of the same analysis, we must work to ensure not only that a successor to the MDGs is in place and ready to exert influence after 2015, but that, crucially, it reflects the true ambition of the Millennium Declaration and of Poverty Over, recognising that a lack of power is integral to poverty.

The importance of broad, popular movements sharing a clear goal in accomplishing change underlies our desire for ongoing partnership with the whole spectrum of stakeholders in poverty eradication. These range from partner organisations to other international NGOs, from the churches and faith-based agencies to the private sector and academia. We see this report as another step on the journey

of Poverty Over, and hope that it forms the basis for deeper and more engaged cooperation – as well as urgent action.

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives, of the sense that they are valued and valuable. It is complex, and its eradication is surely humanity's greatest test; but that is no reason to shirk the challenge. We have a shared responsibility to drive thinking, commitment and progress toward making poverty over.

Set out here is a strategy for accomplishing that – detailing key steps that must be taken. Those who share our vision face responsibilities. There are actions that must be taken, contributions that must be made. We urge you to join us.

'As Dr King said... so many years ago, "I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history." Let us reach for the world that ought to be – that spark of the divine that still stirs within each of our souls.'

US President Barack Obama, upon accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, December 2009¹²

Political scientists too differ over the importance of sanctions, with some highlighting the fact that the government of FW de Klerk came to the table from a position of apparent strength. But even there, an implication that the government felt it lacked legitimacy exists, a factor that sanctions would have driven home, helped by the growing conviction of the Dutch Reformed Church, or at least that sector to which President de Klerk belonged, that apartheid was a sin.

Those inclined to question just how integral sanctions were to persuading de Klerk and his government to negotiate should consider the view of Barend du Plessis, a minister in the

apartheid regime. In 1990, the year Nelson Mandela was released, du Plessis described disinvestment as the dagger that finally destroyed apartheid.¹⁴

In the UK, the AAM was a comparatively small organisation, which for most, if not all, of its existence was extremely unpopular in Whitehall and Downing Street. Yet it was capable of exerting considerable influence over the UN and the Commonwealth, and hence of playing an important role in shaping international policy towards South Africa. Its essential quality was that of a mass movement, always striving for broad appeal, with the aim of educating people about the evils of apartheid

and winning them to the cause of freedom in South Africa. Activists came from all faiths and none, Christian and non-Christian, agnostic and atheist, and from a range of backgrounds.

The AAM was also an innovative organisation, pioneering forms of action that have since become normal practice for single-issue pressure groups. In 1971, activists mounted the first ever political protest inside a company's annual general meeting, namely that of Barclays Bank, parent of South Africa's biggest high-street bank.

The Irish AAM, which was even smaller than its British counterpart, famously organised in 1984 a boycott

of handling South African produce by staff at a Dublin supermarket. The strike lasted three-and-a-half years until finally in 1987 the Irish government imposed sanctions.

There are many lessons for today's movement against global poverty. Those involved – including those who are not obvious allies – must educate, organise and build the movement. We must work in coalition, and through international bodies, especially the UN. We must be innovative. Above all, perhaps, we must commit for the long haul. The international AAM existed for 35 years; the MDGs have only existed for 10.

WORKING TOGETHER? HOW THE MDGS AIM TO TACKLE POVERTY



Women from the Nochari cooperative in Nicaragua present the product of their labours – packaged hibiscus flower and juice products. The cooperative, a Christian Aid partner, helps growers process their products and negotiate with supermarkets. Hibiscus juice is a popular drink in Nicaragua

Christian Aid/Sian Curry

WORKING TOGETHER? HOW THE MDGS AIM TO TACKLE POVERTY

Christian Aid sees poverty as a lack of power in four dimensions.

- **Personal power** (including health, education, mental wellbeing, decent work and leisure conditions, and household relations).
- **Economic power** (income, freedom from extreme inequality, economic security and access to or control over resources).
- **Social power** (community wellbeing, social relations and social inclusion, environmental conditions).
- **Political power** (political freedom, political security and active citizenship).¹⁵

We believe individuals and communities have a right to exercise power in these dimensions over their own lives, and this underpins our three-fold essential purpose: to expose the scandal of poverty; to help in practical ways to root it out from the world; and to challenge and change the structures and systems that favour the rich and powerful over the poor and marginalised.

The first *Poverty Over* report, published in 2009, called for a step change in the approach to development, moving away from poverty reduction to an unequivocal demand for poverty eradication. This was seen to imply three objectives.

- **The eradication of the structural causes of poverty** – from the partial globalisation that fails to deliver economic opportunities to those in poverty, while stripping their states of natural resources and massive tax revenues, to the need for a just response to climate change that ensures rich countries face up to their historic responsibility for carbon emissions and help poorer countries deal with the impact of global warming.
- **The eradication of the symptoms of poverty** such as inadequate incomes, and inadequate access to health services, education, clean water and sanitation services, and so on.
- **The reduction of vulnerability to poverty** – ensuring that people are less likely to fall, or to fall back, into poverty as a result of conflict and natural disasters, including extreme weather events influenced by climate change, and ensuring that any such shocks do not cause lasting poverty.

To further these objectives, we highlighted the importance of new thinking in order to develop and sustain a credible, global compact with the aim of poverty eradication. Now, in this report, we set out our analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the MDG approach in order to draw conclusions about the potential for accelerated and deeper progress by 2015, and the shape of a successor to the MDGs beyond 2015.

The MDGs are, in effect, the operational form of the UN Millennium Declaration – that commitment to a new phase of human development, intended to deliver, through the UN, a global effort aimed at poverty eradication (see Box 2, p8).

The MDGs have made a powerful contribution to development. They have delivered substantial progress on the first two elements of Christian Aid's essential purpose. First, they have provided a shared global framework in which to expose the scale of poverty. Second, the MDGs have driven a coordinated, practical effort to root out poverty, and, as the next section shows, progress on some indicators has been dramatic.

However, the distribution of progress has been uneven at best.¹⁶ More importantly, perhaps, the framework itself does not come close to capturing the breadth and depth of ambition in the Declaration. There is a clear gap between the Declaration and the actual operation of the approach, which has prevented the scale of progress envisaged by the former. In terms of Christian Aid's essential purpose, the MDG framework falls down on the third element: while focusing on some important aspects of people's needs, it has failed to address their cause.

Figure 1 (see p9) shows the full set of goals, targets and indicators. In the report, we then show the loss of ambition that occurred as the Declaration was translated into the MDGs, turning from goals into targets, indicators and, eventually, outcomes. This analysis can ultimately point the way to the enhancements that can bring about a step change in progress by 2015, and support the creation of a successor to the MDGs that is sufficiently powerful for poverty eradication to be a realistic aim.

Box 2: UN Millennium Declaration (2000): key excerpts

Clause 2

We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders, we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable, and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.

Clause 5

We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed... Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable. These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation.

Clause 6

We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the 21st century. These include:

- **Freedom.** Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- **Equality.** No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- **Solidarity.** Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.
- **Tolerance.** Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between [societies] should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilisations should be actively promoted.
- **Respect for nature.** Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches passed to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.
- **Shared responsibility.** Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organisation in the world, the UN must play the central role.

Figure 1: UN Millennium Development Goals

Goals and targets

Indicators for monitoring progress

(effective 15 January 2008)

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one [US] dollar 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

- 1.1 Proportion of population below [US]\$1 per day¹⁷
- 1.2 Poverty gap ratio
- 1.3 Share of poorest quintile [poorest fifth of a country's population] in national consumption
- 1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed
- 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio
- 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below [US]\$1 per day
- 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment
- 1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age
- 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

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

- 2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education
- 2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade one who reach last grade of primary
- 2.3 Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds, women and men

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

- 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

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

- 4.1 Under-five mortality rate
- 4.2 Infant mortality rate
- 4.3 Proportion of one-year-old children immunised against measles

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Target 5.A: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

- 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio
- 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate
- 5.4 Adolescent birth rate
- 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)
- 5.6 Unmet need for family planning

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

- 6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years
- 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex [measured by individual's use at last incidence]
- 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS
- 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
- 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs
- 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria
- 6.7 Proportion of children under five sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets
- 6.8 Proportion of children under five with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs
- 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
- 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured

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 people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

- 7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest
- 7.2 CO₂ emissions, total, per capita and per [US]\$1 GDP
- 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances
- 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits
- 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used
- 7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected
- 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction
- 7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source
- 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility
- 7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums¹⁸

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system

Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally

Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries

Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

Official development assistance [ODA]

- 8.1 Net ODA total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee] donors' gross national income
- 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)
- 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied

Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the 22nd special session of the General Assembly)

Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

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 the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes

8.5 ODA received in small island developing states as a proportion of their gross national incomes

Market access

8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty

8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries

8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product

8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

Debt sustainability

8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)

8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI [Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative] initiatives

8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population

8.15 Cellular subscribers per 100 population

8.16 Internet users per 100 population

PROGRESS ON THE MDGs

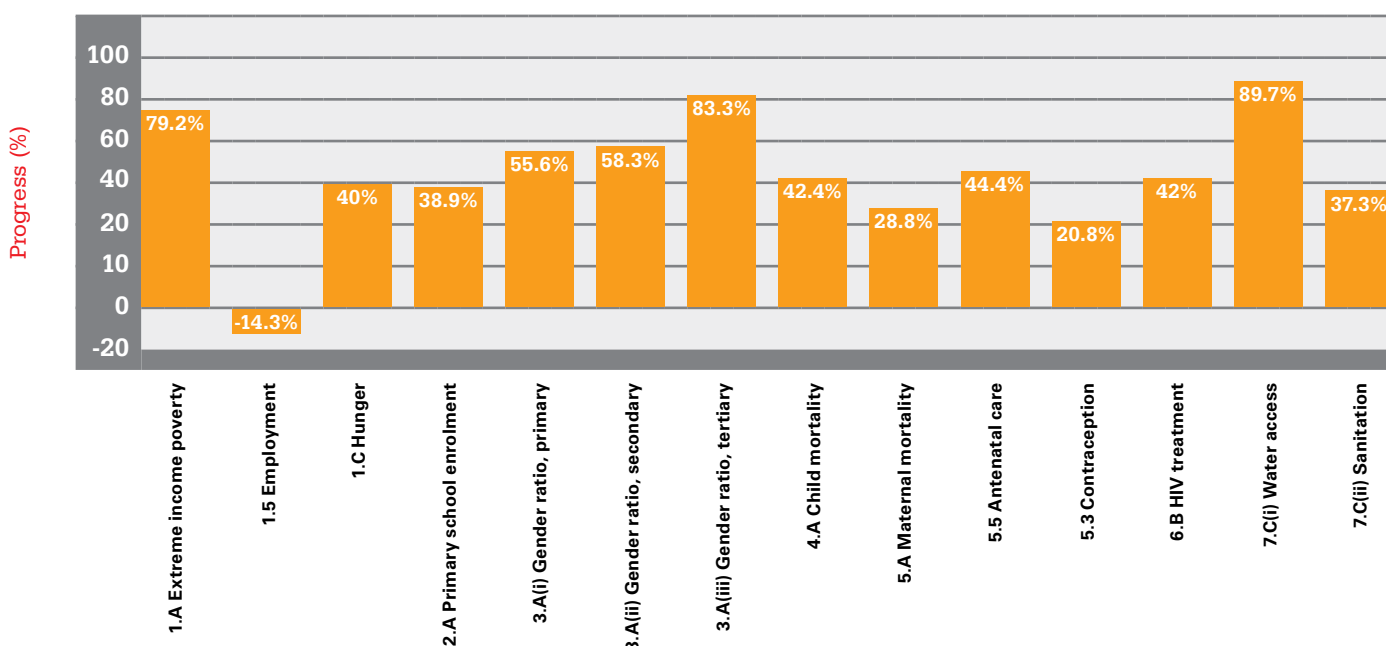
Progress on those MDGs and targets for which consistent data is available (from the UN’s recently published *Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*) is presented in Figure 2 below. Data lags mean that this largely shows, in effect, the extent of progress before the financial crisis.

Of the 14 objectives shown, five are on-track (or better) to be achieved by 2015: on extreme income poverty; on gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolment; and on access to safe drinking water. This data implies considerable achievements have been made in each area, with truly significant implications for hundreds of millions of people. The main driver for the first goal –

ending extreme income poverty – would be expected to be economic growth, with additional spending on education, health, and other services underpinning progress on the other objectives.

Of the remaining nine objectives, progress is most badly lagging on the commitment to achieve ‘full and productive employment and decent work for all’. Data for the simplest measure, the employment-to-population ratio, shows that this has actually fallen back since 1990, in part due to the financial crisis. Of the other objectives, progress on the use of contraception and reducing the rate of maternal mortality is weakest (less than 30 per cent of the intended 1990-2015 advance has been achieved). Progress is 40 per cent or below for access to sanitation, primary school enrolment, and in reducing extreme hunger. Progress is below 50 per

Figure 2: Sporadic progress on MDG objectives



Notes: For each target and indicator in the MDG framework with a specified target value and available data, progress is shown as a percentage of the total required by 2015. Data for 1990 is earliest available baseline data from 1990-1999; data for current progress is most recent available, 2005-2009. Data is from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202010%20En%20r15%20-low%20res%2020100615%20-.pdf with the exception of maternal mortality data, which is drawn from M Hogan et al, 'Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980-2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5', *The Lancet*, 375 (9726), 2010, pp1,609-1,623.

cent in reducing child mortality and providing antenatal care, and – despite the G8's 2005 commitment to universal treatment – in expanding access to HIV treatment.

The divergent performance on access to safe drinking water and access to sanitation is a concern, given the extent of similarities in approach required, and may reflect a simple problem of sanitation being seen as less 'attractive' by donors and therefore less well funded.¹⁹

A deeper issue may lie behind the weak progress on child and maternal mortality rates. Mortality rates are less straightforward to influence, insofar as they do not necessarily decline in a straightforward fashion with economic growth or greater health spending. As will be discussed in the following chapter, mortality and life expectancy rates appear to be associated with income inequality.

This suggests an underlying issue with the operational approach of the MDGs. The approach has been most successful where targets relate to outcomes that are more directly influenced by additional funding. We explore this further in the following section.

LOST IN TRANSLATION? FROM DECLARATION TO OPERATION

There are three key areas of the Millennium Declaration that are largely lost in the process of translation into an operational approach in the form of the MDGs. These relate to the emphasis, or rather lack thereof, put on each of the following in the MDGs:

- inequality
- sustainability
- democratic and participatory governance.

We treat these in turn, using various MDGs to illustrate specific points. The critique in each case, however, applies across all of the MDGs.

INEQUALITY

As the excerpt in Box 2 (see p8) demonstrates, the Declaration puts considerable emphasis on questions of distributive justice – defining the uneven impact of globalisation as the 'central challenge' facing the world, and stressing repeatedly the need for equality, the need to respect diversity, and the need to promote tolerance. Sadly, this emphasis is not evident throughout the MDGs in operation. Indeed, the approach is largely 'neutral' to most inequalities, despite their importance.

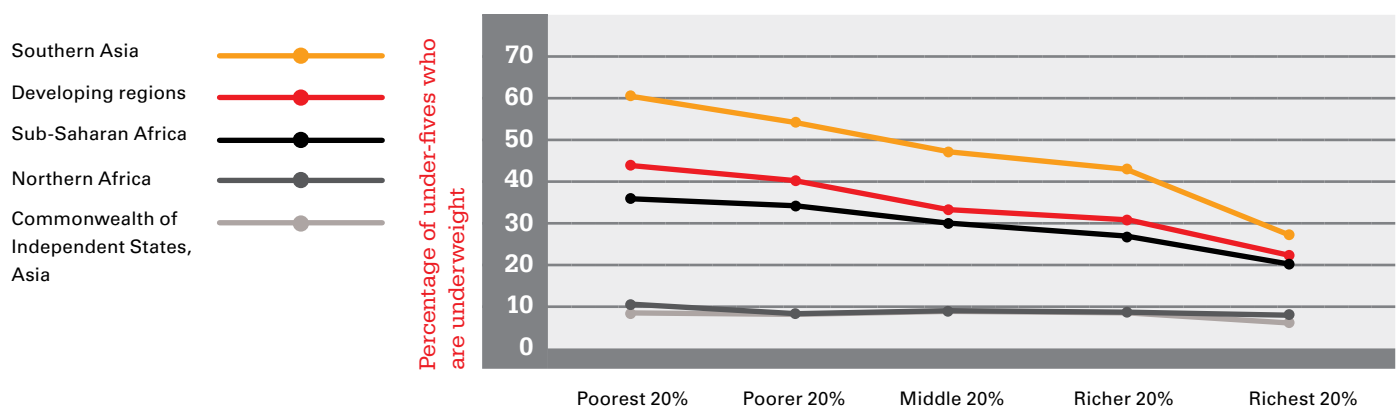
Inequalities are mentioned in just a handful of places in the framework (Figure 1, see p9). First, indicator 1.3 of MDG 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, is the 'share of the poorest quintile in national consumption'. In addition, the identity of beneficiaries is mentioned in target 1.B: 'Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people'. Other than these instances, inequalities do not directly feature in MDG 1, the most basic economic goal.

At worst, this points the way for the pursuit of target 1.A (halving the number of people living on less than one US dollar a day) through raising marginally the income of the 'richest poor' – those on more than 95¢ a day, for example. Clearly, it would be harder to raise the incomes of those on 20¢ to one US dollar a day, but if progress is obtained at the cost of further marginalising the 'poorest poor', there must be questions over the level of actual progress this represents.

It is clear, moreover, that income inequality plays a critical role in undermining progress across the MDGs. MDG 1, for example, also includes a target to halve the numbers living in hunger. The proportion of undernourished people in the developing world fell from 20 per cent to 16 per cent in the decade from 1990, but then appears to have stagnated after the Millennium Declaration was made – and the combined food and financial crises may well have worsened matters since 2008.

Between 1990 and 2008, the proportion of children under the age of five who are underweight only fell from 31 per cent to 26 per cent. In Figure 3 (see p14), the impact of inequality is seen – as noted in *The Millennium Development Goals 2010* report, prevalence is twice as high in the poorest households as in the richest.²⁰ Economic growth that leaves income inequality unchanged will be much less powerful a tool to deliver progress than growth that favours those in the deepest poverty (see 'Growth and inequality', p34).

Figure 3: Inequality and child malnutrition



Notes: Data is from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202010%20En%20r15%20-low%20res%2020100615%20-.pdf

The second and more obvious place where inequality is mentioned is MDG 3: 'Promote gender equality and empower women'. Here the emphasis is lost in the setting of targets. There is only one – target 3.A, which seeks the elimination of gender disparity in education. While laudable, this scarcely captures the ambition of the goal itself. Additional indicators go further, relating to the role of women in the economy (where they continue to be much more likely to feature in relatively insecure and badly paid jobs) and in politics (where the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments has risen to a global high of just 19 per cent in 2010.)²¹

Gender is also addressed in MDG 5: 'Improve maternal health'; or rather, this MDG explores an issue that affects women, but arguably without taking account of the gender dynamics underlying it, and the role that men can and should play in addressing this – for example, through supporting use of contraception. There are two targets: 5.A, to reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio; and 5.B, to achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health. Progress on 5.A has been extremely weak. In addition, 5.B – while somewhat more complex to measure, due to the range of indicators – is arguably even further behind.

The most comprehensive study of maternal mortality, published in medical journal *The Lancet* in 2010, brings together multiple national data sources in order to allow new analysis. The authors found a decline in total maternal deaths of 1.8 per cent a year on average between 1980

and 1990, but only 1.4 per cent from the start of the MDG reference period – 1990 – to 2008. They attribute the deceleration in progress to the onset of the HIV epidemic in the early 1990s. Nonetheless, they calculate that meeting target 5.A would have required a decline of 5.5 per cent a year from 1990-2015 – still far in excess of that which would have occurred in the absence of HIV, according to the authors' simulations.²²

Within target 5.B, to achieve universal access to reproductive health, there has been significant progress in antenatal care – rising from 64 per cent of pregnant women in developing countries receiving at least one visit from skilled health personnel in 1990, to 80 per cent in 2008. The proportion receiving at least four visits remains at around half, however, and at only a third for rural women. At the same time, progress made in reducing the number of teenage pregnancies between 1990 and 2000 has since stalled, as has progress in the use of contraception.

Use of contraception is an important area, since it reflects the ability of women to take decisions over reproduction. There are systematic and predictable effects of inequality on the extent of contraceptive use. Figure 4 (see p15) shows the dramatic impact of education level and relative income on this, as well as the urban-rural divide in 22 sub-Saharan African countries.²³

A key manifestation of gender inequality that is completely absent from the MDGs, but central to achieving both MDG 3, and MDG 6, on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, as well as being important for other targets, is gender based violence. The Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence, of which Christian Aid is a member, has voiced this powerfully.

‘Gender based violence is an abuse of human rights and failure to address it amounts to complicity. It is also unquestionably a critical development issue that needs to be addressed for the effectiveness of poverty reduction plans and strategies. The cost of not addressing gender based violence is significant both socially and economically. The current economic crisis threatens to undermine hard-won advances in human rights and accelerate an increase in gender based violence in countries most seriously affected by the downturn.’²⁴

As the following chapter shows, inequalities are fundamental to addressing poverty as a lack of power. The MDGs must respond directly to this challenge in order to deliver greater progress by 2015.

SUSTAINABILITY

This is arguably the area in which the gulf is greatest between the ambition of the Millennium Declaration and the detail of the MDGs in operation. Consider, for example, this key

passage of the Declaration.

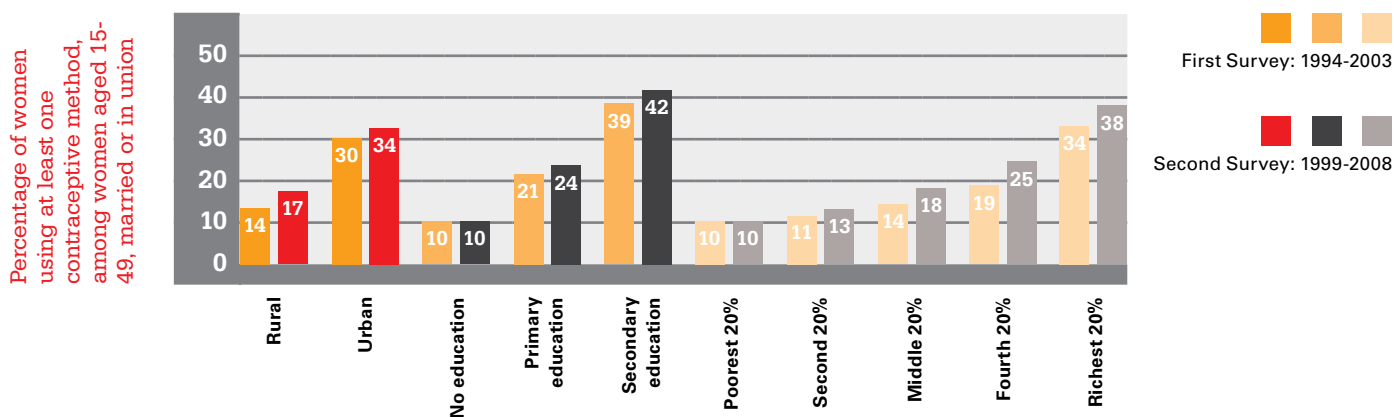
‘Respect for nature. Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches passed to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.’

This becomes MDG 7: ‘ensure environmental sustainability’, which is sufficiently broad as to be able to carry the degree of ambition indicated. At the level of targets and indicators, however, it is another story.

On the one hand, it contains the welcome and specific targets 7.C and 7.D. These require, respectively, the halving by 2015 of the proportion of people lacking safe water and sanitation; and a ‘significant improvement’ in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The mixed progress on 7.C is discussed earlier in this report. In the case of 7.D, the only indicator is the ‘proportion of [the] urban population living in slums’. No reduction target is set, so that there is no measure by which to hold anyone to account. Although the highly marginalised people living in informal settlements may get a mention in the MDGs, there is no framework to assess their experience or judge whether any progress has been made towards the target.

Neither 7.C nor 7.D relates anything like as directly to sustainability as 7.A and 7.B, however, and it has been

Figure 4: Inequality and use of contraception



Notes: Contraceptive prevalence by background characteristics in 22 sub-Saharan African countries, surveys around 1994-2003 and 1998-2008. Data is from *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202010%20En%2015%20-low%20res%2020100615%20-.pdf

suggested – somewhat unkindly – that, as the last goal before MDG 8 (to develop a ‘global partnership for development’), the seventh goal became a repository for issues that had not already been located in the framework.

The goals of 7.A and 7.B require, respectively, the integration of principles of sustainable development into national-level policies and programmes, and a ‘significant’ reduction in biodiversity loss by 2010. The indicators for the two refer to forestation, carbon dioxide emissions, ozone depletion and the depletion of fish stocks, water resources, terrestrial and marine areas and threatened species.

However, the poor and marginalised people whose livelihoods and ways of life depend on these resources are invisible. These are the people most directly affected by the ongoing over-exploitation of the environment, and who hold most of the solutions for sustainable management of natural resources. Yet there is no consideration of their perspectives in the MDG approach to sustainability.

In our report *Community Answers to Climate Chaos: Getting Climate Justice from the UNFCCC* (2009), Christian Aid argued that national (and international) attempts to deal with climate change were hamstrung by the effective exclusion of communities that have a major role to play.²⁵ One of many examples in the report concerns the 33 Quilombo communities in the Brazilian Amazon municipality of Oriximiná, formed by descendants of black slaves – known as Maroons – who, in the 19th century, fled to the forests where they remained even after the official abolition of slavery. Quilombo communities continue to experience profound socio-economic inequality and racial discrimination that make them highly vulnerable.

To ensure their food and income, and also to build their homes and tools and obtain medicinal treatments, the communities depend on the forests. The main source of income for the Quilombo of Oriximiná is the extraction of Brazil nuts. Maroons, much like many indigenous peoples, conceive their territory as a common good that cannot be divided or sold. Their ethnic territories represent one of the pillars of their existence as a group. Safeguarding their territory as Quilombo is necessary not only for their physical survival, but also for their culture and way of life.

The integrity of their territory, however, is under threat from agro-businesses, timber exploitation and mining, as well as development projects, and of course the consequences of climate change. At the same time, the protection of the Amazonian forests is of global importance. Most of the difficulties in controlling deforestation stem from the lack

of resources to pay for enforcement, and programmes that would put a monetary value on the ‘living’ forest. Many NGOs, experts and governments are therefore seeking to define and implement mechanisms capable of giving value to the forest, which would unlock international and domestic funds for its preservation, thereby protecting forest dwellers and recognising their role in protecting the environment.

The Quilombo communities of Oriximiná are among the traditional peoples of the Amazon that can play a strategic role in the protection of the forests – but this can only be done by guaranteeing communities’ rights. This includes recognising their right to land and natural resources and the traditional use they make of their forests; their role in forest conservation and in combating global warming; the need to ensure their participation in the definition of public policies on climate change mitigation; and their right to prior free and informed consultation on all decisions that might result in legislative or administrative measures that could affect them directly.

Such communities show the fundamental importance of promoting environmental sustainability, and the broader notion of sustainable development, in ways that are centred upon people – not imposed by national or international diktat.

A big concern, however, is the emphasis on measures to be taken here at a national level. Since the MDGs do not apply to rich countries, MDG 7 creates, in effect, mechanisms that will make poorer countries account for their use of natural resources. The mechanisms will not apply to rich countries, and nor will they face any other climate change requirement – despite the established historic responsibility of richer countries for carbon emissions.²⁶

Neither is consideration paid to the high demand for natural resources in developing countries to supply growing consumption in rich countries: water consumed to supply fruit, vegetables and cut flowers, mineral demands from the earth beneath forested areas, forests cut for grazing land for cattle, seas over-fished for export, or land taken to grow biofuels.

Since climate change does not feature in MDG 8, global measures are excluded. The MDG declaration and process was established before climate change was fully understood as an international development issue. The targets and indicators, therefore, are not well formulated to deal with the real cause of climate change and its impact on developing countries.

Enabling poor and marginalised women and men to cope with both immediate disaster risks and long-term threats to their livelihoods is a central plank of sustainable development

Following the agreement of the Bali Roadmap at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2007 – a tense affair in itself in which consensus was only reached after days and nights of gruelling talks – global climate change negotiations have moved towards clear outcomes for global carbon emissions reduction and financial support for low carbon development, forest management, and adaptation and resilience to the impact of climate change. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility for climate change – that is, rich countries recognising their responsibility and capacity to act on climate change and support poor countries in responding – has been a central principle of the UNFCCC since its establishment. However, no sense of this is reflected in MDG 7, which measures only the developing country action, or in MDG 8, where a global partnership for action on climate change should be monitored.

Finally, the commitment to sustainability is further weakened by the confining of the issue to a single MDG. A particular example is the separation of sustainability concerns from the economic ones that underlie MDG 1. As a result, the MDGs have little to say about vulnerability: either under MDG 7, where the focus is on the environment rather than the people who depend upon it; or under MDG 1. Yet enabling poor and marginalised women and men to cope with both immediate disaster risks and long-term threats to their livelihoods is a central plank of sustainable development.

An example of how this challenge can be met is the collaboration launched by Christian Aid with one of its partner agencies Christian Community Services of Mount Kenya East (CCSMKE) and Traidcraft, a UK organisation specialising in fair trade and marketing. The project will provide farmers' groups supported by CCSMKE with up-to-date market and price information, facilitated by Traidcraft, and seasonal weather forecasts and data on climate trends from the Kenyan meteorological service, facilitated by Christian Aid. This will give farmers the knowledge they need to plant crops suitable for the market and for the climate – rather than planting crops that either do not sell or that do not grow because of inadequate or unexpected rainfall. Similarly, the work in Nicaragua of Christian Aid's partners Nochari and Soppexcca in supporting farmers' cooperatives to develop new products, such as cocoa, that are more resilient to the changing climate, and to increase their bargaining power and access to markets, is another example of a more sustainable approach, integrating resilience into economic development (see 'Growth and inequality', p34).

As climate change forces us to recognise the global constraints on natural resources, it is essential to ensure that economic development does not undermine long-term sustainability or increase poor people's vulnerability. Timber logging, which can destroy a community's only real asset, and therefore its future, is unsustainable, and any short-term economic growth obtained must be valued accordingly. A parallel argument applies to our myopic, global misuse of the carbon emissions 'budget' through which rich countries can continue polluting while paying poor countries to adopt clean development mechanisms of sometimes dubious value.

The fundamental question of how human civilisation can substantially raise the standard of living for its billions of poorer citizens, without exhausting or irreversibly undermining the planet's ability to support human life, cannot be separated from the broader thrust of poverty eradication. The MDGs must now reflect this.

DEMOCRATIC AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

This is the third major issue that fails to translate from the Millennium Declaration to the MDGs in operation. As the Declaration makes clear:

'Freedom. Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.'

There is now a strong consensus that progress cannot be made on poverty eradication without ensuring that people are able to engage and be heard. As DFID in the UK puts it, in a major report which summarises the findings of the international research it has funded on these issues in the decade since the Millennium Declaration:

'...the political settlement is central to all development. When citizens actively participate in society through local associations and movements outside the state, there are benefits to both state and society... [This research] demonstrates that durable reforms need to be constructed, nationally and locally, in a way that fits each political context.'²⁷

The UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is clear that political rights are at the heart of achieving real change:

'Politics matters for poverty reduction. The protection of civic rights, active and organized citizens, well-organized and representative political parties, and effective states

with redistributive agendas are all important for sustained progress towards poverty reduction.¹²⁸

Incorporating political rights in the MDGs will be controversial, but if poverty is political, this is unavoidable. The word 'political' is sometimes used in a rather charged way – 'why has such and such an NGO become so political?', for example. But the word itself comes simply from the Greek root *polis*, or city, and hence *polites*, citizen. Poverty is not party political – but it is intimately bound up with active citizenship.

A particular weakness of the MDG approach is its failure to deliver in 'fragile states'. By working largely on the implicit assumption that states, donors or both can effectively buy the desired improvements, the approach ignores the importance of politics – and this has the clearest detrimental effect where the system is least functional.

Christian Aid's view, as noted, is that political empowerment is one aspect of people's emergence from poverty, and is therefore important in itself; but donors need not necessarily share that view to appreciate the importance of addressing

the issue. Experience shows that interventions to achieve progress on MDGs are much more effective when civil society is actively involved – that people-power promotes value for money.

Consider the MDG approach to education, which has recently been critiqued in a report by the UK's National Audit Office (NAO). The NAO report examined the progress on the MDGs attributable to support from DFID. It concluded that: 'Fourteen of [the 22 countries in which DFID prioritised education] are on track to achieve the enrolment goal [indicator 2.1] by 2015, with primary school enrolment in DFID-priority countries up from typically 50 per cent or lower in the mid-1990s to 70-90 per cent now. Progress on gender parity has been good, with eight of the 22 already having achieved the goal.'²⁹

However, the NAO went on to conclude that: 'Educational quality and attainment... have remained at the very low levels prevailing at the start of DFID's 2001 Education Strategy. DFID support has increased the scale of provision, but placed insufficient emphasis on quality and cost effectiveness.'

Box 3: Building disaster-resilient communities

Some 70 per cent of the natural disasters affecting the world today are climate related, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).³⁰

The figure is some 50 per cent higher than it was two decades ago and with experts expecting climate change to account for an increasing incidence of severe weather incidents, seems very likely to get worse.³¹

Each year for the past decade, an average of 260 million people have lived through one or more of the following: famine, floods, cyclones, drought, typhoons, earthquakes, mudslides and avalanches.³²

When disaster strikes, it is seldom the richer countries that suffer. Nearly 40 times as many people in the developing world are affected as those in developed countries.³³

In helping the world's poorest people challenge the issues causing their poverty, Christian Aid works with communities vulnerable to disaster to increase their resilience.

It has pioneered an approach – the Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment – that encourages communities to analyse the risks they face and devise solutions most appropriate to their own locale.

In Malawi, this has involved Christian Aid's partners working with the village of Macheмба, close to the

Mozambique border, to identify the most prevalent risks they faced – drought, floods, HIV/AIDS and crop pests – and determine what the village itself could do to minimise their impact.

The picture that emerged was that of a community prone to drought where when the crops failed, households were forced to part with livestock at paltry prices to stave off hunger. Families broke up as the men went to look for work elsewhere, while those with HIV were more susceptible at times of shortage to malnutrition and infection.

Villagers were then asked to take stock of their strengths, which included good local leadership, land available for cultivation, a plentiful supply of labour and local springs for water.

Projects were then developed to build the community's resilience to disaster. Grain banks were set up using savings and credit schemes, and an irrigation and water harvest system was installed to support land cultivation during the dry season.

The improvements were the result of what the community, rather than an aid agency, had deemed necessary. 'Before, we were giving goats [to communities] when what they needed was maize seed so they were not dependent on one thing,' reported Christian Aid partner ELDS.

The countries considered by the NAO include Ghana, where Christian Aid can highlight an example of the importance of civil society participation in ensuring effective policy interventions. Christian Aid's partner agency SEND Ghana has played an important part in ensuring the country's government programmes are carried out efficiently and reach citizens who need services the most. An ongoing programme that SEND has been monitoring is the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). This programme is meant to provide healthy meals with the appropriate amount of calories to students during the school day, which could increase enrolment. The meals are made with locally sourced food, which enhances the livelihoods of local farmers.

SEND works in every one of the 50 districts of the four poorest regions in Ghana. Within each region, they have formed Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) networks, made up of local, community-based NGOs from each district, called 'focal NGOs', which are responsible for monitoring the programmes in their area, including the GSFP. SEND formulates questionnaires for school heads, parent-teacher associations and school management committees to gather information about the efficacy of the GSFP, and trains the focal NGOs to administer them locally. The questionnaires are then analysed centrally by SEND and the results are passed back down to the PM&E networks to discuss the findings with the focal NGOs.

Through this process, SEND can identify where a programme is working, where it is not, and specific issues that need to be addressed. The focal NGOs then go back to the District Assembly and meet with the relevant decentralised government offices, the district authority and community members. Such meetings create a forum for all stakeholders to discuss the findings of the focal NGOs and develop a plan for tackling problems.

In this way, SEND has supported changes at every level, from local to national. At the local level, working with communities has helped identify key infrastructural problems holding back progress, which had been overlooked at national level, resulting in important changes – for example, the provision of a water tank to Zori-Yapala school, a toilet block to Akudor school, the construction of kitchens in Manyoro and so on.

Nationally, SEND has identified coordination problems among the three government ministries (education, health and agriculture) involved, resulting in a restructuring of the GFSP and, consequently, better communication and performance. This has included ensuring that intended complementary measures, such as de-worming and regular body mass index measurements for pupils, and extension advice and credit for local farmers, are actually put in place.

Community involvement has also delivered additional benefits – from women in Lifaldo, Jantong Daboshie and Zori-Yapala mobilising themselves to support the GSFP by supplying

water to schools free of charge, to community leaders across the regions committing land for food production, and communities forming enrolment drive committees to support the enrolment and attendance of their children.

Through supporting community participation and advocacy, SEND Ghana has not only changed the way the government works at the national level, it has also brought about changes at the local level which it is hoped will translate into real sustainable outcomes – increased school enrolment, improved nutrition, enhanced livelihoods of small farmers, and communities holding government to account.

In other areas, too, the participation of women and men living in poverty can make a real difference. Christian Aid's pioneering Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment involves communities identifying and designing responses to the risk of disasters such as the type of extreme weather event that climate change has made more likely (see Box 3, p18).

To obtain the benefits of active citizen engagement across the whole MDG framework, both for people themselves and through more effective policy making, there are some key accountability building blocks that must be put in place. These include freedom of information, transparent budgets, participatory policy making and the political 'space' to allow civil society organisations to operate without draconian restrictions. These measures can ensure that women and men in poverty – whose views are too often overlooked – are able to direct anti-poverty plans in poor countries.

A STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO POVERTY OVER

There has been a growing chorus of concern over the absence of a structural emphasis in the MDGs. Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (the umbrella organisation for more than 100 civil society groups working in international development), summed up the frustration of many:

*'We don't get a sustainable fix for global poverty by addressing needs. And the overarching signature of the MDGs is that they are about needs and gaps – things missing – medicines, pesticide treated mosquito nets, sanitation facilities, access to drinking water, food itself. All these things are life critical, naturally. But to realize the MDGs, there has to be another ingredient. Poverty is sustainably addressed only when rights are sustained.'*³⁴

Those who seek an end to poverty must collaborate in order to bring about change on a greater scale than would be possible by their efforts alone

The underlying structures responsible for unmet needs must be challenged and changed. A clear example relates to MDG 1. Target 1.B is more powerful than most, calling for 'full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people' – but its indicators are only simple economic ratios. The emphasis remains very much on indicator 1.1 of target 1.A, the number of people living on less than one US dollar a day.

Christian Aid's economic justice programme work, in contrast, includes a range of targets that aim to address the structural causes of vulnerability to income poverty. Consider our programme in Egypt, for example, in which the following benefits have been targeted:

- 9,000 small-scale food producers will no longer be working through middle-men and so will reach exporters and companies directly, thereby raising incomes.
- 1,875 fisherfolk will be legally recognised.
- 1,500 wives of quarry workers will have IDs, insurance cards and knowledge of their rights.

At a global level, these may seem trivial when compared to the ambition of, for example, raising the incomes of more than a billion people. What these targets within this particular Christian Aid country programme have in common, however, is that if delivered, they will bring about permanent structural changes to the vulnerability of each group. Directly, there will be improvements as measured by the MDG framework; and in addition, these benefits are likely to be sustained in the future. An old adage compared giving people a fish to the merits of teaching them how to fish; the most important aspect of providing long-term economic security can be supporting women and men to ensure that their rights to fish, or to work, or to access land, and so on, are recognised.

Another example also sits outside the MDG framework but bears directly on target 1.B. This is the adoption by the International Labour Organization's conference in June 2010 – during the drafting of this report – of a new Convention on the rights of domestic workers.

The Convention reflects again the type of structural change that has the power to embed progress, undermining a cause of poverty. As Ellene Sana, from our partner Migrant Forum in Asia, said, it will 'clearly establish minimum standards and rights for all domestic workers [and] help reduce the worst forms of child labour, the stigmatisation and criminalisation of migrant domestic workers (including undocumented workers), and racial and ethnic discrimination'.³⁵

With our support, Migrant Forum in Asia was at the

forefront of moves to link organisations in different countries to push for such an instrument, as well as advocating for changes directly at national level. As has happened here, those who seek an end to poverty must collaborate in order to bring about change on a greater scale than would be possible by their efforts alone. If the object of influence is a global institution or a multinational company, for example, then links across countries are essential to achieve credibility and impact.

In recognition of this, Christian Aid works through and with the private sector, civil society, including faith-based organisations, and government at different levels, because each of these can contribute to greater power for people in poverty.

For every MDG, the benefits of the 'structural approach' can be seen. Consider the example of target 6.B, of universal provision of HIV treatment to all those that need it. This might seem, on the face of it, purely an issue of ensuring funding and/or reducing the price of antiretroviral drugs, but our experience shows that we have a powerful impact when we take a structural approach and begin to address some of the causes of infection and the wider damage to societies that it creates.

In our work on HIV, as in all of our work, Christian Aid cooperates with partners who are themselves representative of communities in need. In the case of HIV, this led us to understand more fully the impact on people's lives. The biggest gap within MDG 6 is that it does not consider stigma and discrimination, nor gender inequalities in relation to HIV, which all reinforce social inequalities: the people most affected by HIV are those that are already marginalised, such as women, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers. This undermines the global HIV response, and also weakens other MDG outcomes – for example, in education, where enrolment and dropout rates can suffer due to the financial pressure of the need to fund treatment.

Stigma marginalises people further, making it difficult for them to be open about their status, or to discuss openly causes and possible preventative approaches. Stigma therefore multiplies the damage caused by the virus, and also inhibits measures against it.

In Sierra Leone, around five per cent of the population is HIV positive, but stigma is a huge challenge. Knowledge of HIV is limited and many people living with the virus are still afraid to disclose their status to their loved ones and understand very little about their medical needs. The government has a free antiretroviral programme through which all people living

with HIV can access necessary treatment free of charge. Yet stigma has meant that very few people have been comfortable taking advantage of the programme – so even where the funding for treatment is in place, numbers taking it up have been limited.

Religious leaders and people living with HIV have an important role to play in addressing the stigma that results in lack of information about and access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. In 2006, Christian Aid initiated a two-day meeting of people living with HIV. Since then, there has been significant progress. The Network of HIV Positives in Sierra Leone (NETHIPS) was launched just a few months later – the launch supported by UNAIDS, the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) for Sierra Leone, the World Bank, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and, of course, Christian Aid.

Since its inception, NETHIPS has grown by leaps and bounds and membership is expanding. Network members are committed and determined, despite working under very difficult circumstances. Offices have been established in all four regions of the country, and NETHIPS has become a reference group for the NAS on all matters to do with HIV, including issues for people living with the virus. NETHIPS is now being supported by the Global Fund and many other prominent donors, and provides a much-needed support and advocacy channel.

NETHIPS has also been a key supporter of the establishment in Sierra Leone of another Christian Aid partner, INERELA+, a network of religious leaders living with or affected by HIV. The leadership of Pastor Albert Freeman has been crucial to this. The close links with NETHIPS have also been helpful, with NETHIPS staff providing vital training for INERELA+ staff in leadership skills, monitoring and evaluation, and project writing. Members of INERELA+ who are living with HIV are encouraged to be part of NETHIPS too.

This crossover between the activist network and the faith-based response to HIV has been crucial to successful advocacy. NETHIPS and INERELA+ have rapidly gained official recognition. They are both represented nationally on all major decision-making bodies in relation to HIV, something which had never happened before. One initiative currently being taken forward is the review and amendment of Sierra Leonean HIV legislation. Both organisations are closely involved in promoting the SAVE message on HIV with the Government of Sierra Leone, and there is now a real hope that it will become a national preventive message.

The SAVE approach consists of 'safer practices, available medications, voluntary counselling and testing, and empowerment'.³⁶ It represents a much more nuanced and empowering alternative to the traditional ABC ('abstain, be faithful, use condoms') approach. Ministry of Health billboards that used to carry messages such as 'AIDS KILLS' have recently been replaced with those carrying the SAVE message. Furthermore, mosques and churches have become more conducive and stigma-free environments for people with HIV to worship, through INERELA+.

Prior to NETHIPS and INERELA+ being established, no-one was openly HIV-positive in Sierra Leone. Now there are nearly 3,000 people (including people in every district) who are open about their status.

By working with marginalised communities to understand their experiences, it is possible to address the causes of poverty much more directly. Although funding for treatment is enormously important, a lack of treatment is far from being the only issue affecting HIV-positive people. Their further social and economic marginalisation through stigma exacerbates or even causes a range of dimensions of poverty, and must also be addressed. Another issue that needs to be tackled in the future is regressive legislation around HIV in some developing countries (for example, Malawi's proposed Criminalisation Bill), which could further worsen the experience of living with HIV.

Finally, the importance of addressing the structures and systems that cause or prolong poverty and marginalisation is seen nowhere at a greater scale than when considering MDG 8, the 'global partnership for development'. Broadly, this is where all international issues have been put in the MDG framework – from the global financial flows associated with aid and debt, to the economic opportunities of worldwide trade, including access to pharmaceutical and technological innovations (which are implicitly assumed to originate in rich countries).

As the financial crisis that began in 2008 continues to bite in rich countries, the prospects for increases in international aid look bleak – with the exception of a handful of donors, including the UK, which has honourably stuck to its commitment to reach by 2013 the UN target level of 0.7 per cent of national income. Ireland has delayed the deadline for reaching its target (from 2012 to 2015) but maintained its commitment despite great fiscal pressure.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAXATION IN DEVELOPMENT

Imagine, as the global aid budget comes under increasing pressure, that there was a complementary source of finance for development. Imagine, also, that the sums involved were of a similar or greater scale than current levels of aid, according to leading estimates. Imagine, one step further, that academic research consistently found this source of finance to be associated with improvements in the quality of democratic and participatory governance.

Now pinch yourself – because that source of finance exists. It is taxation; and while rich countries' governments are able to use around 35 to 40 per cent of their national income to invest in public services and infrastructure, and in providing

a stable, broadly representative state, for many lower-income countries that figure is as little as just 10 to 15 per cent. The amounts raised are much smaller, but not only are these funds valuable for what they can buy, they also tend to be associated with government that is less corrupt and more responsive to citizens.

But these funds are often simply missing from developing countries' revenues altogether. A large part of the tax gap relates to the lack of transparency around international financial and trade flows. Christian Aid's research implies that abusive mispricing of trade by companies trading across borders to lower tax liabilities costs developing countries as much as US\$160bn a year in lost tax revenues, almost one-and-a-half times the global aid budget (see Box 4 below). This is just one element of the bias of global systems against

Box 4: Building a campaign for change

Christian Aid's tax reform campaign has caught the attention of a number of governments and multinational corporations. Firmly rooted in our fight against poverty, it reflects our desire to see developing countries move away from aid dependence, raising instead their own money for healthcare, education and welfare.

Self-reliance is a far more sustainable option than aid, particularly bilateral aid, which can fluctuate according to competing demands placed on donor governments by disasters and emergencies elsewhere. In addition, it is often hedged with demands and conditions that may be inappropriate in the country receiving the assistance.

A country can benefit considerably when government revenues are largely derived from fair and equitable taxing of citizens and businesses. This allows

governments and rulers to have a direct stake in improving the prosperity of some, or most, of the population. Authorities also become more accountable to their citizens, who will want to see evidence that the money raised is well spent. This, together with the creation of a relatively reliable civil service to raise the money, in turn helps counter corruption.

The efforts of developing countries to raise their own revenues, however, are hidebound by the tax dodging antics of unscrupulous businesses and individuals trading internationally. Christian Aid estimates that by concealing the true extent of their taxable profits, often in secrecy jurisdictions (tax havens) offshore, they cost developing countries US\$160bn a year in lost revenue.

Common forms of tax dodging that take full

advantage of the lack of expertise and resources in the revenue departments of many developing governments are abusive transfer pricing, and false accounting.

Transfer pricing refers to the way that subsidiaries of the same multinational trade with each other, or with the parent company.

According to the OECD, some 60 per cent of world trade today comprises a multinational trading with itself. In recognition of this, regulators stipulate that a fair market price – known as an 'arm's-length' price – must be charged for what is bought and sold in such circumstances.

If above board, the deals are referred to as 'transfer pricing'. A company in one country, however, can charge a vastly reduced rate for goods and services to another based elsewhere to minimise its tax liability.

When such deals are between parts of the same multinational, they are called 'abusive transfer pricing'. When between independent entities colluding with each other, the practice is called 'false invoicing'.

Christian Aid is campaigning for international standards of tax transparency that would force companies to declare the profits made and taxes paid in every country where they operate. It also wants an automatic exchange of information between jurisdictions to counter the secrecy offered by tax havens.

From the outset of the campaign, Christian Aid has successfully carved out a position in the policy arena so that crucial change can occur. The global economic crisis created a political appetite for financial transparency which provided a unique

A fairly administered tax regime supports over time the emergence of democratic and participatory governance, and the reduction of corruption

the rights of the poorest countries to levy taxes.³⁷

Tax authorities in rich countries can bring considerable pressure to bear against companies engaged in tax dodging. Poorer countries, however, with neither the expertise nor the resources to tackle tax dodging on a massive scale, simply cannot exert the same kind of pressure.

On top of this, the problems surrounding tax havens (or secrecy jurisdictions) appear to be as great for developing countries as they are for richer ones. The secrecy such jurisdictions offer facilitates abuse, both by trading concerns seeking to hide their profits, and corrupt individuals looking to safeguard illicit earnings.³⁸

Treaties such as the European Union (EU) Savings Tax Directive that require limited automatic information

exchange between jurisdictions exist and offer some protection to revenue of rich countries. No equivalent exists, however, to protect developing countries from the effects of the same, deliberately manufactured financial secrecy.

Effective taxation is at the heart of development – not only providing the revenues that could take spending (for example, on MDGs 1-6) to quite different levels, but also offering the possibility for redistribution in favour of the poorest and most marginalised within society.

Perhaps most importantly, a fairly administered tax regime supports over time the emergence of democratic and participatory governance, and the reduction of corruption. Those paying tax demand a say in how it is used, while governments collecting tax are forced to create a professional, incorrupt civil service to oversee how tax is

opportunity for Christian Aid to highlight the need to consider developing countries in reforms of financial systems.

The previous UK government, the Spanish government, the European Parliament and Commission have all backed our call for an end to financial secrecy.

The G20 London summit in 2009 committed to create proposals for developing countries to benefit from the new cooperative tax environment, while the UK DFID White Paper (2009) and the EU Commission Spring Package 2010 back our calls for financial transparency. Meanwhile, the OECD has set up a taskforce on tax and development and invited Christian Aid to the table.

With multinationals, Christian Aid's approach and strategy have involved public campaigning and behind-closed-door

advocacy and relationship building. In the process, Christian Aid is starting to build a reputation for constructive engagement with the private sector, with some companies already taking a positive approach towards the tax and development agenda.

Christian Aid has also galvanised other NGOs across Europe to work on the issue. In the developing world, our partner Tax Justice Network – Africa (TJN-Africa), in moves that it is hoped will be replicated in Asia and Latin America, offers research and advocacy expertise to help civil society organisations throughout the continent lobby their governments for tax policies to benefit the poor.

With a secretariat based in Nairobi, TJN-Africa has hosted a series of public workshops and seminars for civil society, government officials, financial

professionals, researchers and journalists.

Country- as well as regional-level initiatives continue to organise multi-stakeholder tax forums and tax research and to raise tax awareness via the media.

The network has been active in publishing and disseminating country tax system reports, briefings and educational packs, which will serve as building blocks for creating a continuous process of generating more interest in the links between tax and development, and opening up new policy initiatives, both nationally and internationally.

Last year, TJN-Africa organised a Pan-Africa Taxation and Development conference in Kenya which concluded with the ratification of the 'Nairobi Declaration' which summarised proposals to

enable Africa to become self reliant through tax.

Proof of the manner in which tax is moving up the agenda in Africa came later in the year when representatives of tax authorities from across the continent held the first ever council meeting of the new African Tax Administration Forum.

Better administration, it was agreed, would help countries reach sustainable development and poverty-reduction goals, and enhance good governance.

Challenges identified included businesses failing to report profits, and the use of tax havens by wealthy individuals to hide assets, as well as their use by companies engaged in abusive transfer pricing.

The potential contribution of the private sector to poverty eradication is enormous

levied and collected, and how it is spent. In this way, tax has the power not only to raise the revenues for additional spending, but also to help ensure the better use of the money raised.³⁹

We have seen above some examples of structural change that can and should be pursued to support the achievement of MDGs 1-7. In the case of MDG 8, that change can and should be pursued at a global level through tax reform.

Christian Aid, with partners from many countries and memberships of global alliances such as the inter-NGO, inter-governmental Task Force on Financial Integrity and Economic Development, and the Civil Society Coalition on the UN Convention against Corruption, is pushing for structural changes that would require greater transparency to be provided by companies and secrecy jurisdictions to developing countries. These kinds of structural changes, which would fundamentally shift power in favour of the poorest countries, are well outside the approach of MDG 8. The importance of achieving such change, which can only come about through international political decisions, is why, as well as supporting partners directly to tackle poverty, Christian Aid campaigns for tax reform (see Box 4, p22).

Indeed, MDG 8 is also where the failure of the framework to acknowledge lack of power sufficiently is most apparent. This is the one MDG in which rich countries' governments, rather than those of developing countries, are the primary actors responsible for delivery. It is also the least well-monitored MDG, and arguably the one where least progress

has been made on delivery. Despite having six targets and 16 indicators (more of each than any other MDG), not one of them contains a specific, measurable and verifiable objective.

MDG 8 is also the one in which the international (rather than domestic) private sector has the most obvious role to play, but this is not spelt out with sufficient clarity. The potential contribution of the private sector to poverty eradication is enormous, and goes far beyond assisting with access to drugs or mobile telephones – valuable though these can be. It includes, for example, supporting tax transparency by setting an example within a sector. It also includes working to promote MDGs such as target 1.B on the provision of decent work throughout a supply chain.

Christian Aid works with the private sector in different ways, from supporting companies that can bring important renewable energy sources to poor communities (see Box 5 below) to supporting the establishment and growth of cooperatives where they can contribute to inclusive development that lifts people out of economic insecurity (see 'Growth and inequality', p34).

In many cases, the private sector is striving to support poverty eradication, including in some cases through the adoption of the 'triple bottom line' approach (which aims to account for companies' social and environmental impact as well as their economic performance), but this is not necessarily acknowledged in the MDG framework. There are also clear areas of responsibility that are not identified

Box 5: Energising enterprise

At a time when the world is concerned about the links between energy consumption and climate change, there are still two billion people (one in four of the global population) with no access to electricity.⁴⁰

A third live in India (50 per cent of the population) and another third in Africa (75 per cent of the population). Without power or light, their opportunities to make a better living are limited by their reliance on muscle power to fetch water and fuel, prepare food, plough

and maintain farmland, and conduct business, all between sunrise and sunset.

Similarly, children must study by the expensive, unreliable and unhealthy light of candles or kerosene lanterns – cutting their study time, and causing eye strain and respiratory problems.

In addition, almost half the world relies on unhealthy and inefficient cooking stoves and fires that burn wood, dung, charcoal,

straw and vegetable matter. It is estimated that the fumes from such biomass stoves cost the lives of a million children under five every year from pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.

Today, the human cost notwithstanding, the policies and expenditure of governments, donors and international financial institutions remain biased towards large-scale, centralised, and often high-carbon electricity generation. Such a supply

model, backed up with subsidies, and in some countries corruption, favours industry and city dwellers, who are relatively easy to connect to the mains, and to bill.

In the face of official indifference to the plight of the energy poor, Christian Aid is developing projects to provide electricity to off-grid communities, and to influence energy policy by supporting partner agencies advocating change. In doing so, we are supporting low-carbon

either, perhaps due to the emphasis previously discussed on governments as the main, or only, actors.

Technological innovation in the private sector has a huge role to play in responding to the challenge of achieving sustainable development. And where large companies in particular recognise the scale of their impact – and the implied responsibilities that go with this – they can contribute much to inclusive growth. In India, for example, Christian Aid staff have chaired discussions between civil society organisations and some of the largest companies with a view to working towards employment practices that challenge, rather than reinforce, patterns of marginalisation.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has considered the strengths and weaknesses of the MDG approach. We have seen that the MDGs have driven hugely valuable progress on some key indicators. But we have also seen how much of the ambition from the original Millennium Declaration was lost in translation to the MDGs. The Declaration's important emphases on inequality, including gender inequality, on sustainability and on democratic and participatory governance are effectively missing from the operational framework.

We have also seen how, too often, the MDGs emphasise need rather than its causes. They lead efforts to address specific needs instead of focusing on the generic structural and systemic causes of these, or on the lack of power that is manifested in and responsible for the elements of poverty that the MDGs address – and many others besides.

The Millennium Declaration and the MDG framework together represent a great step forward, as for the first time most of the nations of the world have committed to poverty eradication as a shared goal.

Two key challenges now face those of us who share that same goal:

- to work to ensure that the most progress possible is made by 2015, when the MDGs lapse
- to strive, throughout the same period, to guarantee the establishment of a successor framework that addresses the weaknesses identified here and sets a course beyond 2015 towards Poverty Over.

paths to development.

Projects were recently launched in Kenya and India, building partnerships to access new technologies and promote new ways of working to bring about a sustainable end to energy poverty.

Links have been brokered between Christian Aid partners already working with poor communities on the one hand, and UK and US-based social enterprises that provide affordable solar-powered lighting and

other products on the other.

These products improve lighting, increase time for work or study, save money on candles and kerosene, and reduce ill health. It is estimated that every month, a household using a solar lantern saves US\$2-4 on fuel and gains an extra day of productive work. Over a year, the pilot projects will also cut 500 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

In Kenya, we are supporting Inter Diocesan Christian Community Services

(IDCCS) and the Benevolent Institute for Development Initiatives (BIDI) to establish sustainable local business ventures to market solar-powered products. As well as reaching villages without light or energy, these businesses will provide income for a network of 100 village-based solar entrepreneurs who supply the products.

In India, we are working with a network of partners in the poorest states to distribute solar lanterns, using a micro-credit model

so that very poor households can borrow the cost (US\$10) upfront and pay it back over a year. The monthly cost is less than they currently spend on kerosene to light their homes, and at the end they own a source of entirely free lighting.

We have also brought our partners and Indian clean-energy enterprises together in a joint NGO-business campaign to promote energy policies that benefit the poor.

TOGETHER BUT UNEQUAL



Symbol of globalisation – a McDonald's burger bar in Guatemala City, outside of which a local flower seller tries to drum up business. Listed by the World Bank as a middle-income country, according to UNICEF more than half of Guatemala's under-five-year-olds are chronically malnourished, one of the worst rates in the world

Christian Aid/Mike Goldwater

TOGETHER BUT UNEQUAL

In this chapter, we explore the challenges to ending poverty caused by inequality – and, above all, inequalities based on identity. If we are all in this together, as far as the goal of poverty eradication is concerned, then identity should not matter. All stand to benefit, and all share the responsibility.

It has been remarked, however, that while we may all be in it together, some are in it deeper than others. When any given aspect of poverty is examined, including MDG indicators, we see that few people are ‘accidentally’ or ‘coincidentally’ poor. In any given context, those at the bottom tend, systematically, to be there for a reason – because they are from groups marginalised as a result of identity, whether this be gender, caste, ethnic, religious, racial, regional, indigenous or any other identity that infers a lack of power in the given community; or often a combination of these. Gender can result, in very many cases, in further marginalisation, so that, for example, dalit women tend to be poorer than dalit men, while both are poorer than most others in a community simply because they are dalits.

These inequalities are pernicious, poisoning society as different values are placed on people according to their identity groups. This sets the ground for conflict and undermines the whole range of development outcomes. Care must be taken, however, to keep these arguments separate: we must never subordinate the inherent importance of challenging inequity to the instrumental benefits of reducing inequalities.

When commentators discuss inequality, they tend to focus on a specific type: income inequality between individuals, or between households. The most widely used indicator of inequality is the Gini coefficient, which varies between 0 (indicating complete equality of incomes across a population) and 100 per cent (indicating that the entire income falls to a single individual or household).

Rich countries typically have Gini coefficients between 30 and 40 per cent, with Anglo-Saxon economies generally at the higher end and Scandinavian economies at the lower. A key distinction can be drawn, however, between those economies that produce more equal outcomes (for example, France) and those that produce less equal outcomes but redistribute more from high- to low-income groups (for example, Sweden and the UK).⁴¹

Although causality is difficult to determine, and data quality is poor, International Monetary Fund (IMF) research suggests that, in general, countries with higher initial inequality are likely to redistribute less;⁴² and that developing

countries in particular have not been able to use tax and transfer systems to reduce initial inequality in the same way that richer countries have.⁴³

A major aim of Christian Aid’s tax campaign is therefore to strengthen tax systems, challenging the tax consensus that the IMF and others have promoted in poorer countries as a condition of aid and trade in order to give countries more power to address inequality.⁴⁴

Income inequality between individuals and households within countries is only one part of a wider problem. A recent report from the UK’s Government Equalities Office, for instance, demonstrates that this income inequality in the UK has been relatively stable since the late 1990s, having risen sharply in the two preceding decades.⁴⁵ Economic inequality alone does not show the type of divergences that are possible – all of a person’s prospects of a good life, free from poverty, are at stake.

Epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have gathered evidence from hundreds of academic studies and data sets, demonstrating the range of social damage that seems to be associated with higher inequality in societies – including key indicators of physical and mental health, and at all points of the income scale, not only the bottom end.⁴⁶

In 2009, a pilot project was set up to bring together the parishes of two churches in the Wirral, in the northwest of England, to reflect upon the divergence between them. As the summary starkly puts it: ‘life expectancy for those on the Mersey side of the Wirral is 11.6 years less than those on the Dee side’.⁴⁷ The project brought people together to share very different experiences and perspectives, including those concerning social marginalisation, which often goes hand in hand with income poverty, and the loneliness and isolation that can be suffered among the financially better off. Further work is planned, which will include additional parish ‘pairs’.

This example suggests a potential role for the church, or faith groups more generally, in bridging the social divides that economic inequality often generates. The timing could hardly be better – as fiscal austerity threatens to widen inequalities further, a new study in the *British Medical Journal* has shown that health inequalities in the UK are at a level unseen since records began in 1921.⁴⁸

Inequalities relating to life expectancy and other factors between rich and poor countries are, of course, greater than national divides. In 2008, the average life expectancy at birth in low-income countries, on average, was just less than 59 years. Those born in middle-income countries could

expect, on average, an additional 10 years, while those born in high-income countries could expect a further 10 – an average life expectancy of almost 80 years.⁴⁹

Those groupings cover considerable divergence themselves – with 15 countries having a life expectancy of less than 50 years. These include countries in crisis, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, but also some relatively stable countries such as Zambia. The average life expectancy for sub-Saharan Africa is 52 years, compared to 73 for Latin America and the Caribbean. At the top end, children born in countries such as Spain, Sweden and Japan can expect to live for more than 80 years.

Differences within countries, typically between richer and poorer areas, compound the inequalities. In the UK from 2006-2008, life expectancy varied between 88.9 years for women (84.3 for men) in Kensington and Chelsea, and 77.2 years (70.7) in Glasgow.⁵⁰

In many developing countries, although data is not so readily available, the equivalent gaps are believed to be much wider. The obstacles to poverty eradication associated with inequality in general are certainly huge.

As was shown in the previous chapter, however, the operation of the MDGs has precious little focus on inequality, or on the identity of potential beneficiaries. The Millennium Declaration from which the MDGs are drawn seems sure that ‘we’ refers to all of humanity. One of the six fundamental shared values identified in the Declaration is that of equality. ‘No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured,’ it states.

As noted, the power of this statement finds, unfortunately, little clear expression in the MDGs themselves. Why does it matter, for human development and poverty eradication, if some are more equal than others? There are two key reasons: one economic and the other a combination of the political, social and personal. The economic reason is simple – the less equally shared any economic growth is, the more growth will be required in order to address income poverty.

The other reason why inequality matters is more complex. Once we recognise that poverty is a lack of power, rather than just a lack of, say, income, then inequality takes on a greater importance. Having the lowest level of, for example, education in a community matters, not just because of the likely implications for income, but because of the relative status that is implied. An individual’s ability to contribute to community decision-making, for example, or to enjoy social

relations across the community, may well be affected by his or her relative educational attainment. An extreme example is a lack of literacy in a broadly literate community, which can cause severe marginalisation. And, of course, a lack of literacy in a broadly literate community is itself likely to result from existing marginalisation – from being unable to afford the school fees that all others can, or from being socially excluded because of caste from attending the only school.

Too often, societies are characterised by inequalities between groups. People’s life chances are restricted simply by being part of a given group – by being female, or Jewish, or dalit, or Muslim, or HIV-positive, or Uzbek, or Christian, or illegitimate, or Tutsi, or Bumiputera, or homosexual, or Tibetan, or transgendered, or Fur... or indeed having a combination of overlapping layers of identity, as we all do, but where these can each act, in the given context, to reinforce the extent of marginalisation.

Inequality is especially unjust when it is connected to identity. Why should membership of a particular group prejudice anyone’s chances of a good life, a life free of poverty? Why should someone’s gender dictate his or her likely educational attainment? Why should caste dictate life expectancy? Why should religion determine access to political power? If every human has equal rights, or is created in God’s image, why should such injustice be tolerated? More than that, how can we let it be tolerated?

This is why poverty must be ended; and why responsibility for making this come to pass is so widely shared. The following section explains more about inequalities between groups, including gender groups, their consequences for development and some of the approaches that Christian Aid has taken in response. There are no easy answers, and the fact that, visually, the word ‘over’ can be found inside the word ‘poverty’ may seem more like a cruel joke than a cause for hope; but we owe it to those in poverty to strive with them to that end.

GENDER

The most obvious, encompassing inequality is that based on gender. In 2003, the World Bank published a report on gender and the MDGs, in which the first graph was titled ‘In no region of the world are women and men equal in legal, social or economic rights’.⁵¹ Sadly, a look at Social Watch’s Gender Equity Index for 2009 confirms the continuing truth of this statement for education, economic activity and political empowerment. Even for the richest countries of the world, where education differences tend to be lower, women’s scores on economic and political outcomes

Inequality is especially unjust when it is connected to identity. Why should membership of a particular group prejudice anyone's chances of a good life, a life free of poverty?

average between half and three-quarters those of men.⁵²

'Gender' is not, however, simply a shorthand term for 'men and women'. It signifies a relationship that always involves inequalities of power, not always in predictable ways.

Gender is understood to refer to broader social relations, discussed below, that include class, ethnicity, age, religion, caste and so on.

Using the term in this way allows us to understand more clearly when women's experience as members of a particular class, racial or other group is of greater significance than their experience as women, and to understand when these experiences overlap.⁵³

The World Bank report identifies the main instrumental benefits for the MDGs of making progress in addressing gender inequality. These include benefits for MDG 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, through increased economic growth. Investment in girls' education and health raises productivity, as does increased access to productive assets and resources – for example, through addressing women's land rights. Time poverty – caused, for instance, by spending long hours collecting water – can prevent girls from attending school and so also reduces productivity. Progress in tackling hunger is also held back by gender inequality, because maternal education levels appear to be associated with reduced child malnutrition.

MDG 2, to achieve universal primary education, is supported by reducing gender barriers to school attendance. MDG 4, to reduce child mortality, is supported by gender equality because of the positive impact of maternal education, literacy and control of household income. Women's control of resources and role in reproductive choices can contribute to improvements in maternal mortality (MDG 5), and, as discussed above, addressing the marginalisation of women, including exposure to sexual violence, frequent lack of power to negotiate condom use, as well as stigmatisation of those known to be HIV-positive, is likely to support MDG 6 (to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). Finally, the World Bank study argues that there are also reasons to believe that gender divisions can exacerbate environmental problems.

The report concludes:

'Attempting to meet the MDGs without promoting gender equality will both increase the costs and minimize the likelihood of attaining the goals.'⁵⁴

While the report could be criticised for emphasising the instrumental importance of tackling gender inequality (that

is, emphasising how greater gender equality would play a key role in achieving other objectives in the MDGs) over its importance in its own right, it nonetheless makes a powerful (and widely accepted case) for the strength of the instrumental relationships.

In addition, there is a broad consensus that gender equality must be prioritised for its own sake. Since its creation, the UN has played a pivotal role in pushing forward gender equality and women's empowerment. In fact, the 'equal rights of men and women' is a theme that recurs throughout the Charter of the UN. All 192 UN member states are, theoretically, under an obligation to comply with 'fundamental freedoms for all' without distinction. The very existence of such aims is largely an achievement of women's NGOs.

The question this raises is why – if this was indeed recognised – has progress been so poor on achieving gender equality? It has even been claimed that simply because of their sex, more girls have been killed in the last 50 years than all of the people slaughtered in all of the world's genocides.⁵⁵ Women make up around two out of every three of the people living on less than one US dollar a day, and hold fewer than one in five of the world's parliamentary seats.⁵⁶

As with the MDGs, world leaders have thus far failed to bring the commitments made in their solemn declarations on gender equality into existence. From the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, promising words have not been supported by the political will to bring about real and lasting change. This situation has not been helped by the UN structures with a mandate to work on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Thus far, the architecture of the UN system that is charged with this mandate has been weak, underfunded and, perhaps most notably, disparate. At least four separate parts of the UN are currently dedicated to working on gender, with this supplemented by attempts to look at gender and women's issues across the organisation.

As Stephen Lewis, former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, has said, the shambolic structures have been a reflection of the low prioritisation of gender equality:

'The principle of gender equality and the promise to achieve it have been restated endlessly since 1945 – so often, in fact, that the words have grown as soft and supple as a favourite lullaby. Speechwriters and

‘The principle of gender equality and the promise to achieve it have been restated endlessly since 1945 – so often, in fact, that the words have grown as soft and supple as a favourite lullaby’

document drafters now recite its verses by rote: first the numbing statistics, then the gasp of alarm, the roster of noble objectives, and finally, the sing-along chorus of solemn commitments... we’ve pledged our allegiance to gender equality and women’s empowerment so often that the words – floating on air, unconnected to any actions – have lost all meaning. The Member States of the United Nations are of one mind, until [that is,] they’re asked to allocate human and financial resources to achieve those goals. To this day, promoting the advancement of women and addressing their needs and rights is relegated to a small handful of under-funded, under-staffed, barely known divisions.⁵⁷

However, as part of a significant drive for UN reform underway since 2004, work has begun to restructure this architecture and, with real pressure from NGOs, create a single new UN agency for women. Member states have recently approved the creation of this new agency, which will be known as UN Women and will become operational from January 2011 under the leadership of a new under-secretary-general.

Some have argued that instead of a dedicated agency, it would be better to ensure that women’s rights are integrated throughout the UN system. However, there is no reason to expect this to be successful, given the above analysis; and women’s rights could go unsupported for a long time before rectifying steps were taken. Moreover, since the creation of the new agency is underway, it makes sense to do everything to support its success.

It is at least possible that, with substantial support, the new agency can finally provide the focal point to drive through real and sustained change – if member states provide the necessary financing and the political backing for UN Women to hold the rest of the UN system and members themselves to account for their performance. Clearly, the MDGs will be an important focal point for such action, and so the new agency has the potential to influence progress until 2015. In addition, it can be expected to play a valuable role in ensuring a central gender component to any mechanism that succeeds the MDGs after 2015.

The UK government has already committed to ‘play a key role in ensuring the new agency delivers for the world’s women’.⁵⁸ The EU’s frequently reiterated and fundamental commitment to policy coherence for development means that any policy likely to affect developing countries must take account of and not undermine the EU’s goal of poverty eradication. The incorporation of gender equality requirements throughout all relevant policies is a vital

element of this and other commitments, but, regrettably, has often been treated as a low priority. The EU has, nevertheless, recently committed explicitly to ‘gender equality as a human right, a question of social justice and a core value of the EU development policy’.⁵⁹ At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 14 June 2010, it adopted the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development (2010-2015), recognising that gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but also central to achieving all the MDGs. This was a welcome move, but we await the plan’s implementation.

Christian Aid’s strategic framework contains the following position, placing our commitment to gender issues in the context of power:

‘We understand the different roles men and women can and must play in securing sustainable development, and we are committed to ensuring all our work reflects a gender perspective. Specifically, across all of our strategic focus areas, we aim to support women and girls to gain more say over decisions that affect them.’

Within Christian Aid country programmes, our Gender Minimum Standards commit us to the following:

- programmes must identify key gender dynamics (power relations between women and men) that perpetuate exclusion and ensure that the programme addresses these in a strategic way (that is, programme objectives and strategies must explicitly seek change in these gender dynamics, and this must be an explicit part of programme monitoring and review/evaluation)
- programmes and partners working with particular marginalised target groups must consider and respond to the specific/different needs and interests of women and men within these groups (that is, recognise and respond to multiple/overlapping forms of inequality)
- all Christian Aid supported programme work – including that relating to policy, humanitarian and development, and all partner work – must recognise and take account of these gender dynamics, ensure women’s participation, disaggregate project plans/data/reports and so on by gender, and seek to avoid reinforcing inequality (that is, the programme aims to tackle gender dynamics in its overall objectives and specific strategies/activities, and also has a general ‘do no harm’ health check)
- within our and our partners’ ways of working, we seek a shared commitment to women’s access to decision-making (both as ‘beneficiaries’ and as staff) and to

leadership positions, and to enabling full participation of women and men by addressing their specific needs and perspectives in relation to, for example, childcare/family responsibilities, vulnerability to gender-based violence, and discrimination within the workplace.

As the earlier quote from Stephen Lewis highlights, there is a great deal of support for addressing gender inequality, both for its inherent value and its instrumental potential to contribute across the range of aspects of development. But turning that into practical and financial commitment seems to be persistently problematic. Christian Aid itself has not always found it straightforward – but we must redouble our efforts if we are serious about ending poverty.

GROUP INEQUALITIES

‘Horizontal’ inequalities – those between groups – play an important role in contributing to poverty as well as conflict. Particular groups may be, and may feel, systematically excluded, whether from political processes, economic opportunities or society in general.

The groundbreaking work of the DFID-funded Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) at the University of Oxford, under Professor Frances Stewart, has firmly established the issue of horizontal inequalities in development discourse.⁶⁰ The key findings of CRISE research are that greater economic, political and social inequality contributes to a higher chance of war and to more people dying as a result of social violence.

But fiscal policy – through careful taxation and public expenditure policy – can provide powerful tools to redress inequalities. Research has highlighted the relative success of Malaysia in reducing the economic marginalisation of its Bumiputera citizens (an umbrella term for Malays and other indigenous groups). The reverse can be seen in the policy-driven widening of regional inequalities in Sudan during the 1990s.⁶¹

Researchers for the MDG Achievement Fund have investigated social inequalities within the MDG context, and defined social exclusion as operating simultaneously through various routes:

- through the cultural devaluation of certain groups, deeming them inferior to others in ways that undermine their sense of self-worth and agency
- through their exclusion from the distribution of valued resources, services and opportunities within their society – or their inclusion on extremely unfavourable terms

- through their location in places where their efforts yield poorer returns
- through denying them a voice and influence in the decisions that affect their lives and the communities in which they live.⁶²

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the research finds persistent inequalities that favour white populations over those descended from Africans or indigenous groups. In Brazil, despite progress since the 1990s, people of African descent represent nearly three-quarters of the poorest 10th of the population, but just 11.6 per cent of the richest 10th. In both the white and Afro-descendant groups, women are worse off than men.

Income inequality results in, or is supported by, inequalities in key life outcomes. Child malnutrition, for example, follows a depressing and predictable pattern – Figure 5 (see p32) shows discrepancies between infant mortality ratios for indigenous and non-indigenous children, for 2000-2002. At the extreme, the indigenous population of the tax haven of Panama has infant mortality rates more than three times as high as the non-indigenous population.

Research also shows grave inequalities across Asia and Africa, including persistent ethnic inequalities in child mortality in 11 sub-Saharan countries. A major study of Nepal found some of the most extreme statistics – not necessarily because Nepal is the worst case, but because the data has been carefully gathered and presented.⁶³ Data is frequently a problem, especially when elites hold power of data collection among other things, and may not necessarily be keen to see the extent of inequalities made clear. In recent years, Nepal has seen a move towards addressing the combination of caste, ethnic and regional inequalities – hence the openness to the study.

Among the multiple inequalities, there are some particularly glaring cases. While high-caste Brahmin in Nepal had an infant mortality rate of 52.5 per 1,000 births in 1996, the rate for dalits was 116.5 – a greater difference than that between indigenous groups and the rest of the population in most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. The mortality equivalents for all children under five were 69.0 for Brahmins, and 171.2 for dalits.

Gender inequality was especially grave. Until the 2001 Census, Nepal was one of very few countries where female life expectancy was lower than that of men. Infant and child mortality rates continued to show persistently worse outcomes for girls (79.2 per 1,000 compared to 64.4, and 112.4 compared to 91.2, respectively). Data is not available

to examine the compounding effect of gender and caste/ethnic differentials.

Christian Aid consistently aims to challenge marginalisation. The following story relates to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. In India, social exclusion by caste is so endemic that even after a disaster on the scale of the tsunami, dalits and adivasis (the lowest castes in Indian society) found they were left out of the relief effort by local people, the government and even some international NGOs. Indeed, dalits were turned away from relief camps as higher-caste families did not want to mix with them.

In one coastal village in southeast India, 100m from the sea, all 72 palm tree houses were swept away when the tsunami struck. The village, which is predominantly inhabited by dalits and similarly marginalised adivasis (indigenous tribespeople), received no government offer of compensation for its loss.

After the tsunami, the villagers built temporary shelters on nearby private land. The living conditions were appalling and

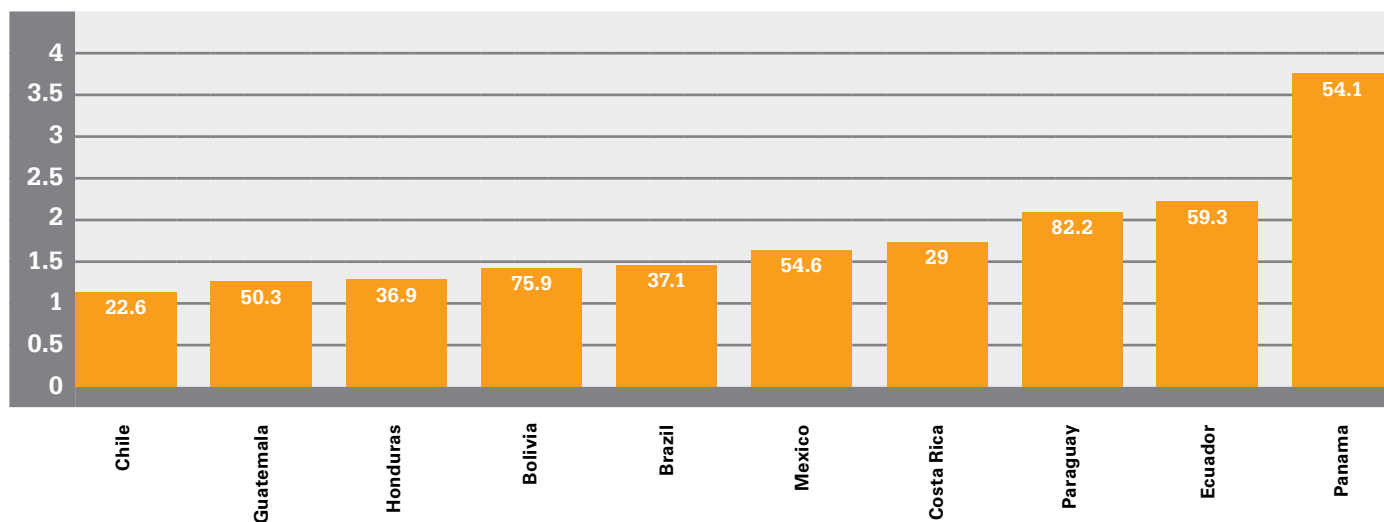
many people, including children, became very sick.

Then an informal village leader, Vasantha, found out that a district official was staying in a nearby hotel. She organised for 50 people to visit the official every day for a week until he agreed to come to their village. When he finally arrived, he recognised that they needed help and arranged the delivery of food and medicine. He also agreed to provide them with new land, but stopped short of promising to build new houses.

Vasantha then contacted the Development Promotion Group (DPG), a not-for-profit organisation helping marginalised communities, which agreed to help build the houses and a new village – funded by Christian Aid – was born, called Alanthalai.

Because the land is low lying and prone to flooding, DPG has included disaster-mitigation elements in house designs, raising the foundations to prevent water from entering, and building external staircases that lead to flat roofs, to facilitate escape in the case of severe floods.

Figure 5: Ratio of indigenous to non-indigenous infant mortality rate, 2000-2002



Notes: Del Popolo and Oyarce (2005), cited in Kabeer, N, 'Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenge of intersecting inequalities', *A Report for the MDG Achievement Fund UNDP-Spain*, forthcoming. Figures in columns represent the indigenous infant mortality rate per 1,000 births. The height of columns represents the ratio of the infant mortality rate among indigenous people to the infant mortality rate among non-indigenous people. A value close to one (for example, Chile) indicates a country where being indigenous makes relatively little difference to this key outcome; higher values indicate greater inequality, for example, a newborn indigenous baby in Panama is nearly four times as likely to die in infancy as a non-indigenous newborn

In this example, the villagers were in no doubt that officialdom's initial indifference to their plight was because they were dalits and adivasis. Where marginalisation is economic, social and political, a political response – of holding power to account – can, as here, be successful, at least to an extent.

On a larger scale, Janadesh – a people's movement in India – provides a powerful example of action to demand change. While the case of SEND Ghana (see p19) relates to civil society encouraging government to keep its promises and to be more effective, Janadesh is a story of citizens actively telling government what is needed to help them out of poverty.

Poverty in India is highest in rural areas, where almost three out of four Indians live. The greatest incidence of poverty is found among the rural landless, 68 per cent of whom are classed as living below the poverty line.⁶⁴ The levels are even higher if the landless are adivasis or dalits.

Christian Aid partner Ekta Parishad identifies the granting of rights to small pieces of land to the landless poor as a critical change that could break the cycle of poverty, as it reduces people's dependence on casual wage labour and provides them with a measure of food security.

With support from Christian Aid, Ekta Parishad started building a movement of people ready to raise their voices together to claim their rights. While campaigning across eight states in India, Ekta Parishad found that even having a land entitlement did not necessarily result in possession. In fact, in around 50 per cent of cases, such an entitlement had proved useless in securing land.

Janadesh, meaning People's Verdict, was an ultimatum to the government to tackle land issues or face non-violent direct action. In December 2005, an assembly of representatives of landless groups agreed several demands on land and livelihoods, setting a deadline for delivery, and announcing that if these were not met, 25,000 landless people would march (*padyatra*) to Delhi to highlight their predicament.

Three specific demands related to land reform, calling for the establishment of:

- a National Land Authority to provide a clear statement of land utilisation in India, identifying lands available for redistribution and strengthening laws to benefit the poor
- fast-track courts to settle past and future conflicts relating to land

- a streamlined system to allow farmers to resolve land issues easily and freely, without wasting time, money and energy.

In October 2007, 25,000 landless people, many of them adivasis and dalits, began their march. They walked almost 350km from Gwalior in the state of Madhya Pradesh to Delhi, taking nearly a month to cover the distance and engaging with the media to raise awareness of their plight as they travelled from state to state. Under growing pressure, the government agreed to a meeting with their representatives, at which the Minister of Rural Development announced the demands would be met. A National Land Reform Commission was then set up, now headed by the Prime Minister.

Another important development was the enactment of the Forest Rights Act which enables every forest dweller to have a land title in his or her name. This represented a great success for those who had been living on forest land for generations without legal rights, many of whom had been victims of harassment by the Forest Department. Already, this department has been forced to drop cases that threatened the land of 174,000 adivasis, while the Rajasthan State Government has withdrawn an order taking land away from dalits.

Christian Aid – which develops and supports advocacy work and has been working with Ekta Parishad for nearly a decade now – played a crucial role in helping build the campaign, providing financial support and linking the organisation with other ecumenical groups.

Janadesh became the most successful campaign in post-independence India, creating change for many poor and landless communities there.

Elsewhere, research has shown that governments can take great steps to address inequality between groups through careful and responsive design of taxation and spending – or, alternatively, can abuse their positions to exacerbate such inequalities gravely.⁶⁵

Two elements seem crucial to tackling horizontal or group inequalities – the availability of data to show distribution of poverty, including its variation among and between groups; and the recognition that unequal distribution of poverty directly reflects distribution of power, and political solutions are therefore required.

'More' is not enough – and acting as if it could be will only undermine efforts to fight poverty

GROWTH AND INEQUALITY

Economic growth can be a powerful tool for development and poverty eradication. Higher national income levels can be associated with a reduction in the number of people living in income poverty in a country, provided that as people become better off, the number of those falling into poverty does not also increase.

Moreover, the direct and indirect results of higher income levels can feed through to create higher government revenues and social spending, in turn strengthening services such as health and education. Hence growth can play a major role in reducing the lack of personal, social, political and broader economic power that contributes to the complex phenomenon of poverty.⁶⁶

As we understand more about the environmental effects of our economic activity, the need to use growth more efficiently becomes clearer. If growth is necessarily constrained, then that which does take place must make as much of a contribution to poverty eradication as possible.

With climate change a pressing problem, the world simply does not have the luxury of continuing to grow 'badly' without regard for people or the environment. Neither can we afford to focus on the pursuit of growth while ignoring the need to eradicate poverty. Growth must not only become greener, but must also yield wider benefits in terms of poverty reduction. The new economics foundation calculates that in the 1980s, for every US\$100 of global economic growth, US\$2.2 went to people living on less than one US dollar a day. From 1990 to 2001, the corresponding amount was found to be just 60¢.⁶⁷

Research that addresses the impact of growth on poverty is critical if we are to understand how best to generate growth that contributes most to poverty reduction. While consistent data on horizontal inequalities (between groups) in different countries is scarce, data on vertical income inequality (that which exists between individuals) is available, although of variable quality.

A new econometric study for Christian Aid seeks to assess the considerable literature on this subject, and to suggest when growth is most likely to help reduce inequality – and therefore address income poverty.⁶⁸

If the relationships between growth and poverty were known and were completely predictable and consistent, then it would be possible to determine for any given country what level of growth to target and how best to do this in order to maximise the impact of such growth on poverty.

However, given the considerable uncertainty over even the relationship between income poverty and growth, there is a need for better understanding on the one hand and greater caution when dispensing policy advice on the other.

The key finding of our survey of the literature is that a standard theory outlining the relationship between growth and inequality (the Kuznets curve) is not robust, and that growth on its own will not address inequality automatically.

The Kuznets hypothesis – represented by an inverted U-shaped curve – predicts that inequality increases within countries as they industrialise, but then begins to decrease once industrialisation is achieved. Taken to its extreme, this tells us that 'more' can be enough – that, eventually, greater growth will necessarily reduce inequality and hence poverty.

However, our results suggest that the relationship between income and inequality differs between countries in a way that undermines the hypothesis. Other variables such as female life expectancy and the level of government expenditure appear to have a more important role in determining how the benefits of growth are shared.

Without a better understanding of the variables involved and their impact, pursuit of growth alone will continue to deliver unnecessarily weak results in terms of tackling poverty and achieving the MDGs.

Overall, our study strongly suggests that we should reject the hypothesis of a Kuznets curve, along with its potentially reassuring suggestion that over time inequality may eradicate itself as economic development occurs. 'More' is not enough – and acting as if it could be will only undermine efforts to fight poverty.

Instead, the evidence points to the likelihood that other factors will determine whether future growth reduces or exacerbates income inequality – and therefore the likely extent of growth's benefits for poverty reduction. This suggests that policy makers can in fact hope to pursue growth that is more beneficial – indeed, many of the variables that appear to influence the relationship between growth and inequality are ones over which policy makers have direct control.

Armed with knowledge of this type, policy makers would be in a much stronger position to pursue poverty eradication, with growth making a full contribution – rather than merely maximising growth without a full understanding of its benefits. Further research in this vein is clearly needed.

In Christian Aid's programmes, we often work to support more inclusive economic development. In Nicaragua, for

example, we are working with farming cooperatives to help them adapt to changing climate conditions and overcome barriers to market access – ultimately leading to expanded production and profit for communities.

Trade is one of the main routes out of economic poverty. In poor countries, which have a large ‘informal sector’, small businesses can play a key role in poverty reduction. In Nicaragua, the poorest country in Latin America, 80 per cent of urban jobs are linked to small, family-run farms. But one of the biggest challenges for small producers is being able to reach a market where they can sell their products. With limited access to transport, little bargaining power and no marketing or sales expertise, many struggle to earn a living. The odds are stacked against them.

Christian Aid’s partners Nochari and Soppexcca help hibiscus, coffee and cocoa producers to work together to overcome these odds. Nochari, which is based in Granada province, is an association of several local cooperatives, mostly made up of women producing a range of artisan products. Soppexcca, meanwhile, is a collective of 18 small coffee-farming cooperatives in Nicaragua’s ‘coffee capital’ Jinotega, one of the poorest areas of the country.

Each of these cooperatives has taken key steps to help its members benefit fully from the economic activities they undertake, most obviously by helping them gain access to markets, develop new products and add value to their business through processing and other activities.

- **Market access.** When poor producers cannot get their goods to market themselves, middle-men take most of the profits. Nochari’s cooperatives enable local farmers to share processing and transport costs, and negotiate bulk-sales contracts themselves. Its hibiscus cooperative now sells juice drinks directly to shops, restaurants and supermarkets across the country. Its farmers grow and sell eight times as much as they used to, and this year Nochari expects to become Nicaragua’s largest hibiscus producer.
- **New products.** Our partners help small producers to diversify, taking into account factors such as demand, climate and soil conditions, and the producers’ existing expertise. In some areas of Jinotega, it has become too hot to grow quality coffee. With Christian Aid’s support, Soppexcca has been piloting a project to help some local farmers move into organic cocoa production instead. When the cocoa is mature it should bring in an extra US\$650 per farmer, per year. During the current three-year project (which ends in 2012) Christian Aid

will support them to start producing and selling cocoa on a bigger scale. Nochari, meanwhile, has identified a gap in the market for hibiscus, where demand currently outstrips supply. Flor de Jamaica – a juice made from hibiscus flowers – is a very popular drink in Nicaragua. Nochari helped set up a hibiscus cooperative, which now has 50 members.

- **Adding value.** Many small producers lack the knowledge and/or equipment necessary to add value to their products through processing, so they have to sell raw products only, hugely limiting their income. Cooperatives enable small producers to pool resources to buy transport and processing equipment. With Christian Aid funding, our partners help support young cooperatives by providing loans, training and machinery. Nochari’s new processing plant – which includes a solar-powered drying house – will soon be fully equipped, and Nochari hopes that it will eventually have an annual turnover of US\$300,000-400,000. As a part of Christian Aid’s last three-year project (January 2007 to December 2009), all 18 of Soppexcca’s member cooperatives now have their own basic processing equipment, which allows farmers to clean and dry coffee beans, in addition to the proposed processing plant already mentioned.

With Christian Aid’s support, these networks of cooperatives are helping to transform the lives of small farmers and their families in Nicaragua. Through fundamentally changing the way business is done, the items farmers produce and the ways in which they add value to their products, these cooperatives are securing a more sustainable and adaptable future for their members.

Christian Aid is also committed to exploring the relationships between growth and environmental sustainability, and between growth and poverty reduction, with a view to generating greater knowledge that can support developing countries’ policy makers and civil society in seeking to get growth right. A focus on growth alone is simply unsustainable.

Inequality – not only economic inequality, but also social exclusion and political marginalisation – is often at the heart of people’s disempowerment

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Inequality – not only economic inequality, but also social exclusion and political marginalisation – is often at the heart of people’s disempowerment. Whether they are individually excluded, or excluded because of their membership of a particular gender, group or both, the effect is to undermine their life chances in systematic ways. This is not only a symptom and a major cause of poverty; it is its very embodiment.

In the time left before 2015, pressure must be brought to bear to ensure that the MDGs are achieved as far as possible to redress some of the inequalities that have been, in effect, tolerated until now. Efforts must be redoubled to make progress, particularly in relation to gender inequality.

Furthermore, the UN, donors and national governments must pursue a consistent standard of data that will allow a clear analysis of the inequalities and dimensions of poverty facing each community and country. This will not only facilitate more effective policy making in a technical sense, but will also allow people to engage with the political response to inequality and make choices about prioritisation.

The post-2015 successor to the MDGs must have at its heart a means of redressing inequality – while also giving due weight to sustainability and democratic, participatory governance.

COME TOGETHER: A CALL TO ACTION



Janadesh, or the 'People's Verdict', march. Some 25,000 rural poor spent nearly a month marching on India's capital, Delhi, to demand land reform. The government responded by setting up the National Land Commission, now headed by the Prime Minister, and enacting the Forest Rights Act, which enables every forest dweller to have a land title in his or her name

Christian Aid/Simon Williams

COME TOGETHER: A CALL TO ACTION

The Poverty Over analysis of the MDG approach set out in this report provides the basis for a clear agenda of action to deliver the eradication of poverty. For those who share this goal, the responsibility to act is also clear.

The MDG approach has delivered much and will deliver more, notwithstanding the imperfections and disappointments discussed in this report. Moreover, it remains the only global process aimed at poverty eradication – and therefore offers, along with any potential successor after 2015, the best opportunity to bring about the necessary step change in progress on global poverty eradication.

A major criticism of the MDG approach has centred on its top-down nature, which this call to action is not intended to replicate. Recognition of the global nature of many of the systemic and structural causes of poverty implies that high-level action is necessary – but this must support, enable and respond to, rather than crowd out, action at the local level and upwards.

The overarching goal of Poverty Over can be broken down into three supporting objectives, relating to the MDG approach.

PUSH FOR GREATER PROGRESS

First, there is a responsibility on all those that have the opportunity – from governments to NGOs and the private sector – to push for greater progress by 2015.

There are various components to this objective, reflecting the Poverty Over critique. The main obstacles to progress within the current approach have been identified as the lack of accountability of rich countries, and the associated lack of seriousness about tackling the global structural constraints such as the injustices of the international tax system, and the weak treatment of issues of power, inequality and sustainability in the MDGs.

If these are to be tackled in order to improve the 2015 outcomes, immediate action is needed. To address the first of these, international policy makers – including those at the High-Level UN MDG Summit in September 2010 – must re-emphasise the importance of structural change and make rich countries, which ultimately have most power to address this in the short term, more accountable.

The issue of inequality within the current approach must also be addressed. In doing so, it makes most sense to focus efforts on the critical importance of ensuring that progress is made on gender equality – across all of the

MDGs, not only MDG 3. This will include requiring that reporting across indicators is consistently on a gender basis, and that performance is duly measured accordingly. It must be recognised that progress on some of the official indicators, including, for example, the high-profile ‘dollar-a-day’ measure, could easily be achieved in a way that entrenches rather than redresses gender inequality – and this must be challenged and changed for the period up until 2015 and in any subsequent initiatives.

To address the issue of sustainability, the parties to the MDGs must recommit to the goal of MDG 7, and invest resources in reinventing the targets and indicators in a way that reflects the advances in understanding of climate change and the scale and urgency of the issue, and puts the experiences of people living in poverty and marginalisation at the forefront.

Up until 2015, it is also necessary that those working towards poverty eradication continue efforts to collaborate for the maximum effect, seeking transformational change where possible, through joining up and increasing the coherence of different efforts, the promotion of best practice, and demonstrating the effects of successes.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for Poverty Over, there is a responsibility on those with this shared goal to demand that a successor to the MDGs be put in place, that this be carefully planned over the next five years, and that it fully incorporates the learning from the MDG approach.

A SUCCESSOR TO THE MDGS

A post-2015 successor to the MDGs that reflects the Poverty Over vision is the second of the three objectives. Again, there are a number of key components to this objective. First, the approach must reflect the full breadth and complexity of poverty, not only in its establishing documents but running all the way through its implementation. The most direct impact of this will be that power and inequality take centre stage, putting redress of the injustices highlighted in the previous chapter at the heart of the approach. Recognition of the importance of sustainability and resilience must go hand in hand with a focus on power.

The second key component, putting this into practice, must be the establishment of a comprehensive framework of poverty indicators. This will ensure, at the outset, that the complexity of understanding poverty as a lack of economic, social, personal and political power is captured, along with the extent and nature of major inequalities and

Together, we can achieve great things. The greatest of all would be to see poverty over

vulnerabilities. Most obviously, gender disaggregation must be built into all levels of the framework. It will also provide a basis for empowered citizen participation in decision-making at each level, highlighting the burning aspects of poverty in each context and providing a basis for responsive governments to prioritise their own approaches accordingly.

An important step has already been taken in this regard with the publication of a new Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by researchers at the University of Oxford, working in collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP).⁶⁹ The MPI uses 10 indicators covering three aspects of poverty (education, health and living standard) to capture the extent and nature of poverty at the household level. While more work is needed to include political and gender aspects of poverty more directly, the MPI demonstrates the type of finer-grained approach that is possible – and, we would argue, necessary – for a better understanding of poverty in a given context and to ensure the most effective and appropriate response.

SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The third component of developing a Poverty Over-consistent, post-2015 successor to the MDGs is to establish national and local decision-making processes in developing countries, ensuring women and men living in poverty can engage with procedures to prioritise tackling those aspects of poverty that are felt most deeply. A baseline study of the nature of poverty in each context will inform discussions.

While in some cases, local and national governments are well placed to support such processes, in others, a lack of responsive governance is itself a central aspect of poverty. In these circumstances, other actors, including donors and international NGOs, must support such efforts and demand an effective voice for participants. The empowerment of citizens through a wide and active civil society engagement, including that of faith-based organisations and the local private sector, is a critical element of the Poverty Over approach – an end in itself as well as an instrument to accelerate change.

Finally, and again stemming from a need to put power at the centre of our understanding of poverty, any post-2015 successor must deliver an appropriate balance of accountability from the major actors – including not only traditional donor governments, but also emerging powers and traditional recipient governments, as well as national and international NGOs and major private-sector players, including multinational corporations.

The third and final objective, which will dominate after 2015 if the preceding steps have been achieved, is to ensure the holding to account by citizens of each of these groups for meeting their respective responsibilities towards Poverty Over. Collaborating effectively to deliver Poverty Over in the shortest time possible will be a continuing objective in this phase.

The following table summarises the three objectives and their components, and identifies the major window for action to ensure each is met. This will form the basis of Christian Aid's work to influence key stakeholders to play their part at particular moments of opportunity. This simple structure can provide the basis for common movement towards the shared objective of poverty eradication.

Pursuit of that goal, which is driven by the recognition that we truly are all in this together, demands that we meet our responsibilities. This is a call to action, to all of us who share the goal of ending poverty, to shoulder our respective responsibilities and to work – together – in the spirit and recognition of mutual obligation and mutual help.

Take the power, and take the responsibility, into your own hands, and join us in further consultation and in action. Together, we can achieve great things. The greatest of all would be to see poverty over.

Figure 6: A framework for progress towards Poverty Over

Goal	Objectives	Components	Window for change
Poverty Over	Greater progress by 2015	Re-emphasise the importance of structural change, and rebalance accountability towards rich countries	2010-2012*
		Stress gender equality across all MDGs	2010-2012*
		Collaborate to make greater progress in current efforts, not least in regard to climate change	2010-2015
		Develop a serious process for creating a post-2015 successor to the MDGs, with broad international consultation and civil society engagement, above all in developing countries	2010-2015
	Ensure any post-2015 successor to the MDGs is consistent with the Poverty Over approach	The approach reflects the full breadth and complexity of poverty, recognising in particular the importance of power and inequality, and integrating sustainability and resilience	2010-2015
		A comprehensive framework of indicators is established, and a full baseline is prepared for each country. This should be followed by national and/or local consultations (utilising baseline data) ensuring engagement of women and men living in poverty in prioritising the aspects of poverty to tackle	2010-2015
		Accountability is appropriately balanced between countries according to historic responsibility and capability, and other actors (for example, multinationals) with appropriate indicators/targets	2010-2015
	Ensure any post-2015 successor to the MDGs is delivered in full	Holding those with power (including rich countries and international NGOs such as Christian Aid) to account for delivering in full on their respective responsibilities	2015-/-
		Collaborating to make greater progress within the new context	2015-/-

* Unless change is forthcoming in the next two years, it will be too late to achieve any effect by 2015

RECOMMENDATIONS



Literacy group for women in Hag Uyousif, Khartoum North. Women and girls are especially marginalised when it comes to literacy in Sudan, with the female literacy rate running at 30 per cent at best

Christian Aid/Caroline Wood

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals made here imply significant commitments and common efforts from many actors, including Christian Aid. As things progress, different challenges and opportunities will present themselves and those who share the goal of poverty eradication must be ready to respond. There are, however, key steps that can already be undertaken, and on that basis we set out here the main recommendations for different actors.

The UK is a leading international development partner, and has commendably committed to raising its aid to 0.7 per cent of national income by 2013. The **UK government** should:

- use the High-Level UN MDGs Summit in 2010 to push for additional measures that address the causes, not only the symptoms, of poverty to ensure greater effectiveness and value for money for the UK's aid contribution
- work to ensure that policy across Whitehall is coherent with development aims, so that the UK is demonstrably contributing to poverty eradication wherever possible by addressing international structures and systems that cause or exacerbate poverty, including in the realms of climate change and international tax transparency
- ensure that DFID immediately engages actively with the UN agencies to frame a successor to the MDGs that responds to the MDGs' weaknesses, as outlined here, and maximises progress towards poverty eradication
- ensure that both the efforts made within the MDGs and the design of the successor take account of inequality, especially gender inequality, sustainability and active citizen participation to a much greater degree
- work with other UN member states to ensure that the new UN Women agency has sufficient authority and financing to hold the rest of the UN system to account for its progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. To demonstrate serious intent, and to ensure a place on the board, the UK government should also commit to being one of the top four funders of UN Women
- commit to active and effective global partnerships in both developed and developing countries with civil society, governments and the private sector to maximise progress under the MDGs by 2015.

The EU is responsible for 60 per cent of global aid flows, and is a major trading partner for many of the world's poorest countries. The **EU** should:

- use the High-Level UN MDG Summit in 2010 to push for additional measures that address the causes, not only the symptoms, of poverty to ensure greater effectiveness and value for money for the EU's aid contribution
- ensure the principle of policy coherence for development is applied across all its externally impacting policies
- ensure that EU member states take a leading role in ensuring UN Women has the resources and authority necessary to make a real difference to women's lives
- play a major role in achieving a breakthrough in international climate negotiations, including accelerated progress towards a 30-per-cent CO₂ emissions cut
- commit the EU and its member states to active and effective global partnerships with civil society, governments and the private sector in developed and developing countries to maximise progress under the MDGs by 2015.

International development NGOs, including Christian Aid, should:

- work with UN agencies and with governments to support them in developing better data sets to create baseline data that captures the full complexity of poverty, and in conducting a wide debate including governments and civil society from developing countries on the nature of the successor to the MDGs
- redouble their own efforts, working in collaboration with each other and with civil society and the private sector in developing countries, to accelerate progress on the MDGs by 2015
- ensure that there is also serious progress on those important aspects of the solution to which the MDGs give insufficient weight, including the themes covered in this report, such as gender inequality, climate change negotiations and tax transparency for developing countries.

Christian Aid supporters should:

- commit to give, act and pray in ways that support progress towards the eradication of poverty
- hold Christian Aid to account for the effectiveness of our own efforts.

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