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# Human Security and the Next Generation of Comprehensive Human Development Goals

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April 2012

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The authors thank Sergej Zelenev, Asuncion St Clair, and participants of the 2011 MDGs workshop of the German Development Institute (DIE) for comments on an earlier draft. Thanks also to Allister McGregor for his comments and Alison Norwood for all her editorial support. All shortcomings remain our own.

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## Introduction: The MDGs and beyond

*“If economic development is to serve its purpose of increasing the security and welfare of the great mass of mankind and enabling them to enjoy a fuller, more fruitful life, its benefits must be widely distributed; it must not serve merely to augment the wealth and power of a small section of the population”. (UN Technical Assistance for Economic Development (New York, UN) 1949: 8)*

2015 marks the target year of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000 along with the Millennium Declaration. Academic and political consultations are underway to review the current MDGs and to elaborate a developmental agenda beyond 2015. This includes MDG performance assessments, progress reviews and conceptual reflections (e.g. Fukuda-Parr 2012). In many countries progress towards the MDG targets, agreed in 2002, is not ‘on track’, although this formulation may under-emphasise the progress made, especially in poorer countries which have had further to go to be on track (UN 2011; Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) 2011; Melamed 2012: 10–16).<sup>1</sup> Within the current agenda this necessitates examination of the reasons for the areas of disappointing performance – most recently ascribed to the food and fuel crises and the financial crises and recession which have struck since 2008. It also requires intensified efforts to accelerate progress towards the deadline for as many targets and countries as feasible.

The challenge that world leaders acknowledged in 2000, remains in large part unfinished work. In addition, new challenges have emerged in income-rich countries and in terms of sustainability. In the current environment of macroeconomic and political instability and myriad manifestations of socioeconomic exclusion, the six fundamental values highlighted in the Millennium Declaration of 2000 are as important as ever for the future global agenda. These values, endorsed by over 180 governments, are:

- (i) freedom in the sense of being able to live in dignity, freedom from hunger, and freedom from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice, and in the sense of democratic and participatory governance;
- (ii) equality among individuals and nations and the equal rights and opportunities of women and men;
- (iii) solidarity to manage global challenges, based on equity and social justice;
- (iv) tolerance of diversity of belief, culture and language;
- (v) respect for nature and for sustainable development; and

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<sup>1</sup> Kenny and Sumner (2011) have noted, however, that because of data time lags, it may take until 2017–2019 to know which MDG targets have been met; moreover, because of missing baseline data for 1990, the rate of progress on some targets may never be known.

- (vi) shared responsibility to manage worldwide economic and social development.  
(UN DESA 2011: 2 and UN General Assembly 2000)

The global priorities and responsibilities of the Millennium Declaration continue to be fully relevant. In contrast, the specific programmatic targets highlighted in the MDGs have to be **updated** (especially in terms of attention to environmental sustainability), **embedded** (including in policy frameworks that draw on the major successes seen in some sectors and countries), and **enlivened** (by revival and reassertion of the values and principles found in the broader Declaration).

This paper makes a case for extending the MDGs beyond 2015 but significantly reshaping them: to make progress towards goals more explicitly rights-based and participatory, to prioritise economic and social equity and environmental sustainability, to insist on the centrality of employment and decent work, and to move away from the outdated and oversimplified North-South dichotomy. To do this, the paper proposes using the notion of human security, both as a conceptual approach and as a framework for a policy approach that can address and redress the complex risks and vulnerabilities facing countries, communities, households and individuals, boldly and with a social justice vision. This constitutes a reinvigoration of the MDGs through the principles of the Millennium Declaration and of the Charter of the United Nations. Thus the paper argues for a deepening of the MDGs agenda, by clarifying its conceptual basis, making it more explicitly policy-oriented and adopting a bolder, rights-based policy stance. The MDGs have been a pioneering set of action-inducing targets, but without renewal now of the value-framework and updating of the policy framework, they risk degenerating into a mechanistic exercise. In earlier decades, international development debates coordinated through the United Nations system were frequently and fruitfully ambitious and ‘ahead of the curve’, and this has to again become the case.<sup>2</sup>

The paper proceeds by first elaborating the need for a deepening of the MDGs approach; second, explaining how a human security approach can provide an organising framework; and third, itemising the advantages which such an approach can bring to the discussions on a post-2015 agenda. The note connects to the emerging discussion on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognising the need for integrating these goals into the MDGs and the post-2015 agenda, but does not essay a full treatment of that theme.

### Lines of thinking around extending the MDGs

Initial proposals in the current MDGs discussion revolve around the existing canon of MDG goals and targets, with some analysts advocating an extension of the period for the original MDGs beyond 2015. Others have proposed

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<sup>2</sup> See the UN Intellectual History Project (e.g.: Emmerij *et al.* 2001; Jolly *et al.* 2005; Jolly *et al.* 2009) and Gasper (2011).

substantive additions and adaptations, to incorporate measures of economic and social inequality and inequities, human rights, climate change and green growth indicators,<sup>3</sup> and measures of conflict,<sup>4</sup> population dynamics (population growth and ageing) and global public goods.<sup>5</sup> In particular, there are proposals to expand MDG 1a, by changing the notion of poverty to include other dimensions besides money-equivalent income (UNDP 2010; Alkire and Foster 2010). This would entail upgrading the income-oriented target of ‘halving poverty’ in its one-dimensional form based on a money measure of income, by using a measure of poverty with additional metrics and indicators, such as access to basic goods and services and availability of basic social services and facilities (Alkire and Foster 2010; UNDP 2010; Melamed 2012). Another line of thinking, while retaining the current MDG approach overall, proposes to consolidate the existing MDGs into fewer goals and targets and decreasing the number of indicators, eliminating those where the variable as such is not appropriate or data are poor or unavailable (Nayyar 2011: 12).

The preparatory discussions for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) are proposing a new term with a broader remit: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs would reflect ‘an integrated and balanced treatment of the three dimensions of sustainable development’ – namely the economic, the social and the environmental. They would thus extend the MDGs, but shift the accent away from the current concentration on ‘social’ factors (United Nations 2012: 16).<sup>6</sup>

At the time of writing, the political, human rights dimension still does not feature prominently in the Rio approach. The danger exists too that SDGs could become ‘greenwashing’ – a cosmetic green coat of verbal paint and promises, on a fundamentally unchanged and ecologically destructive economic system. While the language of SDGs seems politically irresistible, promising all good things together, it does not necessarily address why no or very little net progress towards sustainability has been made since the ‘sustainable development’ label was launched 25 years ago in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). We will suggest that a human security framework can help in giving the current exercise of updating development goals a necessary basis of both greater realism and greater

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Melamed and Scott (2011); Sumner and Tiwari (2010); Sumner (2011); Manning (2011); Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2010); Jolly (2010); Kjørven (2011); Martens (2011); UN DESA (2011); Fukuda-Parr (2011, 2012); Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) (2011); Te Lintelo (2011); Raworth (2012); Melamed (2012).

<sup>4</sup> As one example: Afghanistan, a conflict-ridden country, introduced a 9<sup>th</sup> MDG, on ‘enhancing security’ (UNAMA 2005).

<sup>5</sup> One recent specification of priority global public goods is: stable climate, biodiversity, a stable international financial system, a fair multilateral trading system, access to knowledge and technologies, and access to social protection (UN DESA 2011).

<sup>6</sup> This builds on the 2011 UN General Assembly session, where the Secretary-General proposed ‘a new generation of sustainable development goals to pick up where the Millennium Development Goals leave off’ (UN Secretary-General 2011: 3). See also Ministry of External Relations, Colombia (2011).

ethical commitment, the bases without which another 25 years may slip away. The world cannot afford another generation of inaction.

The proposals mentioned previously might be classified as ‘MDGs plus’ approaches, or ‘second generation MDGs’ (Kenny and Sumner 2011). They make the case for extending the MDGs, shifting emphasis, and enhancing them conceptually, but remaining within the existing overall framework. We look next at proposals that would more fundamentally extend the framework.

### **The case for strengthening policy frameworks in a post-MDGs approach**

Relatively few proposals that make the case for an extension of the MDGs appear to be looking into the actual policy paths needed to support and accelerate progress towards their achievement. This may be a legacy of the politics surrounding the Millennium Agenda and MDGs adoption, where a common stance was reached precisely by omitting policy discourse, so as to avoid being caught up in the disputes around the (post-) Washington consensus and neoliberalism (Hulme and Fukuda-Parr 2009; Fukuda-Parr 2011). It can also reflect a stress on national government ownership, respect for diverse development paths and fear of offending diverse power-holders.

However, one of the reasons the MDGs have advanced only slowly is precisely because sufficient open and imaginative discussion of specific policy paths has been lacking. We suggest that the international community should now adopt a more outspoken approach to core policy positions that reflect rights, principles and emerging evidence. Here is an example, with respect to primary education:

#### **MDG 2 is devoted to achieving universal primary school education.**

The obvious first principle, expressed in most countries’ constitutions, is a right to education. Taking this seriously would imply policy steps such as the abolition of primary school fees, free provision of basic learning materials (and even perhaps also school uniforms and transportation costs), and a commitment to universal coverage with schools having professional teaching staff as well as adequate, socially inclusive and geographically accessible facilities. MDG 2 would therefore ideally be formulated as a reconfirmation of the guarantee of free and compulsory primary education – in a form that enables high-quality and inclusive learning. Such a basic policy prescription – which had wide acceptance (at least in principle) in the 1960s and 1970s – does not feature sufficiently in the MDG discussions. Instead the focus tends to be on supplementary measures,<sup>7</sup> without any pronouncement on universal access to quality education as a core right and on the concomitant policies.

Policy prescriptions with regard to other MDG targets would be more complex, notably those regarding MDG 1 on hunger, poverty, and unemployment. Here,

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<sup>7</sup> Such as school meals, or sex-segregated toilets, or flexible curricula and school years – all extremely relevant, but aimed at operational improvements rather than programmatically addressing the core right to education as such.



policy prescriptions need to recognise the right of countries to adopt heterodox macro and sectoral strategies (Nayyar 2011: 13) and to adopt bolder policies in such areas as land reform, rural poverty and the reduction of hunger and malnutrition (de Schutter 2010). With respect to employment, experience has shown that recent patterns of economic growth have often been 'jobless', failing to create decent jobs in the formal economy and instead increasing precarious work conditions and not redressing inequality and poverty (ILO 2011a; UNRISD 2010). International Labour Organisation (ILO) evidence of this needs to feed into policy recommendations that are part of a social contract and explicitly support and promote active labour market policies such as employment creation and deliberately job-rich macroeconomic strategies, decent work with adherence to the ILO core labour conventions and lifelong learning supported from public resources.<sup>8</sup>

The key point with all these issues is that countries will need to adopt a macro and sectoral strategy within which MDG and SDG goals and targets can realistically be pursued. While it is neither appropriate nor possible to set out one single global strategy, policy space must be opened up, empowering individual countries to formulate and adopt strategies that move beyond the conventional and that match their own circumstances (UN DESA 2008; Nayyar 2011; also see Bachelet 2011).

The 2010 General Assembly review of the MDGs did explicitly place one policy response on the table. This was the need for social protection schemes and a social protection floor to address poverty and vulnerability (UN General Assembly 2010: 5, 10, 14).<sup>9</sup> This is the policy domain where international discussion has become relatively outspoken. The Social Protection Floor Initiative of the UN agencies advocates making social protection coverage universal in the form of a "basic set of essential social rights and transfers, in cash and in kind, to provide a minimum income and livelihood security for all" as well as the 'supply of an essential level of goods and social services such as health, water and sanitation, education, food, housing, life and asset-saving information that are accessible for all" (ILO 2011b). These are to be guaranteed by government and financed from tax revenues. The social protection floor is mentioned explicitly in the 2012 document preparatory to the Rio +20 Conference (United Nations 2012: 13). This could open the way for the new SDGs to have more policy content in other areas as well.

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<sup>8</sup> Fukuda-Parr for example argues that pro-poor growth strategies need to go beyond social protection measures and give more attention to macroeconomic and labour market policies (Fukuda-Parr 2011: 3). Also see Bachelet (2011).

<sup>9</sup> It also mentioned enhancing fiscal space and strengthening the tax base, and the need for access to land (UN General Assembly 2010: 27, 14).

## **The changing world and the case for moving beyond the North-South distinction**

The world has changed considerably since the Millennium Summit and the adoption of the MDGs. An increasing number of developing and emerging countries have achieved high gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates for the past decade (and in some important cases for considerably longer), and have markedly increased both their GDP per capita and their Human Development Index (HDI) ranking. Examples include non-OECD members of the G20 such as Brazil, China and India. The global balance of economic and political power has shifted as a result of this process.

Of special importance for the MDG/SDG discussion is that these new economic and political powers have been developing significant approaches to poverty reduction and alleviation, notably programmes in public works employment, social protection, access to food and nutrition and the right to information (see, e.g. Hanlon *et al.* 2010). Their programmes acknowledge the pervasive challenges of poverty and exclusion, accept government responsibility for policy action, are tax-financed and government-led and have a major potential for genuinely empowering participation. Some of these programmes are conceptualised as rights-based, providing entitlements which are justiciable. In some South Asian public works schemes, for example, there is a 'right to demand work'; employment has to be paid at the minimum wage level and when an employment request is not met within a stipulated time period, the household concerned is entitled to a cash transfer from the state government. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are built into the employment schemes' designs. In India, where civil society is relatively strong, cases of public complaint are beginning to emerge (Koehler 2011b).

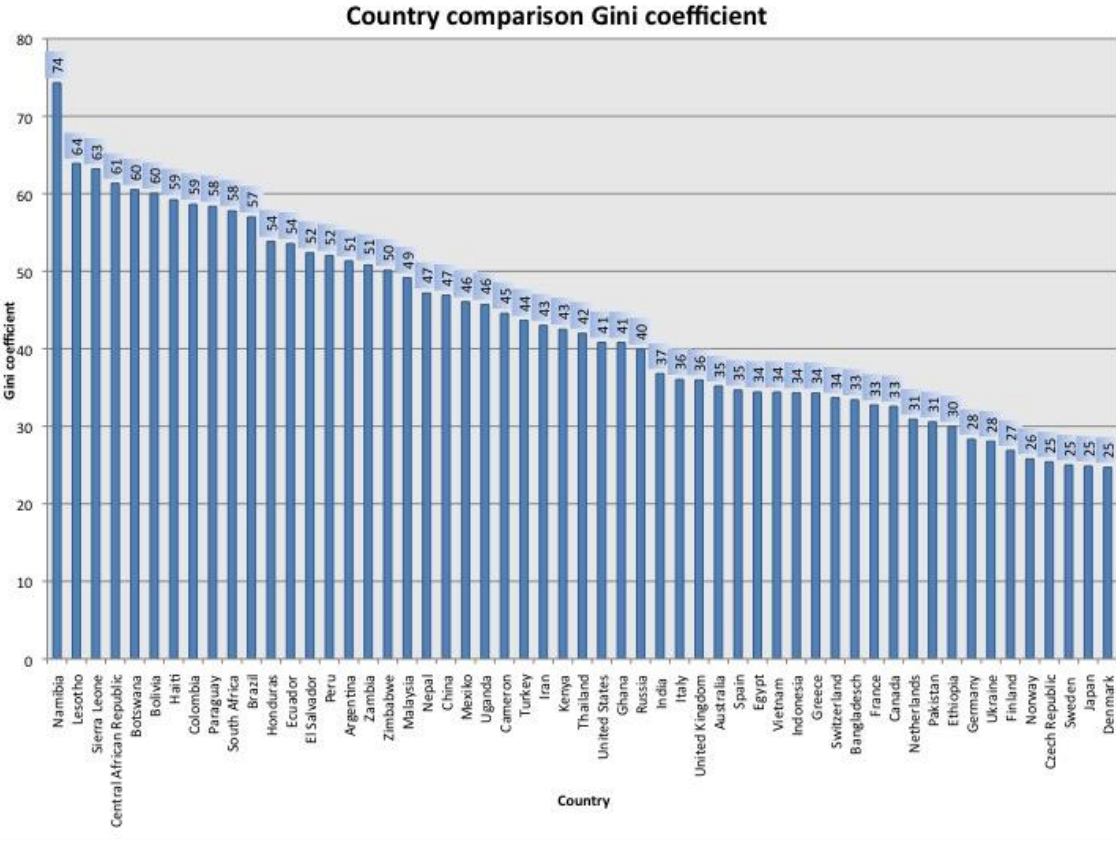
Another change in the global economic geography is the opening of new options for financing public expenditures. Many developing countries now have the potential to generate the fiscal resources to finance the socioeconomic spending necessary to address poverty (Ortiz *et al.* 2011). The larger 'developing' countries are funding their social policy expenditures out of enlarged fiscal revenues. Some have become new donors. At the same time, new and large private foundations have been unlocking new sources (and procedures) of funding. There is even a discernible shift in the professed ideology of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to favouring deficit spending above austerity with a view to avoiding global recession (Lagarde 2011). In a nutshell, politically and financially, fiscal space enabling the financing of socially progressive policies has become larger in the global South, at least for the more successful countries.

At the same time, many of the larger OECD economies are in considerable economic disarray, with sharp declines in GDP growth, high levels of unemployment and increasing casualisation of work. The recession of 2008/2009 was very serious and there is a high chance that it may recur in

2012/13 (ILO 2011c). Unemployment and associated economic and social distress and child poverty have risen in many countries, along with other forms of poverty, including among older sections of the population.<sup>10</sup> As a result, there is increasing awareness of poverty, vulnerability and exclusions in the North (e.g. Standing 2011).

Both OECD and emerging countries show rapidly increasing income inequality. Figure 1 illustrates the current degree of income inequality, with significant numbers of countries showing a Gini coefficient higher than 40 on a 0-100 scale.<sup>11</sup> China, it may be noted, now has a higher Gini coefficient than the USA. In addition, a myriad of other intersecting and reinforcing social inequalities influence access to and the benefits from health, education, nutrition, sanitation and other factors fundamental for human wellbeing (Kabeer 2010; Jolly 2011b; Te Lintelo 2011).

**Figure 1 Income inequality, measured in Gini coefficient, latest available years**



**Source:**

[www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco\\_inc\\_equ\\_un\\_gin\\_ind-income-equality-un-gini-index](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/eco_inc_equ_un_gin_ind-income-equality-un-gini-index)

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps partly in response, the ‘Sarkozy Commission’ on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz *et al.* 2009) identified more human development indicators, along with other moves away from economic growth as the all-sufficient indicator and indeed solution.

<sup>11</sup> For the Gini measure, the closer to 100 (which is the maximum score possible), the higher the degree of inequality.

The range of these problems, some common, some different, is blurring the established North-South or developed-developing country distinction. While one would not want to conflate the absolute poverty experienced by huge numbers in low-income countries with the relative poverty experienced in some dimensions by most of the people classified as being in poverty in OECD countries, the conventional distinction between developed and developing countries is, arguably, becoming misleading. Substantial groups in rich and high middle-income countries do experience absolute poverty in some important aspects of life, including employment, income security, and psychological and social aspects and even larger numbers have a major risk of joining those groups for at least some period. Further, the sources of instability and impoverishment are often global, not purely intra-national. Emerging as central examples of this, amongst others, are financial instability and climate change.

Historically, systems of public health and social security emerged in present-day rich countries in recognition of the insecurities that could affect the large majority of their populations. There was recognition also of the great waste in terms of human potential, and thus of potential benefit for all through preventing this, and the dangers in terms of human conflicts that can result if these insecurities are not controlled and countered. Similar recognitions underpinned the design of the United Nations system from the 1940s, after the human disasters experienced during 1930–1945.

The same insights apply with increasing force for the intensely interconnected and volatile global systems of the twenty-first century, and not just for individual countries or poor countries. There has been a danger that MDGs which pay direct attention only to the South have not highlighted the significance also for the North of achievement of such goals in the South, given the global webs of causation of conflict, disease, migration and climate change. The MDGs and their extension or successor need to be (re-)conceived within a global perspective: as global development goals and no longer as ‘marginal development goals’, goals only of relevance for marginal groups in marginal countries. Failures in the global South bring major risks and costs for the rich global North.

We need thus to look across all countries and address the lack of human development among all individuals and communities living in conditions of hunger, poverty, income insecurity or social exclusion, affected by the risks of climate change or vulnerable to the impacts of political oppression and political or personal violence. In other words, policies and development goals to tackle poverty, vulnerability and sustainability are required **globally**, not exclusively in the South. And indeed, the preparatory discussion for the Rio+20 conference has proposed that the SDGs be “global” and “universal and applicable to all countries”, albeit allowing for differentiated approaches (United Nations 2012: 16). Security for people – human security – has global importance.

### **Human security and securitability in Latvia**

Latvia, a middle-income country and member of the European Union, has been working with the concept of human security on several levels, in academic research and policy planning, since the pioneering Latvia Human Development Report 2003. It has currently adopted the concept of securitability as one of three priorities informing discussions of the National Development Plan 2014–2020. Securitability is defined as “The ability to avoid insecure situations and to retain a sense of security when such situations do occur, as well as the ability to re-establish security and sense of security when these have been compromised” (LAPAS 2011). This resonates with the country’s repeated experiences of individual and societal income insecurity, vagaries in access to affordable health services, and political oppression

### **The case for ‘human security’ as a conceptual framework for the MDGs**

Over the last decade or two, the idea of human security has developed as an important partner to the already prominent and widely articulated global development languages of human rights and human development. It can help to focus and motivate the required work of updating, continuing and deepening the MDGs agenda.

Human security thinking combines

- a core intellectual frame concerning interconnectedness and human vulnerability;
- values centred on basic human rights;
- agendas for action, to build the capacity to avoid, respond to or cope with risks and threats; and
- an established multi-sector presence in many UN agencies, NGOs and universities, as well as a ready compatibility with the work of many other justice and rights-oriented agencies, in fields of social security, employment, public health, environment and peace.

The rounds of discussion on human security in the UN General Assembly in 2008 and 2010 have made clear the considerable and growing support for the ideas of human security, provided that they are separated from the approach adopted under the banner of ‘the responsibility to protect’ and thus not used to justify armed intervention in the affairs of other countries. The UN Secretary General has a Special Adviser on Human Security who is preparing recommendations to consolidate the connection of human security thinking and the debate on the post-2015 agenda.

The core ideas of human security crystallised in the 1940s, if not yet under this name, in response to the worldwide problems of the Second World War and earlier: violence, genocide and crimes against humanity, the poverty and mass unemployment of the preceding Great Depression and awareness of the

possible links between these disasters.<sup>12</sup> US President Roosevelt mobilised the Allies in World War Two with a vision of ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. This vision underpinned the design of the United Nations system.<sup>13</sup> Sustained freedom from fear was seen to rely on freedom from want, and vice versa. The United Nations Charter accordingly made “The explicit linkage of human rights protections to an international order of peace and security... Collective security now was seen to require the defence of human rights norms and principles” (Quataert 2009: 40). Freedom from want and indignity are important both in their own right, and because freedom from fear and violence will never be attained or stable if freedom from want and indignity are lacking.

In a human security approach, the primary object of security is not states and their military forces, but all human persons, and by implication the human species. The UN’s advisory Commission on Human Security described human security as meaning security of ‘the vital core’ of people’s lives (Commission for Human Security 2003). The values that are to be secured thus include not only survival and physical integrity but also other core human values, including the ‘freedom to live in dignity’. In the 2005 MDGs review, the report of the UN Secretary General explicitly situated the MDGs in this policy context of creating freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity (UN Secretary-General 2005).

The concept of human security was made operational by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the 1994 Human Development Report. It specified seven typical priority areas of security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal physical security, security of community life and political security. This represents a partial checklist of areas of security/insecurity and possible threats, to which financial insecurity was added in 1999. It is not itself the definition of human security, which concerns security of those elements in persons’ lives that have a reasoned high priority: ‘core human values’ (Hampson *et al.* 2002). Exact specification of what are considered areas for priority attention and protection will be partly place- and time-specific. This has emerged very clearly in the

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<sup>12</sup> However, the ideas go back much further. The concept ‘human security’ was used already by the Red Cross in 1863, for example ([http://lapas.lv/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/LAPAS-Human-Security-FactSheet-2010\\_info.pdf](http://lapas.lv/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/LAPAS-Human-Security-FactSheet-2010_info.pdf)); and the ILO’s 1919 Constitution stressed the link between peace and social justice.

<sup>13</sup> In a speech to the US Congress in 1941 arguing for US entry into the world war, US President Roosevelt outlined four essential human freedoms, the last two of which have been used in normative international development debates ever since. ‘The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want – which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear – which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor – anywhere in the world’ (Franklin Roosevelt’s Annual Address to Congress – The ‘Four Freedoms’). It is worth underlining that ‘freedom from want’ here means fulfilment of needs of subsistence, not fulfilment of every desire.

UNDP National Human Development Reports that have investigated human security in particular countries, as well as in much related work (e.g.: UNDP Latvia 2003; UNDP 2004; Gasper 2005, 2010; Jolly and Basu Ray 2006, 2007; UNESCO 2008; Leichenko and O'Brien 2008; UNDP RBAS 2009; O'Brien *et al.* 2010; Gasper and Gomez 2011; UN Secretary-General 2010).

Human security thus concerns a focus on the security of individual persons, and compared to conventional military security approaches human security analysis covers a much wider scope of areas considered under 'security' and as contributory factors and possible countermeasures to insecurity.<sup>14</sup> Underlying these characteristics are a number of important features.

1. An explicit concern for the wellbeing of fellow humans. This is shared by the sister humanist perspectives of human rights, human needs, and human development (Gasper 2007). Human security thinking contains an insistence on fulfilling basic rights – which typically are derived from basic needs – for every person. It recognises that human beings exist as units – as persons – not in fractions and decimals and that sustaining a person's life involves satisfying various threshold-level requirements. 'Human security' in health, for example, concerns health issues up to a set of minimum threshold requirements; the threshold is to some degree historically and societally relative, but has a large element of commonality worldwide (see e.g. Owen 2005).
2. The focus on threats to basic human values directs attention to the everyday realities of life, and the things that people value and the diverse but interconnected threats to these values, actual and/or felt. Human security analysis involves a rich, realistic picture of being human. Each human person has a body, gender, emotions, life cycle, and a complex identity and social bonds. The risks and insecurities are partly case- and person-specific, and partly subjective, so human security analysis requires listening to people's 'voices', their fears and perceptions, including both the 'voices of the poor' and of the rich (Narayan *et al.* 2000; Burgess *et al.* 2007).
3. Attention to the lives of real persons reveals the intersections and combinations of diverse forces in the lives of individuals and groups, and the various causes and varied difficulties that arise as stress factors and vulnerabilities interact. For example, the groups who are most threatened by environmental destruction are often also the groups who are most threatened by economic changes (Leichenko and O'Brien 2008; O'Brien *et al.* 2010; Hallows 2011). They are more exposed to

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<sup>14</sup> For the Commission for Africa: 'Human security becomes an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety and participate fully in the process of governance. They enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the basic necessities of life, including health and education, and inhabit an environment that is not injurious to their health and wellbeing' (Commission for Africa 2005: 392).

environmental threats, including because of the locations where they live. They suffer greater harm when hit, because besides their greater exposure they have less resources to use in protection; and they may be less resilient, again because they have fewer resources – economic, social, cultural and political – with which to recover. Micro-level study of the impacts of disasters (for example, Hurricane Katrina) and of ongoing climate change reveals this ‘triple whammy’ (see e.g. UNDP 2007; Leichenko and O’Brien 2008). A human security approach that investigates particular people and locations and the intersecting forces in their lives helps to reveal these patterns in reality.

4. The focus on people in human security analysis underlines both human vulnerability and capability. A human security policy approach seeks to manage and moderate vulnerability. It complements the stress on capability that is found in human development thinking. Human security thinking includes capability too, as we see in the concept of ‘securitability’ articulated in the Latvia Human Development Report 2003 and subsequent work; it stresses empowerment as well as protection. For the Global Environmental Change and Human Security program, human security is defined as where “Individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate or [sufficiently] adapt to threats to their human, social and environmental rights; have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options; and actively participate in pursuing these options” (GECHS 1999).
5. Attention to the intersections that occur in each person’s life is part of ‘joined-up thinking’ that is aware of potential interconnections, including interconnections between threats, and between what are in conventional research and bureaucracies seen as different spheres of study or responsibility. Human security thinking looks at links between economy, conflict, distribution, environment and health. Economic trends can greatly increase the chances of conflict, via mechanisms that have regrettably largely lain outside of the fields of attention of businessmen, conventional academic economists and economic policymakers (Collier *et al.* 2003; Picciotto 2005; Picciotto *et al.* 2007). The resulting conflicts then have implications for distribution and health, as well as for economy, crime and further conflict; the distributional changes may impact on environment; and so on. Further, these interconnections sometimes involve flashpoints or tipping points, stress levels beyond which the negative effects sharply escalate. Beneath certain levels of malnutrition small children can suffer irreversible mental deficits. Some types of stress or abuse may produce irreversible emotional harm. Whole societies too can go over a stress tipping point, as in Rwanda in 1994, when on top of bad harvests and economic crisis that led to a 40 per cent fall in GDP per capita in 1989–93, extreme public expenditure cuts were imposed by the IMF in a situation marked by a history of tense inter-group relations and recent armed conflict (Eriksson *et al.* 1996; Prunier 1997; Uvin 1999).



6. Wider attention to contributory factors and their interconnections increases our awareness of vulnerability and fragility, but also of opportunities and resilience. The numerous national Human Development Reports that have taken a human security approach have produced novel insights and suggestions (see the reviews in Jolly and Basu Ray 2006, 2007). Amongst subsequent similar HDRs, the 2009 report for the Arab Region deserves particular mention (UNDP RBAS 2009), as does the earlier Latvia report (UNDP Latvia 2003). A human security perspective in policy design looks at issues of system redesign in order to reduce chances of crises, not only at palliative responses when crises have hit. It increases thinking about prioritisation within sectors (such as seen in MDGs programmes) and between sectors.

Besides human security thinking's promotion of analytical integration, it does 'boundary work' in other respects. First, consideration of the sources of and threats to human security helps to bring together the different organisational worlds of socioeconomic development, human rights, humanitarian relief, conflict resolution and national security (Uvin 2004). Second, human security discourse also synthesises ideas from the partner 'human discourses' of human needs, human rights and human development, (Gasper 2007). It better grounds human rights and human development work in attention to the nature of being and wellbeing; focuses them on high priorities; highlights interdependence more than does human rights language and increases attention to risks, vulnerability and fragility; and it carefully explores human subjectivity – meaning how people perceive and feel, and what they cherish or fear – which increases its explanatory force, vividness and motivating potential.

Human security analysis recognises emotions, identifies surprising conjunctures, and can give a sense of real lives and persons. The language of 'security' itself touches emotions, which is both a source of strength and of danger (Gasper and Truong 2010). While the 'human security' label aims to re-orient security discourse, it carries risks of being taken over by the psychic insecurities and fears of the rich and the military instincts of those with large arsenals and the habit of using them. However, those fears and habits exist already and have long had ways of expressing themselves without requiring 'human security' language in order to do so. The difference made by this language is likely to be in the opposite direction, gradually helping to promote interpersonal and global sensitivity and solidarity. Human security thinking looks at diverse, situation-specific, interacting threats and how they affect the lives of ordinary people, especially the most vulnerable. It promotes the ability to imagine how others live and feel, and the perception of an intensively interconnected shared world in which humanity forms a 'community of fate'. It thus favours the changes that are needed for global sustainability, in respect of how people perceive shared vulnerabilities, shared interests and shared humanity (Earth Charter; Gasper 2009). Narrower versions of the concept of human security (in terms of the range of core values included) do not block such changes, but are less conducive than the broader versions.

## Human security analysis as an integrating policy framework

The MDG targets can be seen as one part of making a human security agenda operational. At the same time, one of several critiques of the 2000–2002 MDG agenda is that it shied away from actual policy design – failing to make recommendations on how governments would need to go about achieving the various targets and goals.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast, much human security analysis has focused on policy analysis.<sup>16</sup> For example, the 2003 *Human Security Now* report (Commission on Human Security 2003) presents specific recommendations for each of the human security policy areas. Examples include the case for income and resource redistribution at national and international levels (*ibid.* 2003: 76); reforming land rights, including for women (*ibid.*: 82, 137); introducing social protection for all in “some form of universal non-means tested income grant in the absence of other forms of earnings replacement”, to address mass unemployment (*ibid.*: 151); and introducing a core public primary health care system (*ibid.*: 110). The latter two points specifically define these as areas of public responsibility.<sup>17</sup>

Recent research and discussions on inequalities and social justice (Kabeer 2010; Jolly 2011b; Te Lintelo 2011) can serve to update the dimensions of inequality within human security policy. The proposals underline the need for specifically addressing income and social inequalities and their intersections, if the MDGs are to be met. The proposals also elaborate a set of required policy interventions which are in tune with the human security policy framework. They can deepen the MDGs (Fukuda-Parr 2011) and inform the emerging SDGs.

The proposals for government policies (Kabeer 2010; Jolly 2011b; Te Lintelo 2011) include:

adopting legislation against discrimination and for affirmative action [for] strengthening the resource base of the poor, adopting policies for growth with redistribution and improving outreach, quality and cultural relevance of basic social services... Consideration should also be given to adopting group-based solutions to address problems that are collective (particular to specific groups of society rather than only to individuals), and to striking the right balance between universal policies on equality and tailored ones that address groups within the poor that have been systematically excluded.

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<sup>15</sup> The UN DESA publication on national development strategies (UN DESA 2008) is a significant contribution to defining policies and endorsing space for heterodox policy making.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the applications of the human security approach in National Human Development Reports led or supported by UNDP are analysed by Jolly and Basu Ray 2006 and 2007. Also see UN Secretary-General 2010.

<sup>17</sup> We noted earlier how at the same time key roles for individuals and communities are also integral to the human security approach (see e.g. UNDP Latvia 2003).

Agencies supporting equity policies should not be shy in calling for and promoting macroeconomic strategies of redistribution with growth. (Jolly 2011b: 14)

With respect to tax reform there is an explicit call for progressive taxation (*ibid.*: 10; Te Lintelo 2011: 6).

Policies addressing income inequality and social exclusion need to be joined up with policies on decent work and employment, which are central for incomes as well as for dignity (e.g. UN Secretary-General 2005; UNRISD 2010; ILO 2011c; Fukuda-Parr 2011; Nayyar 2011, Bachelet 2011; Raworth 2012). Systematic attention to the factors that support or hinder individuals in increasing their securitability (Simane 2011) will complement the policy interventions needed to address income inequalities, social exclusion and employment – including by strategies at the level of individuals, groups and communities.<sup>18</sup> Such a holistic approach will both consolidate the human security approach and provide a policy dimension in MDG/SDG discourse.

### **The value added of a human security approach to the post-MDGs agenda**

The human security approach can be creatively used for integrating, invigorating and extending the MDGs. In doing so, it can add value to the post-2015 agenda in the following areas (Commission on Human Security 2003; Koehler 2011a; Gasper 2010):

1. Its focus on freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity means that it combines human rights dimensions and the notions of human dignity and choice.
2. It captures all the current MDG areas – food and nutrition, employment, income poverty, education, child and maternal health, HIV-Aids and similar challenges, gender equality and the environment. But the human security concept casts these presently demarcated and separated components of the MDG agenda in a more interconnected and systematic fashion, including by organising them as economic security/employment security (decent work and income), political security, cultural and psychological security, and environmental security. Much of this is clearly connected to the notion of freedom from want, but combined with consistent attention to the theme of living with dignity. Thus a human security approach includes a strong focus on decent work and access to assets as the primary approach to tackling poverty. Moreover, it can accommodate the need for the MDGs/SDGs to incorporate the progressive new policy orientations coming from the ‘South’ within an overarching policy framework.

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<sup>18</sup> The 2010 Human Security Report of the UN for example examines the application of the concept in these areas: the global financial and economic crises, food insecurity and price volatility, the spread of infectious diseases, climate change, and the prevention of violent conflict. See UN Secretary-General (2010).

3. It emphasises 'joined-up thinking' that displays connections across and between development areas and policy domains (Jolly and Basu Ray 2006; Leichenko and O'Brien 2008). It integrates the impacts, in terms of political and personal security, of violence and conflict as well as of ecological destruction and climate change.
4. It includes the impact of income and wealth inequalities and social exclusion and can thus address poverty and exclusion in an integrated, multidimensional fashion (Commission on Human Security 2003: 76), thereby corresponding to the more sophisticated discourse that has emerged on poverty and its many dimensions.
5. It acknowledges the importance of good governance as part of an enabling environment (Commission on Human Security 2003: 4).
6. It examines objective situations as well as subjective perceptions, both of which matter for human development, equity and wellbeing, social inclusion and social cohesion (see, e.g., UNDP Latvia 2003). Sensitivity to subjective aspects is central to thinking about human development from the vantage point of people, as opposed to states, and informing and enabling participatory decision-making and creating social contracts between citizens and governments. By acknowledging that subjective barriers to development are often just as challenging and painful as objective ones, it relates well to the idea of multidimensional human development (Alkire and Foster 2010) and to the concept of 'three-dimensional human wellbeing' (McGregor and Sumner 2009) which covers objective, subjective and relational dimensions of the human condition. This is an additional conceptual strength.
7. It can therefore be used as a point of departure for participation. Participation is the necessary starting point for developing policy approaches which are holistic and empowering, both of which features are conditions for 'securitability'. Securitability, as coined in the Latvian report on human security, embraces the ability of individuals and communities to *avoid* insecure situations, to *retain* a sense of security when such situations do occur and to *re-establish* security and sense of security when these have been compromised, regardless of the type of threat (UNDP Latvia 2003; Simane 2011).<sup>19</sup> Promoting this requires action, strategies and policies at all levels: individual, family and household, community, enterprise, national government, regional and

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<sup>19</sup> Many discourses are using a related concept: resilience. See for example Raworth (2012) and Melamed (2012). The Rio preparatory document refers to resilience in connection with disaster mitigation and responses to climate change (United Nations 2012: paras 25, 72, 107). Whereas resilience means ability to recover after damage, securitability includes both this and also the ability to reduce exposure to threats and the ability to reduce sensitivity/damage when hit by a threat.

international. The framework thus integrates individual empowerment, ownership and rights-based individual and societal participation into the policy domain. By not focussing only on a predetermined list of security risks, it allows the policymaker to facilitate processes, not merely concentrate on issues. This is a wise approach considering that it is not possible today to imagine, let alone find indicators for, all of what will be the future threats and barriers to development.

8. Human security thinking embodies a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, and on the integration of climate change adaptation concerns in development strategies. It does this more readily than do the conventional international development languages of human development and human rights, and with more underlying substance than in slogans alone of sustainable development and green economy. It helps in focussing us on the key interconnections, including between environmental, economic, social, political, health and psychological forces, that require attention for understanding and acting on environmental decline and protection; and helps in providing the foundation stones of recognition of shared risks, shared fate and shared human identity that are necessary for driving serious cooperative response.
9. The challenge of human security is universal – applying to all countries and societies, transcending the earlier categories of developed, developing and transition countries and can appropriately ground a global approach to human development. It transcends the North-South distinction since human security matters everywhere and since it highlights our worldwide interconnection (UNDP Latvia 2003; Burgess *et al.* 2007; UNESCO 2008).
10. The human security concept has been applied in analyses of priorities for international governance that will support human security internationally (see for example High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change 2004; UN Secretary-General 2005 and 2010). The approach directs attention to processes to support securitability for individuals and communities at risk, across different systems of security providers. When considering a post-2015 MDG agenda and vision, these international dimensions of human security require exploration.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, human security thinking will open new perspectives for the objectives, instruments and management of the international system. Nevertheless, as emphasised in the 2010 Secretary-General's Report on Human Security: "Human security is based on a fundamental understanding that Governments retain the primary role for ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of their citizens" (UN Secretary-General 2010: 1).

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<sup>20</sup> See the discussion in Te Lintelo (2011), or UN Secretary-General (2010).

The human security approach's underlying notions of freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity will have even more resonance over the next few years. In the OECD countries, economic recessions, a failure to achieve economic recovery and misguided austerity-driven policy responses may lead in many countries to increased income poverty and vulnerability from additional unemployment and increasingly casualised labour, and to a hollowing out of social services and declining social security and social assistance flows, including of child benefits and pensions. Elsewhere, hunger and acute food insecurity, and extreme poverty (\$1.25 per person per day) continue: an estimated 1.4 billion people still live in extreme poverty and 1.2 billion are undernourished (UN DESA 2009; United Nations 2012). This situation will continue and is likely to worsen for the lowest income quintile groups and socially excluded communities (Kabeer 2010). Freedom from want may therefore become, in some societies and for many groups, an even more pressing aspiration than in the year 2000. Freedom from fear will remain a challenge, given the numbers of internal and international conflicts, climate change, distress migration and flight and the incidence of personal and political terrorism – risks, threats and insecurities which are exacerbated by the increasing fear of falling into want, as employment deteriorates and social protection declines.

In summary, the human security concept is particularly fitting for deepening the MDG/SDG approach for at least three reasons. First, it includes all important domains in an integrated way. Second, it makes clear how economic poverty, political and personal insecurity and violence, environmental degradation, and social exclusion are decisive for all levels of human development and wellbeing: individual, community, national and international. Thirdly, it leads directly into a structured discussion of policy responses, conspicuously absent from the earlier MDG approach.

### **Conclusion and outlook**

The notion of human security can provide a fruitful conceptual point of departure for the MDG/SDG discussions on the post-2015 agenda. Insecurity is a universal dimension of the human condition. Concern for human security puts people, not only states, at the centre of the stage when assessing actions to enhance security. It appeals to human solidarity, both at the level of humankind and at the level of each individual. For these reasons it can deepen the post-2015 agenda – by integrating the values and concerns outlined in the Millennium Declaration, the goals and targets of the MDGs and those of preceding and other international development summits, and the issues addressed by the climate change and humanitarian conferences and the human rights agenda.

The natural disasters of the past few years have heightened climate change awareness. Accordingly the interdependence of environmental sustainability with economic and social development have become common ground, including the notion of a 'green economy', and are influencing the upcoming Rio +20

Conference positions and the SDGs (United Nations 2012; Melamed 2012; Raworth 2012).<sup>21</sup> The approach of human security links well with this emerging discourse that seeks the integration of economic development, social development and environmental protection (United Nations 2012), and adds necessary intellectual, existential and ethical depth. It also provides a framework for systematic attention to policy dimensions and to the empowering notion of individual and community-based securitability.

The perspective of human security can thus function as an organising and exploratory framework for conceptualising development goals for the period beyond 2015. It can combine a broad approach to human development and to policies for human development that are rights-based, priority-centred and genuinely empowering, with an understanding of the complexity of current vulnerabilities. It can provide a more visionary approach in framing 'development' objectives and human development, inspired by a commitment to human rights and social justice.

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<sup>21</sup> Raworth for example offers the illustrative example of a 'doughnut' where food, water, income, education, resilience, voice, jobs, energy, social equity, gender equality and health constitute the inner, social foundation of a 'safe and just space for humanity', with an outer boundary imposed by upper limits for factors such as climate change, freshwater use, nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, ocean acidification, chemical pollution, atmospheric aerosol loading, biodiversity loss, and land use change (Raworth 2012: 4). Raworth's approach echoes the inner and outer limits set out by Barbara Ward in her book *Spaceship Earth* in 1966 (Ward 1966), where the inner limits were given by the human right to an adequate standard of living and the outer limits by what the earth can sustain.

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