



Saferworld submission

UN High Level Panel framing questions

Saferworld response to the framing questions for the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda, January 2013

Introduction

The following outlines Saferworld's response to the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons' framing questions for its work on the post-2015 development framework. As a conflict prevention and peacebuilding organisation with over twenty years of experience working in conflict-affected and fragile states, this submission focuses on those questions posed by the panel which relate most directly to Saferworld's areas of expertise.

Lessons learned and context

1. What have the MDGs achieved? What lessons can be learned about designing goals to have maximum impact?

The existing MDG framework's clarity and simplicity have been crucial to maintaining their high public profile. This has, in turn, driven political commitment, attracted financial resources and concentrated efforts on the ground. In the same way, the motivational power of the post-2015 framework will depend on its clarity. There is a significant risk that this clarity would be blurred if every country or region was able to adopt its own set of post-2015 development targets and indicators. If global targets encapsulate a set of universal priorities successfully (this time including crucial issues that were left out of the MDGs) this would not have to impinge on the flexibility for each country to plan and sequence how it will achieve them in context-specific ways.

The MDGs also illustrate how important the promise of measuring progress is to upholding commitments. Many of the commitments in the Millennium Declaration were not acted on, but those for which there were global targets and indicators were pursued. For this reason, a global goal, target and indicator framework is still needed – and variations such as global goals backed by regional/country-specific targets and indicators are likely to multiply the conversation at the expense of meaningful action.

Discussing MDG8 (Develop a Global Partnership for Development) in 2012, the UN Secretary General remained concerned that 'without an enabling global environment the promise offered by the goals will remain unfulfilled'.¹ In today's multipolar world, most countries would reject the tired distinction between donor and recipient countries as a basis for the new framework. Moreover, where development promises are proving hardest to fulfil – such as in fragile states – there is scope to do much more to address the global factors that create shocks and make a sustained exit from conflict and poverty so difficult (flows of arms, drugs, conflict diamonds, proceeds of corruption etc.). Thus the new framework should go beyond actions to be taken at national level by recipients of aid. Instead, it should include an expanded range of commitments for all countries to address global factors that perpetuate poverty and conflict – not least those most developed countries that have the capacity to address such factors. Saferworld is concerned that discussion on the detail of specific commitments to address 'global factors' has been lacking so far. Immediate priority needs to be placed on developing proposals for feasible targets and indicators if a vital opportunity is not to be missed.

¹ UNSG, *Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015*, Annual report of the Secretary-General, (6 August 2012), p 13.

2. How has the world changed since the MDGs were drafted? Which global trends and uncertainties will influence the international development agenda over the next 10-30 years?

Since the MDGs were drafted, we have seen development become more attainable for those living in countries with better governance and less conflict, but an impossible dream for most of those who do not. According to the World Bank 'a country that experienced major violence over the period from 1981 to 2005 has a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than a country that saw no violence.'² Trade levels after major episodes of violence can take 20 years to recover, and the higher risk there is of conflict, the lower the opportunities for investment a country will have.³ Countries not directly affected by conflict may also suffer economically due to regional conflict. For example, a country making development advances, such as Tanzania, loses an estimated 0.7 percent of GDP every year for each neighbouring country in conflict.⁴ In terms of how these trends will play out, Kharas and Rogerson have projected that: 'By 2025 the locus of global poverty will overwhelmingly be in fragile, mainly low-income and African, states.'⁵

However, in recent years there has been policy advancement on how to address poor progress in contexts affected by violence and conflict, with growing consensus around the approach needed. The *World Development Report 2011* and the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* produced by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding have emphasised that progress on security, justice, and inclusive, responsive, accountable and fair state-society relations are at the heart of development in conflict and violence-affected contexts. This has changed the policy context within which the MDGs are being devised.

3. Which issues do poor and vulnerable people themselves prioritize?

One of the most significant global analyses of the views of poor people remains the World Bank's 1999 *Voices of the Poor* study, which drew on studies in 47 countries. One of the study's most striking findings was that around the world, poor people understand poverty as including vulnerability to conflict and violence: 'Poor people report living with increased crime, corruption, violence, and insecurity amidst declining social cohesion.... In country after country, South Africa, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Kenya, Thailand, poor people draw strong links between crime and unemployment.... Few poor people feel they have access to justice and the police, and officials and criminals are often accused of being in collusion'.⁶ Thus the report pointed out that, according to poor people, the concept of poverty needs to be redefined: 'Poor people... describe poverty as the lack of food and assets, the powerlessness that stems from dependency on others, and the helplessness to protect themselves from exploitation and abuse because of their dependence. ... Tranquility brought about by peace is important to poor people, even when poverty does not decrease.'⁷ In the eyes of the poor, freedom from the fear of violence is inseparable from poverty reduction.

Has the situation evolved since the *Voices of the Poor* study? In November 2012, a major new report by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects reaffirmed these findings. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* is based on consultations with over 6,000 people in 20 countries. The report identifies 'Improved Political and Security Conditions' as one of three main areas where people on the receiving end of aid think support should focus: 'Although improvements in economic well-being are most important, many people also talk about the influences of international assistance on their political and social conditions. They look for, and hope for, aid providers to have positive impacts on their governance structures and on their physical safety. When the assistance supports new ways of engaging with their government or improvements in their safety, they welcome it. People want aid providers to support them in gaining voice *vis-a-vis* their government. They welcome support for their efforts to reduce mistrust and conflicts.'⁸

² World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, (2011), p 60.

³ *Op cit* World Bank, p 6.

⁴ *Op cit* World Bank, p 6.

⁵ Kharas, Homi and Andrew Rogerson, *Horizon 2025: Creative Destruction in the Aid Industry*, Overseas Development Institute, (2012), p 3.

⁶ Narayan D et al, *Can anyone hear us?*, World Bank, December 1999, p 222.

⁷ Narayan D et al, *Can anyone hear us?*, World Bank, December 1999, p 217.

⁸ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*, (November 2012), p17-18.

4. What does a business-as-usual scenario look like?

A further key finding of the CDA *Time to Listen* report is that people feel aid must do better in helping to reduce violence and division: 'In every location... people talked about the effects of international assistance on the likelihood of conflict in their areas. In all but one country, people said that international aid over time had introduced or reinforced tensions among groups and that, cumulatively, it had increased the potential for violence and/or fundamental divisions within their societies.'⁹ If development efforts are to be more successful, they must preventatively address factors that drive violence and promote peace between the state and all social groups.

In the business-as-usual scenario, development efforts would continue to fail to get to grips with the challenges of conflict and violence. Fragile and conflict-affected countries account for more than 60 percent of the people living in severe underdevelopment,¹⁰ and 32 of the 46 countries at the bottom of the UNDP's human development index are conflict-affected or fragile.¹¹

If the business-as-usual scenario has failed to address poverty in the face of violence, what is the nature of the failure? A recent Saferworld paper picked out four critical lessons from major multi-country/multi-donor assessments of past peacebuilding and development experience. Responding to these could help identify ways for the new development framework to better engage with the central challenge of conflict and violence:

- We remain more reactive than proactive – the post-2015 framework is a rare chance to change the emphasis to upstream prevention of conflict and violence – avoiding costly and contentious crisis response and interventionism.
- We remain incoherent – the post-2015 framework is a chance to make a decisive move towards coherence between actors and sectors and between local, national and global solutions.
- What brings peace to most countries can bring conflict to some – alongside setting robust long-term targets in the right areas, the post-2015 framework should allow for context-specific priority setting and sequencing.
- We are ignoring the politics of development – the new framework needs to set targets that affirm the centrality of inclusive, fair, responsive and accountable state-society relations without attracting controversy.¹²

The shape of a post-2015 development framework

5. How should a new framework address the causes of poverty?

Picking any Millennium Development Goal as a yardstick, people are poorer where there is conflict.¹³ For every ten places that a country rises up the Global Peace Index, per capita income increases US\$3,100. In Somalia, the loss of a generation of higher education has been described as a 'national disaster'. In DRC, 70% of children have no access to school. During Timor-Leste's conflict, 90% of schools were destroyed or badly damaged. Less peaceful countries also have lower levels of gender equality, and wherever you look in the world (South Sudan, Chechnya, Algeria, NE India, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, Kosovo), gender-based violence has been a particularly abhorrent aspect of conflict. In post-war Cambodia, an estimated 75% of women experienced domestic violence. UNICEF recently highlighted that 8 of the 10 countries with the highest under-5 mortality rate are in conflict/fragile situations. In 2008, the Economic Commission for Africa found that all 8 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratio were in or post-conflict. After spending four of the last five decades at war, South Sudan's estimated maternal mortality rate was, at 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest in the world. The Geneva Declaration has documented how poor living conditions, sexual violence, prostitution and infection of combatants can assist the spread of disease, how homicide & HIV infection rates are correlated, how conflict and armed violence accelerate the growth of slums, and how access to drinking water sources and sanitation are significantly correlated with levels of violence.

⁹ CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*, (November 2012), p.24.

¹⁰ *Op Cit* UN System Task Team on the Post- 2015 UN Development Agenda, p 5.

¹¹ As outlined in the joint civil society statement, *Bringing peace into the post-2015 development framework*, (September 2012), p 4.

¹² Saferworld, *Addressing conflict and violence from 2015 - Issue Paper 2: What are the key challenges? What works in addressing them?*, (November 2012).

¹³ Sources for all examples in this paragraph are cited along with further evidence in Saferworld, *Addressing conflict and violence from 2015 - Issue Paper 1: The impact of conflict and violence on achieving development*, (November 2012).

It is no longer good enough to know these facts and to remain focused on symptoms of underdevelopment. The factors that have severely impeded MDG progress in the above contexts need to be better understood and strategically targeted. The new framework needs to be based on an identification of what is holding back the countries worst affected by poverty – and build on evidence of the most effective ways of addressing the challenges holding them back. This evidence is reviewed, with suggestions for relevant priorities, in our response to question 16 below.

6. How should a new framework address resilience to crises?

As the Institute for Economics and Peace has documented, not only is peace good for economic development, environmental health, and social cohesion, but ‘countries with higher levels of peacefulness tend to be more resilient to external shocks, whether economic, geopolitical or natural disasters.’¹⁴ The World Bank has reached similar conclusions.¹⁵ Broadly speaking, the elements of improved state-society relations that uphold sustainable peace (see our response to question 16 below) are similar to those that enable states to better manage crises of different kinds. In this sense, it is not only possible but also essential for the post-2015 framework to integrate commitments that build peace with those that promote resilience, sustainability and poverty reduction.

7. How should a new framework address the dimensions of economic growth, equity, social equality and environmental sustainability? Is an overall focus on poverty eradication sufficiently broad to capture the range of sustainable development issues?

Whether an overall focus on poverty eradication is sufficiently broad to capture the range of sustainable development issues depends on how poverty is defined. If tackling poverty implies a focus on income alone, this would in any case require progress in building peace and reducing violence to succeed. The same is true if poverty is defined in relation to the existing MDGs, as the figures on MDG progress in conflict-affected and fragile states cited above have shown. However, there is strong evidence that poor people consider peace, security and justice to be human goods in themselves that need to be incorporated in the redefinition of human development alongside other important concepts such as sustainability and respect for planetary boundaries. Therefore, as recognised by the excellent report of the UN Task Team in June 2012, an overall focus on human progress/development that includes a commitment to promote peace and reduce violence – not just as a foundation for poverty reduction but as good in itself – is needed.

10. What time horizon should we set for the next phase in the global development agenda (eg. 10, 15, 25 years, or a combination)?

The UN Task Team was also right to argue in its 2011 report that longer timeframes ‘may suffer from weaker political accountability, because deadlines would be beyond the watch of the leaders who approve them’. A 15-year timeframe for the new framework would balance the need to pursue long-term change with the sense of urgency that befits a truly ambitious new global framework. Likewise, the world has changed significantly since the year 2000 – a 15-year timeframe for the new framework would provide for revision of the new framework before it becomes outdated.

Themes and content of a new framework

14. Which issues were missing from the MDGs and should now be included?

One of the main gaps in the MDG framework has been the failure to focus on the challenges that have held back human development in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The key neglected challenges that have been omitted from the mainstream vision of development hitherto are insecurity, injustice, disregard for human rights, and concomitant failures to make states fully inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable toward society.

Neglect of these issues has diminished the relevance and applicability of the MDG framework in conflict affected and fragile states, and contributed to the failure to spot emerging fragility pre-emptively in many societies that have been presumed stable before lapsing into violence. Thanks to, inter alia, the *World Development Report 2011* and the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), there is now growing consensus as to the gaps that need to be filled to address conflict and violence, and

¹⁴ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Structures for Peace*, (2011), p 2.

¹⁵ Keefer P., *Conflict and disaster*, World Bank, Development Research Group, (March 2009).

to prevent societies from lapsing into violence. Saferworld research from September 2012¹⁶ identifies that the current MDG framework does not include goals and targets in the following six issue areas that are prioritised within six of the most prominent contemporary peacebuilding frameworks:

- All states are able to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably
- All social groups can participate in the decisions that affect society
- All social groups have equal access to justice
- All social groups have access to fair, accountable social service delivery
- All social groups feel secure
- The international community is effectively addressing the external stresses that lead to conflict.

In addition to maintaining a focus on access to decent livelihoods (with increased emphasis on equal access for different groups), these are the key peacebuilding issues, fundamental to successful human development, that need to be explored and included in the new post-2015 framework.

**15. How should a new framework incorporate the institutional building blocks of sustained prosperity, such as freedom, justice, peace and effective government?
AND**

16. How should a new framework reflect the particular challenges of the poor living in conflict and post-conflict situations?

For the post-2015 framework to overcome conflict and violence, it must address the drivers that in context after context cause conflict and violence around the world. As the Saferworld analysis from September 2012 outlined above notes, there is considerable agreement among six contemporary peacebuilding frameworks on the priorities for sustainable peacebuilding – but these priorities are largely absent from the existing MDGs. A November 2012 paper from Saferworld goes deeper into the evidence on this. It asks two questions: ‘what are the key challenges to peacebuilding and development in conflict-affected and fragile contexts?’ and ‘what works in addressing them?’ The multi-country studies reviewed by Saferworld for this paper reaffirm a similar set of key issues to those highlighted in Saferworld’s September briefing:

- the ability of states to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably
- transparency, accountability and controls on corruption
- fair access to social services and resources
- voice and participation in decision-making
- reducing violence and making the public feel secure
- ending impunity and ensuring access to justice
- shared economic growth and opportunities for decent livelihoods
- ensuring equality between social groups – especially between men and women
- reconciliation and tolerance between different social groups¹⁷

On each of these key issues, our research points to the evidence provided by multi-country research and accepted in multilateral policy discourse to illustrate what works in addressing these key issues. High Level Panel members should take this evidence into account as they consider priority issues that should be included in the post-2015 framework.

¹⁶ Saferworld, *Approaching post-2015 from a peace perspective*, (2012), p 4-7.

¹⁷ Saferworld, *Addressing conflict and violence from 2015 - Issue Paper 2: What are the key challenges? What works in addressing them?*, (November 2012).

17. How can we universalize goals and targets while being consistent with national priorities and targets?

Saferworld recognises the value of local, national and regional-specific planning and sequencing to identify how to reach global targets and measures on conflict – particularly as conflict sensitivity requires locally specific prioritisation and sequencing. Nonetheless it is still possible to have global targets that uphold shared progress towards universal commitments that are valid in all contexts. We feel that any framework designed according to the individual circumstances of each country or region would risk simply being ‘every country having its own MDGs’. This would not result in a clear, global framework at all so much as a collection of national plans – which most countries already have. If this was the case, the new global framework would risk losing its power to direct international attention and spending priorities towards priority issues, as well as to enable conversations in-country about the progressive targets set in the international sphere.

Although each context is different, tackling conflict and violence is in the shared interest of all countries. Our response to question 16 above also clarifies some key characteristics that are hallmarks of sustainably peaceful societies the world over. It is these things that the new global framework should commit countries to and incentivise and measure countries’ progress towards.

It will not be enough to have aspirational goals and leave targets and indicators to be set at the national level. Instead, common targets can be created that still leave room for countries to benchmark where they are, prioritise and sequence according to what makes sense in context, receive assistance according to their need, and take credit for all progress made.

Partnership and accountability for development**19. How specific should the Panel be with recommendations on means of implementation, including development assistance, finance, technology, capacity building, trade and other actions?**

The High Level Fora on Aid/Development Effectiveness have focused on agreeing principles and ways of working to achieve development results. All willing nations have been encouraged to subscribe to these, and a sizeable majority of UN member states have done so following extensive global consultation. The post-2015 debate should neither duplicate this discussion, nor set up parallel commitments. It is important to keep the post-2015 debate focused on defining a shared vision for human development goals, with measurable targets and indicators, and to avoid a lengthy re-articulation of standards and principles covered by other processes. While they provide solid foundations that can be referred to as a basis for development progress, the detail of existing human rights instruments and aid effectiveness agreements cannot be duplicated in the post-2015 framework if it is to be succinct and therefore meaningful.

Nonetheless, if recommendations are made on means of implementation, it is very important to note that successful human development is not only or primarily about aid – coherent political, economic and security actions are fundamental to development progress. Nor is development determined only by the actions of and relationships between governments: a range of actors, including the private sector, civil society and the public, need to co-operate in mutually accountable ways to achieve development goals. Two conclusions follow: firstly, it is valid for the post-2015 framework to contain commitments that will be pursued through non-aid activities where required; secondly, some of the commitments in the new framework should be designed to foster constructive partnerships as well as to curb practices that threaten development. This said, the architects of the post-2015 framework should not seek to prescribe how each of the goals and targets will be pursued.

20. How can accountability mechanisms be strengthened? What kind of monitoring process should be established? How can transparency and more inclusive global governance be used to facilitate achievement of the development agenda?

Accountability of the new framework is a challenging but critical issue. To make progress, the apparent consensus that indicators should be built up from already existing data may need to be more strongly challenged: we should ask ‘what is our vision?’ and ‘what are the targets?’ before we ask ‘how do we monitor?’ Developing capacity to monitor the right things will require changing what we measure and building capacities. Country ownership of monitoring may be desirable but independence and credibility of monitoring is essential.

The value of any monitoring process will depend on data quality. More data is available on key peace-related issues than is often assumed, but there is also broad consensus in existing literature on common weaknesses of the available data and indices.¹⁸ Investment in better capacity for independent collection of data – particularly in fragile contexts – needs to be more prominent in current debates.

Getting the indicators right will be difficult. When measuring peacebuilding progress, changes in capacity are not the same as better outcomes – and better outcomes are not enough unless they generate confidence among all social groups. Therefore no single indicator can in every context tell a full, fair story about progress. Peace-related commitments in the new framework will need to be monitored with a combination of three indicator types:

- Capacity Indicators – is the capacity developing to address the key issue?
- 'Objective' Situation Indicators – do statistical measures of actual societal situations show that improvements are being achieved?
- Public Perceptions Indicators – does the public feel that an improvement is occurring? These are particularly important for peacebuilding purposes.

None of these will by itself present a full, reliable picture – but when combined each indicator type can validate the other – helping to avoid misleading results and perverse incentives.

Disaggregation of indicators makes it possible to spot differences in access to resources, services and benefits between ethnic, religious, class, caste, gender, age and income groups. This is crucial: tackling such inequalities is central to achieving fairness and tackling conflict.

Finally, global indicators are only of value if they are limited to upholding progress on a short list of priorities that are genuinely universal. Some indicators that could be progressive in one context could have unintended, harmful impacts in another: these must be avoided.

Shaping global consensus for the goals

23. How can we build and sustain global consensus for a new framework, involving member states, the private sector and civil society?

The post-2015 framework will have little impact on poverty if its designers are not bold enough to include issues of inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable state-society relations, as well as provision of security and justice to poor people. Policy dialogue on this should begin early, be truly global and open to perspectives from North, South, East and West. Original research by Saferworld on the perspectives of influential countries on conflict and violence issues in the post-2015 debate has helped identify important considerations for building consensus on key peacebuilding issues.¹⁹ The key to agreement on peace and security aspects of the post-2015 framework may depend on cultivating the shared recognition that promoting sustainable peace is in the interest of all states.

As well as a discussion about what is good for development, many member states will view the discussion as about something that may well be applied to their own domestic contexts – and to resist commitments that are perceived to strengthen norms of external interference in sovereign affairs or to prescribe particular models of governance or conflict management. If the post-2015 framework can articulate a shared, depoliticised vision for upstream conflict prevention that in no way supports norms of external interference, this could satisfy a range of different interests at play. A departure point for dialogue is that the new framework will be voluntary, and will neither be a basis for interventionism nor have any bearing on state sovereignty. Dialogue can also help a consensus to emerge around language that does not shy away from the reality of poverty and its true causes, but at the same time is not divisive and builds trust among all nations.

¹⁸ For example: measures that rely on expert opinion carry the risk of subjective bias; survey data can be inconsistent across contexts due to factors such as linguistic and cultural difference, and many existing surveys do not ask the same questions consistently, are not conducted at regular intervals and are not sufficiently disaggregated by identity group; cross-country comparison of official data can also be misleading depending on capacity, definitions under which different phenomena such as crimes are recorded, differences in reporting rates, political factors etc; some existing aggregated indexes on fragility, peacebuilding, statebuilding or governance have been criticised for questionable weighting of different sub-indicators, over-reliance on expert opinion and arbitrary cut-off points in the data; however, at the same time, any set of indicators that aims to measure such a complex process as peacebuilding and statebuilding in too simplistic terms is likely to present a partial or skewed picture.

¹⁹ Saferworld, *Addressing conflict and violence from 2015 - Issue Paper 3: Rising powers and conflict*, (November 2012).

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict. We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in almost 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

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