

# **Beyond the Sustainable Development Goals: Uncovering the truth about global poverty and demanding the universal realisation of Article 25**

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**The Sustainable Development Goals – despite their positive and progressive rhetoric – by no means constitute a transformative agenda for meeting the basic needs of all people within the means of our shared planet. This report argues that we may never see an end to poverty “in all its forms everywhere” unless ordinary people unite in their millions and demand the universal realisation of fundamental human rights through huge, continuous and worldwide demonstrations for economic justice.**

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# Introduction

How can governments ensure that people in all countries – as well as future generations – have access to the resources needed to meet their basic needs without exacerbating climate change or transgressing other environmental limits? In other words, how can we (re)organise the global economy so that it embodies the principle of sharing through a recognition that humanity only has one planet's worth of finite resources that must be equitably distributed for the common good of all?

This is the epochal challenge that campaigners and policymakers have been grappling with ever since a global agenda for sustainable development was first set out in a report by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, entitled *Our Common Future*.<sup>1</sup> Almost three decades since the 'Bruntland Report' was published, however, governments are no closer to implementing the policies and regulations that can achieve greater equity in a constrained world, despite countless international conferences and commitments that span the full spectrum of social, economic and environmental concerns.

On the contrary, inequality has widened to unprecedented levels over the last three decades, with the richest 1% now owning nearly as much wealth as the rest of the world's population

combined.<sup>2</sup> As outlined in Part 2 of this report, almost 4.2 billion people still live in severe poverty and more than 4,600 people die needlessly every day simply because they do not have access to life's essentials. Meanwhile, humanity is consuming natural resources 50% faster than they can be replenished, and CO2 emissions are currently set to increase by a catastrophic four degrees Celsius by the end of the century.<sup>3</sup> These statistics barely scratch the surface of today's interrelated global crises, which is why achieving truly equitable, just and sustainable economic development remains humanity's most urgent priority in the dawning 21st century.<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore encouraging to note the scale and ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have now been formally adopted by the United Nations in order to pave the way for a new global partnership to “free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet”.<sup>5</sup> This new set of targets will define the international development agenda for the next 15 years, building on the apparent success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were implemented in 2000 to a similar fanfare of worldwide media coverage and hype.

If taken at face value, it may seem irresponsible for anyone to dismiss such a well-intentioned and high-level agenda of this nature, if only because it presents a valuable opportunity to improve intergovernmental cooperation and focus the minds of both policymakers and the general public on pressing global issues. Who could possibly disagree with the broad vision and prime objective of the SDGs campaign to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”? As the international community aligns its development policies to this definitive global initiative, however, many civil society organisations and engaged citizens are voicing serious concerns about whether the goals can ever live up to their claim of embodying a “supremely ambitious and transformational agenda”.

Even a cursory analysis of the SDGs outcome document reveals that there are many reasons to question not only the goals themselves, but the entire sustainable development agenda and the political-economic context within which it will be implemented. Unfortunately, the program's numerous shortcomings have been obfuscated by persuasive and misleading rhetoric coming from UN agencies, stakeholder governments, corporations and the many non-governmental organisations praising the success of the MDGs and heavily promoting the new ‘Global Goals’ campaign.<sup>6</sup> One of the aims of this report is therefore to bolster a counter-narrative to the mainstream view that the existing

international development framework is capable of addressing the critical social and ecological crises facing humanity.<sup>7</sup>

In the sections that follow, we also highlight some of the key criticisms of the SDGs and explain why they will not deliver environmentally sustainable outcomes or tackle the pressing structural issues at the heart of today's global crises. In contradistinction to the commonly held view that governments are winning the battle against hunger and poverty, we demonstrate that – by any reasonable measure of human deprivation – more people live in poverty today than ever before, we are failing to sufficiently reduce or even acknowledge the reality of life-threatening deprivation, and the situation is getting worse rather than improving. We therefore refute the claim that the MDGs halved poverty between 1990 and 2015, and argue that it will be impossible to end hunger and extreme poverty by 2030 as long as we continue to pursue a policy framework based on the discredited free market ideology of neoliberalism.

Due to the continued failure of the international community to reform the global economy in line with more equitable and ecological standards, a strategy for mass civic engagement is also proposed – one that calls on ordinary people to demand that governments fully implement the essential requirements set out in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an overriding international priority.<sup>8</sup> In a world in which policymakers remain beholden to outmoded political ideologies and are unduly influenced by powerful corporations, we argue that unprecedented and continuous worldwide protests are necessary if governments are ever to meet the basic needs of the world's majority poor within an immediate timeframe. From both a moral and strategic standpoint, the report concludes that only a united global demand for governments to guarantee the basic rights set out in Article 25 – for adequate food, shelter, healthcare, and social security for all – can pave the way towards a sustainable global economy based on justice and the principle of sharing.



## A fairer sharing of wealth, power and resources — or business-as-usual?

Many civil society groups are broadly supportive of the post-2015 development framework, not least because the new global goals place environmental sustainability at the heart of the programme. Compared to the MDGs, the newly-agreed targets are also far more universal and inclusive: they emerged from a two year public consultation that incorporated the views of developing countries, they apply to countries in both the Global North and South, and they seek to engage all stakeholders in the implementation process over the next 15 years. Indeed, the overarching promise of a global compact to provide universal access to social protection and “leave no one behind” is rightly ambitious and fully in line with the United Nations Charter, as well as international covenants that pertain to the fulfilment of basic human rights.

However, the real question is whether governments will be able to raise and redistribute the large sums of money needed to meet the goals, especially at a time when many countries are still adjusting to the impacts of the global financial crisis, experiencing low rates of economic growth, and reducing public spending on Official Developing Assistance (ODA).<sup>9</sup> To help forge “a new global framework” for financing the shift to sustainable development, the SDGs are accompanied by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which emerged from the Third International Conference

on Financing for Development (FfD3) that took place in July 2015. Disappointingly, even though developing countries face an estimated annual gap of \$2.5 trillion in SDG-relevant sectors, governments did not commit to any significant measures to bridge this shortfall during the FfD3 talks – let alone agree to any substantive reforms that could address the structural inequities that keep developing countries impoverished.<sup>10</sup>

The failure of policymakers to agree any concrete measures for redistributing more of the world's highly concentrated wealth to protect the most vulnerable people was just one of a number of grave concerns voiced by civil society organisations in response to the SDG's preparatory and financing talks. As highlighted in Box 1, donor governments still provide only a fraction of the aid they pledged almost half a century ago, and even these inadequate donations are distributed via mechanisms that are in urgent need of reform to ensure they are no longer politically motivated or attached to harmful policy conditions.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, foreign aid is dwarfed by the net flow of financial resources from the Global South to the North, which suggests that in reality the populations of (resource rich) low-income nations continue to finance the development of 'rich' nations rather than the other way around.<sup>12</sup>

Instead of agreeing to provide significantly more funding for development, donor governments pushed for countries in the Global South to take greater responsibility for mobilising finances domestically. At the same time, they effectively refused to implement any of the urgent measures that civil society has long been calling for to prevent illicit financial flows, tackle tax avoidance or restructure external debts. The unacceptable failure to reform the global economy so that financial flows benefit rather than impede sustainable development in the Global South will cost developing countries many trillions of dollars in lost revenues each year. Both the FfD3 and SDGs outcome documents also commit to scaling up private-public partnerships as a way of raising finance, which is a measure that scores of campaigners and civil society organisations argue has established a "corporate development agenda" that will benefit businesses far more than those living in extreme poverty.<sup>13</sup>

In a final insult to the many groups of developing countries who had successfully negotiated the language on key points in the 28-page SDGs outcome document, the completed text was reportedly agreed undemocratically behind closed doors – mainly as a result of last minute demands by the United States.<sup>14</sup> The end result was a watered-down 'agreement' that went against the tenor of previous outcomes in Financing for Development

conferences, and opened the door to even more privatisation of the public sphere. As summarised in a joint statement that focused on the ‘economic justice aspects of the means of implementation’ during the AAAA negotiations, numerous civil society groups complained: “[the] emphasis on private financing and the role of transnational corporations will further weaken public policy space [for] governments and fails to address the unfinished business of regulating the financial sector despite the extreme and intergenerational poverty created by the global crisis.”<sup>15</sup>

### Box 1: Core civil society objections to the SDGs

Major concerns have been raised by civil society organisations in response to the two main documents that form the basis of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda for the next 15 years.<sup>16</sup> Commenting on the SDGs outcome document, for example, one of the Major Groups of civil society organisations involved in the negotiations issued a damning report stating that “the human right to food, the right to water and sanitation as a goal, women’s rights to decision making on peace and security, the rights of indigenous peoples, and the right for women to control their sexuality free of coercion, discrimination and violence ... amongst others are notably absent.”<sup>17</sup> Civil society groups also objected that many of the pressing issues they had long been campaigning on were not addressed, including:

**International aid:** The commitment for OECD countries to provide 0.7% of GDP as Official Development Assistance (ODA) is already 45 years old, but despite the ongoing efforts of campaigners very few donors have achieved that minimal target let alone committed to increase their contributions to levels that are commensurate with urgent global needs. In fact, levels of international aid fell in real terms during 2014.<sup>18</sup> Yet apart from an additional \$214 million for the World Bank’s Global Financial Facility, no additional time-bound or actionable pledges for financing development were made during the SDG process – the AAAA merely reiterated the European Union’s existing aid commitments. Nor did governments commit to reforming aid mechanisms in line with long-standing demands from campaigners to free donations from neoliberal policy conditions, and ensure that ODA is not politically or financially motivated or likely to create dependency.

**Differentiated responsibilities:** To the dismay of many developing countries and civil society groups, the SDGs place a disproportionate emphasis on developing countries needing to raise additional finances domestically. This perspective largely ignores the historical injustices and structural inequalities that are the underlying cause of poverty and environmental problems, such as the extraction of wealth and resources from developing countries during the colonial era, or today's unfair international trade and finance arrangements [see Box 2]. At the same time, it disregards the differences in the respective economic and technical capacity of developed and developing countries to meet the new development targets. For these reasons, the language of the SDGs undermines the principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities' which was enshrined at the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 in recognition of the disproportionate contribution that highly industrialised nations have made to global carbon emissions and environmental degradation in the past.

**Tax justice:** Perhaps the biggest disappointment was the failure of governments to establish a truly inclusive United Nations tax body to promote international tax cooperation, stop illicit financial flows and tackle tax dodging. Developing countries lose an estimated \$100bn a year in revenues from corporate tax avoidance alone, and as much as \$300 billion in total lost development finance.<sup>19</sup> Without an international agency with universal membership that can regulate global tax standards and help prevent these losses, it will remain impossible for developing nations to mobilise the additional domestic revenues that donor countries are now demanding.

**Debt cancellation:** Although the AAAAA acknowledges that many countries are still vulnerable to debt crises, the burden of fault and responsibility was placed squarely on developing countries. Rich countries pushed for debt discussions to continue under the IMF and OECD rather than the United Nations, and they opposed the multilateral legal framework to guarantee the just and equitable treatment for creditors and debtors that the G77 and African nations were proposing. As such, governments failed to establish a legal mechanism for orderly debt restructuring in accordance with the long-held demands of developing nations and civil society organisations – even though debt cancellation would enable developing countries to fund the more effective and comprehensive social protection programs that are required in order to meet the SDGs.<sup>20</sup>

**Corporate influence:** The new goals emphasise the need for a global partnership between the UN and the corporate sector to help bridge the funding shortfall, which is a major concern for campaigners at a time when the excessive influence of corporations over policymaking – even at the United Nations – is compromising democratic principles, social justice and environmental sustainability.<sup>21</sup> While corporations might benefit from ‘blue-washing’ by effectively wrapping themselves in the UN flag, the extent to which the private sector can help the very poor is far from clear – especially since there is nothing in the outcome document to suggest that businesses should be more accountable, transparent or better regulated.

**Reducing inequality:** Including a goal to close the growing gap between the incomes of the very rich and the rest of us was widely demanded by leading economists, development thinkers and civil society campaigners during the SDGs negotiations.<sup>22</sup> But the new goal to “reduce inequality within and among countries” is extremely weak as it only calls for an increase in the share of national income to the bottom 40% of earners at a level that is greater than the national average – however little that increase might be. It therefore fails to address the problem of the top 10% of the population accumulating a greater share of national income than the bottom 40%, despite the evidence that income concentration among the very rich is a key driver of inequality.<sup>23</sup>

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## Fair shares in a world of limited resources

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The twin challenge of sharing the planet's resources both equitably and sustainably has been lucidly illustrated in Oxfam's 'Doughnut' report, which asks whether basic human rights can be universally met without transgressing planetary boundaries. The report proposes that establishing an environmentally safe and socially just space for humanity to thrive requires a fairer distribution of income and resource use across the world, greater efficiency in resource consumption, and a shift away from using GDP growth as the main measure of economic development.<sup>24</sup> To what extent, then, do the SDGs challenge the prevailing model of consumption-driven economic growth or reflect the need for wealth, power and resources to be shared more equally within and among nations?

Despite the inspiring rhetoric with its strong emphasis on sustainability, the content of the SDGs outcome document suggests that the goals will not be sufficiently transformative to instigate the policy changes needed at the national and global level to create a more ecologically sustainable world. In fact the 17 goals and 169 targets broadly fail to acknowledge the root causes of climate change and the wider environmental crisis, and there remains an overriding focus on boosting economic growth by increasing the production and consumption of material goods – regardless of the environmental impacts of this purely market-driven approach. In particular, SDG 8 is entirely devoted to the promotion of “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth”, even though there is now ample evidence to suggest that relying on the trickle-down of global economic growth is not an effective way to end poverty, since only a tiny fraction of the wealth generated by growth benefits the world's poor.

For example, according to detailed projections by David Woodward based on optimistic assumptions about future rates of global economic growth, it would take at least 100 years to ‘eradicate’ poverty at the \$1.25-a-day level and twice as long at the more appropriate \$5-a-day measure of poverty.<sup>25</sup> In a further indictment of trickle-down economics, Woodward calculates that the average person would need to have an income of more than \$100,000 (or over \$1,300,000 at the \$5-a-day threshold) to achieve these reductions – even though one percent of the world's population would still remain in absolute poverty in this scenario. Pointing to the need for an unprecedented program of redistribution as a more effective route to ending poverty, Woodward has called for the share of income from global growth

that accrues to the world's poor to be increased by a factor of five, alongside a more fundamental reassessment of our approach to development.<sup>26</sup>

The SDGs also embody the widely recognised and profound contradiction between the pursuit of economic growth and the very notion of ecological sustainability. Not a single country has managed to 'decouple' economic growth from environmental stress and pollution, and achieving any significant level of decoupling remains highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, evidence suggests that accelerating economic growth in order to speed up poverty reduction will result in a rise in global carbon emissions that would wipe out any possibility of keeping climate change to within the 'acceptable' margin of a two degrees centigrade increase.<sup>28</sup> The reduction in poverty that might result from trying to 'enlarge the size of the economic pie' would clearly be counteracted by the adverse environmental impacts of global warming, as well as the financial costs of adaptation.

As long as the development agenda fails to accept the fundamentals of biophysical limits, the SDGs cannot claim to represent sustainable solutions to world poverty. It's now widely recognised that environmentally viable economic systems will remain impossible to build without challenging the dominance of economic growth in policymaking, ending the culture of turbo-consumerism, and establishing sustainable patterns of production and consumption that are not dependant on the commodification of nature.<sup>29</sup> It stands to reason that while humanity is in ecological overshoot and consumption patterns remain highly unequal (e.g. the richest 20% of the world's population are currently responsible for 80% of all consumption),<sup>30</sup> any international program for sustainable development will necessitate a radically different economic model. Central to this transition should be a 'global convergence' in levels of material throughput and carbon emissions (with over-consuming countries taking the lead in reducing their resource use while less developed countries increase theirs), alongside a progressively tighter cap on the overall rate of global consumption until it can be maintained at a sustainable level.<sup>31</sup> Since none of these fundamental issues highlighted above are adequately addressed in the SDGs, they cannot claim to represent a sustainable, equitable or truly inclusive global framework for meeting the essential needs of both present and future generations in all countries.

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## From historical injustice to international sharing

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A fundamental reason why the global goals are not 'transformative' is due to their failure to articulate the deeper structural causes of extreme poverty. As a linguistic analysis of the key documents for the SDG process demonstrates, poverty is misleadingly framed as a naturally occurring 'disease' – something to be expected and managed as merely a part of the natural world – rather than being understood as an avoidable consequence of the rules underpinning the global economic system.<sup>32</sup> The result is a superficial and apolitical narrative around the existence of human deprivation, and a development agenda that is incapable in itself of reforming the policies and institutions that perpetuate hunger, inequality or environmental degradation.

The systemic causes of these interrelated crises are rooted in a complex history of exploitation that is entirely left out of discussion in the SDGs discourse. From the era of colonialism to the Structural Adjustment Programs imposed upon developing countries from the 1980s, history reveals how the iniquitous political decisions that have shaped the global economy for centuries are the true cause of human deprivation and environmental destruction. These policies can be traced back at least as far as the enclosures that took place from the 16th century onwards, when wealthy merchants and aristocrats privatised common land and sparked a humanitarian crisis characterised by widespread poverty and mass unemployment. Box 2 highlights how wealth extraction activities and unjust economic rules continue to exacerbate global inequalities to this day through austerity measures, so called 'free-trade' agreements, debt-based finance, the scaling back of state regulations, tax havens and much more.

### Box 2: The long history of humanity's failure to share

*"In order to understand the causes of poverty we have to understand history. Before the 1500s, there was no discernible difference between the West and the rest of the world in terms of human development. The impoverishment of the global South began first with the plunder of Latin America, followed by the Atlantic slave trade, then the British colonization of Asia and the European scramble for Africa. This architecture of wealth extraction was essential to Western development.*

*Later, neoliberal policies—like the deregulation of capital markets, privatization of essential services, elimination of social and environmental protections, and a constant downward pressure on both corporate taxation and workers wages—were imposed across the global South, mostly by way of western-supported dictators and [...] structural adjustment [programmes]. This turned into the biggest single cause of poverty in the 20th century, because it created both the incentives and the systems required—like tax havens—for wealth and power to be centralized in the hands of the elite. Today, the process of wealth extraction continues in the form of tax evasion, land grabs, debt service, and trade agreements rigged in the interests of the rich, a reverse flow of wealth that vastly outstrips the aid (the epitome of a small, technical fix) that trickles in the other direction.*

*It is no surprise, then, that the fortunes of rich countries and poor countries continue to diverge. Or that the richest 1% have managed to accumulate more wealth than the rest of the world's population combined.”*

Source: Martin Kirk, Joe Brewer, Jason Hickel, 4 Things You Probably Know About Poverty That Bill and Melinda Gates Don't, Fact Co. Exist, 3rd February 2015.

From this historical perspective, it's undeniable that the most industrialised and least developed nations have made very different contributions to the social and environmental crises we face. Given the huge disparities in wealth that exist between high – and low-income countries, there are also obvious differences in their respective economic and technical capacity to tackle these problems. Although these basic assumptions are enshrined in the widely accepted principle of 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities', they have caused much contention during the UN's climate change negotiations and are now effectively being side-lined in the SDGs framework as developing countries are pressured to take greater responsibility for their own development [see Box 1].

Far from embodying a transformative economic agenda based on international sharing and human rights, the SDGs are most notable for evading a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform existing policies, regulations and global governance mechanisms to safeguard the world's poor. In sum, the SDGs continue to adhere to a very narrow political and economic ideology, even though the tenets of neoliberalism (such as privatisation, deregulation and public spending cuts) are known to increase

inequality and environmental damage, and therefore undermine the practice of sustainable development.<sup>33</sup> It's for the same ideological reasons that the SDGs also take an orthodox position on free trade, despite the wide-ranging literature documenting the harmful effects of trade liberalisation on national income, domestic agriculture and industrial production.<sup>34</sup> In the face of fierce opposition from rich countries during the FfD3 talks, many Latin American and African governments argued that "trade does not automatically lead to development, and conditions should be established to ensure that trade rules produce positive social, economic, and environmental impacts, rather than exacerbating inequalities and unfair competition."<sup>35</sup>

None of this is to suggest that the SDGs are malign or mired in conspiracy, and there is every reason to praise the new focus on "leaving no one behind". But considering the gravity and extent of the world's interlocking crises, it compels us to speak the truth about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: that it holds no promise for tackling the structural injustices in the current global economic system, or ensuring that development finance is people-centred and protects the biosphere. Following the similarly disappointing outcome from the Rio+20 Earth Summit in 2012, the SDGs and the FfD3 negotiation outcomes have further diminished the UN's mandate to address systemic issues from a human rights perspective. The goals themselves might be laudable and ambitious but a practicable strategy to achieve them is conspicuously absent, which ultimately threatens to perpetuate the failed neoliberal paradigm of market fundamentalism for another 15 years. Put simply, there is little to suggest that the implementation of the SDGs will address issues of equity and unfavourable power relations, or usher in an era in which the principle of sharing might underpin global economic policy decisions and governance frameworks.

## Uncovering the truth about global poverty

As highlighted above, the focus on sustainability in the SDGs is superficial and contradictory, especially in light of the importance they place on consumption-driven economic growth, trade liberalisation and other ecologically flawed and largely market-oriented policy solutions. Aside from their weak environmental credentials, however, the majority of the new goals remain closely aligned to the MDGs in that they emphasise the need to guarantee the fulfilment of basic needs and universal human rights. Indeed, the new goals reflect the powerful narrative around ending hunger and poverty that has been forged by donor countries, international financial institutions, the business sector and the United Nations in an attempt to influence public perceptions on the state of human deprivation across the world.

The ‘story of poverty’ that these stakeholders narrate tells the tale of how governments have successfully halved poverty since 1990 and – in response to public campaigns such as those calling to ‘make poverty history’ – how they have since agreed a new set of targets that will completely eradicate the ‘disease’ of hunger and poverty across the world by 2030. The moral of the story is that charitable aid and the decisions made by policymakers in rich countries are effective at building a better world, and there is no need to question the fundamentals of how the global economy

functions; in order to guarantee prosperity for all, we don't need to share the world's wealth, power or resources more equally, we just need more consumerism, more economic growth, more free trade and more neoliberal capitalism.<sup>36</sup>

The success of this narrative is in part due to what has been described as 'the world's largest advertising campaign', launched to inaugurate the UN's SDGs summit in September 2015.<sup>37</sup> The immense global effort to publicise this misleading story of human progress might explain why it's so readily accepted by the general public, even if it seems counterintuitive in the context of today's intractable global crises: growing inequalities, widespread cuts in public spending, rising unemployment levels across Europe, and the unprecedented migration of refugees fleeing the Middle East and North Africa, to name but a few problems regularly highlighted in the media.

However much we would like to believe that governments are on track to end hunger and poverty, a more detailed examination of the available data shows that the received wisdom about our economic progress is largely based on misdirection and exaggeration. The mainstream narrative about how global poverty is being reduced distracts from the need to address its structural causes and diffuses public outrage at what is, in reality, a worsening crisis of epic proportions that demands a far more urgent response from the international community than the SDGs can deliver. Equally, the misperception that we are winning the fight against human deprivation in the developing world validates (and locks us into) an ideological approach to global policy decisions based on further unleashing market forces and diminishing the role of the State in ensuring people's basic needs are universally secured.

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## Are we really on track to end poverty by 2030?

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According to official UN statistics, there has been a steep drop in global hunger and poverty levels over the past 25 years. In 1990, around half of the developing world reportedly lived on less than \$1.25-a-day – a figure that reduced significantly to 14% by 2015. Similarly, the proportion of people who are undernourished has reportedly fallen from 23% in 1990 to 13% today.<sup>38</sup> On the surface this is great news: any reduction in the number or proportion of people who cannot afford access to life's essentials is a step in the right direction and should be commended. But to understand

what these figures really mean, a broader perspective on the statistical approach to measuring poverty is needed – which has dramatic implications for our understanding of how successful the Millennium Campaign actually was.

In stark contrast to the hype about the success of the MDGs, the evidence indicates that the measurable outcomes of the Millennium Campaign should instil policymakers with “a sense of humility”, since its impact on broad-based poverty reduction is highly questionable.<sup>39</sup> As a set of political commitments by world leaders to define international development priorities, the MDGs did help establish a global framework for scaling up action on poverty-related objectives, and they arguably made an effective case for more aid and better data. But it would be inaccurate to assume that the impact of the goals was significant compared to what would have happened in their absence.<sup>40</sup>

For example, it's well known that poverty reduction in Asia was driven by the extraordinary period of sustained economic growth that occurred in China rather than the UN's development targets.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, China was responsible for the vast majority of the poverty reduction that took place globally between 1990 and 2015 and is thus a key reason why MDG-1 was met – even though China's state-led approach to development was different to the market-driven policies that the fall in global poverty is normally attributed to. The growth experienced in China also impacted on other countries, such as those in Africa that were able to increase their exports to China due to higher levels of demand for commodities.<sup>42</sup> In other countries, poverty reduction was often due to domestic programmes designed to improve access to state welfare rather than the MDGs per se, as exemplified by the successful Bolsa Familia program in Brazil.

Serious concerns also pertain to how the measurement of poverty has evolved since the MDGs were first conceived. Dr Jason Hickel has described how changes to the way poverty is calculated have contributed to the illusion that poverty is rapidly reducing as a direct result of free-market/neoliberal capitalism [see Box 3]. Most significantly, the baseline year for measuring progress on poverty reduction was shifted back to 1990 in order to include all the poverty reduction that took place (mainly in China) well before the Millennium Campaign even began. On more than one occasion, changes to the way the poverty line was calculated also meant that hundreds of millions of people were subtracted from the MDGs poverty statistics overnight. As various analysts have long argued, these statistical alterations call into question the self-proclaimed success of the MDGs, and even

caste doubt over whether the data was deliberately manipulated to ensure that the goal to halve poverty was achieved within the allotted timeframe.<sup>43</sup>

### Box 3: The poverty of global statistics

Governments first pledged to halve the number of undernourished people during the World Food Summit of 1996, which equated to reducing the number of people living in poverty by 836 million. Even though this was not widely considered an ambitious goal to achieve by 2015, the target was effectively reduced by 197 million people when it was reformulated as MDG-1, because the goal no longer measured the absolute number of people living below \$1-a-day and instead focussed on the proportion of people living in poverty.

Then, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted MDG-1, the baseline date for measuring the change in poverty levels was moved back from 2000 to 1990, which further narrowed the target by 324 million people. This statistical manipulation also meant that all the poverty reduction that took place during the decade before the Millennium Campaign was included in the MDGs statistics – including the sizable reductions in poverty that took place in China in the 1990s, even though that had nothing to do with the international development targets.

These changes dramatically reduced the poverty headcount to less than half the number originally pledged during the 1996 food summit. The sleight of hand continued when the World Bank changed the way it calculated the \$1-a-day international poverty line (IPL), as they positioned it at a level that was significantly lower in real terms. Overnight, this small change showed that the number of impoverished people was reduced by another 400 million between 1981 and 2001. Similarly, as a result of a second change in the way the IPL was measured, a further 121 million people were again statistically freed from poverty in 2008. The new \$1.25-a-day poverty line was adopted by the Millennium Campaign which was now more likely to appear successful as a result of these changes to how poverty is calculated.

Source: Jason Hickel, Exposing the great 'poverty reduction' lie, Al Jazeera, 21st August 2014.

Professors Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge have reputedly demonstrated that the World Bank uses such faulty methodology when calculating poverty that their statistics could be underestimating the severity of the problem by up to 40 percent.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, income poverty is only one aspect of deprivation, and other factors such as undernutrition, access to healthcare and decent work are not accounted for in the World Bank's calculations. Campaigners have long advocated for a wider definition of poverty to be used that either includes measures of deprivation and social exclusion, or national poverty lines that better reflect people's access to essential goods and services. Widely supported alternative methods of defining poverty (such as Social Watch's 'basic capabilities' approach or a 'Rights-Based Poverty Line' that measures whether specific human needs are being met) tend to reveal an alarming truth: that the vast majority of the developing world population still live without sufficient means to live a healthy and dignified life.<sup>45</sup>

The huge discrepancies between different methods of measuring poverty underscores the importance of defining it appropriately in the first place. The World Bank's current definition of what constitutes 'extreme' poverty is somewhat arbitrarily based on an international poverty line of \$1.25-a-day (previously set at \$1-a-day until 2008). This exceedingly low and highly controversial poverty threshold, calculated using the purchasing power parity (PPP) metric, reflects how much \$1.25 can purchase in the USA but not in a low-income country like Malawi or Madagascar, as is often believed. It's clear that meeting even the most minimum human requirement for access to food, water and shelter – let alone paying for basic medical services – would be impossible to achieve in the United States with such little money.<sup>46</sup> It's not surprising that even the World Bank's own analysis has shown that as many as one in three children still face the risk of dying before the age of five when living at (not below) the previous \$1-a-day poverty line.<sup>47</sup>

At the very least, this behoves the World Bank and the SDGs to adopt a morally appropriate dollar-a-day poverty line that accurately reflects a minimum financial requirement for human survival. This is a view shared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) who argue:

*“The \$1.25-a-day poverty line only provides an indication of the most extreme poverty: achieving this level of income falls far short of fulfilling the right to “a standard of living adequate for... health and well-being” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 25.1). Taking \$5 as the minimum daily income which could reasonably be regarded as fulfilling this right, poverty would remain*

*widespread even in those regions which might have largely or wholly eradicated extreme poverty by 2030.”<sup>48</sup>*

Adopting this more realistic international poverty line would transform our understanding of the magnitude and persistence of poverty in the world. For example, using the higher threshold of \$5-a-day, UNCTAD calculates that almost a third of all people in East Asia and the Pacific live in severe poverty, while in the Middle East and North Africa the figure is around 50%. Most disturbingly, some 90% of the population in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa still live on less than \$5 a day.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, assumptions about the success of poverty reduction programs over the past two decades no longer hold true when the \$5-a-day line is used. According to World Bank statistics, poverty at this level of income has consistently increased between 1981 and 2010, rising from approximately 3.3 billion to almost 4.2 billion over that period.<sup>50</sup> If the Millennium Campaign had used this more appropriate poverty threshold, MDG-1 would clearly not have been met: rather than halving the number of people living in severe poverty, there are 14% more people living in \$5-a-day poverty now than in 1990. Similarly, it is feasible that there will be no significant change (if not an increase) in the number of people living on \$5-a-day by 2030 even if the new goal to “end extreme poverty in all its forms everywhere” is eventually met. As ActionAid and others rightly suggest, however, a \$10-a-day benchmark may be a far more a realistic measure of poverty when comparing lifestyles in rich and poor countries.<sup>51</sup> At this level (which is still substantially less than the official poverty line used in the United States of around \$16-a-day)<sup>52</sup> 5.2bn people live in poverty – equivalent to over 70% of the world’s population.<sup>53</sup>

The first Millennium Development Goal also aimed at halving the incidence of hunger but, just as poverty is getting much worse, global levels of hunger and malnutrition are far from showing any improvement. When measuring progress on hunger, the UN prefers to use a threshold for caloric intake that only allows for the ‘minimal activity’ needed to pursue a sedentary lifestyle, based on calculations by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).<sup>54</sup> However, an accurate understanding of global hunger levels requires a more appropriate measure of how many calories are needed to maintain normal physical activity. Scholars and civil society organisations have berated the FAO for basing its new hunger estimates on a caloric threshold below the minimum required for a sedentary lifestyle that can last more than a year, arguing that the statistics therefore “gravely underestimate hunger as commonly understood”.<sup>55</sup>

Even though the FAO acknowledges that “many poor and hungry people are likely to have livelihoods involving arduous manual labour”, they have chosen to count people as hungry when their caloric intake reaches the rock-bottom level of 1,800 calories – far less than the 2,100 calories that the World Food Programme state is required to lead a healthy life.<sup>56</sup> A more appropriate caloric threshold should therefore be based on the energy requirements needed to maintain ‘normal’ physical activity as measured by the FAO. According to statistics for this higher threshold, more than 1.52 billion people live in hunger – a number that is exactly the same as it was in 1990, which contradicts the claim that hunger levels were halved as a result of the MDGs. If we use a higher caloric threshold that is more in line with the physical demands often associated with living and working in developing countries (based on the FAO’s ‘intense’ level of activity), more than two and a half billion people remain hungry – an increase of more than 300 million people between 1990 and 2012.<sup>57</sup>

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## The hidden emergency of preventable deaths

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*“We live in extreme isolation from severe poverty. We do not know anyone earning less than \$30 for a 72-hour week of hard, monotonous labor. The one-third of human beings who die from poverty-related causes includes no one we have spent time with. Nor do we know anyone who knows and cares about these deceased – someone scared by the experience of losing a child to hunger, diarrhoea, or measles, for example. If we had such people as friends or neighbours, we would think harder about world poverty and work harder to help end this ongoing catastrophe.”<sup>58</sup>*

Clearly, a more detailed exploration of the reality of global poverty undermines UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s claim that the MDGs were “the most successful anti-poverty movement in history”.<sup>59</sup> On the contrary, the critical analysis outlined above suggests that even if SGD-1 is met in 2030 it would not necessarily reduce \$5-a-day poverty and, as argued previously, it would certainly not address its structural causes. While this critique of UN poverty statistics is necessary to highlight the truth about global poverty levels, more appropriate figures based on higher poverty and hunger lines still don’t fully illustrate what life-threatening deprivation means in human terms, especially for those of us living in affluent countries who have little or no contact with the world’s poor. For most people reading this

report, the extent of needless suffering experienced by millions of people in the Global South is hidden well below the radar of the mainstream media, largely ignored by politicians from both sides of the political spectrum, and beyond the concerns of the typical citizen who is too busy trying to 'make ends meet' in a modern consumerist society.

Given the continuing lack of public awareness around the true extent and severity of global poverty – which is reinforced by the propaganda from both the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals campaigns – it's necessary to reinterpret abstract and often meaningless 'dollar-a-day' statistics in a way that better illustrates the real impact of extreme deprivation on human life. In so doing, this compels us to consider the broader social, ethical and even spiritual implications of our collective and ongoing failure to prevent this crisis within a morally acceptable timeframe.

World Bank figures conceal a disturbing fact about what it really means to forgo access to life's essentials: according to calculations by Dr Gideon Polya based on figures from the UN Population Fund, over 17 million 'avoidable deaths' occur every year as a consequence of life-threatening deprivation, mainly in low-income countries.<sup>60</sup> The enormity of this statistic is supported by an array of figures periodically released by UN agencies, as well as earlier estimates made by STWR using World Health Organisation data.<sup>61</sup> As the term suggests, these preventable deaths occur simply because millions of people live in conditions of severe poverty and therefore cannot afford access to the essential goods and services that people in wealthier countries have long taken for granted – not even nutritious food or safe drinking water. The extent of this ongoing tragedy cannot be overstated when approximately 46,500 lives are wasted needlessly every day – innocent men, women and children who might otherwise have contributed to the cultural and economic development of the world in unimaginable ways.

#### **Box 4: A snapshot of avoidable life-threatening deprivation**

–The final Millennium Development Goals report estimated that about 16,000 children die each day before celebrating their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes.<sup>62</sup>

–Without urgent international action, almost 70 million children under five will die by 2030 from mainly preventable causes.<sup>63</sup>

- A third of all child deaths occur because of under-nutrition.
- Hunger is the greatest risk to health worldwide, killing more people than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.
- According to the UN's official statistics, there are more hungry people in the world than the combined populations of North America and the European Union.
- In 2015, one in three people (2.4 billion) still lack access to adequate water and sanitation facilities.<sup>64</sup>
- Climate change is estimated to be responsible for 400,000 deaths each year, particularly due to hunger and communicable diseases in the lowest-income countries.<sup>65</sup>
- Taking into account the fiscal capacity of governments in developing countries, it would take around \$75bn to finance the cash transfers needed to lift people to the \$1.25 extreme poverty line, fund a basic health package and get all children in school.<sup>66</sup>

If these deaths were broadcasted to the general public every night via our television screens, the public reaction would no doubt be far more compassionate than even our heartfelt response to the dramatic images of refugees pouring onto the shores of Europe having fled conflict and economic insecurity in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere. But unlike the escalating refugee crisis, the mainstream media fails to draw attention to the aggregate daily toll of poverty-related deaths, largely because it is a hidden and chronic problem spread across many diverse developing countries. It's therefore almost impossible to picture the loss of human life on this scale or quantify its impact on the families and communities of those affected. Nonetheless, the annual preventable death rate far outweighs the fatalities from any other single event in history since the Second World War, and around half of those affected are young children.<sup>67</sup>

If this atrocity continues at the current rate, some 255 million more lives could be lost by the end of 2030 – equivalent to the entire population of Indonesia. Given today's technological advancements and humanity's combined available wealth of \$263 trillion, it's perhaps no exaggeration to suggest that the magnitude of these avoidable deaths is tantamount to a global genocide or holocaust.<sup>68</sup> How long can we allow this daily

tsunami of fatalities to continue unabated?

Without doubt, humanity is in the midst of a global emergency of epic proportions – one that requires an unprecedented international response that surpasses today’s piecemeal and superficial approach to development. The failure of world leaders and policymakers to address the real causes of hunger and poverty suggest that the responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of ordinary people to demand an end to preventable human deaths, thereby paving the way for a radically new model of economic progress that is firmly based on a more equitable sharing of global resources.

As STWR has detailed in an earlier report, governments could raise trillions of dollars annually to end needless deprivation through a range of widely-supported redistributive measures, from tax and debt justice to redirecting perverse government subsidies.<sup>69</sup> International agencies already have the knowledge, capacity and expertise needed to prevent these avoidable deaths, and the systems and institutions that can assist them have long existed. The requirements for an unparalleled international effort to prevent life-threatening deprivation are therefore already in place, if only the world’s governments can collectively surpass the SDGs agenda and finally do whatever it takes to secure basic human needs for all as a leading global priority, and regardless of cost.

Not since the Brandt Commission’s proposal for an international programme of economic sharing have policymakers considered ending hunger and poverty in a way that is commensurate with the vast scale of this humanitarian crisis.<sup>70</sup> Despite widespread approval, however, the necessary political will to implement the emergency programme set out in the ‘Brandt Report’ was lacking in the early 1980s.<sup>71</sup> Humanity cannot sustain this level of complacency any longer; every day we fail to act many thousands of people are condemned needlessly to death in a world of plenty. It’s therefore imperative that millions more people awaken to the worldwide emergency of preventable poverty-related fatalities, and take the lead in demanding unprecedented government action. As the final section of this report affirms, the future possibility of sharing Planet Earth for the common good of all largely depends on this shift in global consciousness.

## Ending the global emergency of extreme human deprivation

The above sections have argued that the Sustainable Development Goals – despite their positive and progressive rhetoric – do not in fact constitute a transformative agenda for restructuring the global economy and meeting the basic needs of all people within the means of our shared planet. More than this, the basic assumptions that underpin the SDGs discourse – that life is improving for the majority of humanity, that unfettered economic growth and development-as-usual can continue indefinitely into the future, and that the world is on course to completely eradicate poverty by 2030 – is fatally flawed and misleading.

For these reasons, it is futile to direct further policy proposals or alternative ideas to the world's governments, who continue to follow an outmoded economic paradigm while failing to enact the emergency measures and far-reaching structural reforms that are necessary to end needless human deprivation within an immediate time-frame. Instead, we propose that civil society groups and engaged citizens adopt a strategy for global transformation based on solidarity with the world's poor and a united demand for governments to radically reorder their distorted priorities.

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## Mobilising a ‘movement of movements’

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*“The SDGs do not represent the flames of change. In fact, they are more of a smoke signal, a mere distraction. The hope now rests in their potential to spark indignation, to help build a movement of people who recognize the true depths of the challenges we face.”<sup>72</sup>*

If the world’s agenda-setting institutions are significantly underestimating the extent of global poverty and failing to identify its deeper structural causes, then how should we as ordinary citizens act in response? What should be our reaction to the sheer extent of life-threatening deprivation in the world, given that our combined efforts to meet urgent human needs – as expressed by the actions of our elected governments – are tragically inadequate on a global scale? Clearly, the more than 46,000 people who die from poverty-related causes each day cannot wait till 2030 for governments to guarantee the fulfilment of their basic socio-economic rights, regardless of the aspirational global targets enshrined in the SDGs.

In the first instance, there is no prospect of the international community treating the emergency of life-threatening deprivation as a priority above all other priorities until public attention is redirected towards the true reality of this growing humanitarian crisis. Galvanising an informed public opinion the world over is a formidable challenge given the false mainstream narrative on poverty reduction and a general lack of popular awareness within affluent society. But without a collective worldwide awakening to the injustice of extreme poverty amidst excessive inequalities, it may remain impossible to mobilise a global movement of citizens with the power to overcome the corporate greed and free-market ideology that has long prevented humanity from ending this ongoing tragedy.<sup>73</sup>

There are already many prominent thinkers who proclaim the need for massive, in-the-streets and non-violent protests that involve unprecedented numbers of citizens across the world. However, the global justice movement as a whole still lacks a concerted focus on the critical needs of the unheard and marginalised poor, many thousands of whom are at risk of dying unnecessarily from poverty-related causes at this very moment. As STWR has repeatedly argued, there can be no transformation of the world in a wholly moral or inclusive sense until the basic rights of these voiceless multitudes are prioritised and upheld, which will require mass mobilisations in the streets like we have never seen before.

If sharing means anything in a world of plenty, it must surely mean the prevention of starvation and destitution as a leading concern for the world's people and governments. We now see significant mobilisations of civil society to try and persuade our political representatives to enact policies that can limit global warming; but the time is long overdue for massive popular protests that call for a rapid end to the moral outrage of hunger and life-threatening deprivation.

The vision of civic engagement that is being outlined here is beyond anything witnessed before in recent history, yet it may represent a last hope for many millions of the world's poor and dispossessed. None of the inspiring peoples' movements of recent years – from the Arab Spring to the diverse Occupy encampments – have been able to move beyond reactive protest and solely national or single-issue causes, or else articulate a shared demand that can significantly impact on global policymaking. We may never realise a fairer world without a truly unified social movement that involves a huge segment of the global public, and not just the relative minority of committed campaigners and activists. The responsibility for change falls squarely on the shoulders of us all – ordinary engaged citizens – to march on the streets in enormous numbers and forge a formidable public voice in favour of ending the injustice of hunger and poverty in all its dimensions.

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## Demanding the universal realisation of Article 25

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*“For all this, the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new Agenda for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education. These pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life and, more generally, what we could call the right to existence of human nature itself” – Pope Francis.<sup>74</sup>*

STWR's founder Mohammed Mesbahi has proposed a simple strategy for galvanising these massive public demonstrations that speak out on behalf of the world's majority poor, which will require ordinary people of goodwill to uphold the long-agreed human rights of Article 25 as their leading concern in the critical

period ahead.<sup>75</sup> The time has come for millions of citizens in every country to collectively demand the universal realisation of these basic rights – for adequate food, housing, healthcare and social security for all – until governments reorder their distorted priorities, significantly reform the global economic system, and finally implement the principle of sharing into world affairs.

From both a moral and strategic perspective, heralding Article 25 among vast numbers of people may represent the only viable route for creating a global citizens movement that is capable of overcoming the political inertia and self-interest of governments. With over 70% of the global population struggling to live on less than \$10 per day, there is no doubt that a common cause for guaranteeing basic socio-economic rights across the world could bring together many millions of people in different continents on a common platform for transformative change. If these protest activities can become the subject of mainstream political and media discussions, people from all walks of life may soon be persuaded to join in – including those who have never demonstrated before in the richest nations, along with the poorest citizens in low-income countries. As Mesbahi has elucidated in greater detail in his writings, such protest activity will need to be peaceful, unceasing, wholly inclusive and non-ideological, and fundamentally motivated by the cause of ending extreme human deprivation on the basis of an international emergency.<sup>76</sup>

We may never see an end to poverty “in all its forms everywhere” unless ordinary people unite in their millions and uphold the fundamental rights of Article 25 through huge, continuous and worldwide demonstrations. However, galvanising world public opinion in favour of rapidly eliminating needless poverty-related deaths should not be seen as an end in itself, but as the first major step towards addressing the root causes of the world’s social and environmental crises. It stands to reason that if governments are seriously compelled by the people’s will to protect, promote and realise the human rights of Article 25 for every person without exception, then it will call for dramatic reforms of the global economic architecture and a massive redistribution of global resources.

There is no shortage of analysis pointing out the policies and transformations that are necessary to inaugurate a more just and sustainable world, but the most urgent question for engaged citizens must concern how to create a worldwide ‘movement of movements’ that can shift real power back to ordinary people. From STWR’s perspective, the key to mobilising such a counterpower in world affairs is not to focus on systemic solutions and sustainability issues alone, but to also redirect

public attention to demand real justice for the least fortunate members of the human family. Hence a universal call for governments to immediately guarantee the human rights of Article 25 may represent the “path of least resistance” towards building a united people’s voice, ultimately paving the way to alternative forms of development that can truly address the needs of present and future generations.<sup>77</sup>

*“[I]f we can perceive the duplicity of our governments who profess to be concerned with ending poverty while continuing to exploit the poorest people and countries, maybe it’s time for us to wake up and ask them: where’s the missing part? Where’s the love, the kindness, the common sense of preventing people from dying of hunger in a world of plenty? Perhaps we should all crowd into those government summits and conclaves about eradicating poverty, and together ask our political representatives: ‘If you really care about helping the poor then why don’t you share the world’s resources more equally among all nations, instead of making non-binding development goals and merely redistributing insufficient amounts of foreign aid?’*

*And if we as ordinary people are truly concerned about ending the injustice of hunger so that it never happens again, then maybe we should apply the same question to ourselves: where’s the missing part? Where’s the caring, the compassion, the concern for defending the basic rights of those who live in a continual state of want and penury? For is it enough to press our politicians to send more aid to poor countries on our behalf, or does the love we have for our fellow human beings compel us to go before the government and say: ‘This shameful situation cannot continue—it’s time to save our starving brothers and sisters as your utmost collective priority!’ What kind of education and conditioning has led us to accept this state of affairs, and what’s to stop us demanding from the governments of the world: WHERE’S THE MISSING PART?!”<sup>78</sup>*

## Notes

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7. An ambitious campaign to 'hack' the official logic of the SDGs agenda was initiated by the US-based watchdog group, The Rules, in September 2015. For more on this initiative and associated campaign materials, visit <[www.therules.org](http://www.therules.org)>
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59. United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, New York, 2015. See foreword by Ban Ki-Moon.
60. Figures based on research by Dr Gideon Polya using data from the United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects*, 2013 Revision: <[http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel\\_population.htm](http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_population.htm)>. Note that China is excluded from these estimates. As Dr Polya explains: "Avoidable mortality (avoidable death, excess mortality, excess death, deaths that do not have to happen) can be defined as the difference between actual deaths in a country and deaths expected for a peaceful, decently-run country with the same demographics (i.e. similar birth rate and age distribution). For relatively high birth rate Developing World countries the baseline death rate is about 0.4% or 4 persons per 1,000 of population each year. However, for the Developing World (minus China) (2015 population 4,632 million) the death rate is 7.7 deaths per 1,000 of population per year (2010-2015), this yielding an avoidable death rate of 7.7 - 4.0 = 3.7 avoidable deaths per 1,000 of population per year, and 3.7 avoidable deaths per 1,000 of population per year x 4,632 million persons = 17.1 million avoidable deaths annually." See: Gideon Polya, '4 % Annual Global Wealth Tax To Stop The 17 Million Deaths Annually', [CounterCurrents.org](http://CounterCurrents.org), 27 June 2014. See also: Gideon Polya, 'Body Count. Global avoidable mortality since 1950' that includes an avoidable mortality-related history of every country since Neolithic times, <<http://globalbodycount.blogspot.com>>
61. In 2012, STWR calculated that around 15 million people die needlessly every day from poverty related causes. Calculations were based on figures from the World Health Organization, Disease and injury regional estimates, Cause-specific mortality: regional estimates for 2008. Only communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases were considered for this analysis, referred to as 'Group I' causes by the WHO. Ninety six percent of all deaths from these causes occur in low -and middle-income countries and are considered largely preventable.
62. United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, *op cit*.
63. UNICEF, *Progress for Children: Beyond Averages - Learning from the MDGs (No. 11)*, June 2015.
64. United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*, *op cit*.

65. DARA, *Climate Vulnerability Monitor: A guide to the cold calculus of a hot planet*, 2012.
66. Kevin Watkins, *This year's development summits have many mountains to climb*, The Guardian, 20th January 2015.
67. Since the Second World War, in which around 60 million people lost their lives between 1937/39-1945, there is no evidence of 17 million people dying as a result of any one specific event in a single year. In comparison, the ten deadliest natural disasters of the entire 20th century led to the death of around 5 million people.
68. Credit Suisse, *Global Wealth Report 2014*, Zurich, September 2014.
69. Share The World's Resources, *Financing the Global Sharing Economy*, see part 3.
70. See: STWR, *The Brandt Report: A Summary*, January 2006.
71. While not all of the Brandt Commission's recommendations are appropriate in today's world considering its emphasis on increased trade liberalisation and global economic growth, there is still much that civil society campaigners and policymakers could draw from its "program of priorities". Above all, this includes the proposed five-year Emergency Programme that would necessitate massive resource transfers to less developed countries and far-reaching agrarian reforms, as well as major reforms to the international economic system. The Commission also called for a new global monetary system, a new approach to development finance, a coordinated process of disarmament, and a global transition away from dependence on increasingly scarce non-renewable energy sources. In line with the Brandt Commission's spirit and vision for a more equal world, it is high time that governments committed to an extensive UN-led consultation process (with full input from civil society) on how to reform and restructure the global economy in order to address today's interlocking financial, economic, political and environmental crises.
72. Fionuala Cregan, *Igniting the Communal Fire: What the SDGs Could Learn from Indigenous Peoples*, Commondreams.org, 25th September 2015.
73. Those actively involved in the Occupy protests in the fall of 2011, for example, represented only 0.1 percent of the United States – enough to have a huge impact on mainstream debate, but not enough to create any lasting impact on government policies and priorities. For more on this issue, see: STWR, *Sharing as our Common Cause*, December 2014, <[www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/sharing-our-common-cause#A world in crisis](http://www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/sharing-our-common-cause#A%20world%20in%20crisis)>
74. TIME, *Transcript: Read the Speech Pope Francis Gave to the United Nations*, 25th September 2015.
75. Mohammed Mesbahi, *Heralding Article 25: A strategy for world transformation, Share The World's Resources*, July 2015.
76. Mohammed Mesbahi, *Heralding Article 25, part three*, op cit. See also the ongoing series of publications entitled: *Studies on the Principle of Sharing* <[www.sharing.org/information-centre/articles/studies-principle-sharing](http://www.sharing.org/information-centre/articles/studies-principle-sharing)>
77. For a fuller investigation of these premises, see Mohammed Mesbahi, *Heralding Article 25e*, op cit.
78. Ibid.

### **Share The World's Resources**

STWR is an independent civil society organisation campaigning for a fairer sharing of wealth, power and resources within and between nations.

Through our research and activities, we make a case for sharing global resources as a pragmatic solution to a broad range of interconnected crises that governments are failing to adequately address – including hunger, poverty, climate change, environmental destruction and conflict over the world's natural resources.

We call on governments to implement an international program of emergency assistance to eliminate hunger and life-threatening deprivation as a foremost global priority. We also call for UN Member States to negotiate an unprecedented program to reform the global economy, with a major focus on the following areas: guaranteeing access to social protection and essential public services for all; establishing a just and sustainable global food system; and instituting an international framework for sharing natural resources more equitably and within planetary limits.

For more information, please visit [www.sharing.org](http://www.sharing.org)

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