Myanmar's Experiences with the Millennium Development Goals and Perspectives on the Post-2015 Agenda
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1. Introduction

In 2001 the international community set itself a target date of 2015 to achieve the key objectives of the historic United Nations Millennium Declaration committing nations worldwide to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015 - that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the deadline for these MDGs approaching, national and global discussions have started on the progress made as well as on the effectiveness of the MDG framework and what might usefully succeed it post 2015.

Due to the Government of Myanmar’s focus on taking forward its reform process, national discussions on the effectiveness of the MDG framework and a potential development framework beyond 2015, have not yet been prioritized. However, given Myanmar’s recent and largely successful reform efforts, including a focus on poverty alleviation through a combination of people-centered development and bottom-up planning many within the international community are now eager to better understand Myanmar’s views with regard to the post-2015 global development agenda. More recently, Myanmar has participated in several global discussions, including the 2nd Briefing Session on the Post 2015 Development Agenda in Bangkok in November last year and the 4th High Level Meeting on the Post 2015 Development Agenda in Bali in March of this year.

With the Government of Myanmar (GOM) currently being at a cross-road in the country's transition towards people-centered development, there is much that can be learned from international development experiences. Similarly, Myanmar has much to offer those processes dedicated to taking forward the post-2015 global development agenda. Given the context of an intensifying global debate on a development framework beyond 2015 and Myanmar’s current chairmanship of ASEAN, it is important that Myanmar starts preparing a comprehensive and coordinated position on the MDG framework and a global post 2015 development framework. From mid-July until mid-September, 2013, The Myanmar Development Resource Institute- Center for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) undertook intensive research on Myanmar’s experiences with the MDGs and the post 2015 international development agenda. More specifically, the objective of this research was to examine Myanmar’s experiences with the MDGs and the international processes related to the development of a set of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build
upon the MDGs and converge with the post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, the research aimed at collecting suggestions from Myanmar civil society and policy makers for the global post-2015 development agenda and related goals, targets, indicators and modalities for the new targets and goals.

This brief outlines the findings of this research and was written for use for members of the Government of Myanmar who are undertaking work on MDGs, the post-2015 international development agenda and the development of new SDGs through engagement with the international Open Working Group of the United Nations General Assembly on SDGs and other regional processes. Section 3 contains an overview of Myanmar's MDG achievements, section 4 goes into the global post-2015 framework and on-going worldwide activities and discussions, and sections 5 and 6 offer the views of Myanmar's civil society and policy-makers on post-2015, Section 7 subsequently outlines several suggestions for the way forward. The findings are based on an intensive literature review, focus groups and individual interviews with 37 national civil society groups from urban and rural areas (from 65 invited) which in total worked across issues related to all the MDGs, and focus group and individual interviews with 19 parliamentarians and government officials.

2. Executive Summary

The Government of Myanmar (GOM) is at a cross-roads in the country's transition. First among the GOM's priorities is poverty reduction. On August 9th, 2013 the President outlined the Integrated Action Plan for the second 30 months of this government, which highlighted the implementation of a people-centered development approach based on the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR). As Myanmar begins its leadership of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and prepares for the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), developing such policies that ensure that socio-economic profits reach the people is more critical than ever. This policy paper suggests that the Integrated Action Plan for the next 30 months envisioned by the President in his speech can use the indicators of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as targets for socio-economic achievements in Myanmar over the next two and a half years. In addition, the global dialogue on the development of the post-2015 international development agenda and the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could help inform the National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP) as it being finalized and ensure its alignment with Myanmar's international commitments. New post-2015 goals and targets and the lessons learned from the MDGs may be integrated into national and decentralized planning, with the possibility for an emphasis on contextualized targets at state and regional levels.

Myanmar has the opportunity for government policy and planning at all levels, including the NCDP that will build on the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR), to be developed

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1 The FESR, which went into effect in December, 2012, serves as an interim guidance document for the GOM until the 20-year National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCPD) is finalized. In addition to setting out the central themes of poverty reduction, growth with equity and rural development, the FESR set out priorities, sequencing and sector plans for government reform.
addressing new goals and targets produced at the outcome of the post-2015 process. Intensified capacity building for policymakers and implementers in every government level and sector will be crucial in achieving remaining MDGs and future post-2015 goals.

A post-2015 global development agenda is currently being developed by the international community. The MDGs expire in 2015 and will be replaced with new SDGs, which will help monitor the progress of the post-2015 global agenda. Potential goals, targets, indicators and time frames for the new SDGs are currently being defined by the international community through a variety of discussions. Once a final draft of the new SDGs has been created in 2014 using the input from these discussions and other contributions, a final version will later be agreed upon by the United Nations General Assembly.

Myanmar can influence the international post-2015 development agenda through the UN and other inter-governmental processes and through its ASEAN leadership. While 2015 is a critical year in Myanmar’s transition, the convergence of the Myanmar government’s people-centered approach with the bottom-up development approach driving the international post-2015 agenda development offers Myanmar not only the chance to learn from the experience of others, but also to contribute to the global discussion. The President’s emphasis on public service delivery and the committee to appraise such service delivery fit squarely with the emphasis on good governance in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in June, 2012 (Rio+20). And during the development of this brief members of Myanmar’s government, policymakers and civil society made a variety of suggestions on the post-2015 agenda. They also made recommendations for both the content and form of new SDG goals, targets and indicators. These actors hold that bottom-up, people-centered, inter-ministerial and cross-sector policy development and planning is needed for Myanmar to meet post-2015 international goals and commitments. Myanmar’s civil society and policymakers suggest that the global post-2015 agenda and new SDGs should build on MDG lessons learned. In general, they feel that SDGs should be developed under “common but differentiated responsibilities” principles (CBDR), retain unmet MDG targets and include separate targets for developed and developing countries, while allowing localized targets/indicators.

3. The Millennium Development Goals

MDGs are eight international development goals officially endorsed by all 189 UN member states in 2000. Designed to address economic and social conditions in the world poorest countries, the MDGs are to be met by 2015. Each goal has quantifiable, time-bound targets with indicators developed by appropriate technical bodies. The eight MDGs are:

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education,
MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empowering women,
MDG 4: Reduce child mortality rates,
MDG 5: Improve maternal health,
MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability, and
MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development.

3.1 National MDG Achievements in Myanmar

According to the Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, produced by the Myanmar Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar has accelerated progress towards achieving the MDGs. Further progress is needed, however, in order for Myanmar to reach all targets by 2015.

Myanmar has made notable achievements in areas such as poverty, hunger reduction, the primary level net enrollment ratio, the literate rate for 15-24 year olds, births attended by skilled health personnel, improved sources of drinking water, sanitation, and the mortality rate for both children under the age of 1 year and under the age of 5 years. The incidence of poverty decreased from 32 per cent in 2005 to 28 per cent in 2010. The government's target to reduce poverty to 16 per cent by 2015 could be achieved, based on past trends, the forecasted growth - if it is inclusive, improvements in agricultural output and productivity, in the livestock and fisheries sector, accelerated reforms and effective assistance by the development partners.

Myanmar has made gains in literacy and basic education and should achieve the literacy target set for 15-24 year olds (MDG 2). However, Myanmar is unlikely to meet target for primary school completion. Myanmar has met the MDG 3 target seeking to eliminate gender disparity in education, but has yet achieved parity of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. The country also has a lower proportion of national parliament seats held by women than many other countries. While child survival has improved in Myanmar, it may not reach MDG4's target for child mortality reduction. Similarly, despite progress, Myanmar may not reach by 2015 the MDG 5 targets of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters and achieving universal access to reproductive health, although the number of births attended by skilled personnel has increased.

Myanmar has reached target 6A (reducing the incidence rate of HIV infection) in MDG 6 but has not achieved universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS or halted and begun to reverse the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) by 2015. Progress toward meeting the targets of MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability) is mixed, with 79 per cent of the population accessing an improved sanitation facility. There has been improved access to improved drinking water but with decreased access to safe drinking water. While the Myanmar government is committed to protecting Myanmar's biodiversity and forest cover, the country lost 11 per cent of its forest cover between 1990 and 2010.

With the lifting of sanctions and various restrictions, official development assistance (ODA) has increased to Myanmar (MDG 8) and changes in some highly regulated sectors are continuing. Myanmar's progress toward MDG 8 has included an increased emphasis on good governance,
development and poverty reduction. The country's debt sustainability has improved with the reduction of principal payments and internet and telephone access has increased.

3.2 State and Regional Analysis

Eradicating poverty is GOM's primary policy objective as the country continues its transition. Poverty incidence is around twice as high in rural than urban areas, with the result that rural areas account for almost 85 per cent of total poverty. (FESR, paragraph 12). The disparity between states and regions in MDG achievement (see Table 1) highlights how MDGs can be used to assess progress toward in different parts of the country. While the overall Union poverty rate is 25.09 per cent, differences between states range from 11.4 per cent in Kayah State to 42.63 per cent in Rakhine State. Analyzing MDGs at state and regional levels could help government and other actors determine how to best channel resources to achieve more consistent living standards and MDG results throughout the country.

As participants in the development of this brief noted, the development of sub-national MDGs or SDGs could give Myanmar an important tool in reducing socio-economic differences and an important pillar for decentralized planning processes at state and regional level. The ASEAN Roadmap for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals also proposed the development of sub-national MDG indicators, thus encouraging local ownership and leadership. Such localized MDGs or SDGs could allow for plans to address regional and state variations in issues such as gender matters in relation to local cultural and religious practice, local issues relating to area-specific peace processes, border trade and associated legal and law enforcement problems such as those related to drug and human trafficking, and other local sustainability and poverty concerns.

Table 1: Comparative Studies of Millennium Develop Goals by State & Region (2011-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Region</th>
<th>MDG-1 Poverty Rate (per cent)</th>
<th>MDG-2 School Enrollment Rate</th>
<th>MDG-3 Student-Teacher Ratio</th>
<th>MDG-4 Child Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)</th>
<th>MDG-5 Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)</th>
<th>MDG-6 Proportion of Births Attended by Skilled Personnel (per cent)</th>
<th>MDG-7 Population-Doctors Ratio</th>
<th>MDG-8 Proportion of Land Covered by Forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kachin</td>
<td>28.03</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.39</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>65.77</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>58.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs

In June 2012, government delegates from 188 countries met at Rio+20 to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. There governments agreed that SDGs should be elaborated as part of a post-2015 global development agenda. UN delegates also formally backed a decade-long initiative to decouple economic growth from the unsustainable use of natural resources, the 10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YF). The Secretary-General of the UN was charged with oversight for the development of the post-2015 international development agenda and the new SDGs. The final negotiated version of the new SDGs will be approved by the UN General Assembly.

4.1 Dimensions

The Rio+20 outcome document declared that the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda should address the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, economic and social). SDGs should be action oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries. At the same time, delegates wanted SDGs to take into account different national realities, capacities, levels of development, national policies and priorities.
Rio+20 also mandated that the new SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda should be developed with the full involvement of governments, civil society, the scientific community and the UN system, which provides technical support, analysis and lessons learned via the UN Technical Support Team. The Secretary General appointed a High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLPEP) and an Open Working Group of the General Assembly (OWG) to advise on the post-2015 development work framework and on the SDGs. Countries at Rio+20 also stated that the post-2015 global agenda also should be developed using all ongoing intergovernmental processes, including those of UN economic commissions and UN entities dealing with specific sectors or technical issues.

4.2.1 High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons

The High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLPEP) was set up by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2012 to advice on the global development framework beyond 2015. It is composed of 27 eminent individuals from government, academia and the private sector and is chaired by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Presidents of Liberia and Indonesia. HLPEP discussions lead to a May 2013 report on the post-2015 agenda. The HLPEP report held that the post-2015 international development agenda should be universal and be driven by five big transformative shifts: 1) Leave no one behind; 2) Put sustainable development at the core; 3) Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; 4) Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and 5) Forge a new global partnership.

The report further suggested twelve SDGs to help ensure an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future: 1) end poverty; 2) empower girls and women to achieve gender equity; 3) provide quality education and lifelong learning; 4) ensure healthy lives; 5) ensure food security and good nutrition; 6) achieve universal access to water and sanitation; 7) secure sustainable energy; 8) create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth; 9) manage natural resource assets sustainably; 10) ensure good governance and effective institutions; 11) ensure stable and peaceful societies and 12) create a global enabling environment and catalyze long-term finance.

The Panel suggested that the SDGs should not be binding but that they should be monitored closely. In order to ensure an independent and rigorous monitoring system with regular opportunities to report on progress and shortcomings at a high political level, the HLPEP also called for an international development data revolution, with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to all citizens.

4.2.2 Open Working Group of the General Assembly
The OWG is the main formal venue in which most UN members and civil society groups offer their insights into the potential post-2015 agenda and potential SDG structures. The OWG has conducted four post-2015 discussions, with another four to take place in late 2013-2014. OWG discussions call on the expertise of 30 representative UN nations (some seats rotate between several countries) and major groups such as business and industry, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, children and youth, scientific and technological communities, women, and workers and trade unions. Participants have held that the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda should be grounded in the successes and lessons learned from the MDGs.

Representatives of the Group of 77, of which Myanmar is a member, and China called for the SDGs to drive people-centered sustainable development, strengthen official development assistance (ODA) commitments, enhance the global partnership, and advance all MDG 8 indicators. Holding that the Monterrey Consensus provides a continuing framework that promotes a favorable international economic climate for sustainable development, they emphasized that the SDGs must be developed and implemented according to CBDR principles, as did numerous actors during the OWG sessions, including targets for more developed economies. Like other communities, they called for a global youth unemployment strategy, improved reproductive health, a focus on non-communicable diseases, and specified means of SDG implementation.

The European Union (EU) called for a post-2015 global agenda and SDGs in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, an overarching strategy that covers resource efficiency, low carbon economy, research and innovation, employment, social inclusion and youth and that seeks to mainstream the three dimensions of sustainable development. Suggesting a focus on good governance, least developed countries, coherence among UN entities, and rights based approaches, the EU saw a fundamental link between global environmental sustainability and poverty. EU representatives said the SDGs should address justice, equality and equity, issues relating to human rights, democracy, the rule of law, empowerment of women, gender equality, peace and security.

Speaking for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ghana said means of implementation should be attached to goals, and that SDGs should promote sustainable agriculture and improve farmers livelihoods. Sustainable land and forest management and the restoration of degraded lands should all have targets. Other African countries asked that Africa be given priority over other areas, and that SDGs address food availability and access, food waste, water, respect for cultural diversity, and neglected tropical diseases. Representatives of southern African nations emphasized the need to target education completion rates, teacher training and pupil teacher ratios.

The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) recommended the post-2015 global agenda and SDGs should focus on non-communicable diseases, long term predictable financing, links between SDG priorities, and incentives at national and regional levels to improve sustainable agriculture. Representatives of Pacific Small Island Developing States held that work on oceans should be an integral part of the SDGs, as should sustainable fishing practices.

Neither the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nor ASEAN made OWG statements, but several regional countries expressed positions. Cambodia called for economically
developed countries to meet commitments and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, for inclusion of
disaster management co-operation and for emphasis on improved small-scale agriculture. India
suggested post-2015 focuses and SDGs on climate change, gender equality, women’s empowerment,
youth, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable consumption. India also suggested different targets
for different levels of development and to focus on improved financial architecture, inter-
generational equity and aging, and flexibility on international property rights. Sri Lanka called for
goals targeting accelerated rural development while working under CBDR principles. Among the
issues China and Indonesia focused on were innovative and inclusive financing and water.
Bangladesh declared that commodification of public goods, the environment, structural components
that impact international development processes, water, migration, universal health care and means
of implementation must all be addressed in the post-2015 agenda and SDGs.

OWG delegates from other individual countries and from the major groups agreed that SDGs should
include unmet MDG targets. Cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation on both national and
international levels was widely supported, as were capacity building and an SDG on improved data.
The “dashboard proposal,” in which a core of agreed targets and indicators for each agreed goal
would be defined yet allow countries to add more specific targets and indicators to reflect individual
priorities or circumstances, gained support, as did the idea of targets that could support multiple
goals. (For instance, a target on clean cooking stoves might support goals on the environment,
energy, women’s empowerment, maternal health, and child health.)

5. Myanmar Perspectives on the Post-2015 Agenda and the SDGs

Myanmar has participated in inter-governmental meetings organized by actors such as the ADB and
the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bali,
Bangkok and other locations. At those inter-governmental fora, Myanmar has stated that the post-
2015 development agenda should prioritize poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth and social
development (health and education), creation of decent work for all, equality and equity, human
rights, and peace and security. Myanmar has also contributed to MDG and SDG discussions on
specific technical sectors such as health in appropriate inter-governmental regional and global fora.

During the meeting of the HLPEP in Bali in March, 2013, parliamentarians and representatives from
civil society across Asia declared that four principles should underpin the post 2015 development
agenda: (i) human rights, democracy and good governance; (ii) equality and non-discrimination; (iii)
sustainable development; and (iv) system-wide approach to quality public service delivery. Gender
equality and women’s empowerment were emphasized as cross-cutting principles central to the
other four. Parliamentarians, policymakers and civil society in Myanmar interviewed for this brief,
while having varying degrees of understanding about the MDGs and the processes for developing
the post-2015 global agenda, agree with these general principals, which also align with principles
outlined in the FESR.
5.1 Civil Society Perspectives: We Are a Resource

Civil society groups feel they have much to contribute to the development of the post-2015 development agenda, both internationally and in Myanmar. Civil society groups in Myanmar noted that the FESR declared that, "A close working partnership with civil society organizations is also crucial since they have valuable on the ground experience in the implementation of grass-roots service delivery and participatory processes." (FESR, paragraph 132.)

Focus group and individual discussions were undertaken with 37 civil society groups in Myanmar, addressing issues in all of the MDGs. The focus group and individual discussions showed a generally low knowledge of MDGs and almost no knowledge of Rio+20, the post-2015 development agenda process, or SDGs. Organizations with strong UN links were most likely to know about MDGs. They would welcome the chance to gain more knowledge about and civil society participation in development of the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs. Organizations also would welcome wider consultations to garner more civil society input on the post-2015 international development agenda and SDGs and on the post-2015 Myanmar development agenda. They asked that an on-line survey on MDGs and SDGs for Myanmar, be developed. Currently two international web platforms exist as a repository for national and thematic inputs into the post-2015 development debate: www.worldwewant2015.org and www.myworld2015.org.

During brainstorming sessions, participants felt that CBDR principles must guide the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs. They felt that SDGs should include unmet MDG targets and that more economically developed countries should have targets to mitigate their consumption and environmental impacts. Developing the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs meant balancing national and international interests. Participants in the civil society focus groups felt that all government ministries and departments (policy, planning, administration, budgeting, legislative drafting, etc.) needed to know how the post-2015 global agenda, the 10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, the MDGs and the SDGs impacted their work and how their work should reflect them. All government planning should mainstream the proposed SDGs.

Defining targets and indicators for SDGs was deemed especially crucial, as they can represent "small things that are actually big things." The global community has to decide whether SDGs should be "achievable or aspirational," groups held, and the SDGs should feed into existing campaigns and commitments. Capacity building was deemed critical, especially in government so that MDG and SDG related work can be successful at all levels in all regions and states under decentralization. It was especially important to develop good data for regions, states and townships so they could lead evidence-based, bottom-up planning, as data in a number of sectors was often considered unreliable. They emphasized the need to include an SDG target or goal on improved data for all sectors. Civil society was seen as key in providing monitoring and evaluation support to the government for MDG and SDG progress.
Cross-sectoral SDG targets and indicators supporting more than one goal were deemed useful. Civil society participation and multi-ministerial co-operation at local, national and international levels should be included in targets and in planning processes. Physical infrastructure work (roads, water, sanitation, communications, etc.) could support the achievement of numerous MDG and potential SDG targets and goals. A specific SDG on physical infrastructure was suggested based on the percentage of improvement, taking into account environmental and other issues.

To reach the poverty targets set in MDG1 and in potential SDGs, and to reflect Myanmar’s agrarian economy, changes to planning processes and governance structures for food production were seen as key by the organizations. Groups felt more local input for production planning combined with more macro-level strategic development of agro-business to match production was needed. Less emphasis should be placed on rice production despite its historical importance, the groups felt, when rice often was not the crop with which farmers felt they could achieve the best income. In order to achieve MDGs and SDGs, it was suggested that current ministerial structures relating to food production be re-organized to create a more integrated approach. States and regions needed to be the national planning drivers, organizations said.

According to the groups, poverty should include other dimensions besides the economic, as income alone is not enough to measure sustainable development. Decent work, the civil society organizations held, needed to be reflected better. Better income did not necessarily mean decent work and some organizations felt that decent work should be defined within the SDGs. Organizations noted that the employment ratio indicator did not take into account the impact of migration for labor and that this should be changed, since decent work means less migration.

Civil society organizations held that an income number for poverty is hard to develop for agrarian settings since outputs must be considered, as with any small business. Inflation and exchange rates mean it is hard to use a firm number as a measure for SDGs. Proportion of income spent on food alone may work as a poverty indicator in some settings but not in agrarian communities, where it is especially hard to estimate who is under the poverty line. It was suggested that the poverty line indicators should be developed on a country or sub-national basis, to reflect local situations while still striving to meet internationally agreed goals.

Access to capital, reasonable credit, markets, technology, energy and resources are the drivers for economic growth and needed indicators, according to the groups. Insurance coverage was needed in a social safety net, but insurance was also needed by business, as lenders are less likely to lend on uninsured collateral. Risk-sharing in an agrarian society like Myanmar is important, since farmers now bear all crop and livestock risk, since most farmers work on credit and there is no insurance. Availability of insurance could be an indicator in SDGs on both health and poverty.

Organizations addressing gender called for gender mainstreaming (MDG 3) in all government planning, including the National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP) and into all SDGs. Targets for women’s increased participation in parliament should include both national and state and regional indicators and a target for gender budgeting should be introduced. Data on all SDGs should
be gender-disaggregated, and an SDG on gender should show linkages to the Convention to End Discrimination against Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other instruments.

Civil society addressing children’s education (MDG 2) felt SDG indicators should include completion rates, not just enrollment, and student teacher ratios, especially in rural areas. The post-2015 development agenda also needed SDG indicators for life-long training, education quality and teacher training. Civil society organizations working on child mortality (MDG 4) felt that nutrition targets for all children and immunization targets besides measles should also be included in SDGs. Water and sanitation indicators should be linked to child health goals. There should be indicators for children over five, and an overall health infrastructure indicator should be developed. Organizations addressing maternal mortality and reproductive health (MDG 5) held there should be an SDG indicator on health and sex education in schools. Targets again should be tied to international goals, such as the “20 by 2035” commitment.

Civil society thought dengue and other tropical diseases, access to medicine, and non-communicable diseases should be added as targets in any health SDG that might replace MDG 6. HIV targets should reflect impacts on affected individuals, not just those with the virus. The groups noted that each disease should have its own targets, developed using percentage of change, and that a target should be included which seeks to make international entities like the Global Fund more effective and operate in a more timely manner. Indicators should be developed on drug resistant malaria, drug resistant TB and prevention. All health groups felt the MDG 8 access to essential drugs indicator should be kept, and perhaps refined.

Environment groups (MDG 7) felt that SDGs should reference the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and that environment work should be seen as a global partnership. Land, water, air, forests, biodiversity and extractive industries should all have separate targets. The 10YF is a key planning framework for addressing sustainable production and consumption issues, and countries like Myanmar need access to the carbon trading facility and other structural mechanisms. The groups suggested there should be national resource planning instead of national agricultural planning since there is so much connection between the environment and agriculture. Indictors on land rights, cross-cutting with poverty SDGs, also will be needed.

Regarding MDG 8 changes, focus groups called for SDG targets and indicators on governance, transparency, accountability, trade and civil society participation, which would encourage the government’s moves on transparency and anti-corruption. One indicator could be the publication of budgets at all levels. A ‘quick win’ in this area could be aid transparency in line with the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) guidelines, which can be bolstered by the government’s new focus on statistical quality development. Targets in the form of the ‘Busan Principles’ agreed on at the fourth high level forum in Busan, South Korea, which include 10 targets to enhance donor-coordination and overall development effectiveness developed by the GPEDC (managed by a joint UNDP and OECD secretariat), should be maintained. Organizations requested that multi-donor trust funds be made more accessible to local groups. The capacity building indicator should be cross cutting in relation to specific SDGs. Governance and trade indicators should include the impact of subsidies and should link with poverty SDGs.
Civil society had several suggestions for new SDGs, including SDGs dealing with disabled people, data and information (which could align with FESR section 8.2), peace and security, aging and population distribution issues, and migration. Corporate social responsibility and corporate responsible investment indicators were called for, in order to firmly include the business community in the SDG process. Several civil society groups felt that if good targets were set for health, education and environment, achievement in poverty targets will naturally follow.

6. Myanmar Policymakers’ Perspectives: A Policy Gap

Discussions with parliamentarians and government officials in the capital Nay Pyi Taw found policymakers holding much in common with civil society groups. Parliamentarians had limited awareness of the individual MDGs and their indicators, and little knowledge about the global post-2015 development agenda processes and the SDGs. These policymakers called for people-centered, bottom-up planning and increased capacity building at all levels of government to provide policy and planning support on MDGs and SDGs.

Parliamentarians felt that Myanmar needed to urgently improve the legal system so rule of law at all levels (in line with FESR section 8.4) could support MDG and SDG goals. Policy gaps existed in a number of sectors, but developers of the policy, legislation and administrative rules required to fill current policy gaps needed to understand the complex and multi-sector impacts the formulation of policy, law and regulations can have on MDG and SDG goals. Without critical donor support to capacity building in for planning, policy development, and implementation at state, regional and township levels and in building inter-ministerial planning capacity, achieving MDGs and SDGs could be much more difficult for Myanmar.

Policymakers felt that the SDGs should be global goals that could be translated into national targets. Like members of civil society groups, policymakers felt that state and regional SDGs should also be developed within a national planning framework to accurately assess regional and state variations in situations. This would be especially useful in a country as diverse as Myanmar.

Any post-2015 development agenda or SDG needed to be developed in relationship to Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international frameworks. Decentralization means it is necessary to change mindsets, collapse hierarchies and ensure all relevant actors understand the principles of equity and sustainable development on which the post-2015 development agenda will be based. Key to success in decentralization and in meeting both MDGs in the second 30 months of the current government and SDG targets in the future is increased capacity and planning on resource sharing and development. This includes capacity building on issues of taxation and equitable allocation of natural resource revenues. All must take place within the context of the current peace processes.
Policymakers had numerous ideas for SDGs, targets and indicators, including SDGs for peace and security, gender, data improvement and capacity building. In general, policymakers, like civil society, thought that data on Myanmar’s MDG progress needed to more robust to represent the country’s true situation. SDG indicators should be developed on the freedom of access to all types of government data.

Other suggested indicators included indicators for gender budgeting, cultural diversity and the percentage of high-level positions for women both in government and the private sector. Indicators on water and sanitation related to urbanization are needed, as is an indicator on municipal level capacity building for urban growth and planning. MDG health goals and the access to essential drugs target should be kept in SDGs, but policymakers also called for a health service access indicator, especially for remote areas. Poverty reduction should have a small farmer emphasis and indicators on resource sharing mechanisms, which are linked to good governance. Human trafficking and migration were also mentioned as possible poverty targets or indicators. Transparency and corruption indicators should be developed, including aid transparency, for without good governance overall development could be hampered. Targets should be developed on civil society inclusion, corporate social responsibility, aid effectiveness and donor co-ordination.

7. The Way Forward

7.1 Within Myanmar

Both the FESR and the President’s outline for the plan for the second 30 months of this government are philosophically aligned with the goals and modalities described in the Rio+20 document. The Bali Declaration further emphasized the goals with which the GOM is now aligning itself. From the President’s inaugural speech in 2011, in which he committed to the creation of “good governance and clean government,” the on-going emphasis on social, economic, political and administrative reform and the development of mechanisms such as the committee to appraise public sector service delivery is inculcating these goals into on-going policy and planning processes throughout the country. As the AEC begins and trade barriers fall, these policy and planning processes could help Myanmar integrate the four pillars of the AEC Blueprint, including the development of ASEAN as a region of equitable economic development. (FESR, paragraph 27.) Achieving the MDGs, integrating fully in the AEC, and graduating from Least Developed Country status are all part of the government’s short and long term goals. (FESR, paragraph 46.)

Parliamentarians and civil society all saw strong linkages between the FESR and numerous ideas presented both nationally and internationally for the development of the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs. In order to take advantage of opportunities presented by the development of the post-2015 global agenda and the SDGs, both within Myanmar and as chair of ASEAN, Myanmar needs to embark on intensive capacity building for both civil society and throughout the entire government to ensure SDGs are mainstreamed into government processes as decentralization continues. (FESR, section 7.2 and section 8) Capacity building will help institutionalize reforms, break down rigid hierarchies that impede growth and change mindsets from focusing on quantity alone to also focusing on quality. Examination of current resources and discussions with donors to support the capacity building needed at all levels for effective decentralized government should be expedited.
The GOM in turn could encourage development partners to adhere to the post-2015 development agenda and adhere to the 'Busan Principles' relating to development effectiveness.

At policy level, the NCDP, based on the FESR, should be developed taking into account the ongoing discussions of the post-2015 global agenda and the SDGs. Gender, poverty reduction and job creation, and the equitable allocation and sustainable use of resources should be mainstreamed into the NCPD, as outlined in the FESR, while civil society should participate in the development of a people-centered NCDP to achieve the SDGs. Existing strategic plans should be re-examined in light of discussions on the post-2015 global agenda and the SDGs and adapted as necessary to ensure that Myanmar meets these goals and its goal of graduating from Least Developed Countries status. (FESR, paragraph 46.)

Cross-sectoral and multi-ministry strategic planning should be undertaken (see the President’s speech of August 9th, 2013) as should social, economic and environmental impact assessments for government and private sector projects (in line with FESR, paragraphs 91 and 92), including assessment of the gender aspects of each project and the potential for impact mitigation. Strategic policy and planning processes such as these, including mainstreaming SDGs and other issues, should be adapted to and used at state and regional and other local levels, while research should be undertaken on each regional and state MDG situation. All of these data development and analysis processes would be in keeping with FESR section 8.2, addressing information access and transparency, and statements in other FESR sections on the need for better data and accuracy.

8. In the Global Community

As leader of ASEAN in 2014, Myanmar will have a key role to play in the development of the post-2015 development agenda (FESR, Section 9). Myanmar has called for an accelerated attainment of the MDGs by ASEAN, Myanmar can lead in the development of common positions within ASEAN on particular goals, targets, indicators or modalities for the new SDGs, working under CBDR principles to take into account the varying economies within ASEAN. At the ASEAN Multi-Sectoral Workshop on MDGs: Accelerating the Achievement of MDGs and Priorities beyond 2015, Myanmar noted the need for ASEAN to create more equitable, higher functioning work and projects under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and to move together towards common goals to attain MDGs. Myanmar also noted that the post-2015 strategic response should focus on pro-poor growth within the national socio-economic contexts of ASEAN member states and that assistance in specific areas is still required for some ASEAN member states, although they have achieved much already under the MDGs.

Both within ASEAN and through work with UNESCAP, SAARC and other entities, Myanmar will help develop coordinated responses to the challenge to developing the SDGs. Myanmar is also well poised to work with other ASEAN member states to promote strategies to localize MDG activities so that they are incorporated into local government planning, action and monitoring. Myanmar is in a position both to benefit from the experiences of other ASEAN countries and to share its own experiences as it mainstreams MDG work into its reform and decentralization processes. Similarly, Myanmar can take the lead in working with ASEAN member states in developing modalities for
localizing the SDG development and implementation processes. As leader of ASEAN, Myanmar can also participate in international fora, including relevant sector fora, to present ASEAN’s position and experiences which are relevant to the development of the SDGs and the post-2015 international development agenda.

In addition to taking the lead in discussions on any common positions which the ASEAN community may wish to take, Myanmar should support the use of ASEAN regional mechanisms to help ensure countries take planning and implementation decisions that support each other on trade, environment and other issues with regional implications so that all ASEAN members can meet the new SDG goals once agreed upon. Cross-border trade issues stemming from the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community need to be addressed in a regional context so all ASEAN members meet their post-2015 and SDG targets and goals. (FESR, paragraph 27)

8.1 Civil Society Links and the SDGs

The FESR noted in paragraph 114 that, “GOM has also emphasized cooperation with civil society, as a strong and active civil society is a critical counterpart to a more capable, responsive and accountable state as well as a stronger, more competitive and responsible private sector.” Leadership of the ASEAN community could also provide opportunities for Myanmar to expand input into people-centered planning during 2014 and both to hear civil society voices and to build capacity in civil society for the post-2015 global agenda and SDGs. The Myanmar People’s Forum in December 2013 could provide a good venue to discuss the post-2015 global agenda and SDGs. This discussion could provide an excellent background for further discussion and a chance to provide input into regional civil society discussions on these issues at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum in March 2014.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10YF</td>
<td>10 Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEC</td>
<td>ASEAN Economic Community</td>
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<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>CARICOM</td>
<td>Caribbean Community and Common Market</td>
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<td>CBDR</td>
<td>common but differentiated responsibilities</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>Center for Economic and Social Development</td>
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<td>Framework for Economic and Social Reforms</td>
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<td>Government of Myanmar</td>
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<td>Open Working Group of the United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
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