



Chronic Poverty
Research Centre

Poverty elimination and the MDGs

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The importance of the MDGs

- The Millennium Summit and the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals for 2015 was a major achievement
- The MDGs provide a set of goals shared by donors and developing countries – and a focus for public and political attention to poverty.
- Most donors have made poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs primary objectives of their aid programmes

- **We need renewed effort to achieve the MDGs**

- In Africa many of the MDGs are off track
- Despite rapid growth in South Asia and China, absolute poverty persists for hundreds of millions
- Without much outcry, the world recently missed the ‘gender’ goal of ensuring equality in primary and secondary enrolment by 2005!



- **But meeting the MDGs will only halve the proportion of people in poverty by 2015 – leaving perhaps a billion in chronic and extreme poverty**
- **The ultimate goal, agreed by world leaders at the 1995 Social Summit, was the elimination of absolute poverty . This goal was reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit which pledged to make the “right to development a reality for everyone”.**

- Understanding the factors that make poverty persist is vital both to achieve the MDGs and to going beyond them.
- MDG 2 is a commitment to universal primary education - ensuring every child goes to school.
- You can't reach this goal without reaching people in chronic poverty
- Reaching the poorest – means taking into account the multidimensional nature of poverty.
- It means understanding the obstacles that prevent people taking advantage of opportunities and services, and that often make poverty intergenerational
- Factors that make poverty persist include:
 - Being a subsistence farmer in a remote area or living in an urban slum
 - Belonging to a marginalised group – such as this tribal family or a religious or ethnic minority
 - Being old or disabled
- But chronic poverty is not about minorities who can't work – rather it affects large numbers of people whose earnings from work leaves them below the poverty line



No land, no choice, no freedom

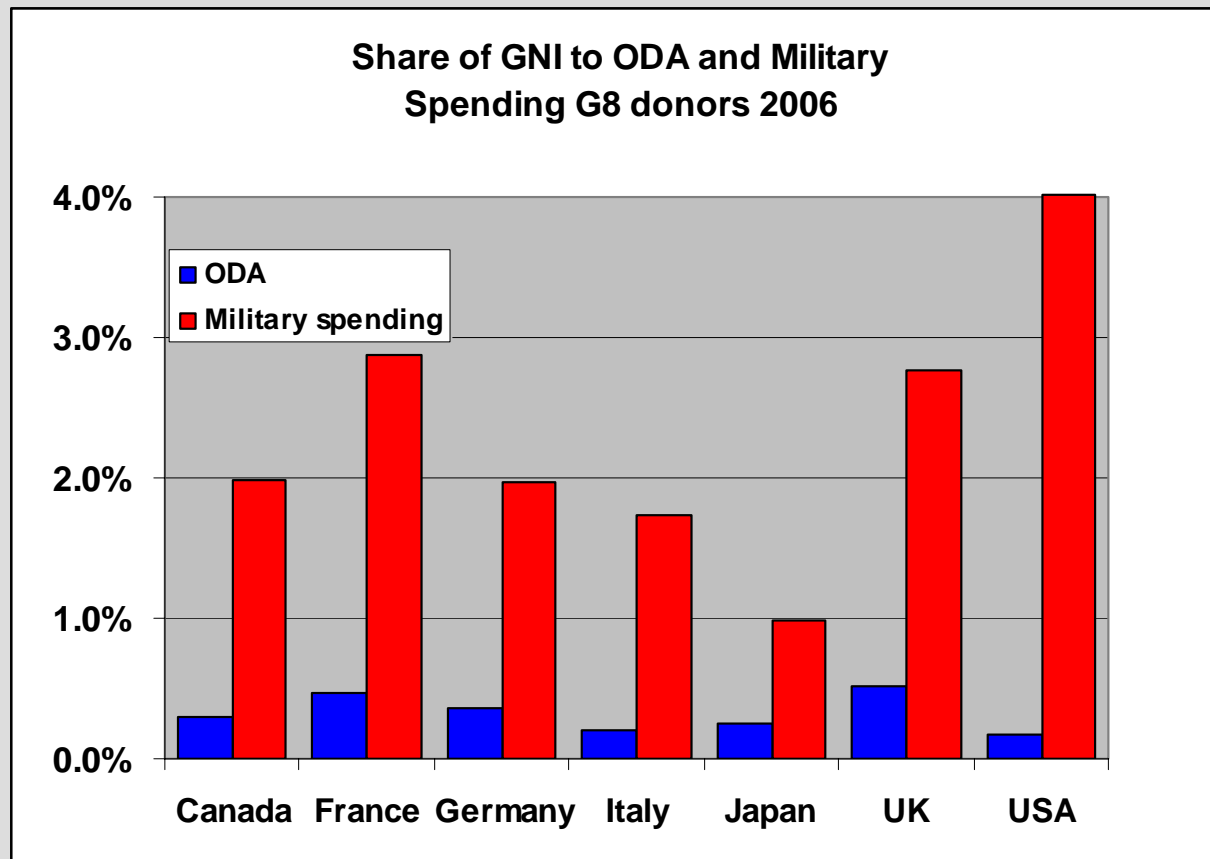


- Need strategies that address both economic disadvantages facing people in CP– and the political & social structures that keep families poor.
- Having no land may give you no choice but casual labour at the beck and call of local landowners.
- Or being subject to changing tastes of northern consumers. – and the purchasing policies of globalised supermarkets.

Going from 2015 goals to poverty elimination means more than MDGs x 2

- Current efforts to reach the MDGs tend to benefit the easy to reach poor, those who are able to take advantage of the opportunities of the globalising market
- Eliminating chronic & extreme poverty means addressing **political, social and economic factors that make poverty persist.**
- Not just tackling social exclusion – but also what academic colleagues call adverse incorporation – in other words economic structures that are fundamentally exploitative.
- Basic services in health, education, water and sanitation are vital - but
- **Addressing vulnerability** means extending the concept of basic services to include **social protection** – pensions, cash transfers, minimum income guarantees which are routine in most OECD countries and affordable.
- Poverty elimination probably means more attention to political economy issues and the rights that chronically poor people are routinely denied – the right to information, to participation, and to the kind of political representation that puts their needs higher up the agenda.

MDG 8 is about global partnerships. Even with recent aid increases (much of which are debt and produce no new money) and new aid pledged, OECD countries can afford to do much more to help eliminate poverty



- Commitment to broad based growth must mean **more than mitigating** the worst social and economic consequences of a globalised economy.
- MDG 1 on poverty and hunger often presented as being all about growth. But as NEF has pointed out, our obsession with growth obscures the fact that it is a very inefficient route to poverty reduction - \$166 worth of production & consumption for \$1 worth of reduced poverty.
- We need a much more **direct and proactive strategy for investment in the poorest**. Lack of assets for example may mean major asset transfer programmes and serious attention to **equity and redistribution**
- At the recent World Forum on Measuring the Progress of Societies, OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría also noted both the need for investment in statistical capacity in developing countries, to provide better data on poverty – but also the need for a rebalancing of how progress is measured
- *“We have to move towards **measuring welfare, not just output**”*
- Revised global goals post 2015 must place social, wellbeing and human security – not just military security - at the heart of the international agenda

Visualising a world without absolute poverty.

If we can't visualise it, we can't plan for it.