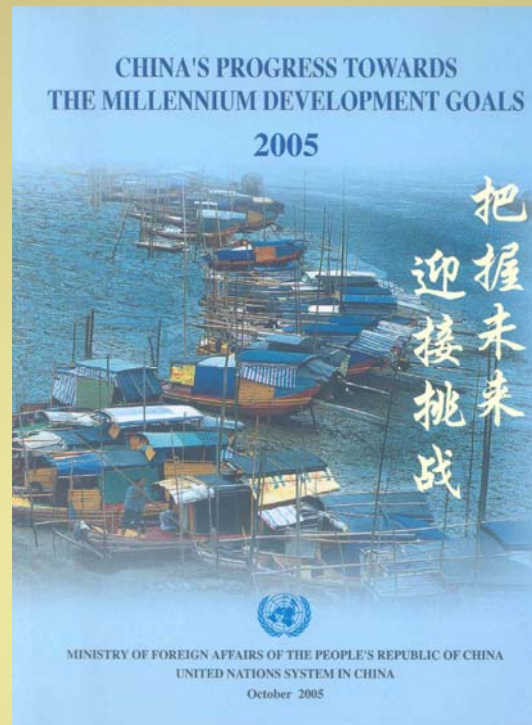


CERC MDG Seminar Series



Millennium Development Goals: Background, Discourse, Implications

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I: Background

II: Discourse

III: Implications for Basic Education



Part 1: Background



The Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Background

- Based on the Millennium Declaration
 - Adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 governments at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000
- Built upon earlier United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s
 - E.g., education goal is built upon the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtien in 1990
- Used as a reference for National Development Plans
 - E.g., Eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Economy and Social Development in China incorporates the MDGs
 - Implemented and supported by PRSPs

Organization of the Goals

- The eight MDGs break down into 21 quantifiable targets that are measured by 60 indicators
 - E.g., target for education: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
 - Indicators for education:
 - Net enrolment ratio in primary education
 - Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary
 - Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men
- Monitored by MDG reports (National and Global)
 - Complemented by subject-specific monitoring reports
 - Dividing the world into 10 Regions

Achievements (2008)

- The overarching goal of reducing absolute poverty by half is within reach for the world as a whole
- In all but two regions, primary school enrolment is at least 90 per cent
- The gender parity index in primary education is 95% or higher in six of the 10 regions
- Deaths from measles and AIDS have fallen
- Export earnings in developing countries devoted to servicing external debt fell from 12.5 per cent in 2000 to 6.6 per cent in 2006

Challenges (2008)

- Sub-Saharan Africa poverty targets are unlikely to be met by 2015
- 113 countries failed to achieve gender parity in education by the target date of 2005
 - Only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015
- Aid declined for the second consecutive year in 2007
 - Risk further declining with the economic slowdown of 2008/09
- International trade negotiations are years behind schedule
 - Any outcome seems likely to fall far short of the initial high hopes for a development-oriented outcome.

Part 2: Discourse



MDGs as Discourse

- Discourse
 - “The glasses through which, in each age, people have conceived things, how they thought and acted” Veyne
 - “Discourse is not the expression of thought; it is a practice, with conditions, rules, and historical transformations” Escobar
- Does the international development discourse get narrower and more technical?
 - Related to the economic development of a country
 - Based on a pre-analytic belief in the Millennium Development Goals

Questioning the Pre-Analytic Vision

- Pre-analytic vision:
 - “...analytic effort is necessarily preceded by a preanalytic cognitive act that supplies the raw material for the analytic effort” (Schumpeter)
- Post-modernism:
 - Challenges the view of a “modern west as a teaching civilization” and as the “only universalizable civilization” (Sachsenmaier)
- How does the local “target” population and “beneficiaries” experience “development”?

Development Discourse

- Rostow: The Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto
 - The evolution from “traditional society” to a “take-off” towards “maturity” and an age of “high mass consumption”
- Underlying reference to economic growth in the MDG discourse, especially by implementation plans (PRSPs)
- Strengthened by globalization process
 - The integration of national markets in one global market
 - The progress of conservative economic discourse (“neoliberalism” or “market fundamentalism”)

Things Fall Apart

- Post-development:
 - The West's imposition of external norms and expectations on the economy and society of a country, thereby constructing it as "under-developed"
 - Development has therefore structured the South into a Western economic and political system with disastrous effects on the local culture and population
- An example of the encounter of local society with development: Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart
 - A 1959 English-language novel about the life of Okonkwo, a leader and wrestling champion in Nigeria, his three wives, his children, and the influences of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the traditional Ibo community

MDGs: Discursive Analysis

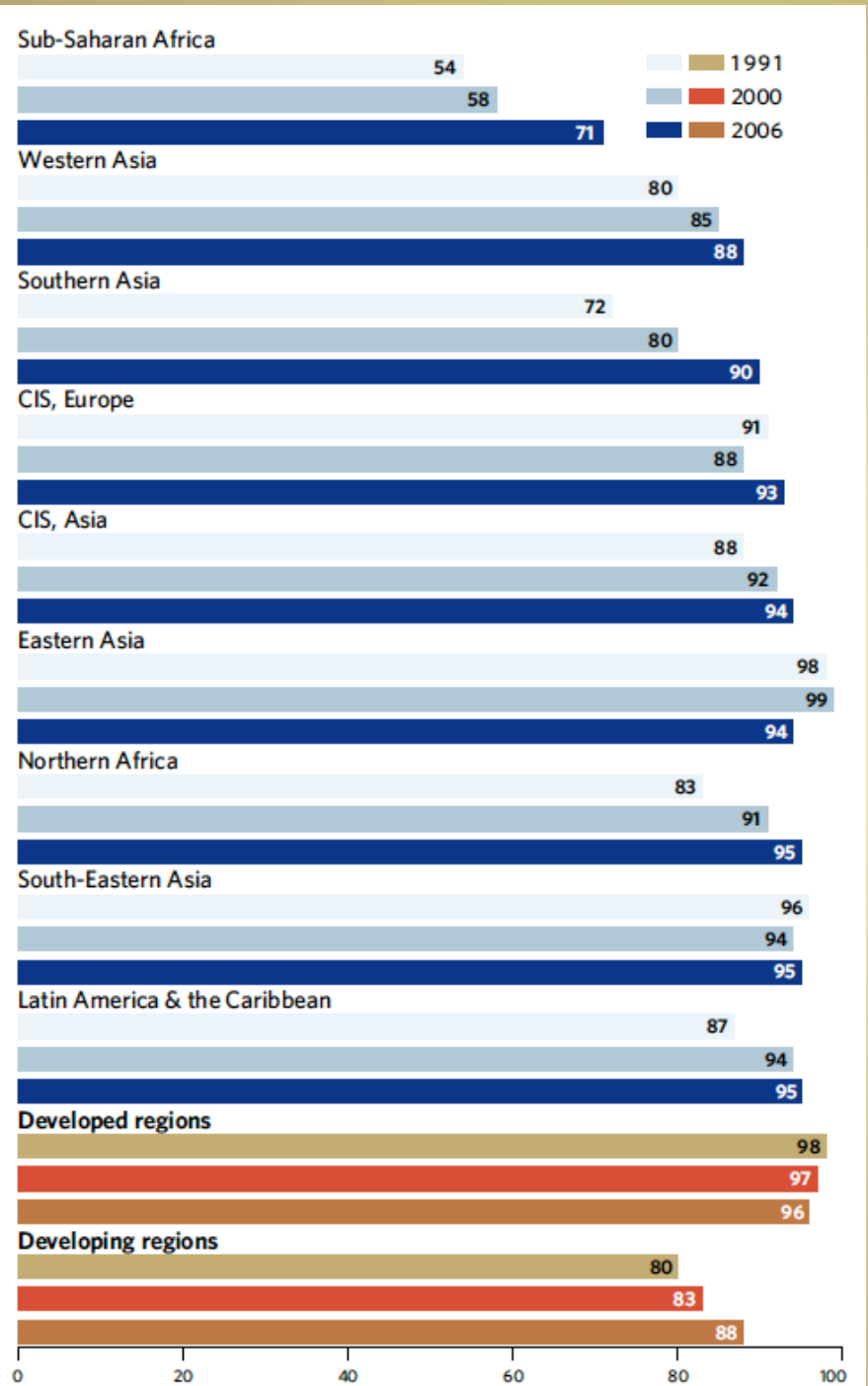
- Metanarrative legitimizing aid industry
- Measuring change set in motion
 - Not primarily analysis of forces producing poverty
 - Creating new discourses (why are promises not kept?)
- Lowest common denominator of change
 - But can also be used as tools for change
- Subject-specific implementation (goal by goal) – not a vision of integrated poverty reduction
- Normalized and bureaucratized through exercises in mainstreaming aid
 - Displacement from context

Part 3: Implications for Basic Education



MDG Achievements

Total net enrolment ratio in primary education



Skewed narratives

- Focus on quantitative results (enrolment ratios)
- Quality measured as years attended at school or secondary school enrolment ratio
- Little questioning of the underlying meaning of education
 - No focus on schools as protection
 - Lacking focus on learning taking place in school
 - Lacking focus on results of schooling
- Education is considered as a stand-alone goal; lacking integration of development activities

Basic Education and the MDGs

- Unification of discourses:
 - Our society has simply decided that the purpose of schooling is economic - to improve the financial condition of individuals and to advance the prosperity of the nation (Noddings)
- The post-colonial context:
 - Educational structures largely inherited from the colonial times
 - A second colonization by Western development institutions
 - Development projects correspond “pre-packaged solutions” and “outdated version of ... standard models” (Illich)
 - Schools may therefore lead to rural exodus, thereby ultimately creating unemployment and frustration

Towards a Post-Global World?

- Simplification of development and education discourses
 - Reflecting debates around the MDG and EFA
 - Mostly related to implementation and effectiveness issues (adopting an economic language)
- Post-development theorists suggest to rethink development through use of local civil society associations
 - Where is the “untainted” discourse? Does it exist?
 - To which extent do we live in a post-global world in which discourses have been homogenized and neutralized?
 - How to rethink educational development in such context?

Conclusions

- The MDGs appear as a progressive action plan
- However, the dynamic MDG discourse often masks real problems & serves to justify the aid industry
- Current export of Western development models may reduce the possibility to find alternative paths
 - Local discourses increasingly reflect Western discourse
- Need for alternatives challenging the conventional MDG implementation programs
 - Need to re-launch the aims-of-education debate
 - Need to question the pre-analytic vision that guides policy choices
 - Need to establish alternative dialogues with the grassroots level

Thank you.