

Leaving No One Behind!

'Post 2015: heading towards a new future? From Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'.

SLIDE 1

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen!

It is a privilege to be here with you today and a great honour to give this lecture here at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Groningen. I have precious memories from my time as a student at this University. As a newcomer to The Netherlands, I experienced a very welcoming and supportive attitude at this University and especially by this Faculty.

Today it is good to be back, now as the director of Oxfam Novib, a leading Dutch development NGO, part of Oxfam, a global alliance of development organisations.

The timing of this lecture couldn't have been better, as we are at a critical juncture for global governance and international cooperation.

We are part of a privileged generation:

- Never before have so many people enjoyed prosperity and wealth,
- Never before have people had so many opportunities to develop their talents and realize their potential
- Never before people have been so close to each other, new and old technologies make virtual borders disappear and allow people to connect with each other.

We are privileged and blessed as we are gathering here!

At the same time we are facing huge challenges:

- Billions of people around the world are living in extreme poverty. More than 1,3 billion people have to survive on less than 1,25 \$ a day.
- Seven out of ten people in the world live in a country where the gap between rich and poor is worse than thirty years ago. Inequality is widespread, systemic, and growing, as a result of policies and practices of governments, companies and consumers.
- One in nine people go hungry to bed.
- Climate Change is already impacting daily lives of millions of men and women around the globe. And yet some people, politicians and governments are in state of denial.

- In the failed and fragile states we witness an explosive mix of all these issues together while bad or weak governance leaves people with no perspective for a better future.

However, the year 2015 could become a crucial year in which we are finally facing these challenges. COULD. To make this actually happen the world leaders need to take the right decisions... and more important: they need to act on them accordingly.

Two important global events are planned for this year:

In a few weeks from now world leaders will gather in **New York for the annual meeting of UN general assembly**. The expectation is that they will confirm the newly agreed post 2015 development agenda, which includes 17 so-called Sustainable Development Goals. In the mean time preparations for **the UN climate Summit in Paris in December** are on their way. The Paris Summit's objective is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, for all nations across the globe.

For me these events are connected because they address the interrelated crises of our time: inequality & extreme poverty, war & conflict fuelled by violent extremism, and the effects of climate change, which impact all these developments across the board. As immediate direct expression of these crises we are also witnessing an unprecedented human movement. The world today has the biggest number of refugees and displaced persons since Second World War: by the end of 2014; 60 million people were displaced.¹

Bringing together a vast majority of the world's leadership, the two events I mentioned present opportunities for the world to agree on an ambitious and comprehensive global agenda for the future of world. An agenda that will set the world on an ambitious course

...to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030,

...to finally tackle climate change and

...to preserve our planet for future generations.

That is why I think there couldn't be a more suitable point in time/ moment for me to be back in Groningen and to talk to you about the post 2015 agenda.

¹ UN MDG Report, July 2014

*In the coming 45 minutes I will share with you my perspective on the challenges for development cooperation, as well as the solutions to the huge problems our societies are facing. But most important, my main message, that I would like to convey to you today, is that in dealing with these challenges, we need to secure that **we leave no one behind!***

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But before talking about the future, I would like to spend some time on previous promises and global agreements on ending poverty. I can imagine that some of you seriously doubt the need and benefits of global agreements or in particular international development cooperation and multilateralism, but I hope that my contribution today will show that there is an urgent need for reaching global agreements, in order for the world to deal with the global threats we are facing.

On 8th September 2000, 15 years ago the world leaders declared the following:

“We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. “

To achieve the high hopes of this Millennium Declaration eight concrete goals were defined: the so called Millennium Development Goals aimed to put an end to horrible, extreme poverty, child and maternal mortality, disease and famine in large parts of the World by 2015! That means now!

With the MDGs the world defined a vision for a better world for more people around the globe at the turn of the millennium.

Lets take a minute and look at these goals were all about

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The Millennium Development Goals are to:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- (2) Achieve universal primary education
- (3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- (4) Reduce child mortality
- (5) Improve maternal health
- (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- (7) Ensure environmental sustainability; and

(8) Develop a global partnership for development

Did it make any sense to have these concrete goals? Yes. To have concrete global goals mattered!

1. These global goals created a collective agenda for all the relevant actors working on development and international cooperation. Governments, multilateral organizations, international financial institutions and NGOs- all worked towards realizing these common goals.
2. The MDGs were concrete, measurable and time-bound. For the first time since the beginning of global development cooperation it was possible to measure progress. We all know the sometimes very polemic debates on whether aid helps are not. Whether poor countries make any progress or not. The achievements made because of these concrete goals, I will talk about them in a minute, cannot exclusively be attributed to international aid. However, there is no doubt that international cooperation among governments, specialized UN agencies like UNICEF or UN Women and NGOs such as Oxfam contributed to it.
3. In some countries because of MDGs baselines had to be defined and relevant data had to be collected. Nowadays everybody knows how precious data is. Evidence based development work is no stranger to professionals in the field of international cooperation. And this is a huge achievement.
4. In the past 15 years the annual progress reports on the MDGs, have made very clear where the most difficult challenges for change and progress in people's lives lay. Development is not only a technical or a bureaucratic process: it is first and foremost a social transformation. It requires among others accountable and legitimate governance, engaged people, strong civil society, rule of law, fair markets and a socially responsible private sector.

And having concrete global goals matter because a lot of concrete results have been achieved since then. Let us take 3 examples: The base line for targets was the situation in 1990.

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Extreme poverty declined by half! That means about 900 million people less living below the extreme poverty line.

SLIDE 5

The under 5 mortality rate fell considerably, although we did not achieve our target yet!

SLIDE 6

Also the number of people newly infected with HIV Aids has decreased, especially in low and middle-income countries.

In general, while some goals like **MDG 1** can be celebrated as a success, other goals have not been met.

MDG 2 aimed at equal primary school access for every child, boys and girls alike. Still today not every child goes to school although total school enrolment rose to 91%. The biggest progress was achieved in Sub Saharan Africa, with a 20% increase in the net enrolment rate from 2000 to 2015 compared to a gain of 8% between 1990 and 2000.

However, a big problem is that when girls are in primary school and parents suddenly lack the money to send their kids to school (for example because food prices rise or there is a famine) girls get more often taken out of school than boys.

This brings me to another MDG – **MDG 3** concerned with gender equality between women and men –, which hasn't been achieved. A couple of indicators were used to monitor the achievement of this goal. One of them was to measure gender parity in primary and secondary education. As I mentioned we see a huge progress in the number of girls going to primary schools. This is the case in most regions and full gender parity is achieved in Eastern and South Eastern Asia. For secondary and tertiary education, however, the gender gap still needs to be closed, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia (countries like Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan). The attacks on Malala Youssefsai from Pakistan who continued her education beyond primary school and the plight of the Chibok girls abducted in Nigeria who have also gone to secondary school, illustrate high price girls and young women pay for their education and self-determination.

Another indicator for the achievement of MDG 3 was the number of women in Parliament. As a former parliamentarian I personally know how important is that a diversity of voices is represented in the political arena. While there are now more women in parliament- 174 countries out of 192 countries have women in parliament- still only one in 5 members of Parliament are women (20%).

Even though we have been successful in achieving the MDGs, looking beyond the numbers reveals big differences between countries and between regions. In some countries, progress has been enormous. Countries like Vietnam or Cambodia in South East Asia show a huge success in poverty alleviation, which can be seen in that basic public services like education and health care are now available for the majority of the people. In Sub Sahara Africa there is less progress regarding all the MDGs. There are also big disparities between urban and rural areas, between the richest and the poorest people within a country (for example even in Sub-Sahara Africa the children of rich parents are much more likely to access and complete all levels of schooling). For women and girls, and the most marginalized members of society for example such as older people, disabled people, or indigenous communities the disparities are the biggest.

There is one MDG that we need to have closer look at:

In order to achieve the MDG1-7, governments agreed a global partnership was needed; That ambition was formulated in MDG 8 (*aimed at achieving a global partnership for development: including a fair trading and financial system, dealing with debt, providing access to affordable essential drugs etc*).²

In particular I want to pay attention to one essential element of MDG 8: Overseas Development Assistance- short: ODA. (In normal language official aid) Rich countries organized under the auspices of the OECD promised to allocate 0.7% of their annual GDP for ODA- this agreement was also reflected in MDG 8.

Positive in terms of the achievement of MDG 8 is that worldwide ODA increased by 66% in real terms (so adjusting for inflation) between 2000 and 2014, reaching to \$135.2 billion in 2015

BUT: even though aid flows increased, these do not match the financing needs of the MDGs. The World Bank estimated in 2002 that in order to achieve MDG 1, it was estimated that we would already need a staggering amount of 39 to 50 billion dollar. This figure would be additional to existing aid flows (!), which reached 58 billion dollar in 2002 (2002 OECD data) and this figure does not account for funds needed to implement reforms at country level which would ensure that aid would arrive effectively.

Assume we need about a conservative 30 billion dollar for each target- the costing figures for MDG 3 on gender indicated a similar need as for MDG 1, then the total need for 7 MDGs would be about 240 billion USD per year- so while aid flows increased to 135,2 billion USD, they would fall 100 billion short of what is actually needed in this conservative estimation.

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In the case of ODA, the Netherlands doesn't stand out. Until 2010 our country was a generous donor and provided an annual 0.8% of its annual GDP towards ODA, as official aid.

² Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system, address the special needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries, in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries and in cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

Since 2010, Dutch aid dropped sharply to a projected 0.58 % of GDP towards aid in 2015. A further decline is expected over the coming years as well as an additional cut to ODA of 1 billion EUR in 2017. While Dutch politicians these days are celebrating the economic growth again there is unfortunately no attempt by current coalition partners to correct the situation and to fulfil the international commitments our country has committed itself to.

An Unfinished Job

The conclusion is that despite huge achievements there is still a big, unfinished job waiting for us to take on. In addition, extreme inequality and climate change, religious extremism and gender inequality are not only problems of poor and underdeveloped countries. These are universal problems, affecting rich and poor, North and South. A report published by Oxfam (Even it up! Time to end extreme inequality) shows that in 2016 the richest 1% of the world will have 50% of the wealth of the world.

Climate change is already a reality of our lives today and it will impact the economy and environment in California, Mali, Brazil and Vanuatu, as it will do in the Netherlands. Today, we emit 50% more CO₂, as compared to the 1990s, further causing global warming and rising sea levels are inevitable. The environmental consequences of climate change are felt harder in least developed and middle income countries. Poor countries are less able to guard themselves against the impact of environmental degradation.

Cross-border political tensions, conflict and war showcase the fragility of our efforts to reduce poverty and increase economic development. The number of people escaping war and conflicts is rising. 86% of the world's refugees are today in developing countries with Turkey, Lebanon and Pakistan each hosting more than one million refugees.

Only a small percentage of people from a country like Syria will try to seek refuge in Europe after 5 years of war and terrorism. This summer many of these refugees died in Mediterranean Sea while trying to cross it to come to Europe. No single country or region on the Earth can hedge themselves from the rest of the World. Neither can any single country or region solve these challenges alone.

A universal Agenda is needed!

Therefore, the world needs a universal plan of action. An inclusive agenda that takes everybody on board and takes particular care of the needs of the poorest on this Earth. Civil Society Organizations, like Oxfam, have been calling for such an agenda for many years now. Luckily now a coherent and comprehensive agenda for change in form of the post 2015 development agenda and new development goals have been agreed at the beginning of August. At the UN Summit on 25 September in New York, world leaders will formally adopt the new agenda.

This agenda consist of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with 169 targets to reach in 2030. Is it too many? No. It shows the complexity and the magnitude of the challenges of our time.

SLIDE 8

These are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
- Goal 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies
- Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

So, as an individual living in a country like the Netherlands these goals would seem obvious. One of the major novelties of the SDGs is the fact that there are universal goals- applicable to developed and developing countries alike.. I will come back to it in a minute.

The SDG-agenda has been presented by Ban Ki Moon as the people's agenda. However, is it truly a people's agenda? On a positive note: the post 2015 framework and new SDGs are quite an achievement. The process to come to this agenda in itself has been quite unique in the history of United Nations. A consultative process in different regions engaged about 5 million people from across the world in defining this agenda.

A special website was launched and under the hashtag " #TheWorldWeWant" people from all over could give their opinion on what the new SDGs should look like. Through its website and on the ground, the UN has organized consultations in almost all of the low and middle-income countries and regions.

Not only because of the process also because their substance, I would say the post 2015 agenda and its 17 global goals incorporate a number of elements of a transformative agenda , one that would finish the unfinished job of the MDGs and one that would help us to collectively tackle the challenges of our time. The agenda is based on a key principle, the principle of **Leave No One Behind**. This means that the SDGs will have to be met for for all members of society- so all socio-economic groups and marginalized people- women and girls, the old and the young, people with disabilities, indigenous people or people discriminated against for other reasons for example because of their sexuality and gender. The post 2015 agenda is also rooted in the indivisibility of human rights-, which is expressed in the principle of **Leaving No one Behind** and is also made explicit in the text.

This is important progress compared to the MDG, which lacked a rights-based approach. The new global goals address core development challenges the MDGs did not tackle such as climate change, income inequality, sustainable consumption and production, fragility or quality education. In particular I am very happy with the new comprehensive gender equality goal, which targets core women's rights issues such as discrimination and violence against women and girls.

I am very excited about this achievement.

Governments have promised that they can be held accountable for achieving the SDGs.. We can hold our governments accountable for meeting these goals

We are a generation with the means to end extreme poverty and inequality. We can achieve prosperity for all people within planetary boundaries.

The pressing question is how to deliver and realize this agenda? What are absolute conditions and which actions are needed to realize the ambition of the SDGs

In my opinion there are three conditions that need to be met, if we want to deliver this ambitious agenda:

- 1. Political Will:** for achieving these global goals tough political decisions are needed. And more important: resources must be made available. Harmful rules in international trade, international investments and international tax system must be changed.

The success of the SDGs and post 2015 framework relies significantly on the means available to achieve their implementation. As we enter the post-2015 era, we are faced with a huge unmet need for financial resources to tackle some of the major challenges of our time. Not billions, but trillions are needed. And obviously, this is one of our big concerns: will there be enough financial resources for implementation of this universal agenda? The MDGs were never fully financed because donor governments never met their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their annual GDP towards development.

The signs are not very promising. In July of this year the third conference on Financing Development took place in Addis Ababa. Unfortunately the Addis conference has not delivered the kind of transformative Agenda that is needed to close the development finance gap. In Addis governments recommitted to allocating 0.7% of their GDP towards aid- this is an important step. However, there was no agreement on making this commitment time-bound and actionable. Addis also failed to address the huge burden on the poorest countries to finance adaptation to climate change. They are carrying the big burden of climate change, extreme weather, floods and draughts, and yet they have not caused the problem! They need financial, technological support. They need the knowledge to deal with consequences of Climate change.

It is unacceptable that more and more aid is used as public climate finance. In Paris summit on climate change end of this year, governments need to put a stop to the diversion of existing aid to address climate change. We need new and predictable resources instead.

Domestic resource mobilization, for example through taxes, is critical to deliver basic public services, vital infrastructure and much needed investments in agriculture and food security. However, global tax rules are unfair and developing countries lose around 100 billion dollar each year on tax dodging.

Big corporations use countries, like the Netherlands as a tax haven by registering their company here and not paying taxes in the country they operate. Australian mining company Paladin used mailbox companies to avoid paying taxes for its operations in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. Oxfam supports the proposal of developing countries to reform global tax governance. Unfortunately this was not agreed in Addis Ababa, the Netherlands was one of the countries against such a global tax reform.

Investment in fair tax systems in low and middle-income country is vital too, next to supporting more transparent budgetary processes with public accountability. Some donors launched the 'Addis Tax Initiative' (also supported by Netherlands), which aims to strengthen developing countries' tax authorities. Initiatives like these are more than welcome. But we should be under no illusions as these initiatives can never be a substitute for fundamental changes to the global tax system.

- 2. We must make SDGs a true people's agenda. People are the ones who can ensure the agenda will be delivered.** Actions on climate change, increased aid, more multilateral cooperation, fundamental reforms on tax rules, sustainable ways of produc-

tion and consumption, all of these issues require engagement and pressure from the people.. In countries like The Netherlands, we need people's support for development cooperation and the SDGs, without it, we will lose the battle.

3. And finally we need a partnership of everybody in order to deliver this transformative **change and end poverty and injustice** in the lifetime of our generation. **We need to align our forces.** This means that civil society organizations, media, corporate sector and universities and knowledge institutions are all needed for this agenda. No one can do everything and achieve all but we all together can achieve a lot.

When leaders adopt the SDGs in September our work is just beginning. Those noble pledges need to be translated into concrete development outcomes that bring positive change in poor people's lives.

To conclude: the new post 2015 agenda and the SDGs are a great opportunity for all of us. We must believe that the great promises of these global goals can be achieved and we absolutely want to leave no one behind.

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In April 2014 I visited Gao in Northern Mali. Just a few months before my visit, the city was liberated from extremist groups who occupied and ruled the city for almost one year.

In Gao I met this woman: Amina. I listened to the horrific stories about what she encountered during the time of occupation by the extremists, the challenges she is facing now, but most of all, I listened to her hopes for a better future.

When I talk about leaving no one behind I just try to think what this would mean for Amina.

- * I imagine that She enjoys a peaceful, safe and secure life. No extremist beats her and violates her rights in the name of any religion,
- * I imagine that she as a small farmer enjoys sustainable and secured income and livelihoods, has access to finances, to inputs, and knowledge required to adapt her way of farming to the changed climate,
- * I imagine that she enjoys accessible and affordable health care she needs as she gets older
- * I imagine that her daughter can marry the man she chooses and delivers her children safely,
- * I imagine that her son has a decent job and an attractive economic perspective, so that he does not need to leave Gao, to take an uncertain and dangerous journey by boat across the Mediterranean Sea, in search for a better life.

There are still millions of Amina's left behind, excluded and marginalized. To me and for many people who support our work, this is the shame of our time. We must act. As individuals, as citizens, as civil society organizations, as companies and as universities!

Together we must contribute to realizing the dream of a just and equitable world for all and we must influence our leaders to take the courageous decisions that are needed.

Ambitious dreams need courageous leaders. AND

Courageous people make courageous leaders.

I believe in the power of people for change!

Thank you very much for your attention