

Grand Developmentalism: A Critical Appraisal of Millennium Development Goals

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Abstract

Following C. Wright Mills' notion of conceptual fetishism, the paper articulated 'grand developmentalism' as a framework to critically interrogate the conception and formulation of the Millennium Development Goals vis-à-vis its failures or marginal progress in the global south. Through this perspective, it is argued that grand developmentalism is the generalise way in which development issues are conceived, defined, formulated and problematized without taking into consideration problems and questions posed by the empirical world in the contexts and settings where it is to be applied. In grand developmentalism, the problems of development are narrowly or generally conceived and superficially defined in a way that has nothing to do with actual/real problem facing the people of the developing countries. In this sense, the goals, targets and indicators articulated in the MDGs are conceived, defined and formulated are in sharp contrast to real world situation or reflect a true picture of what is on ground in respective countries of the global south. This therefore makes the MDGs a form of grand developmentalism and thus make its attainment difficult especially in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The paper further delves into the current discussion on post-2015 development agenda vis-à-vis proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs) and argued that the proposed development agenda is nothing but an embellishment of grand developmentalism. The paper concludes that the ideas and practices of global sustainable development that would come after 2015 should be developed in relations to the complexities of development issues in the global south and not on abstract agendas and strategies that are constituted in universalistic frames.

Keywords: Global south, grand developmentalism, MDG, SDG, International development

1. Introduction

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, International development efforts have been coalesced around the frameworks of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are set of ambitious goals and national targets put forward and ratified by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development on or before 2015. However, a significant progress towards reaching the targets has been notably achieved or deemed successful in some countries but in others—especially in the sub-Saharan Africa, the progress has been marginal or deemed unsuccessful. A variety of factors has been attributed to this failure: over-ambitious goals themselves and unrealistic expectations

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(Clemens & Moss 2005); aid dependence over growth and self-reliance (Manning 2010); lack of ownership and commitment (Amin 2006; Ogunrotifa 2012); limited state capacities and governance incapacities (Mishra 2004; Oya 2011); non-emphasis on sustainable development (Sachs 2012); and evaluation and implementation problems (Fukuda-Parr & Greenstein 2010); and failure to take into account different national realities, capacities and development levels (Rippin 2013).

However, the outlined factors are just symptoms and not the real issue that hampered the achievement of the MDGs in Africa and elsewhere. The fundamental trouble associated with the MDGs is the way in which goals, targets and indicators articulated in the programme of the MDGs are conceived, defined and formulated, which are in sharp contrast to real world situation or reflect a true picture of what is on ground in Africa and other countries of the global south. This is regarded as ‘grand developmentalism’—the general and narrow way in which development issues are defined and problematized takes priority over real questions and problems posed by the empirical world. The fundamental ideologies that underpinned grand developmentalism are rooted in neo-liberal capitalism and modernisation approaches—that affirm the traditionality and underdevelopment of the global south, and posit that global south can become modern and develop by following western model. These ideologies however, shape the conception, design, formulation and implementation of diverse international development agenda in the last five decades (including the MDGs) and have important implications on successor agenda to the expiring MDGS (the post 2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals) that is currently in discussion.

To further ground the idea underpinning this paper, the article will be divided into five sections. The section two is devoted to espousing the notion of Grand Developmentalism; section three will examine how the MDGs is a form of grand developmentalism; section four is devoted to the current discussion and proposal on sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the paper shall be concluded in section five.

2. Grand Developmentalism: A Notion for Development Toolbox

The term ‘Grand Developmentalism’ was coined from the notion of Conceptual Fetishism articulated by C Wright Mills in his treatise on Sociological Imagination (1959). In Sociological Imagination, Mills was concerned about the theoretical and methodological state of sociology in his days and offered a devastating critique of grand theory and abstracted empiricism for fetishizing either concepts or methods. Mills argues that abstracted empiricism loses its grip on social reality by prioritising methods rather than the problems of empirical world, stressing that abstracted empiricism ‘elevates a prior commitment to specific research techniques and methods over the challenges presented to us by the empirical world’ (Gane 2012: 153). In this regards, methodology as Mills argues ‘seems to determine the problem’ (Mills 1959: 67).

While grand theory engages in fetishism of concepts at the expense of the problems of empirical world. The practitioners of grand theorization involves in high level of abstraction that negate the ‘specific and empirical problems’ (Mills 1959: 58). Mills posits that grand theory engages in fetishization of abstract concepts in place of genuine and substantive problems of empirical world such that ‘the basic cause of grand theory is the initial choice of a level of thinking so general that its practitioners cannot logically get down to observation’ (Mills 1959: 42). In other words, it is the concepts rather than the actual problems that are of paramount importance to grand theorists such that they elevate conceptual schemes and systems over the specific problems in the empirical world that they seek to analyse. However, grand theory is particularly relevant to this paper because of its engagement with development discourse. Grand developmentalism is the dialectical engagement of grand theory but goes beyond the remit of the later in terms of what it encompasses.

Development agenda becomes grand developmentalism when development solutions are not based on the social realities and problems of development as actually experienced in the contexts and settings involved (global south) but on the basis of general definition and understanding of what national governments or International agencies think the problem is all about. In grand developmentalism, the social realities of the contexts in which development problems are experienced are not considered when conceiving and designing appropriate development programmes and policies. The important features of grand development are: *the nature of problem definitions, the nature of methodology employed, and grand development solutions proposed.*

—*The nature of problem definitions*

Development issues are not defined on the basis of empirical and specific problems in the contexts and settings where they are experienced but they are problematized on the basis of narrow or general definition without adequate empirical grounding, such that the conceptual frames and schemes are created on the basis of such narrow problem definition. Grand developmentalism is the generalise way in which development issues are conceived, defined, formulated and problematized without taking into consideration questions and problems posed by the empirical world in the contexts and settings where it is to be applied. Development policies, ideas and practices can take the shape of grand theorization when the problems are not adequately defined in relations to the specific situations in the context and settings where it takes place, while concepts are created on the basis of flawed definition of development problem. It is the narrow problem definition and concepts rather than the actual problems that are of paramount importance to grand developmentalists such that they elevate conceptual schemes and systems over the specific problems in the empirical world that they seek to analyse.

In the context of international development, Western governments and the International agencies (whose agenda is to promote western dominance around the world) promotes grand developmentalism in development discourse, with a view to controlling the aspirations of the global south, and redefining their problems, priorities, and realities in a way that has nothing to do with the actual situations they are facing. Both institutions conceived development from their western-centric paradigm that defined the global north as ‘developed’ and the global south as ‘underdeveloped’ and the latter needs to be more modern and develop by catching up with the former through neoliberal pathway.

The ‘development problems’ of global south are defined in this western viewpoint while their proposed solutions are articulated in Brussels, London and Washington or outside the capital cities of the global south. Development is about *solving the social problems of the people (citizens) in socio-culturally appropriate and locally sustainable way, as the problems are experienced, perceived and understood by the people.* Inability of international agencies and western institutions to define development in this light is hampered by their realpolitik of national interest and domination quest to resolve the problems of the global south to their own advantages by ensuring that those ‘problems are defined in such a way that some development program has to be accepted as a legitimate solution’ (Escobar 1991: 667). In this regard, the actual problems of development in the global south are neglected or superficially defined by these institutions on the confines of what contemporary international politics permits.

Given the degree of generality in its problem definition, grand developmentalists create concepts that are suitable to the narrowly defined problem, whereas concepts should have been derived from empirical world. This therefore negates the contextual and specific problem of development it seeks to analyse and proffer solutions. For instance, the problem of poverty is a perennial issue affecting most people in the global south despite the fact it has

different facets across different countries in those settings. Poverty is a concept that is discursively created within the global institutions as “living on less than a dollar daily”. Though, economists argued that poverty can be conceptualised in absolute and relative terms. Yet, the form which poverty takes in most developing countries goes beyond or defies these definitions. Poverty in retrospect must be analysed in relations to how it is being shaped in a particular society and not on a general term or with a set of inherited concepts, categories and theories that are developed outside the setting where their proposed solutions are to be applied. This narrow definition of development issues especially poverty vis-à-vis grand developmentalism seemed to have become a kind of bureaucratic practice that has been entrenched within the institutional operations of international development agencies and other western agencies such as USAID, DFID and others, for more than fifty years of development discourse. If the problem definition is flawed, the conceptual schemes, variables and methodology to interrogate the issue and arrive at workable solutions will also be flawed.

—*The nature of methodology employed*

Grand developmentalism also takes its shape in the form and nature of methodology it employed. Once development issues and problems are defined in narrow and general format, the next facet of grand developmentalism is to ensure that research techniques of quantitative methodology ‘determines the scope, range and focal points of investigation’ (Gane 2012: 154), and later develop concepts to analyse the problems. The problematic aspect of grand developmentalism is that the development “research starts with a concern for numbers or measurement, which it elevates over the specific qualities of the empirical world it is attempting to analyse” (ibid). It always privileged the use of quantitative methodology and techniques, and fetishized issues that are more concerned with statistical measurement. Even if the issues are germane but are not quantifiable, grand developmentalists will always find ways to quantify in a way that will be appealing to them. Despite the fact that some issues and problems can be best explored using qualitative methodology, grand developmentalism ensures the impositions of quantitative techniques on all aspects and dimensions of development issues and problems regardless of the specific contexts and demands of the empirical world.

The most obvious shortcoming associated with quantitative approach is that they do not reveal the real life situations or subjective dimension of the life world of the people, context and settings under investigation. The problem posed by empirical problems of development in the global south may be adequately captured by the use of other methodologies such as ethnographical fieldwork, participant observation, Focus Group Discussion, In-depth-interviews and archival and historical methods (other than quantitative techniques). There is concern for measurement in international development agenda such that by prioritising quantitative techniques and reducing development issues into number and statistics, such agenda obscures what “real development” is all about and lost the grip of non-economic factors such as culture and history that are germane to the real understanding and solutions to the development problems in global south that cannot be explained by the quantitative method. In this sense, grand developmentalism lost all contact with the social, cultural and historical dimension of development of the societies it purports to offer solutions because it is rigidly committed towards quantitative methodology in approaching and addressing international development issues in the global south.

—*Grand development solutions proposed*

Development solutions proposed by the International agencies and other western institutions are not based on the reflections of the real problems facing respective countries in the global south. In this sense, they are either: not offered as genuine solution to real

problems or attempt to provide what they think as solutions to the real problems facing countries and people of the global south. Most of the development solutions are not realistic; it was designed to achieve realpolitik of western interest and domination in the global south. Available evidence indicates that most of development efforts and substantive solutions proposed by the western institutions and international agencies from 1950s to date are not geared towards solving development problems in the global south. For instance, in the 1940s and 1950s, development problems in the global south revolved around the issues of hunger/starvation, malnutrition, traditional agricultural practices, poverty, lack of access to clean water, sanitation, education and health facilities, infrastructural deficits, low agricultural productivity, low wages, and lack of industrialisation. However, these development problems were conceived and defined especially in sub-Saharan Africa (in 1940s and 1950s) in terms of economic development inhibited by 'low standard of productivity of the African peasants, by his unwillingness to adopt improved agricultural methods and by his failure to take proper measures for the conservation of the soil' (Cooper 1997: 72). Rather than tackling these real problems holistically and reform the agricultural sector through the introduction of mechanised farming practices, the development solution offered by the colonial powers and the international agencies was that 'industrialisation is the engine of growth which would pull the rest of the economy along behind it' (Thorbecke 2007: 22).

The industrial sector because of its anticipated profits was privileged at the expense of agricultural sector because 'it was felt that industry, as a leading sector, would offer alternative employment opportunities to the agricultural production, would provide growing demands for foodstuffs and raw materials, and would begin to supply industrial input to agriculture' (ibid). Despite the fact that agriculture was the mainstay of the economy and employed more than 60 percent at the time, the industrialisation-first strategy of the 1950s discriminated against agriculture and favoured industrial sector to the extent that capital resources in forms of aid and foreign direct investment (FDI) was channelled towards industrialisation so as to trigger economic growth and generate higher investment. The grand failure associated with this development solution was: over-reliance on economic growth as the basis of achieving development in the global south, and not as proffering solutions in lieu of real problem facing the people of the global south.

Because of the persistent problems: shortage of domestic saving and foreign earning that undermined the industrialisation-first strategy of the 1950s, agricultural sector was brought back to the central stage of development policy in the following decade. In the 1960s, development problems especially poverty were defined by international agencies as 'income and consumption problems, supposedly solved by increases in economic growth and foreign aid' (St Clair 2004: 178). To address this issue, a development strategy was framed around the notion of 'economic dualism'—traditional (agricultural) and modern (industrial) sector was proposed. In the strategy, agriculture was identified as a sector that 'could best perform its role as a supplier of resources by being active and co-equal partner with modern industry' (Thorbecke 2007 :25) and contribute potentially towards economic growth and 'investment in human capital and of policies designed to overcome resource scarcities' (Ruttan 1996: 104).

This culminated in development policy solution that oriented towards extending and expanding financial lending to agriculture so as to bridge the foreign exchange gaps and deficits in the global south. Due to its insistence on economic growth, the development strategy (solution) of the 1960s was hopelessly out of touch with the dynamics of socio-economic and development challenges and realities in the respective countries in the global south. Its narrow understanding of development problems in the global south at the time culminated in the articulation and implementation of superficial development strategy that has nothing to do with the real problems facing the people in those contexts.

However, the apparent failure of economically oriented approaches in previous development strategies of the 1950s and 1960s prompted a re-examination of social aspect of development beginning in the 1970s (Escobar 1991). The development strategy in the 1970s was framed around basic needs approaches—a consumption oriented strategy that attempt to solving the problem of absolute poverty by defining the amount of income required to satisfy basic human needs such as foods, water, clothing, shelter and other minimum level of consumption in terms of education, sanitation and health care as spelt out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) [Thorbecke 2007:31]. This strategy led to shift from investment projects in power, transport and telecommunications and towards projects that are beneficial to the poor or that have direct intervention to the poor such as food for the malnourished, mass inoculation program, adult literacy campaigns and credit provision for farmers. What is however, problematic about this strategy is not only because it offered no genuine solutions to development problems facing the global south at the time, but that poverty-alleviation aid on which funding of this development strategy depended on, is unsustainable. This stemmed from the fact that basic needs approach focused on consumption habit of society so as to be able to meet its basic needs and rise above the poverty line, and not interested towards investment in economically productive activities that will allow the society to sustain these basic needs in the future (Bowler 1987).

Subsequently, the collapse of the commodity price (primary products) in the world market constituted massive export problems for export-dependent countries of the global south in the 1980s, and later triggered balance-of-payment deficits, foreign debt crisis, and debt-servicing burdens (Onimode 2000: 80). The development solution proposed by the international financial agencies in solving this issue at the time was the policy of structural adjustment programme (SAP) where the gains of development process achieved in 1970s were reversed while poverty alleviation programme was suspended as attention was focused on adjustment issues. The SAP policy (of currency devaluation, trade liberalisation, de-industrialisation, massive capital flight, privatisation of public enterprises, mass retrenchment in public sector and cut in social spending etc) was imposed by the IMF and World Bank to adjust African and some countries to the ‘productive’ requirement of the creditor countries.

Apart from the fact that the policy brought untold hardship on socio-economic lives, and devastating consequences on sustainable livelihood of African people, the policy was designed and orchestrated ‘as a stop-gap measure to savage the shaky international financial system by allowing third world debtor countries to service at least part of their public and private debt and keep their creditors afloat; encourage the implementation of appropriate adjustment policies in the third world countries through conditionality attached to programme lending’ (Thorbecke 2007: 46); and to control the development aspirations of respective countries in the global south and subjugate them into perpetual western domination. The socio-economic crises that emerged in the aftermath of Asian financial crisis and the implementation of SAP policy in Africa engendered a fundamental redefinition of poverty and development problems in the global south in the 1990s by international agencies and western institutions as ‘human development challenges’. Based on Amartya Sen’s notion of ‘capability to function’, development solution was framed around right based approach where emphasis was based on ‘securing the freedom, well-being and dignity of all people and framing these goals in terms of social justice’ (St Clair 2004: 178). In this sense, foreign aid through the World Bank was provided towards poverty alleviation in terms of access to human rights and freedoms while other western institutions (such as USAID and others) channelled funds towards actualising this objective in the 1990s.

The development strategies and solutions articulated by the international agencies between 1950 and 1990 were caught in the blind-alley web of grand developmentalism—because solutions proposed are not based on the real problems facing the global south or

attempt to solve those problems but they are offered because of what western governments/institutions and international agencies allowed or deemed as feasible to their interest. This notion of grand developmentalism is rooted in the philosophical and methodological foundations that shape the conception of those agendas, policies and programmes that underpinned development discourse for more than 50 years. However, in the first decade of the 21st century, international development agenda revolves around the MDGs (which is the major thrust of this paper). The extent to which the conception, design and implementation of the MDGs exemplifies grand developmentalism will be thoroughly examined in the following section.

3. MDGs: A Form of Grand Developmentalism

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the outcome of the United Nations Millennium summit held in the year 2000. The source of the Goals goes back much further in time, and some of the most important component will be discussed in this paper. In fact, it is important to strip the MDGs naked in order to flesh out its basis, compositions and essentials. The MDGs at the initial stage comprises of 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators. The goals and targets have been set (mostly) for 2015 using 1990 as a benchmark or baseline. The goals, targets and indicators of the MDGs evolve out of the ‘resolutions of 23 international conferences and summits held between 1990 and 2005’ (Rippin 2013). They are clearly worked out by ‘‘ Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators (IAEG), consisting of experts from the DAC, World Bank, IMF and UNDP’’ (Manning 2009; Hulme 2009; Hulme 2010).

The MDGs was a road map clearly worked out as a useful guide to International development agenda. Though, it was declaration first approved in 2000 but the commitment and implementation of the programme was not formally approved and endorsed by the UN General Assembly until 2005 (Manning 2009; Hulme 2010; Sumner & Lawo 2010). The 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators articulated in the MDGs programme are quantitative in nature, design and outlook. They are designed to be evaluated and measured in quantitative/statistical format. The MDGs as a form of grand developmentalism can be expressed in the following ways:

First, the problems of development facing people of the developing countries are narrowly defined in the MDG document. Though, it is important to state that the problems of poverty, hunger, inaccessible to primary education are generic problems facing the developing countries, albeit with different forms and contents across different countries. While the UN General Assembly must be commended for its resolution towards solving the world development problems, but the way in which these problems are experienced in different countries differs. This narrow definition of development is reflected in the fact that most of the targets and indicators are not realistic. The implementation of the MDGs in developing countries hinge on the targets and indicators it was designed to achieve. The goals are welcome (after all no one will condemn effort aimed at the eradication of extreme poverty) but the targets articulated to achieve the goals are problematic and unrealistic in the sense that they are not the true reflections of development problems and situations in the global south while the indicators to achieve these targets are faulty on the basis of its unrealistic design. It is important to map out the goals, targets and indicators; and juxtapose it with reality in the global south by examining the programme closely in the following ways:

–Poverty reduction and Hunger

The targets and indicators used to define; measure and tackle poverty and hunger obscure the nature of reality or real life experience of poverty and hunger in developing countries. Questions that need to be asked instead are: what are the natures of poverty in

different countries of the Global South (but also in Global North)? Is the poverty situation in Nigeria the same as the nature and level of poverty in Bangladesh and Vietnam? How is poverty seen and defined by the people in developing countries? What are policies that generate and engender poverty? Does the poverty situation transcend beyond the global yardstick of US\$1 per day [1993 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)], or rather, what are the cultural, social, history and moral dimensions of poverty? Are dietary energy consumption and under-weight the best indicators for measuring hunger in the global south? The established targets of reducing by half the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger is a one-size-fit-all yardstick that cannot adequately measure poverty and hunger. This is a danger of grand developmentalism.

—Universal Primary Education

The main target to achieve the second goal of the MDGs is to ensure that children (boys and girls) are able to complete a full course of primary education. The fundamental question to ask here is that how is the goal going to be achieved? In the MDGs formulation, the indicators to achieve this set target are: net enrolment ratio in primary education, proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5, and literacy rate of 15-24 years old. The fundamental issue with these indicators is that it inhibits understanding of what is the state of primary education in respective countries in the global south? What are the socio-cultural factors that affect enrolment of pupils in primary education in respective countries in the global south? What is the ratio of teachers to pupils? All these questions reflect national realities that must be considered in the design and formulation of the MDGs.

—Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

The issue of gender and women empowerment features prominently in the third goal of the MDGs, and this intersects with primary education with respect to equality between boys and girls in terms of primary school enrolment. However, it is unclear what form and shape gender takes in developing countries as far as the MDGs are concerned. Inability to understand how gender is entrenched and shaped everyday lives of people in different countries in the global south will affect efforts being made to address gender inequality in access to education and women empowerment. The MDGs failed to adequately capture the social, cultural and historical contexts that underpinned and shaped gender in developing countries; and the sorts of cultural practices and practices that promote gender inequality in the global south. In fact, without delving into the questions of what sorts of cultural practices inhibit girls' education and what forms of national policies promoting gender inequality in education enrolment and attainment, achieving gender equality and women empowerment will remain unrealistic and vague under the MDGs programme.

—Environmental Sustainability

The most important targets to achieve environmental sustainability—which is the seventh goal of the MDGs—is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into national and global policies; reduce-by-half the proportion of people who have no access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; and to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers. The indicators to achieve these targets seemed unrealistic and unworkable. This stems from the fact that the MDGs did not take into consideration the low level of industrialisation in developing countries, the contribution of carbon emission in developing countries to global carbon emission, and the policies and programmes that undermine the sustainable provision of clean drinking water. The pertinent questions that need to be examined in this regard are: Under what circumstance do carbon emissions take shape in

respective countries in the global south? What cultural, economic and historical policies and practices promote slum dwelling? What are the local contexts of energy use in different countries in the global south? How do local factors and national policies influence peoples' access to secure tenure? The complexities inherent in the local realities of environmental sustainability in developing countries make the targets and indicators impracticable. Furthermore, what is problematic is that the western world, which is entirely responsible for the environmental problems the global south are facing, is not mentioned in this goal and, even more remarkable, is not even asked to reduce their emissions or to make drinking water available by not letting firms like Nestlé etc. privatise the drinking water of the world? As a form of grand developmentalism, the issue posed by environmental sustainability in the MDGs did not address the nature of capitalistic policies that promote environmental problems in the global south. This indicates that the important targets responsible for environmental problems in the global south as far as the MDGs are concerned are neglected while unrealistic targets are put forward.

—Unreliable source of financing

The fundamental questions that are crucial to the achievement of the MDGs stemmed from financial imprimatur associated with the programme: How are the MDGs projects and programmes going to be funded? Where would its source of funding/financing emanate from? What is the estimated financial cost of implementing MDGs project in a particular country? How much will it cost to implement the MDGs projects in each year, in a particular country? What is the ratio of a country's GDP to estimated financial cost of the MDGs project?

The implementation of programmes and projects required a guaranteed financial war chest to achieve its overall targets and objectives. But as far as the MDGs are concerned, there is no guaranteed financial outlay or specialised savings and international gold reserve for their attainment. The means to finance the MDGs programme are based on financial pledges and commitment from the developed countries. The financial commitment from developed countries is premised on the condition that recipient developing countries must operate openly and non-discriminatory towards the global trading and financial system. This is meant by the "global partnership for development". Basically, it determines that developing countries must be part of a neo-liberal system that requires recipient countries to open their markets for all goods from the North before they can receive Official Development Assistance (ODA), aids and grants, and debt relief from the latter. This is not only problematic because donor countries may experience financial crises and economic recession and may not be able to fulfil their financial commitment and pledges. It may render aid dependent relationships futile and put the attainment of the MDGs into serious challenges. As the source of financing is not based on the size of the economies and the GDP of the respective countries in the global south but depends on foreign aid as the main source of financing, there is no independent financial pathway for developing countries to achieve the MDGs other than ODA, debt relief, aid and grants articulated in the eighth goal.

Second, is the problem of evaluation, implementation and enforcement. The millennium declaration that paves way for the endorsement of the MDGs in the global space was made in 2000 while the benchmark of its implementation was backdated to 1990. Technically, there is a period of 15 years to implement the MDGs across different states in the global south. But it is unclear how the MDGs would be implemented in the global south within the said period. Are MDGs producing the intended effect? Are their targets set for each year? How are the targets going to be achieved? How much does it cost to achieve the targets? Under what basis (yearly, quarterly or monthly) are the MDGs projects going to be evaluated, monitored and implemented? How will the MDGs be monitored to ensure its

attainments? Are the MDGs a worthwhile development policy, programme and project? What are the assessment difficulties facing the MDGs in the global south? Whose agencies or institutions are saddled with the responsibility of monitoring, evaluating and implementing the MDGs? Do beneficiaries of the development projects talk back about the effects of the projects? When they do, are their voices reflect “native” point of view or institutional point of view? What is the medium through which beneficiaries [people] talk back about the effect of development projects?

In some countries in the global south, measurement, evaluation and implementation are being taken seriously, while inability to take these questions in other countries into consideration constitutes a problem for measuring the progress and performance of the MDGs’ progress such that “even in the case of countries with a perceptible acceleration of progress consideration doubt has been raised whether this acceleration is the result of real national commitment or rather an effort of ‘speaking the language’ in order to secure donors’ support” (Rippin 2013: 19). Even in the contexts and settings where measurement, evaluation and implementation are being taken seriously, the fundamental question is that: are the measurement, evaluation and implementation a true reflection of realities in those contexts? Are they measuring the wrong things? In as much as their measurement is wrong, their evaluation and implementation would remain a charade. This problem of evaluation and implementation make the MDGs a form of grand developmentalism.

The third point is what can be observed as sustainability deficit. Development should be all about satisfying the need of the people and improving their livelihood patterns. Development should be what the people actually want or need, and not what the national governments or global institutions think that the people need or want. The MDGs as form of modernization and neo-liberal ideologies, was articulated and presented by the international agencies as “real development” or as legitimate solutions to the development problems of people in the respective countries of the global south. But in reality, it does not capture the priorities and problems facing the people in those contexts. The issue of sustainability is embedded in what people actually want and people are at the centre of sustainable development. What kinds of involvement do people really have towards development projects and programmes? What kind of autonomy does development projects foster in terms of ownership and control? What kinds of relations do people at the grassroots have towards the development projects in terms of decision-making processes in areas of design and implementation? What is the power-relations context that shapes the conception, design and formulation of development policies and projects? Can development projects be sustained by the people for future use? The questions emanate from what the people directly want or need and not impose on the people like the MDGs.

The authors of the MDGs do not find out what the people really want but they design and formulate those goals on assumptions of what they think people want. Sustainability here is linked significantly to ownership, participation and power-relations. The centrality of sustainable development indicates that people’s ownership and participation in the development conception and design will promote sustainability of such project. Here I argue that people protects and sustain development projects that emanates from them and addresses their needs/wants. The MDGs are suffering from sustainable deficits because there is no provision for how the projects would be sustained by the people who are the end-users. This stems from the fact that It was imposed on the people first by the global institutions and second, by the national governments in the global south, and thus, reinforce the existing-power relations in the global structure of power. Therefore, lack of participation of people in the developing countries in the conception, design and formulation of the MDGs constitute ownership and participation issues that will make development programmes and projects in the global agenda unsustainable. In order to address this deficit in the MDGs, sustainability

was identified as important issue in the post-2015 development agenda articulated as sustainable development goals (SDGs) but the extent to which this new proposal reflect on the real problems confronting the global south will be espoused in the next section.

4. A Note on the Proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN and other international (development) agencies are currently working on post-2015 development agenda. Following the UN conference in Rio de Janeiro (2012), an Open Working Group was established to develop a set of sustainable development goals that will be consistent with the UN development agenda beyond 2015. The table 1 below outlines the details of the proposed sustainable development goals (SDG) and targets that have been presented for consideration and appropriate action at the 68th session of the UN General Assembly. Since its presentation, the proposed SDG has been the basis for the current discussions and negotiations on UN post-2015 development agenda.

The development as understood in the SDGs is a reflection of neo-liberalism and modernisation approach that seeks to reinforce the hegemony of the Western economic model in the global south, and strengthen the grip of their mainstream development discourse beyond 2015. The SDG is a policy roadmap clearly worked out as a useful guide to international development agenda. The proposed SDGs comprises of 17 goals, 126 targets and more than 250 indicators articulated in the SDGs programme are quantitative in nature, design and outlook as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Proposed Sustainable Development Goals

GOALS	TARGETS
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 equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11	Make cities and human settlements 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 for sustainable development
Goal 15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Source: Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals available at www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page

From the outline of the SDGs proposal, first, it is clear that the basic premise underlying development is still unchanged. The development paradigm is still conceived as top-down approach; that the global south is incapable of facilitating its own development without external assistance; and seeks to foster aid-dependent relationship. The SDG is a notion of development paradigm that is driven from outside the global south as if countries in the respective countries of the global south are incapable of driving and engendering their own developmental initiatives. The SDGs as a development programme is founded on the basis of modernisation and neo-liberal approach whose rendition serve as the prism that shape the orientation and mandate of international agencies towards acting as a sole repository of 'legitimate' development solutions that will fast-track development in global south to the pace of development in the global north without having to undergo latter's historical circumstances and processes.

This imposition of development strategies and ideas on the global south is the basis of grand developmentalism because global south are not allowed to control their development destiny and define their problems and priorities in relations to their respective local realities. This inhibits the ability of the global south to develop according to their own pace, capacities and realities. Therefore, development idea encapsulated in the proposed SDG is still dominated by institution's point of view rather than native (local) point of view in the global south.

Second, what is questionable in the proposal is how different national priorities and realities are taken into consideration. The SDGs set global targets for measuring development, with its authors assume that those goals and targets are the legitimate solutions to development problems facing the global south, which the respective countries of the global south will not object to. What will be problematic in the proposed SDGs is that the definition of development problems and priorities will be put together by government officials and politicians in most capital city of the global south where 'policy is thus bureaucratised and depoliticised through "commonsense" practices such as planning and strategies' (Escobar 1991: 667) are exogenous to social and political situations or been derived vis-à-vis grassroots movement. The SDGs do not explain how respective countries in the global south can build capacities to address their problems, develop inward looking development solutions, and sustain them on the basis of their capabilities and capacities.

Third, the SDGs are the rehash of the MDGs in terms of financing. Huge development projects and programmes implicit in the SDGs require guaranteed level of financing for it to be executed and implemented. So far, it is not clear whether there is a guaranteed financial outlay for its execution or how specialised savings and international gold reserve for the attainment of the SDGs are spelt out, and whether the third conference on financing for development in July 2015¹ will see an end to this.

Finally, the notion of 'sustainability' in the SDGs document is vague. From the outline of the SDG proposal, its sole objective is to sustain the core programmes and projects of the MDGs—gender equality in health and education, poverty reduction etc. The missing links in the SDG proposal are the questions of: what sorts of social relations to the grassroots are involved in the design, planning and implementation of development projects? What forms of power does SDG foster or undermine? The fundamental crux of the proposed SDG is that international agencies' notion of development articulated in the document prioritised and privileged bureaucratic and institutional definition of the problem rather than the actual problems obtained in local contexts. Sustainability in the SDG case is non-existent because people in the global south are not the driver neither are they at the centre of such sustainable

¹<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/overview/third-conference-ffd.html>

development initiatives, and are such, they are incapable of sustaining a development projects that are not of their own making.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Post-2015 Development Agenda

The retrospective appraisal of the MDGs articulated in this paper unpacks the hidden spectre of grand developmentalism implicit in the agenda and practice of global institutions in the twenty-first century. Through the framework of grand developmentalism, it is trite that the Global South is facing problems of development, but the problems are not actually defined and understood within the context of situations and everyday realities in the respective countries. The conceptualised way in which the reality of global development issues was defined in the MDGs was in sharp contrast to the nature of reality on ground in the global south. Thus implies that the conceptions of development agenda articulated through the MDGs expressed it inadequately. The targets and indicators put forward in achieving all the eight goals of the MDGs seemed to be a sort of wrong diagnosis of development issues at the global south, therefore making it difficult to implement. Therefore, both the MDGs and the SDGs, as general or universal framework for global development practice, failed to acknowledge how this general problem finds its expression in the concerned countries.

As far as the discussion on the post-2015 development agenda is concerned, a participatory process must urgently be facilitated. It must start from grassroots development research where local activists, anthropologists, economists, sociologists and NGOs are engaged with a view to mapping out the real development problems facing the people and identify sustainable solutions to them. The participatory process should proceed towards national consultations where policy makers, economists, development experts and political are engaged in debates, deliberations and discussions about the findings of grassroots development research. Through this participatory medium, national capacity, the characteristics of the economy (i.e. GDP), and a country's financial state would have to be taken into consideration and formulated into national priorities, targets and indicators for achieving national development goals. Thereafter, a thematic consultation between the national governments and global institutions should be facilitated. This would ensure that important national development issues with differentiated targets that reflect a universal goal framework are derived in a participatory process.

Second, an independent development commission should be inaugurated by the United Nations General Assembly in each country that is signatory to the post-2015 development agenda. The commission should be allowed to perform its responsibilities independently without undue interference from national governments and International Institutions. The composition of the commission should include: local activists and NGOs, a national government official, local academics, development experts, a UNDP official and a representative of global financial institutions. The commission should be saddle with matter relating with global development financing, fund disbursement, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of development projects. The commission must also ensure that funds are channelled to approved projects, such that projects are executed according to approved standard and reflect the real cost and value of the projects. In evaluating the projects, the commission should develop its own yardstick for measuring the targets and indicators outlined in order to establish whether a particular goal(s) can be achieved or not. This will help to checkmate the grim reality of weak state institutions, corruption and mismanagement that undermined the performance of the MDGs especially in SSA.

Finally, a fundamental re-examination of global development financing from aid dependent relationship (over-reliance on ODA as enshrined in the MDGs) to available domestic fiscal affordability is needed. This will help to create independent financial pathways for the global south to achieve the development goals at their own pace and level of

development. Rather than relying on donor's agencies and international institutions in implementing all development goals and targets, the financial gap between country's fiscal capabilities and national priorities has to be plugged through debt relief, ODA and financial aids from international institutions. Africa and the rest of the global south should move beyond the narratives of capitalist's tokenism and crumb-from-the table practices of aid-dependent relationship embedded in development goals, to narratives that privilege inward looking economic and development solutions and strategies in growing economy, creating jobs for teeming numbers of unemployed population, and building local capacity to achieve sustainable livelihoods and development.

Conclusively, the ideas and practices of global sustainable development that would come after 2015 should be developed in relation to the complexities of development issues in the global south and not on abstract agendas and strategies that are constituted in a universalistic frame. This will incorporate the perspectives of the North and global South in the participatory process of drawing up a new agenda that will reflect a win-win situation where strategic "engagement of local mobilization with global discourses, and of local discourses with the global structure of power" as Cooper (1997: 85) brilliantly captured, are utilised.

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