"STRATEGIES FOR ERADICATING POVERTY TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL": Country ownership, institutions and capacity to formulate and implement poverty eradication strategies – lessons from PRSPs and MDGs implementation"

Naresh Singh.¹

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to summarize some of the key lessons learned from the PRSP and MDG processes² in the areas of country ownership, institutional arrangements and capacity to formulate and implement poverty eradication strategies in order to achieve sustainable development for all. The twin challenges to sustainable development have been and continue to be over- and under-consumption. While this paper focuses on the latter it must be borne in mind that sustainable development for all will not be possible without the former. The paper does not attempt an exhaustive assessment of the vast experiences gained from the PRSPs and the MDGs, which were implemented from 1999 and 2002 respectively to 2015; but rather to draw out a few lessons in the aforementioned areas pertinent to the sustainable development agenda. The objective is to stimulate further discussion on the 2030 Agenda which seeks to be transformative, applicable to all countries, and be implementable in a holistic and integrated manner. The paper is organised into 3 main sections dealing with lessons learned from the PRSPs and MDGs in the areas of country ownership, institutional arrangements and capacity issues. These are followed by a concluding section which contains key lessons learned and recommendations for the 2030 Agenda.

2.0 COUNTRY OWNERSHIP

2.1 PRSPs:

In theory, a PRSP was intended to be a document prepared by a country government—under the supervision of Bank-Fund teams—that identified the incidence and causes of poverty, who the poor were, and strategies for overcoming poverty, including policy and expenditure targets. It was supposed to be “locally generated and owned,” developed through “wide participatory dialogue,” and focused at both the micro and macro policy-making levels. Further, the PRSP framework was expected to “encourage the accountability of governments to their own people and domestic constituencies rather than to external funders,” whereby, “the poor become active participants not just passive recipients”.³ The degree of success achieved and the lessons learned in trying to do all of this varied significantly with the passage of time and experience gained.

Early reviews of PRSPs, around 2002 for example, were scathing. Experiences from Asia, Africa and Latin America at that point indicated, that country governments had little control over the structure, content and policy prescriptions in their respective PRSPs, thus making a mockery of Bank-Fund claims of national ownership, public accountability and broad based

¹ The author is an independent consultant in international development. He can be reached at nareshsingh11@gmail.com.
² PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, sometimes referred to by the generic term PRS (Poverty Reduction Strategy). MDG: Millennium Development Goals established subsequent to the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN.
³ Caroline M. Robb, 2000. Participation in Poverty Reduction Papers, Africa Department, International Monetary Fund.
participation. Despite the rhetoric of “nationally driven” development, the PRSP-PRGF frameworks continued to conflict with local and national priorities of reducing poverty, fostering domestically meaningful economic development, promoting equality and equity, and encouraging popular participation in the design of national development policies. Up to this point that PRSP experience was seen by many as quite similar to the earlier structural adjustment programs and their one size fits all approach.

At the end of the first and into the second generation, 2004 -2005, the situation seemed quite different. Governments became more poverty focused with poverty getting into the mainstream of government business rather a marginal concern handles by small projects. National strategies moved from vague statements of political aspiration into comprehensive multi sectoral national plans although weaknesses in content in areas such as growth and gender equality remained. Poverty reducing expenditure or pro-poor spending as a percentage of GDP increased although definitional challenges remained. Links between poverty planning and budgeting improved and responsibility for poverty reduction shifted from social sector line ministries to Ministries of Finance and Planning. PRSs strengthened and were strengthened by the Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks. Poverty monitoring, long the domain of donor funded project units which undermined government ownership and capacity, was now seen more as a government responsibility requiring government capacity. A little later in 2006 an assessment by the ECA and the AU revealed that African governments were picking up on earlier lessons, were taking ownership not only at the national level but also at the level of the AU and had recognized that the PRS did not emphasize growth enough. So they introduced the idea of Sustainable Growth Poverty Reduction Strategy SGPRS:

However, weaknesses in government ownership, even after the first phase, quickly showed up in the social sector line ministries who no longer had the main responsibility or control over the budgets for poverty reduction but were being saddled with monitoring and reporting. Local governments were not as engaged as they could be, and this reduced local level ownership.

The PRS approach also resulted in unprecedented engagement by civil society organisations in poverty policy debates, though NGOs have played a far more active role than other types of organisations. Whereas previously most NGOs related to government only in a service delivery role, many begun to engage in policy activities with clear potential to scale up their contribution to poverty reduction and help challenge non-transparent and unaccountable government behaviour. However, poor people and constituent organisations were not adequately represented in most PRS processes, which have instead tended to engage largely urban-based NGOs, including many with strong links to international NGOs or donor agencies.  

2.2 MDGs

---

The MDGs were established in 2001 as simple quantified and measurable goals reflecting the principles that had been agreed by countries in the 2000 Millennium Declaration so that those agreements could be put into practice in selected areas.

Most developing countries integrated the MDGs into their national (or more accurately government) development plans including importantly into sectorial health and education plans; into their rolling medium term planning processes and significantly into their annual budgets. However, the degree of integration was not uniform and varied from somewhat cosmetic inclusion to actual prioritisation followed by budgetary allocations. But it must be pointed out that the MDGs were not intended to be uniformly integrated as such into each country and that global collective MDG achievement was the goal not the individual achievement of the goals in each country.

The MDG global paradigm whether originally intended or not came to be based largely on developing country government implementation of increased donor funded programs in the social sectors. The private sector was largely left out. On the other hand the goals did allow for civil society organisations in open societies to hold their governments accountable for the goals they had adopted at the national level.

2.2.1 Campaigning, Advocacy and Public Awareness actions played a significant role in creating awareness, understanding, acceptance and securing buy-in among a range of stakeholders including governments, CSOs and citizens. Outreach and advocacy for the MDGs seemed to work well in open societies. Governments and political parties were readily supportive when the MDGs provided a framework for them to articulate their own political agenda. CSOs latched on to them when room existed for them to hold their governments accountable or for them to advance their organisations mandate or strengthen their chances of resources mobilisation. In many cases it was, however, unclear whether the outreach activities were to gain publicity for the development agenda or for the participating development agencies themselves.

2.2.2 The MDG Reports were typically prepared by governments with strong support by UNDP. These reports played important roles in generating country engagement and ownership beyond their primary purpose of reporting to the UNGA. At the national level they were used by governments to track the country’s progress towards the goals, by donors to inform their funding priorities from time to time and by CSOs to hold their governments accountable. This was evidenced by public statements of Ministers in countries as well as by reference to budget speeches and use in political campaigns. As such the national reports revealed areas that needed more attention both geographically and thematically and on occasion provided the basis to employ the MAF to accelerate progress. Some countries prepared sub-national regional reports which were instrumental in developing regional development strategies and local level projects. Local level assessments of progress towards the MDGs revealed that national averages sometimes masked local area deprivations which called for special attention to reduce inequities.

2.2.3 MDG nationalisation and localisation occurred when countries took ownership of the MDGs and modified the targets they sought to realise at the national level, suited to their own socio-economic situation; as well as when they developed targets at the sub national level whether in provinces, regions, districts, municipalities or villages. In some cases grass
The MDGs were generally welcomed at the local level where the appetite was driven by the hunger of local governments for visibility and the possibility of additional resources for local development. UNDP’s experience in local governance and decentralisation enhanced its credibility and capacity to support localisation of the MDGs. Local level engagement with the MDGs was also important for government credibility in advocating change towards their achievement at national levels especially when supported by projects which had direct impacts on local service delivery and on the livelihoods of local people.

The best outcome seems to be achieved when the MDGs are embedded in local government structures, when policies are in place to help them raise their own revenues in addition to central government revenues and when external funding takes the form of the UNCDF approach rather than the MV approach. In the UNCDF approach local development funds are used to support the capacity development of local government rather than duplicate them. Local governments are then required to support the local partnerships in the development process. While this approach might require longer time frames than handing out funds, it is much more sustainable. The usual challenges of decentralised approaches such as elite capture, have of course to be managed.

3.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The PRSPs were in practice led by the WB/IMF although they sought and obtained national government and civil society engagement over time. Donors looked to these strategies as the frameworks for their engagement with the PRSP countries. The PRSP/PRS provided the rules of the poverty reduction game in these countries for all practical purposes and so the WB/IMF became the dominant international players in this game. Their main focus was on debt reduction and budget management for poverty reduction. The introduction of the MDGs with their exclusive focus on a social agenda were seen by many as attempt by the UN to take a leadership role on the international poverty reduction agenda and to balance the finance efforts of the WB/IMF. Since the MDGs provided the poverty reduction goals, targets and indicators against which country performance on poverty reduction would assessed without specifying any strategies it became clear, although slowly, that the PRS should ultimately be assessed against their contribution to these goals.

Most PRSs were unable to deliver a fully integrated strategy in which the quality of social sector plans is matched by those for the productive sectors. Applied analysis of the sources of growth and obstacles to pro-poor growth has been variable in quality and often not linked to the choice of policy actions or the setting out of a reform strategy. Macro-frameworks have been characterised by a lack of realism and flexibility, including little analysis of policy trade-offs and how these relate to broader poverty goals. PRSs have also been weak on understanding and managing shocks. However, with the advent of the second generation PRS there were signs of more systematic attention to growth and pro-poor growth emerging over time. It is worth recalling that the MDGs did not have any goals

---

7 MV: The Millennium Villages were local villages set as models by the Millennium Project which were provided with all the aid they required to achieve the MDGs.

monitoring growth or vulnerability. Donor preferences for social sector spending can be seen in the relative dominance of social sector targets in the Millennium Development Goals, with some donors actively persuading governments to adopt these as PRS targets and indicators. Under pressure to demonstrate results, many donors have opted for the quick wins of targeted social sector spending instead of seeking to address the paucity of analytical work on pro-poor growth, and support longer-term government action to bring it about.9

Many PRS processes unfolded in semi-democratised states in which domestic politics tends to be patronage-based, with fragmented party systems and weak civil societies, and in which the domestic media often lack basic political freedoms.10 Domestic oversight and media institutions were under-resourced and overstretched, and benefitted from little donor support beyond short-term projects or those aimed at promoting donors’ own foreign policy interests. The PRS approach resulted in limited forms of behavioural change from donors at country level. Although donors started to co-ordinate their activities better, reformulate their country strategies in PRS language, and to move towards budget support, most had yet to make the fundamental change in practices that were needed to reduce transaction costs and ensure that aid helps to build rather than undermine national capacity.

Perhaps the most important institutional consideration was that the PRSPs/PRS approach tended to be articulated largely in technocratic terms, perhaps because much of the debate had been led by the World Bank and the IMF. Yet poverty reduction is a fundamentally political objective and the original principles of the approach had many political implications.11 Country ownership, for instance, implies some form of consensus between national actors and involvement beyond the state elite, but leaves open questions about which actors should be paramount, how consensus is to be achieved, and how to deal with unforeseen and complex outcomes. Comprehensiveness requires the bringing together of macro frameworks and poverty reduction goals, which assumes a fair degree of state capacity as well as authority and legitimacy over territory and the fiscal space. Results orientation demands that government is explicit about its goals and their implications.

The MDG characteristics which positively shaped their contributions included (i) a clear focus to national policy efforts; (ii) a set of clear, simple, quantitative and easily communicable targets, while providing an integral approach to key human development dimensions; (iii) a starting point for improved accountability through the use of simple but robust indicators; and (iv) a tool for advocacy to strengthen international development cooperation, including through the explicit recognition of the special needs of Africa and LDCs.12 The factors which seem to determine progress towards the MDGs at country level have been summarized by the UNDP administrator as: policy choices and their coherence; governance and capacity deficits; fiscal constraints; and political will.13 It is important to

---

note here that economic growth is not explicitly identified as a factor and that none of these factors had a goal in the MDG framework! Nevertheless over time the goals acquired unprecedented political support in many quarters and came to serve three major functions of consensus building, monitoring benchmarks, and planning targets.

On the other hand their inherent weaknesses included i) lack of consultations at its conception to build ownership led initially to the perception of a donor-centric agenda; ii) exclusion of some important issues embodied in the Millennium Declaration such as human rights, iii) inadequate incorporation of other important issues, such as environmental sustainability, productive employment and decent work, inequality; iv) limited consideration of the enablers of development; v) lack of attention to disaggregated indicators to monitor progress among vulnerable groups; vi) exclusion of qualitative aspects and interdependencies across the MDGs and vii) failure to account for differences in initial conditions\textsuperscript{14}. Many of these weaknesses have been addressed in the SDGs.

In general, the weaknesses have also proved to be strengths. The MDGs were not meant to be comprehensive in the sense of including each and every dimension that determined human development and/or in the sense of spelling out all complexities of the development process. Rather, the design aimed to provide a clear and transparent focus on to the poor, in order to shift global attention to development beyond the narrow domain of economic growth, which dominated the policy agenda at the time of the Millennium Declaration, and to focus on key dimensions of human development. The simple quantitative nature of the MDGs, one of their key strengths, which helped an RBM focus also meant the quality aspects of development, for example in education, were often neglected.

The MDGs were introduced at a time when RBM was becoming fashionable in bilateral and multilateral organisations and so quantifiable time bound goals with targets and indicators were welcomed with open arms in these organisations with their logical frameworks and verifiable indicators. The MDGs, however were mere goals juxtaposed with targets and indicators and did not indicate what strategies and actions would be required for their achievement. Theories of change so crucial for effective RBM were not, maybe could not be articulated, and so the link between what donors supported in countries and the achievement of the goals was not made clear and weakened donor support over time.

4.0 CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

4.1 PRSP-MDG Linkages. By definition the countries targeted by PSRPs being HIPC and LDC were financially weak and had very limited capacity to either deliver anything operationally or even to absorb resources and convert them to results. Capacity limitations were seen as policy bottlenecks, weak monitoring and accountability, high transactional costs, fragmented institutional arrangements, inadequate human resources, older technologies and infrastructure deficits.

PRSs were intended to be bold, inclusive documents which set out the broad direction of policy for achieving the MDGs, but in practice they were only moderately ambitious in their spending commitments and targets for the medium term, and limited in their vision of the

\textsuperscript{14} UN System Task Team on the post 2015 UN Development Agenda. 2012. Review of the contribution of the MDG Agenda to foster Development. Lessons for the post 2015 development agenda.
policy and financing challenges for achieving the MDGs by 2015. This was due in part to estimates based on the external funding available rather than that required for the MDGs. An alternative approach involved a needs assessment of the public investment required for meeting the MDGs and a long-term (10-12-year) policy plan. The national PRS would then form the medium-term component of this longer-term plan, the idea being not to create a new policy process but to re-base existing ones around the concept of ‘what was needed’ rather than ‘what was available’. This more aspirational approach could have provided the basis for more ambitious estimates of the required financing (both domestic and external), and placed in front of both donors and governments a clearer picture of the future cost of achieving the MDGs. Concerns about weak or missing institutions, weak capacity and poor budgetary systems constrained what was likely to have been a credible scenario for scaling up PRS financing. Concerns about absorptive capacity and the political implications of low-income countries financing the majority of public expenditure through aid, including a significant share of recurrent financing, inevitably trimmed back expectations of how far and how fast it was possible to increase financing to levels consistent with MDG achievement. This should not, however, have deterred donors from attempting to articulate a higher case aid scenario based on: a credible scaling-up strategy that was realistic about absorptive capacity issues; a medium- to long-term time horizon; and commitment to enhanced predictability.

4.2. MDG Influence on Resources. Some of the goals and targets garnered significant attention in terms of funding as well as programs and research, while others were and made little difference. The goal for global diseases was a stunning success in terms of HIV treatment because it built on and contributed to the pre-existing momentum around AIDS. The goal probably garnered additional support to health spending, and HIV treatment in particular, by drawing high level political attention as well as supporting activism across the world. Goals for primary education, water and sanitation, and child survival also contributed to positive campaigning. On the other hand, there were targets that made little difference. Despite the hunger target, the food, agriculture and nutrition agenda continued to be marginalized from national and international agendas. The issue has now emerged as a top global political priority, backed by several global initiatives and mentioned consistently in G-8 summits; but this was a response to the 2008 ‘food crisis’ and not the launch of the MDGs in 2001.

Similarly, employment has continued to be a neglected issue. Both were issues that were embedded as targets in the broader poverty goal, which encompassed income poverty, employment and hunger. The latter two were overshadowed by attention to the income poverty target. Lack lustre results on hunger and employment received relatively little notice from developing countries governments or donors. The goal on a global partnership for development— aid, debt, trade, technology transfer saw some progress in debt relief and total aid commitments increased, although only very slightly as a proportion of the GNI of donor countries.

---

Importantly, all three of these low performing goals and targets are related to supporting measures to increasing the productive capacity of developing nation’s economies, which was neglected in the heavy emphasis on “basic needs” encoded in the MDGs priorities\textsuperscript{16}.

4.3 Capacity Issues for MDG-SDG Transition

Capacity needs for the transition from MDGs to SDGs highlighted by a UNDESA workshop spanned the following: Evidence-based policy-making, statistical capacity, mainstreaming of SDGs, institutional reform, prioritization, integrated systems tools, measuring inequalities across countries, implementation and finance, capacity to deal with new data demands, and recognition of alignment of SDGs within existing line agencies. A much more comprehensive almost universal list of requirements for the transition is included in the workshop report\textsuperscript{17}.

One of the most important areas of capacity deficits which is common to the PRS, MDGs and SDGs is that developing country data awareness and capacity\textsuperscript{18}. Fortunately the MDG process has fostered the strengthening of statistical systems at both national and international levels to enable the production of quality data for monitoring progress towards the set of concrete, time-bound MDGs. The international statistical community has helped to improve methodologies, produce guidelines, and define priorities and strategies to support countries in data collection, analysis, and reporting on MDGs.

Disaggregated data helped to track progress accurately in local areas and across marginalized and disadvantaged groups to map out inequalities in MDG progress. While the initial MDG data was focused on averages, which concealed pockets of deprivation and those left behind, later work went beyond the averages to improve on inclusivity.

However, the availability, frequency, and quality of poverty-monitoring data have remained low, especially in small states and countries and territories in fragile situations. Institutional, political, and financial obstacles have continued to hamper data collection, analysis, and public access. There is an urgent need to improve household survey programs for poverty monitoring in these countries. Similar challenges exist in civil registry capacity resulting in large numbers of people not having legal identity (no proof being a citizen of their country of birth). For example, more than half of the babies born in sub Saharan Africa (about 15 million) are not registered at birth. Many adults, especially among indigenous peoples in Latin American countries such as Peru are not able to vote for the same reason.\textsuperscript{19}

MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF)

Just after the half way time for achieving the MDG’s several global assessments of progress towards their realization indicated that much more needed to be done if the goals and targets apart from just a few would be achieved by 2015. These steps had become all the more urgent in the face of the slowdowns and reversals in economic growth witnessed by many countries since 2009. At the same time the national MDG Reports were also revealing


\textsuperscript{17} UN DESA 2015. Report of the Capacity Building Workshop and Expert Group Meeting on Integrated Approaches to Sustainable Development Planning and Implementation: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents


uneven achievement at national levels both thematically and geographically. The MAF offered governments and their partners a systematic way to identify and prioritize bottlenecks to progress on MDG targets that are off track, as well as ‘acceleration’ solutions to these bottlenecks. MAFs were not intended for all countries but for those that showed political commitment at the highest levels, had a degree of stability to allow progress, had existing initiatives that could be built on and had a financial and human resource base that would allow progress.

UNDP led the process of developing and rolling out the MAF but quickly realised the need for and obtained to some degree UNDG buy in at HQ levels. This question of ownership was also a challenge at national levels with UNCTs some of whom continue to see the MAF as a UNDP instrument. Experience to date has shown that successful MAF’s need to be country led with the government in the driver’s seat, utilise an inclusive participatory multi-stakeholder process which is cross sectorial in nature going beyond the sector of immediate concern. The value added of the MAF as demonstrated in the early pilots was to focus fragmented efforts and resources of the various actors, determine priorities among existing plans and breakdown silos to allow new cross sectorial partnerships.

A boost for the MAF came when the CEB agreed to begin looking at ways to help accelerate progress in selected countries based on MAF exercises. This led to formal reviews by the CEB of specific MAF documents and plans, jointly led by the UN and the World Bank. Recently (2014) the CEB agreed to consider the case of Yemen, going well beyond the traditional criteria for MAFs apparently in recognition of the fact that fragile and conflict affected countries are most off track and something needs to be done.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS OF LESSONS LEARNED FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN THE 2030 SDG AGENDA

5.1 Many lessons have been learned in the PRSP/PRS process over the last 15 years and some of these have been used for continuous learning and improvement over time. These have been distilled here and are well documented elsewhere. As the IFIs and other stakeholders move into the post 2015 agenda lessons learned on both the political and technocratic issues will no doubt guide future action. These lessons include how to i) plan for political transitions, ii) build coalitions of support, iii) get the poor themselves and their representative organisations engaged, iv) engage local NGOs in public policy processes v) strengthen national data collection and reporting systems, vi) budget for what is needed for poverty reduction everywhere in all its forms.

5.2 Data gaps, data quality, compliance with methodological standards and non-availability of disaggregated data were among the major challenges to MDG and PRS monitoring. This constraint is likely to affect the SDGs, the monitoring of which is likely to be much more complex and require much more data collection and management. When this crucial data incapacity is juxtaposed with rise of the data revolution and the UN SG statements on big data; it would seem incumbent on the international community to invest in data building capacity in relevant countries in the post 2015 era.

5.3 “The 2030 Agenda is transformative, applicable to all countries, and need to be implemented in a holistic and integrated manner. What is new in terms of approaches/strategies to combat poverty as we start implementing the 2030 Agenda?”
The PRSP was a government and civil society focussed exercise (and for good reason, jubilee history etc.); largely dealing with government expenditures and investments. The MDGs were a social sectors agenda again focussed on government spending but this time mainly aid related. The role of private actors (organisations, individuals or collectives) was minimal. The strategies of both PRSP and MDG were more welfarist and lacked a wealth creation approach. Yet the countries which most succeeded in reducing poverty whether the BRICS or others did so through sustained economic growth driven by private actors although in some cases with active engagement of government. The problems that were associated with such success were increases in inequality and uneven performance, leaving many behind.

The implication for the SDG agenda to especially achieve goals of reducing inequality and increasing inclusivity is to ensure that private actors are much more engaged but even more importantly that the poor become private agents of wealth creation albeit in a sustainable manner. In order to do this an assets approach will be required in which ownership of the full range of productive assets (human, social, physical, natural, economic and political) by the poor is given priority. This can be pursued by a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) which combines the decent work, small and micro business and assets agenda. The SLA should now be revitalised based of the lessons learned in their implementation over the years but most importantly incorporate the legal empowerment of the poor (LEP) agenda. This agenda which deals with property, labour and business rights as well as access to justice and the rule of law will provide the necessary complements which have been missing in the SLA. This will allow for the first time a practical integration of human rights and markets to provide a truly transformative and holistic framework so much needed to implement the 2030 agenda. Traditional notions of employment and jobs neither fit well nor allow full exploitation of the sharing economy, the new economics of multisided platforms and the potential of behavioural economics especially as applied to the informal sector.

Creating Room for innovation, acknowledging complexity, emergent novelty, self-organisation and non-linear development pathways will require shifts in the way policies are set, programs designed and monitoring and evaluation carried out. The 2030 agenda will require adaptations and flexibility to the logical framework tool and introducing developmental monitoring and evaluations based on complex adaptive systems compared to traditional formative and summative program evaluations. Approaches to creating adaptive polices include enabling the self-organisation and social networking capacity of communities; decentralising governance to the lowest and most effective jurisdictional level; promoting variation in policy responses; and formal policy review and continuous learning.

---

22 Sundararajan, A. 2016. The Sharing Economy: The end of employment and the rise of crowd based capitalism.
5.4 How to translate 2030 Agenda into national strategies in the new context including rising inequalities and climate change?

In considering how to translate the 2030 agenda into national strategies it would be useful to consider 4 categories of countries: OECD, MIC, LIC and FCAS. The PRSPs and MDGs were not applied to the OECD countries which will therefore be omitted here. In each case the individual country context including politics, development challenges and opportunities and capacity and institutional gaps will have to be taken into consideration but the categories will allow more practical knowledge sharing. The MICs are likely to face greater concerns of inequality and be contributing more to climate change. They will want to adapt the SDGs to their existing policies, strategies and programs and while this will be important it will have to be monitored to ensure they remain faithful to the 2013 agenda. They will have basic capacity and resources but will need access to knowledge platforms and leading practices, new partnership arrangements and improved monitoring, accountability and reporting systems. LDCs will require more support in financial resources mobilisation, general capacity building including human resources, technology acquisition strategies and data management capacity. FCAS will require integrated peace building approaches, multidimensional livelihoods assessments and programming and resilience building.

5.5 How institutional capacity and partnership can be strengthened to enable coherent and integrated policy-making to end poverty?

Forging a consensus among UN agencies; among UN agencies and IFIs, then among bilaterals and multilaterals, first at Headquarters levels and then in country settings on operational and implementation issues, was very important to the roll out of the MDG agenda. These issues included leadership, coordination, on the ground delivery, resources mobilisation, data collection, monitoring and reporting and support for acceleration where needed.

The MAF has the potential to play a very useful role in the 2030 agenda. Its cross sectorial approach to finding bottlenecks within and beyond the sector of immediate concern will be of direct value in the new agenda. Buy in of the UNDG will be helpful to the extent that the ownership of the tool is shared by UNDG members. Refinement of the tool to make it more receptive to innovative thinking and more suited to the new agenda should be undertaken as a joint effort and jointly piloted in countries. This might result in a new Sustainable Development Acceleration Framework (SDAF) to address challenging situations. It will allow for evidenced based, adaptive and integrated policy making.

The political nature of poverty reduction and sustainable development is now well recognised (or should be) but operational strategies and tools need to better reflect this reality. For example in political transitions during political campaigns and when a new political party is taking power PRS and SDGs might have to take the form of a political manifesto. Deeper country ownership could result from allowing incoming politicians to make their mark on the PRS/SDG especially if they have a clear mandate from citizens acquired through elections or another representative process.

25 OECD=Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; MIC =Middle Income Countries; LIC=Low Income Countries; and FCAS=Fragile and Conflict Affected States.