

The Regional Agenda for Post-2015 Development and Strategic Partnerships

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The Starting Point: A General framework for the development debate

The global crisis indicates, among other things, that the economic model that is still applied in Latin America and the Caribbean is being questioned and requires a revision. The basis for this revision are the paradigms being discussed and proposed for the framework of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, particularly from local spaces — specifically, communities and CSOs promoting development, who define several dimensions and give the revised model an essence of sustainability.

Despite agreements and commitments that recognize the interconnection between development and human rights, it is not acceptable that there remains a lack of harmony and discrepancies among them. As Alicia Barcena from Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) says, equality and inequality — both in terms of rights and assets — are conditioned by productive structure, technological development, gaps in labour, territorial organization, capacity development, social protection and political participation.¹

Development, understood as a process of social, political and economical change, requires good functioning institutions, but also implies a radical revision of values and attitudes. As the Mexican political scientist Rolando Cordera suggests,

“social being” is not only discussed in the social arena; equality also needs to be considered a right and an ethical principle. He highlights that the right to development preceded the current wave of attention to the universalization of human rights and is inseparable from social justice.²

Concomitant with the universality of development objectives, nation-states must assume their role of promoters and guarantors of human rights and national development in regional and national spaces. In that sense, guarantees about human rights will be ensured by nation-states as long as there are public policies protecting these rights. Consequently, proposals for the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should focus on public policy actions that need to be implemented by states in the framework of basic guarantees for the fulfilment of rights.

On the other hand, economic growth, even if it is fast and sustained — which right now is not the economic situation for most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) — cannot guarantee or facilitate the achievement of the SDGs.

As noted in the Beyond 2015 campaign, growth does not resolve inequalities if it is not accompanied by wealth redistribution and access to resources, and oriented towards a fair and sustainable future. It is not acceptable to equate the idea of economic growth with inclusive economic development or to sustainable development, which has other perspectives and includes individual and collective rights.

It is important to highlight that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is still essential in LAC countries, despite most of them moving into the category of middle-income countries, often based on questionable indicators. Meanwhile, in almost all of these countries inequality and social gaps remain or are deepening. Middle-income status, based solely on per capita GNP, should not be an argument to eliminate North–South cooperation.

Even if recent progress in LAC is recognized, it is still the region of the world with the worst distribution of wealth, as well as sustained wide social gaps in areas such as capacity development, employment, access to systems of social protection, gender equality, ethnic discrimination, youth issues, and access to power.³

Progress in terms of human rights and gender equality in development requires paying special attention to sexual, reproductive, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are interrelated and are not divisible.⁴

It is clear that inequality risks social, economical and political stability and promotes the values of status quo, power and hierarchy over social cohesion and community. It must not be forgotten that everybody benefits from more equal societies. This has been an important omission in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and without a roadmap to reduce the extreme inequality of incomes, within and between countries, the next post-2015 global targets are at risk of failure.⁵

A Development Agenda — with clear indicators for measuring progress — cannot be separated from the public budgets at every level of government, since these are the primary instrument for development, particularly at the local (sub regional) level. It is in these budgets

where the effectiveness of a truly inclusive development process will be demonstrated.

Financing, therefore, is crucial for the success of the Post-2015 Agenda and SDGs. International experts indicate that it will be necessary to invest 4% of GDP in economies in transition for at least a minimum of 20 years.

We already know that domestic resource mobilization, aid and private capital (coming from the main pension funds, development banks and other investors) will be insufficient in terms of financing and development. Yet these seem to be the only options being explored, and not more innovative financing options such as the proposal of a tax on financial transactions or the use of global public goods. It is not surprising that the international community considers the private sector as the primary source of financing for the Post-2015 Goals.

A more comprehensive vision for development requires a very ambitious global agreement, one that can offer a wide range of options for financing for countries with both low and medium incomes. Despite the important debates on “the world we want,” it is also imperative to get an agreement on how to implement that world we want.

The Global Partnership, established in MDG 8, is essential. Its importance was confirmed by the report from the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons.⁶ From the perspective of Centro Europeo de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (CEPEI), a renewed Global Partnership for 2015 must incorporate policy areas that transcend ODA and traditional development cooperation. The 2011 Busan High Level Forum discussed the essential importance of involving non-official actors, such as CSOs and private sector, to achieve development

effectiveness. However, these wider stakeholder engagements may sharpen the differences or conflicts, instead of reducing them.

Therefore, the evolution of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), post-Busan, seems to have confronted more challenges than progress in constituting an effective structure and generating the political influence needed to coordinate with key development countries and multilateral actors that must be included in a new architecture for development finance. “Non-member countries of the OECD, with higher influence on development issues, instinctively seek alternative routes, instead of building upon traditionally established patterns for development cooperation by the leading group of developed countries that are members of the OECD.”⁷⁷

How is Mexico performing? Advances and challenges

The Mexican Government has positively assessed its progress in fulfilling the MDGs and has been active in monitoring the global process and the post-2015 debate promoted by the UN system. A Government declaration in December 2013 highlighted that, in fact, from 2005, when the first report was drafted, Mexico has made important advances in every Millennium Goal and target. This progress is a result of government policies and programs oriented towards the needs of the population in different areas of development. Moreover, the Government of Mexico incorporated additional goals, which have been called “Goals Beyond the Millennium.” Some of these latter goals have focused on combating poverty and hunger, and also on advancing the effectiveness of pre-school and secondary school education.

The Government has stressed the importance of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and issues in

International Migration to be considered in the building of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The consultation, “Building the future we want in Latin America and the Caribbean: towards a Post-2015 Development Agenda” (April 2013, held in Guadalajara, Jalisco), sent messages about the inclusion of issues in International Migration in the global post-2015 discussions and negotiations, and made a call for the Agenda to address inequalities, including strengthening the voices of Indigenous Peoples. The Government also organized the consultation, “Energy and the Post-2015 Agenda: The Future of Latin America and the Caribbean” (March 2013, held in Merida, Yucatán), in which non-government actors of Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean debated the inclusion of energy issues in the framework for the new international development agenda.

In the 2013 Progress Report prepared by the Government of Mexico, the President of the Republic presents the challenges that Mexico is facing: “We know that the MDGs point to a minimum and do not constitute an answer to all the problems, and they do not solve all the needs of the population. While Mexico achieved all the targets against extreme poverty and hunger, establishing a minimal basis to start the journey, the Government of the Republic considers that the results are not yet those desired by Mexicans. That is why my Government is committed to improve the social and economical conditions of families with fewer resources.”⁷⁸

Marcia de Castro, Resident Representative of the UNDP in Mexico, considers that most of the targets seem to be achievable in Mexico. However, she points to some urgent issues that should be integrated in the national development agenda: i) a reduction of poverty; ii) the inclusion of all Mexicans; iii) full employment; iv) broad participation in primary education for boys and girls; v) gender equality; vi) improved access to

health; vii) environmental sustainability; and viii) contributing to a strong global partnership.

When assessing the indicators for the Goals against the 2015 targets, specialists that monitor each of them suggest that 38 indicators have been achieved (74.5%); five are advancing favourably and are expected to be achieved in 2015 (9.8%); five are not progressing enough (9.8%); two are not progressing or are deteriorating (3.9%), and one lacks information in order to assess progress. Therefore, in 2012 there was a positive balance in which 84% of the indicators have a high probability of being achieved by 2015.⁹

In the conclusions of the report by Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), inclusive development is promoted: “We are in a critical moment to decide by every country the world that the next generations will inherit. This new moment has been preceded by a period of global, regional and national consultations whose magnitude and level of participation was unprecedented.”¹⁰ México has promoted in different forums the importance of an open and inclusive discussion, believing in building a new structure to promote prosperity for all the citizens of the world. The establishment of a new development agenda should be one in which the visions of civil society, private sector and the academy are all considered.

In the report, one of the five major areas for significant change for the Government is the need for a “new global partnership, based on a spirit of solidarity, cooperation and shared responsibility that takes into consideration different capacities. A new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual responsibility must back the Post-2015 Agenda. A new partnership shall be based on a mutual understanding of our shared humanity, mutual respect and mutual benefit.”¹¹

Indeed, the progress made by México is important, as are the national and Latin American consultations in which civil society was able to express its views. However, the participants in the Beyond 2015 campaign from the region, have identified some limitations regarding the following areas: i) the framework of development (inclusion and content) and with basic perspectives and values; ii) the determination of the means for achieving the new objectives; and iii) the role of CSOs and the requisite enabling environment to guarantee quality participation. The latter should consider not only social accountability but also of the process for developing the framework for the Development Agenda. In relation to these concerns, the next two sections set out some assessments and some recommendations, not only for Mexico, but also for the Latin American region.

The means for making progress in the post-2015 Development Agenda: Key Actors and Factors

The results of the participative research conducted by Beyond 2015 with persons affected by poverty and marginalization, have shown in general that they do not benefit from current interventions focused on reducing poverty, including those related to the MDGs. Any pretence for a truly inclusive sustainable development, must include the poorest and the most vulnerable in every Goal. The persons living in poverty do not want charity; they want the capacities for realizing their rights and for a meaningful livelihood. For them, sustainable development must be “people-centered.” It must be based on respect for the claim for equality for all, the right and freedom to prosper and flourish. Consequently, the proposed Goal 10.¹ needs to be revised.^{1A} A revision is necessary to translate

1 Target 10.1 commits that, by 2030, the incomes of the bottom 40% in each country will grow faster than the national average.

political will into a real commitment: *Increase recognition and fulfilment of cultural, political, economical, social and environmental rights for political, social and cultural minorities, and eliminate every legal and socio-cultural base of discrimination.*¹²

Given the experience of more than 30 years in LAC, CSOs that are fostering social or sustainable development have developed models of social processes in rural-communities as well as urban popular communities. These models have demonstrated their viability, in part due to the recognition and strengthening of a diversity of community actors who, in the end, are the main actors for development.

These are complex processes, and include partnerships between municipal authorities, community-based organizations, NGOs and local economic actors. Together they recognize that it is in the local community where situational diagnosis, the mobilization of actors, and viable public proposals are generated. CSOs have been a key part in consolidating democracy and citizenship. Learning from these experiences or alternative models of multi-stakeholder democratic participation would strengthen the collective definition of objectives, as well as the need for diverse strategies for their effective implementation.

But, paradoxically, in many of these LAC countries there are also processes and projects for the private sector exploitation of natural resources. These projects are implemented with impunity, without recognition of the right of communities to land and territory, without respect for the right to free, prior and informed consent. This external exploitation of resources is presented as development projects, but is usually outside the plans of municipal governments and is inconsistent with inclusive development.

Given this situation, participants from local and community spaces have highlighted the following recommendations for inclusive development:¹³

- Adopt and foster integrated policies and strategies that are coherent and sustainable and that build from the knowledge, abilities and capacities of the local areas and their communities.
- Ensure democratic governability, which implies the participation of all as rights holders and the obligations of the state as duty bearers, as well as an informed citizenship that can generate spaces for reflection with power to propose solutions.
- Guarantee the participation of civil society in the public arena, generate and establish mechanisms to strengthen their capacity for political influence, as promoters of public goods, for social organization, and as actors who also contribute to the design of public policies and regulations.
- Strengthen the capacities of the local regions and the different community actors, such as social organizations, community organizations, NGOs, among others. Decentralization must guarantee effective and egalitarian development in local regions.
- Recognize cultural and territorial diversity, as well as the implications that these conditions have on fostering development. It is not possible to establish common goals and indicators for both a country and its regions.
- Advance towards a concept of development that emphasizes the dignity of life and respect for human beings. Development must not be linked to the economic interest of developed countries, but it must implement inclusive development models that ensure access and equality of opportunities, in which there is recognition of the wealth, capacities and

diversity of those who live in developing countries and local areas. Development cannot be designed from the top down; it is built by people from the local level.

Conclusions: Recommendations about partnerships

Based on the framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which is still under debate, and the means for its implementation in the different national and local realities, which require international and domestic resources, partnerships among actors are indeed a key issue requiring a high level of commitment. Consequently there have been great expectations arising from the recently created Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) in Busan in 2011. At its first High Level Meeting, which took place in Mexico in April 2014, all stakeholders confirmed the commitment that unites the Global Partnership, which is “the collective search for an inclusive and sustainable development for the world.”

But beyond declarations, it is indeed expected that the GPEDC will have the will, capacity and strength to provide a reformed architecture for the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It must be one that avoids going backwards or softening commitments. CSOs and other social actors are concerned that advances in development effectiveness from the Paris to Busan High Level Forums may be lost.

It is for this reason that an enabling environment is essential — in its different dimensions and areas — in order to promote CSOs’ activities as development actors in their own right. An enabling environment is a necessary condition; in its absence the circle of partnerships for sustainable development cannot be complete. Such an environment implies minimally freedom

of association and expression, effective formal spaces for political engagement, and viable options for the sustainability of CSOs. It includes judicial, political, economical, cultural and cooperation dimensions.

In the words of Alessandra Nilo, in “the future we want,” partnerships with CSOs are crucial — they are key partners in ideological definitions, decisions about policy, and implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda. As a result, it is recommended that the new Development Agenda include an objective that promotes partnerships between the United Nations, governments and civil society at every level.¹⁴

Partnerships, Nilo says, must consider common but differentiated responsibilities when defining the means for implementing the Goals for the new development agenda. ODA is a key element in the promotion of multilateral and bilateral partnerships, and must remain a priority.

But one of the limitations for development is inadequate and insufficient finance. Financing for development is under scrutiny, recognizing the dramatic changes that have happened in the international financial landscape since the MDGs were approved almost 15 years ago. One example is that traditional ODA is under pressure, and its relative importance against other sources of finance has been decreasing. For many middle-income countries, the ratio between ODA and GDP has declined by almost a half during the first decade of the century, while tax collection, foreign direct investment and remittances have substantially increased.¹⁵

The GPEDC, which brings together 157 countries, has potential as an important actor supporting the SDGs. But it remains to be seen if it has the structure and the strength to achieve or facilitate new policies and funding modalities to strengthen its impact on sustainable

development and the mobilization of resources at the national level. Moreover, there are other actors and processes not included in the Global Partnership, which remain to be defined in their relationship to North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation and Triangular cooperation. It is also essential that there be appropriate regulation of the private sector (legal framework) and their “investments” for development. How will the latter provide resources but also challenge governments and other local and community-based actors under the framework of partnerships?

Objectives and goals should not only have universal application. They also require universal commitment. Universality must involve at the same level a commitment to the means of implementation and an open debate is needed regarding this issue. It is very important to clarify that a global partnership, in which every actor has responsibility, is crucial for the success of the framework and its implementation.¹⁶

With respect to the core issues of peace, security and governability, it should not be forgotten that 75% of the world's conflicts are related to confrontations over natural resources and the territories affected by large resource-related projects. Peace and security are not always related to a lack of democracy, leadership or governability. A wrong approach to development can cause greater inequality between countries and thereby distort or nullify the actions of partnership for development.

Endnotes

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