



## CONFERENCE ROOM PAPER

### **Social Development 15 Years after the World Summit for Social Development -- Progress and challenges**

#### **Introduction**

Fifteen years ago world leaders gathered in Copenhagen and agreed to put people at the centre of development. The 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development provides an opportunity to review advancement towards and renew commitments to inclusive social development. Progress towards achieving the goals of the World Summit has been mixed. In some areas, such as primary school enrollment and gender equality, significant progress has been documented, while advancements in other areas such as reducing poverty and inequality have been disappointing. While many new global instruments have been implemented in the area of social integration, progress has been elusive and difficult to measure. The global crises, including the food and fuel crises followed by the financial and economic crisis, are posing a major challenge to social development and threaten to reverse gains achieved thus far. Initial estimates suggest that all progress in reducing global unemployment since 1995 has been lost in just the past two years. Progress in poverty reduction is also expected to reverse, with as many as 200,000 more people being added to the ranks of those living in extreme poverty as a result of the crisis. The impact on financing for development at both the national and international levels is expected to be negative as government budgets shrink during economic recession. At the same time, needs for social protection programmes increase; thus, the costs of maintaining these programmes go up. Official development assistance, measured as a per cent of shrinking GNIs, is also expected to be adversely affected. Finally, climate change is now recognized as the most daunting challenge to face mankind. Its impact on social development, if unabated, could be devastating.

#### **Creating an enabling environment for social development**

The Copenhagen Declaration addresses the creation of an enabling environment for social development in commitments 1, 9 & 10. Together, these commitments address issues of commitment, cooperation and resource allocation to social development. Public expenditure on social services provides a good measure of national level commitment and resource allocation. Using health and education as indicators of social commitment, the level of social spending has seen some slight increase since Copenhagen. Many low-income countries have increased their spending on health. Similarly, since the recommitment to education through the Education for All-Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the majority of countries with data show increased national spending on

education; however, the share of national income devoted to education declined in many countries as well. Similarly, country inequalities in wealth are reflected in education spending. In 2004, developed regions accounted for more than half of the world's spending on education but comprised only 10 per cent of the global population aged 5-25. On the other hand, while sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 15 per cent of the world's 5-25-year-olds, the sub-region makes up only 2 per cent of global spending on education. It is trends like these that point to the need to bolster national commitments to social spending and international financial support as a means to advance social development.

The past three decades of structural adjustment have placed many governments under constant pressure to reduce budget deficits, placing strain on social spending. In addition, the impacts of the current global economic crisis threaten to overturn the small gains that have been made. Unlike the previous crises, the current crisis began in the industrialized world, and it is possible that developing countries have not yet felt the full effects. The current crisis has meant falls in private financial flows, decreased foreign direct investment, reduced remittances, and reductions in both the price and volume of exports from developing countries. The resulting combination of economic slowdown and decreasing revenues may impact government spending on social development eventually, although current figures show that developing country governments have so far guarded education and health spending.

As outlined in the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration, one way to help bolster the commitment to social development across the globe is through international cooperation and support.

Commitment to development assistance has been varied, showing decline from 1995 to 2001 and then increasing from 2002 to 2008, with ODA levels in 2008 at their highest ever. Even with this positive trend, however, ODA is still far from the recommended United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNI of donor countries.

Commitments of aid to social programmes have also been positive, with commitments to health more than doubling from 1995-2007, and commitments to education increasing by more than 50 per cent.

With the current and looming effects of the global economic crisis, it remains to be seen if this upward trend in ODA can be maintained in absolute terms. ODA commitments and disbursements are usually set as a percentage of GNI, and the economic contraction caused by the crisis may lead to reduced GNI for most countries. However, within the member countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), projections for the near future remain positive. As of March 2009, the OECD has projected a 21 per cent increase over 2008 numbers in total ODA from DAC countries in 2010, based on OECD assumptions of ODA/GNI ratios and declared country commitments. However, the average ODA/GNI ratio is still expected to reach only 0.39 per cent.

## **Eradicating poverty**

The Copenhagen Declaration identifies poverty eradication as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative. Despite progress in poverty reduction since the World Summit for Social Development, there are still 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty (down from 1.8 billion in 1993). For the first time in history, there are also 1 billion people suffering from hunger. Poverty rates remain unacceptably high in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and have even increased since the 1990s. The recent food, fuel and economic crises are reversing progress towards internationally agreed development goals and are estimated to have pushed as many as 200 million people into poverty in developing countries.

Poverty and inequality are closely related, and inequality has been on the rise world-wide in recent decades at both national and international levels. More than 80 per cent of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. The poorest 40 per cent of the world's population accounts for only 5 per cent of global income. On the other hand, the richest 20 per cent account for 75 per cent of world income.

### **Creating productive employment**

At the World Summit for Social Development, world leaders committed to promoting full and productive employment as a means for all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods. In fact, global unemployment had been on the decline, dropping from 6.3 per cent in 1998 to 5.8 percent in 2008, until the current global financial and economic crisis derailed this progress. The ILO's preliminary estimate indicates that global unemployment reached 6.6 per cent in 2009 and preliminary projections indicate a slight decline to 6.5 in 2010. Moreover, sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia all experienced increases in unemployment even before the onset of the crisis; these economies have been unable to accommodate their rapidly growing workforces.

Increasing attention has also been given to the quality of employment, with a growing emphasis on decent work. Vulnerable employment, defined as own-account and contributing family workers, had been in decline until the onset of the economic crisis and is now increasing according to ILO projections. Such workers are more likely to be excluded from social safety nets such as unemployment benefits and are less likely to receive an adequate income or be protected by labour regulations. Projections forewarn of a sharp rise in such employment, such that about half the labour force will be in vulnerable employment as of 2010. Productivity per worker is also expected to decline in 2009 contributing to downward pressure on wages and the quality of employment. The ranks of the working poor, those working but living on less than \$1.25 per day, declined to one in five in 2007 from about one in three in 1999, but this figure is expect to increase to one in four in 2009 as a result of the economic crisis.

### **Ensuring stable, safe societies based on human rights through social integration**

The concept of social integration is a multidimensional one, encompassing many facets of social and economic life. Social integration involves ensuring that the concerns of all members of society are considered in all decision making processes, ensuring that all social groups are free to interact in wider society, ensuring that the rights of all groups and individuals are fully accommodated, and ensuring equitable access to the necessary resources for full participation in society. Social integration results in enhanced social cohesion, providing the necessary conditions for social and economic development for all.

Measuring progress in social integration is a difficult undertaking, as the requirements to fulfill each dimension change in space and time. This difficulty notwithstanding, some indications of progress in social integration can be assessed. In some areas of the world, such as the European Union, comprehensive measures of social integration have been set up, that encompass the objective and subjective considerations for the given social context. On a global level, the increased attention brought to poverty reduction, access to education, access to health care, employment and participation spurred by the Millennium Development Goals have led to some positive strides towards more integrated societies. For example, much progress has been made towards the goal of universal and equitable access to education, and in all areas of the world, access to primary health care has improved since the turn of the century. In terms of visibility, consideration and rights, women have seen some improvement across the globe, with women's political participation improving across all regions, as well as access to education.

The need to recognize the rights and needs of traditionally vulnerable groups within societies is a developing trend. This is evidenced by several mandates and instruments that contribute to the dissolution of barriers to inclusion faced by many groups in society that have emerged since Copenhagen. In 1995, the World Programme of Action for Youth set forth a global agenda for youth. The International Plan of Action on ageing, adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 led to several areas of progress, including new social protection mechanisms to protect older persons. The rights of indigenous peoples are being more widely recognized in large measure thanks to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006. Finally, the ground breaking Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 and entered into force in May 2008, adding this group to the ranks of other vulnerable groups such as women and children with regard to global recognition of their specific needs within society.

There is still progress to be made. Extreme manifestations of social disintegration, namely conflict and civil strife, continue to afflict many countries; discrimination against marginalized groups remains a concern in developed and developing countries alike; economic hardship brought on by the global recession has the potential to stoke social discontent and intensify social tensions; yet social integration is often an afterthought on the development agenda.

## **Achieving gender equality**

World leaders committed to gender equality at the World Summit for Social Development, and further elaborated and reconfirmed that commitment later that same year at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has helped to keep gender equality central on the international development agenda. Reviews of the implementation of the Platform for Action have been conducted at 5 year intervals, with the third review scheduled for March of 2010 at the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Are women better off now than they were 15 years ago? While significant disparities remain, women have made progress in economic and political participation. The percentage of women in national parliaments has increased by more than 50 per cent, rising from 11.7 per cent in 1997 to 18.3 percent in 2009. However, women's integration into wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is proceeding much more slowly despite marked advancement in women's education. Worldwide, the percentage of employees who are women in non-agricultural wage employment increased only marginally from 35.3 per cent in 1990 to 39 per cent in 2007. In most regions women remain over-represented in vulnerable employment that are less likely to be protected by labour laws and social safety nets and are among the lowest paid workers.

## **Providing universal and equitable access to quality education**

A great deal of progress has been made towards the goal of universal and equitable access to education agreed upon at the World Summit for Social Development. Enrolment in primary school has improved largely as a result of policy efforts such as the abolition of school fees and increased public investment in many countries. The net enrolment ratios for developing countries increased between 1999 and 2006 at twice the rate of the 1990s.

Since the Copenhagen Summit the net enrolment rate in primary education has increased for almost all regions, with many regions reaching 9 out of 10 children and many countries close to delivering universal primary education. However there remain large regional differences and in sub-Saharan Africa only 7 out of 10 school-age children are enrolled in primary education despite an increase from about 5 out of 10 in 1991. In absolute terms this means that around 45 million primary-school-aged children are out of school in sub-Saharan Africa and 31.5 million remain out of school in South Asia. The number of children out of school declined by 28 million between 2000 and 2006, despite growth in the number of children in this age group in developing countries (United Nations Economic Social and Cultural Organization, 2009). Thus, the number of children out of school is now both by percentage and in absolute terms lower than it was at the time of the Copenhagen Summit, which represents substantial progress on the education front. However, for some regions the difference between enrolment and the actual attendance is high, especially for Eastern and Southern Africa where the difference is as high as 13 percentage-points.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF A World Fit for Children Review & Global databases ([childinfo.org/files/progress\\_for\\_dhildren\\_2007.pdf](http://childinfo.org/files/progress_for_dhildren_2007.pdf))

The large increase of pupils has created a need for more qualified teachers. The ratio of students per teacher<sup>2</sup> is considered to be one of the most important measures of educational quality, reflecting the human resource capacity of the education systems.<sup>3</sup> Between and within regions and countries remarkable differences are seen in the pupil-teacher ratio, as wealthier regions tend to have greater access to human resources for education, resulting in lower pupil-teacher ratios. On average, teachers in sub-Saharan Africa have to teach three times as many pupils (43 pupils per teacher) as their counterparts in North America and Western Europe. This ratio has increased from 38 pupils per teacher since 1995 due to the rising enrolment level in the region. The ratio is generally lower in secondary education but with the same regional variations. Therefore, there is a great need for more teachers in some regions of the world.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the educational level of teachers remains insufficient in many developing countries, and often the countries which are lacking number of teachers also have the least qualified. The distribution of qualified teachers is also uneven: in general cities and smaller town have better qualified teachers than isolated or rural schools.

In summary, quantity and quality in education are complements rather than substitutes: The countries farthest away from performing well quantitatively (i.e. enrolment rate) are also the farthest away from performing well at the qualitative level (i.e. qualified teachers, number of pupils per teacher, percentage of GNP devoted to education). Sub-Saharan Africa has the worst quality and quantity indicators in all aspects followed by South and East Asia.

Greater access to secondary school is needed to accommodate the increasing number of primary school graduates. In developing countries many students—especially girls and students from poor families—are dropping out at the transition from primary to secondary school. Regional disparities at the secondary level are stark. While developed countries and most transitioning countries are nearing universal enrolment in secondary education, developing countries are far from that goal. Sub-Saharan Africa's net enrolment ratio is just 25 per cent. In Latin America, 88 per cent of children from the wealthiest decile move through the secondary school system, twice the rate of the poorest decile.

There is concern and growing evidence that the economic crisis will reverse progress on education in developing countries where children are likely to be taken out of school due to shrinking household budgets and public investment in education may decline along with government budgets.

### **Improving health outcomes and access to primary health care**

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<sup>2</sup> The pupil-teacher ratio at primary level defined as the average number of pupils per teacher at the level of education specified in a given school year.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO: Teachers and educational quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015, 2006

<sup>4</sup> According to estimates, the Sub-Saharan Africa-region will need to raise its current stock of teachers - by 68 % from 2.4 million in 2006 to 4 million by 2015 - in order to meet the MDG on education for all<sup>4</sup>. UNESCO: Teachers and educational quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015, 2006

The Copenhagen commitment on education and health emphasized the importance of equitable access to primary health care for poverty eradication, employment and social integration. Progress made in reducing child mortality indicates that access to primary health care is improving in all regions of the world. Twenty-seven per cent fewer children died before their fifth birthday in 2007 as compared to 1990 (WHO 2009). Despite progress, the disparity in child mortality between developed and developing countries remains stark and the economic crisis is expected to slow progress in reducing child mortality further.

In contrast to the significant progress made in reducing child mortality, little progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality—defined as death of a woman during pregnancy, childbirth or within six weeks of childbirth from pregnancy related conditions—and thus it remains among the most disparate of all health indicators. Half a million women die from pregnancy related complications each year, with most of those deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa. Insufficient prenatal care, lack of trained personnel at delivery, and low contraceptive prevalence and high adolescent fertility all contribute to thousands of unnecessary deaths each year, with disappointingly little progress in recent years despite its prominence as a Millennium Development Goal. Maternal health has the unfortunate distinction of being the goal for which there has been the least progress of all the MDGs, in part due to major reductions in donor funding for family planning since the mid-1990s.

The progress in reducing child mortality and lack of progress in reducing maternal mortality reflect an underlying challenge to improving global health outcomes. Child mortality is highly sensitive to targeted interventions such as vaccination programmes, expansion of oral-rehydration therapies to treat diarrhoea and increasing availability of bed nets to prevent the spread of malaria. Reducing maternal mortality requires more long-term structural and institutional changes that rely on consistent funding and strong political will. Like other areas of social development, the crises pose a severe challenge to progress in the area of health and threaten funding for the implementation of health programmes.

### **Accelerating development in Africa and the Least Developed Countries**

Economic growth in Africa has had impressive gains since Copenhagen. GDP growth in 2006 was two times that of 1995, and the per capita growth in purchasing power parity tripled. During this period, ODA to Africa has shown an increasing trend, and, in 2006, had almost doubled over 1995 numbers.

The increased commitment to ODA is to be commended, but more still needs to be done so that these gains are translated into progress in social development. Progress in poverty reduction (defined by the dollar-a-day poverty line) in the region has been marginal, declining from 58 per cent in 1990 to 51 per cent in 2005. While some progress was made in reducing unemployment in Northern Africa from 1998 to 2008, unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa increased over the period. Similarly, while there has been increased commitment to access to education, evidenced by an increase in public expenditure since the 1990s, increased public expenditure and increased enrolment

have come with an increase in the pupil-to-teacher ratio, indicating a compromise in the quality of education. More must be done to strengthen the capacity of countries in Africa to effectively use resources, including international assistance to realize sustainable social development.

ODA to the least developed countries has also risen, although the increase has not been as marked as compared to sub-Saharan Africa. ODA to the least developed countries increased by 65 per cent from 1995 to 2006, and LDCs continue to account for over one-fifth of total ODA disbursements.

The economic crisis is expected to slow growth in Africa. While the economic growth rate has doubled from 3 to 6 per cent annually between 1995 and 2006, growth for 2009 is forecast to drop to between 4 and 4.5 per cent. ODA flows may also be negatively impacted by the crisis, posing further challenges to development in Africa and the least developed countries.

### **Mainstreaming social development in national development plans**

Structural adjustment programmes had been criticized for their lack of attention to the poverty impact of the measures proposed, and for not involving the main stakeholders at the national level. In 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) introduced a new approach centred on the development and implementation of poverty reduction strategies by low-income countries as a precondition for debt relief and financing from both institutions. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) were introduced with the purpose of increasing stakeholder participation and to put social development goals at the forefront of policy design and implementation.

As of September 2009, 63 countries had prepared PRSPs, and three more had produced interim strategies. While there are no evaluations of the overall impact of these strategies on poverty reduction, there are sector-specific assessments of their treatment and coverage of various social development issues, mainly employment, health and education.<sup>5</sup> These assessments suggest that PRSPs are not delivering on their potential for social development. Overall, the coverage of employment in PRSPs, both in terms of quantity and quality of work, is weak. In Africa, for instance, only a few countries had macroeconomic policies directly linked to employment generation in PRSPs prepared before 2005 and very few of them attempted to quantify the expected impact of policies on employment. Similarly, few internal reviews by the World Bank and IMF (Staff Advisory Notes) comment on employment programmes, social protection or rights at work. However, employment and social protection are receiving increasing attention in the more recent papers.

An analysis conducted by WHO in 2005 shows that the PRSPs prepared up to that year recognized ill-health as an important dimension of poverty. However, few included a

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<sup>5</sup> The World Bank and the IMF note that such evaluations would not be possible, since the PRS approach is not a single project or a particular policy measure, but a set of principles and actions that affect the environment in which policy is formulated, implemented and monitored.



detailed analysis of the links between the two, or identified those health issues that contribute most to poverty. Nor did they look systematically at the health needs of the poor. According to WHO, the budgets presented in PRSPs would not result in large increases in resources available for health. Similarly, according to UNESCO, PRSPs in general fail to articulate clear strategies for overcoming poverty-related barriers to education and for reducing inequalities. However, there is a general recognition that PRSPs have widened participation, especially with members of civil society.

### **Understanding the impact of climate change on social development**

Climate change is manifest in increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather patterns such as floods, droughts, heat waves, and rising sea levels. Natural disasters impede social development directly through human casualties and indirectly through the diversion of resources. Extreme weather patterns hurt agricultural production and contribute to food and water insecurity. Climate change is also likely to impact health by contributing to the introduction of new diseases and changes to existing diseases. While emissions are greatest in the developed countries, vulnerability to climate change is greatest in the developing world. People living in poverty are likely to suffer disproportionately from climate change as they are more dependent on the natural environment for survival and they have limited resources to adapt to climate change.

Climate change will lead to increased hunger and food insecurity, particularly in developing countries. Whereas the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity is expected to be positive in Europe, it will be predominantly negative in developing countries. Growing seasons will be shorter, land degradation will intensify and many staple crops are vulnerable to reduced yields as a result of climate change. The large numbers of small scale producers, many on marginal lands, are most vulnerable and have the fewest coping mechanisms. Areas where food production relies on rain rather than irrigation will be the most severely affected.

Climate change is also expected to negatively impact health through new diseases and increasing strain on overburdened health systems. Outbreaks of infectious disease are likely to increase. Ecosystem changes will contribute to the emergence of new diseases and produce changes in vector-borne diseases like malaria.

Water availability is essential for food security and rural livelihoods. Climate change is expected to lead to increased scarcity of fresh water and, as a result, contribute to social conflict and large scale migration.

Forests are a source of livelihood for nearly one out of four of the world's poor, providing them with food, fuel, medicine and clothing. Climate change will have an adverse impact on those who rely on forests for their livelihoods—90 per cent of whom live in extreme poverty. Climate change is also expected to intensify problems in urban environments such as increased air pollution and related health consequences.

In the past, economic growth and social development have been associated with increased emissions of greenhouse gases. The countries with the highest GDPs and ranked highest on the Human Development Index are among the biggest polluters per capita. However, this connection must be broken through the large scale adoption of adaptation and mitigation strategies (such as use of adaptive technology, conservation, use of alternative fuel sources, etc.) in order to sustain long-term growth and to reduce the present and increasing impact of climate change on social development.

### **Moving forward**

The World Summit for Social Development promised a new vision for development, one in which improving human well-being would be the central measure of success. To some extent this vision is becoming a reality, as evidenced by the increased attention given to internationally-agreed social development goals such as poverty eradication, gender equality and full and productive employment and the positive results that have been achieved in many areas. However, the lack of progress in other areas, as well as rising levels of inequality between countries and regions, highlight the importance of increasing our focus on an inclusive people-centred development. Also, the rapid reversals in areas such as poverty and employment as a result of the economic crisis reinforce how fragile the accomplishments made really are and the importance of diligence in maintaining social development. Mechanisms to protect people, particularly the most vulnerable, must be developed in order to preserve accomplishments and further social development.

### **Questions**

- ❖ Fifteen years after the World Summit for Social Development, how have we done so far in meeting the 10 commitments made at Copenhagen? To what extent are these commitments still relevant?
- ❖ Some areas of social development have not seen much advancement in the last 15 years. What are the reasons and what can be done to ensure commitments to these goals are fulfilled?
- ❖ The global social and economic context for social development has evolved since Copenhagen. New challenges have emerged. For example, what has been the impact of the economic crisis and climate change on social development and how can these impacts be mediated? How can we better assess the impact, given the weaknesses in existing data such as time-lag and poor coverage?
- ❖ How can adequate funding for social development be assured, particularly given the fiscal constraints created by the economic crisis? What actions can countries take to create an enabling environment for social development during these difficult economic times?

- ❖ Are social development goals being given priority in government planning strategies? If not, what can be done to ensure they receive appropriate attention, based on good practices as well as lessons learned?
- ❖ Finally, how can we ensure that mistakes of the past are not repeated as we frame the way forward for the social development agenda?