Reducing Poverty Is Achievable
Finding Those Who Are Hidden By Inequalities

Synthesis of the Wikiprogress online consultation

In the run up to the OECD Global Forum on Development (GFD), Wikiprogress organised an online consultation on “Reducing Poverty Is Achievable – Finding Those Who Are Hidden By Inequalities” in partnership with the OECD, Paris21, Save the Children, ODI’s Development Progress, the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), UNICEF, Jeune Afrique, The Africa Report, the European Report on Development (ERD), Wikigender, Wikichild and the Global Progress Research Network (GPRNet).

The consultation ran from 6-15 March 2013 gathering a total of 55 comments highlighting the stories of individuals, families, communities and societies that have been excluded by social and economic inequalities. Comments also included examples of successful programmes, policies and methodologies that have made a difference in people’s lives, as well as recommendations for a new development framework. This paper provides a synthesis of the comments made during the Wikiprogress online consultation and serves as a contribution to the OECD GFD. This report aims to reflect the results of the consultation, and does not represent the views of the OECD or any of the partner organisations listed above.

The consultation responses have been broken down into three main sections: the first section identifies those who are excluded due to inequalities; the second section introduces some approaches to address inequality; the last section sets out concrete action points and recommendations proposed by the participants including proposed post-2015 goals.

Main outcomes of the Wikiprogress discussion include:

♦ Participants identified societal groups that will require more attention in the future, as they are marginalised, vulnerable and exposed to multiple and intersecting inequalities;

♦ Participants identified a range of approaches as essential to address inequality;

♦ Priority should be given to people who are the most excluded from society because of multiple and cumulative inequalities;

♦ A well-being and a human rights-based approach can significantly contribute to the process of defining and developing the post-2015 agenda;

♦ Measurements of progress in reducing poverty should be transparent, focused on those who have been excluded and country specific.

The entire discussion is available on the Wikiprogress website at:
http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/Online_Consultation:_Reducing_poverty_is_achievable
Section 1: Those excluded because of inequalities

The first element of the consultation was to uncover those groups that have been excluded by social and economic inequalities. Below are the societal groups that participants to the consultation highlighted as being the most marginalised, vulnerable and exposed to multiple and cumulative inequalities.

Children

Many comments highlighted that children bear the brunt of inequality. Referring to Save the Children’s report “Born Equal: How reducing inequality could give our children a better future”, one participant stated that in some cases children born into the richest households have access to 35 times the resources of the poorest, suggesting that inequality of outcomes for parents becomes inequality of opportunity for children. Likewise, in countries with high income inequality such as Nigeria, child mortality rates are twice as high among the poorest households as compared to the richest households. This link between nutrition and education for children was highlighted more than once during the consultation. In particular, it was noted that one priority should be to ensure that children are healthy and safe so that they can access education and learn in optimal conditions. This recommendation was put forward by the Whole Child Initiative and their five tenets promoting “healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged” children. Finally, inequality of opportunity for children was stressed in terms of learning languages. An intervention provided the example of children in 1980s West Bengal, India who started to learn English after their primary level. This put these children at a disadvantage as they grew up looking for jobs, in comparison to children in other parts of India.

Adolescents and Youth

It was noted that adolescents are often excluded from child and adult statistics, yet they represent a key population group in terms of their contribution to the economy. For example, a Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Study by HBSC in Europe and North America showed that adolescents growing up in unequal societies suffer poorer levels of health over and above that associated to their own socio-economic status. In addition, a number of participants argued that youth unemployment is an overlooked issue that goes hand in hand with an overpriced university education. This leaves many qualified young graduates with huge student loans and with job prospects limited to unpaid internships.

Women and girls

Many participants highlighted that women, girls and mothers are key excluded groups. On women, a participant shared her story from Karnali, Nepal, where the female literacy rate is 8%, life expectancy is very low and discriminatory social practices are rampant. Another comment pointed to violence against women and the fear resulting from it as a major outcome of inequality and a barrier to achieving well-being. This discussion further reminded the Wikiprogress community that gender inequality is a strong driver of lower educational outcomes for girls. For example, in Indonesia, there are twice as many illiterate women as men, and three times as many girls as boys are never enrolled in schools.

Mothers

On mothers, a participant highlighted the particular needs of “mother-only” families and the intergenerational vicious circle to which they are exposed: single mothers typically struggle
financially, lack support from fathers and often don’t receive adequate public assistance, which usually leads to their children not being healthy or not being able to access education, therefore repeating this model to their own children. Another comment pointed to the fact that women bear at least 2/3 of the burden of unpaid care work, which prevents them from engaging in income-generating activities. This “time-poverty” is often the result of a lack of social services, which means that women have to give up their paid work to care for an older person or a sick child. Policies and measures should recognise that mothers, and in particular single mothers, are more vulnerable to poverty and that they need the appropriate support.

**Adolescent girls**

One participant pointed to adolescent girls (ages 10-18) as an invisible group often lumped together under the “youth” or “women” categories – which “stops us from addressing their particular needs and circumstances”. Adolescent girls are deprived of their rights through intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination, as a result of their gender and age. For example, girls from the poorest quintile of households in Sub-Saharan Africa are 3 times more likely to be married before they are 18 than girls from the richest quintile. Adolescent girls affected by poverty see the discrimination and exclusion they experience exacerbated. Among these are girls affected by violence, insecurity, discriminatory practices or disability.

**Older people**

Another segment of the population that participants thought is not being properly considered in current debates is older people. Comments reflected that while older people make substantial economic and social contributions to society – such as caring for children – they often face higher levels of poverty than the other groups in society. Research reflected in the consultation showed that between 15-30% of older people live alone or with no adult of working age. By 2050, there may be up to 1.2 billion older people living without secure incomes. In addition, ageing is one of the key drivers of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – and with 75% of NCDs occurring in the over 60 age group, its economic impact is one of the greatest challenges for developing countries.

**Disabled people**

It was also pointed out that disabled people are not included properly in development processes. One participant referred to World Health Organisation estimates that 1 billion people worldwide have some form of disability; over 70% of them live in developing countries; and 20% of people in extreme poverty are disabled. Other figures by UNESCO indicate that 30% of all primary-aged children not in school are disabled. Despite these striking facts, disability is omitted from the MDGs and disabled people continue to be excluded from the processes to define new development goals. Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD)’s Inclusive Education Programme was mentioned as an example of...
how children with disabilities can be included in mainstream primary schools. Another participant shared a video of a young disabled woman living in a village in a flood-prone area of Bangladesh, in which she explains her role in the ‘Disaster Preparedness Committee’, making sure that people with disabilities are not forgotten when disaster strikes.

**Section 2: Entry points for a new development framework**

During the discussion, participants proposed a range of approaches they deemed as essential to address inequality. Below are a few key concepts and approaches that participants wanted to highlight to the Global Forum on Development.

*Think “well-being and progress”*

Some participants argued that citizen well-being should be central to development policies and measures. For example, it was noted that, at the European level, the focus has shifted in the last decade to new indicators of well-being and societal progress. The comment highlighted a dialogue on beyond GDP which combines a) a households’ perspective, b) distributional aspects of income, consumption and wealth and c) multidimensional measures of quality of life, including subjective well-being and environmental sustainability.

The well-being conceptualisation of development was proposed by another participant as an alternative approach to a traditional economic approach, as it requires thinking not only about getting people out of poverty but also about ensuring that people experience a satisfactory life. Another participant reinforced this view by insisting that well-being should be at the centre stage of our policies; she gave the example of how Bangladesh made big strides in education and health in recent years, which led to a life expectancy of its inhabitants that is 4 years longer than their neighbours’ in India, despite India being on average twice as rich. A comment by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) highlighted that well-being allows for better examination of the most vulnerable groups across all quality of life areas. By ensuring equal access to opportunities, disadvantaged groups can be raised up toward the national average. Finally, a comment reflecting ODI’s Development Progress project and forthcoming report, argued that we need to better understand country experiences for reducing poverty and increasing well-being by looking at group based inequalities (across age, ethnicity, language, religion, rural/urban zone, etc.) and according to multiple dimensions of well-being.

*Equality, equity and dignity for all*

Many participants agreed that the post-2015 development framework must be driven by a human rights-based approach with equality, non-discrimination, equity and dignity as key themes. Global human rights frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its optional protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights should be reflected in the post-2015 agenda, particularly in a political climate which is still reeling from a global economic recession where human
rights are in danger of taking a back seat to austerity measures.

Comments converged towards the concept of ‘equity’ as more fundamental than just looking at ‘equality’. In the case of children for example, it was mentioned that we should make sure that every child in each school and each community has access to the resources required to ensure a level playing field. However, one participant stressed that instead of focusing on equity, the post-2015 agenda should adopt the ‘dynamics of exclusion’ as a tool for measuring the progress of the hardest to reach and of the most excluded groups, as it would provide a more accurate measure of success in reducing inequalities. Finally, living a life worthy of human dignity was mentioned several times. For example, one participant highlighted the discrepancy between the salaries of highly paid officials and those of poor people struggling to afford even basic accommodation or food and asked governments to use financial resources more wisely and avoid spending it on electoral campaigns.

Think “multiple inequalities”

Several participants recommended that rather than viewing inequalities in silos, we should consider intersecting and multiple inequalities when defining the new development framework. One participant stressed the predominance of inequalities that stem from the intersection of structural inequality, exclusion and harmful social norms that consistently keep large portions of the population in a state of poverty. Another participant shared her experience from India, where she came across rural women that were HIV positive, young girls with disabilities and migrant women in vulnerable employment – she pointed to gender equality as an entry point to understand the complexities of intersecting inequalities and argued that gender equality should be included in the post-2015 agenda.

Define “poverty”

Several participants agreed that, in order to monitor progress on reducing poverty, there should be agreement on how poverty is defined and measured. Participants highlighted that a post-2015 definition of poverty should include the many ways in which people experience poverty. One participant proposed that poverty should be defined as the inability of an individual to affect change in their life. Another participant distinguished between ‘relative’, ‘moderate’ and ‘absolute’ poverty – highlighting that, where possible, we should start by identifying the poorest of the poor. A suggested indicator is the distance from a facility or service as a way to identify those that need support the most. Use of Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and Census data could help in this endeavour. It was also noted that one should look beyond the proportion of the population living below ‘$1.25 per day’ and examine indicators of wealth. Finally, another participant referred to the report on social cohesion by the OECD Development Centre, where poverty and social exclusion are seen as a continuum rather than separate categories, arguing that new forms of poverty and vulnerability
emerge in societies undergoing rapid transformation.

Include both rural and urban contexts

The divide between rural and urban areas came up several times during the consultation. Many of the participants advised that this should be taken into consideration when developing a new post-2015 framework. For example, one comment was that child mortality can reach levels that are six times higher in rural than in urban areas in countries with conspicuous spatial inequalities. Similarly, another participant highlighted the link between place of birth and life opportunities. For example, poor people in rural areas will likely have poorer quality education and health services, lack land ownership rights and access to credit. One participant argued that one should focus more on addressing inequalities in distribution of productive assets (such as land, credit or markets) and reducing inequalities in opportunities such as access to education and health. It was also noted that rural areas should be made attractive to qualified teachers and health professionals by developing a rural infrastructure and implementing an inclusive growth agenda.

Section 3: Key action points

Let’s listen to those affected

Strong opinions came out during the consultation that the views of beneficiaries of current post-2015 debates should be thoroughly taken into account, as they are rarely consulted. One participant stressed that we need to include these voices not only to understand what matters to them but also to include their own solutions on how best to combat poverty. One suggested approach is to develop agencies targeting the skills of individuals and communities through capacity building programmes. Another participant cited the example of a well-being survey developed by the Canadian Index of Well-being (CIW), stressing that, unless people are engaged in the policy phase, there is a risk that the right mix of programmes and services fostering well-being will not be achieved. One participant pointed out that policy makers often lack the knowledge of the reality on the ground and therefore do not implement the right policies. The necessity of a consultative and inclusive policy loop was argued by several participants in the discussion. Successful national initiatives cited were the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and the Australian National Development Index, which ensure that comprehensive public participation translates into appropriate policy directions.

Ensure good governance and public policy

One participant mentioned that good governance should be broadened to include true accountability to communities and individuals, by increasing their representation at all decision-making levels in the post-2015 discussions. Another participant argued that inequality could be challenged by targeted interventions, redistributive tax policies and the investment in essential services such as universal health care. Investment in nutrition, in particular, is essential to lift the most vulnerable out of poverty. In particular, it was stated that malnourished children face poorer learning outcomes.

“Investments in "progress" need to be holistic and take into account the interests and voices of those whom the post 2015 agenda will affect the most.”

Keiko

“The inequality in Africa also lies between leaders and citizens.”

Tnara

Can we reduce #poverty? @OECD thinks so! Join their online consultation bit.ly/Wdjjiq CLOSES tomorrow @ 5pm GMT+1 #OECDgfed #Africa
outcomes and higher drop-out rates. Recommendations to curb inequality include: a push for job creation and for ensuring a minimum wage; fostering entrepreneurship opportunities; an agricultural policy focusing on the most vulnerable; a reinforcement of solidarity values; and improving the efficiency of direct transfers programmes, such as social protection allowances.

**Promote social mobility**

One comment was that citizens’ acceptance and tolerance of inequality is much higher if they have prospects for upward mobility – this ensures that people feel satisfied with their life and minimises the risk of social upheavals. Another participant said that flexibility in the labour market would maximise opportunities in moving between jobs, starting new careers or receiving training. To skill up local capacity, transfer knowledge and ensure flexibility, one approach cited was that development agencies work more with local organisations when implementing their programmes. Further, one participant referred to the 2012 World Bank report and the 2011 OECD Development Centre report on middle-classes in Latin America as highlighting those advantages that come with investing in education to promote greater social mobility both within and across generations.

**Sustain peace**

There were contributions focused on the need to reduce levels of violence and conflict because of its major implications for development. In particular, insufficiently regulated international markets for arms and security that fuel conflict, as well as international financial markets that enable funds to move across borders for terrorism and crime are areas that need urgent attention from governments. It was mentioned that reducing violence should move up in priority for the post-2015 agenda as violence and conflict not only make countries poorer (by impeding the achievement of key development goals such as poverty eradication) but also because they reduce social capital (by decreasing the trust that individuals and communities have in each other) and cause global spillovers by moving violence and conflict across borders. It was argued that, when thinking of a new development framework, it is important to: a) see peace as an integral part of this effort; b) take a global approach, as violence is highly interconnected; and c) remember that inclusive political processes, low levels of violence and a fair distribution of wealth and opportunity are key elements that build peace.

**Implement better measurements and statistics**

Many participants argued that the focus of data collection should now be on those aspects and groups that have not been included in the MDGs. It was argued that National Statistics Offices have an important role in developing better statistics to enable policy makers to respond to societal needs. It was also stated that statistical measures ought to be transparent and easily understood by everyone.
One participant suggested the ‘time distance’ approach for looking at time-series data could provide an additional dimension of temporal disparity. The Gaptimer Progress chart enables a user to check the world situation across 10 MDG indicators, therefore facilitating the debate around the post-2015 agenda. Time-distance was mentioned as an effective measure to build additional objective and subjective perceptions of the overall degree of inequality. For example, the Philippines have used it to monitor implementation of the MDG targets.

Many participants agreed that addressing inequalities requires the development of better measurement systems at the country level. One participant introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), a multidimensional measure based on ten indicators of health, education and living standards that shows both the incidence and the intensity of poverty. It measures deprivations directly and shows in which regions or among which groups poverty is being reduced, and how that reduction is being achieved. The suggestion was made to adopt a composite measure called MPI 2.0 built upon this index. An MPI 2.0 would be an easy to understand and disaggregate measure that would show the inequalities between those living in poverty, in terms of the number and type of interconnected deprivations they face. It was argued that this would be an essential complement to income measures for policymakers, enabling them to see quickly and easily what is happening ‘beneath the averages’.

Finally, it was noted that disaggregation of data by disability, gender and age group should be required in all targets established under the new framework to ensure that older people, people with disabilities but also girls, adolescent girls and women benefit equally from development progress. It was stated that this would also allow for better monitoring of the distributional impact of policies and budget allocations on different populations.

Foster the use of information technology

It was suggested that in order to identify those who require policy interventions, a mapping exercise could be introduced by using Geographic Information System (GIS). Such a measure could help to identify those living in ‘absolute poverty’ from those in ‘relative poverty’ and ‘moderate poverty’, allowing resources to be appropriately channelled. Another comment was that of using technology such as mobile phones to connect the rural and urban areas in terms of improving

“A composite measure that could enable policymakers to see at a glance whether and how multidimensional poverty is being reduced across states, or different groups, would present an opportunity to gain insight into the factors contributing to poverty from the perspective of poor people, as well as act as a monitoring and evaluation tool”

Tery van Taack (Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative)

“I know that aggregating is sometimes convenient for those who are really interested in comparable data, however so much is lost on the average. Let us please keep in mind those that are so easily falling through the cracks due to external shocks, big and small.”

Monique

“Active participation in democratic processes is a model which is unfortunately rare and one which would strengthen outcomes. This approach would bring statistics to life as a relevant tool for the average citizen engagement process.”

Tani Shaw
communication and access to services. It was suggested that more women should be involved in technology to reduce poverty, referring to a report on “Women and the Web” by the Intel Corporation and Dalberg, which calls for doubling the number of online women and girls in developing countries to 1.2 billion in 3 years. Finally, some participants also stressed the importance of using technology to spread information and raise awareness on the inequalities experienced by various groups. It was specifically noted that since global collaboration is needed, new technologies should be used to collaborate more efficiently.

**Propositions for post-2015**

There were many key actions specifically mentioned in reference to the post 2015 development agenda. They include:

- ‘Promote equality and tackle discrimination in all its forms’. A cross-cutting goal on equality and non-discrimination was suggested to ensure that marginalised groups are included across all goals and targets.
- The development framework must enable the effective participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of the process; all goals should explicitly consider disability; specific targets and indicators related to disability must be included within each goal; there must be mandatory disaggregation of data by disability, and new datasets on disability.
- **Gender indicators** should be incorporated in other dimensions such as child health, HIV and employment, to ensure that the multiple and intersecting inequalities can be captured.
- Instead of calling for universal education, a global gender equality agenda could target a specific increase in the enrolment levels of girls from ethnic minorities or call for higher progression rates from primary to secondary education for adolescent girls from the lowest quintile of households.
- An objective on equality of opportunities should be explicitly included in the post-2015 agenda in order to address social challenges in a comprehensive manner.
- **Adult education** should complement children’s education targets.
- A goal on delivering universal social protection floors for all people would greatly support vulnerable citizens to tackle poverty.
- A goal on healthy life expectancy, with targets to measure life expectancy at birth (already a core component of the Human Development Index) as well as healthy life expectancy at 60, could lead to more effective interventions for all age groups.
- For health indicators, one should measure the reduction in levels of maternal mortality amongst adolescent mothers, who are at the highest risk of dying in childbirth.
Conclusion

The 55 contributions to the discussion identified different groups in society that are excluded from economic growth, social programmes and/or statistics, and proposed options to address their particular needs. Participants shared many country examples for reducing poverty and increasing well-being. The consultation also allowed a rich exchange of views on how progress on reducing poverty can be measured in the years to come, along with some key recommendations for goals to be included post-2015.

In this report we highlighted the main themes and solutions reflecting participant views. The consultation brought together perspectives from Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, the United States and many more countries. Participants included international organisations, governmental agencies, research institutes, policy analysts, statisticians, gender experts, development practitioners, international and local NGOs and civil society.

The outcomes of this consultation will be presented at the OECD GFD, which is taking place on 4-5 April 2013 in Paris. The event is hosted by the OECD’s Development Co-operation Directorate, the OECD Development Centre, the OECD Statistics Directorate and Paris 21, in co-operation with the European Report on Development and Jeune Afrique. The online consultation provided an opportunity to include a broad range of perspectives ahead of the Forum.

The entire discussion is available on the Wikiprogress website at: http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/Online_Consultation:_Reducing_poverty_is_achievable

Wikiprogress is a global Web 2.0 platform to share and exchange knowledge on progress issues in order to evaluate social, environmental and economic progress. Launched in 2009, Wikiprogress is open to anyone who has an interest in the concepts of measuring and fostering progress and well-being. Its core mission is to connect worldwide organisations and individuals wishing to develop new, smarter measures of progress.
Resources shared by the participants

Papers and studies
- Intel Corporation and Dalberg, Women and the Web: Bridging the Internet gap and creating new global opportunities in low and middle-income countries (2012)
- HSBC studies: Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Study (HBSC) in Europe and North America (see http://www.hbsc.org for reports and published articles)
- Human Development Report 2013 (UNDP)
- Sabina Alkire and Andy Sumner, ‘Multidimensional Poverty and the Post-2015 MDGs’ (2013)

Articles & Blogs
- Gaptimer Progress Chart (in The Guardian, March 2013)
- Gaptimer: Example of time distance monitoring implementation of the MDG targets by Dr. Romulo A. Virola, National Statistical Co-ordination Board of the Philippines.
- Shailaja Chandra, Measuring the Poor from Above (14 March 2013, The ProgBlog)

Indices and Frameworks
- The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)
- The CIW Framework
- The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW): Results from a wellbeing survey based on the CIW Framework and piloted in Guelph, Ontario, a city of 130,000 people – the results have been used by the City in a very comprehensive and ongoing public consultation process.
- The European Framework for Measuring Progress (E-Frame)
- The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), OPHI

Tools
- Gaptimer (developed by SICENTER, the Socio-economic Indicators Center in Slovenia): Free web tool to monitor implementation of targets with the S-time-distance measure. It can be used for monitoring implementation in many areas beyond MDGs, like adding a second dimension to comparing actual values with target values, forecast, budget, plan, etc., both at macro and business levels.
- The Disability and Development Database – it provides information on government projects that aim to include people with disabilities in mainstream education, health and rehabilitation, and livelihoods programmes.

Websites
- The Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
- Overseas Development Institute(ODI)’s Development Progress
- Action Works Nepal – an organisation that works with poor, excluded and vulnerable women and men, girls and boys for their socially equal, dignified and just lives.
- Gaptimer.eu: http://www.gaptimer.eu
- End the Cycle (of poverty and disability)
Save the Children (UK)

ASCD - The Whole Child: http://www.wholechildeducation.org/

Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD): http://www.lcdisability.org/ – its Young Voices programme brings together young disabled people from 22 countries, providing them with a space to share experiences and work together to speak out against discrimination. Training sessions equip them with skills and confidence to advocate for their rights. Young Voices groups raise awareness of disability rights in creative ways including through film, music and theatre.

The LCD & Inclusive Development Centre (Research Centre): http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr

LCD’s Inclusive Education Programme. See “Inclusive Education: An Introduction”

The Global Progress Research Network – An international cross-disciplinary network of researchers, teachers, writers and research institutions, representing all major world regions, committed to promote research and debate, and build knowledge, understanding and collaboration, on societal progress, its meaning, measurement and development.

Videos

YouTube: Wealth inequality in America (November 2012) – Infographics on the distribution of wealth in America, highlighting both the inequality and the difference between our perception of inequality and the actual numbers.

TED Talk: Sugata Mitra: The child-driven education (2010) – Education scientist Sugata Mitra tackles one of the greatest problems of education: the best teachers and schools don’t exist where they’re needed most. In a series of real-life experiments from New Delhi to South Africa to Italy, he gave kids self-supervised access to the web and saw results that could revolutionize how we think about teaching.

YouTube: My story: Kazol Rekha (2012) – Kazol Rekha is a young woman living in a village in a flood-prone area of Bangladesh. Kazol is paralysed after an accident severed her spinal cord. In this video she tells about her role on the Disaster Preparedness Committee, making sure people with disability are not forgotten when disaster strikes.

Partners