

THE CSWCD IN THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The Millennium Development Goals

The year 2015 marked a milestone in development. It was the year when nations that had embarked on the journey towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had to report on how they measured up on the attainment of these eight goals. How DID the nations fare on the MDGs? Here are some useful statistics (UN, 2015):

- Globally, it is said that extreme poverty declined by more than half in a 15-year period, or since 2000, falling from 1.9 billion persons in 1990 to 836 million in 2015. More people earned wages, and the number of people in the working middle class—i.e., those living on more than \$4 a day—almost tripled between 1991 and 2015.
- The primary school net enrolment rate in the developing regions reached 91% in 2015, up from 83% in 2000, while the number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide fell by almost half.
- Meanwhile, the literacy rate among the youth aged 15 to 24 increased globally—from 83% to 91% between 1990 and 2015—and the literacy gap between women and men narrowed.
- Measures of gender equality improved. For instance, the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in the developing regions as a whole was achieved. In fact, in 2015, there were 103 girls enrolled for every 100 boys, with girls outstripping the educational gains achieved by boys.
- As workers, more women have entered the non-agricultural sector since 1990, now constituting up to 41% of paid workers outside the agricultural sector. Moreover, over a period of 20 years, or since 1991, the proportion of women in vulnerable employment as a share of total female employment declined by 13 percentage points.

- The global under-five mortality rate declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015.
- The maternal mortality ratio declined by 45% worldwide, more than 71% of births were assisted by skilled health personnel, and contraceptive prevalence among women increased from 55% worldwide in 1990 to 64% in 2015.
- New HIV infections fell by approximately 40% between 2000 and 2013, and 13.6 million people living with HIV were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) globally, an immense increase from just 800,000 on ART in 2003.
- Other important health goals were met: both the global malaria incidence rate and the tuberculosis mortality rate fell by almost half within the past 20 years.
- On environmental sustainability, ozone-depleting substances have been virtually eliminated since 1990, and terrestrial and marine protected areas in many regions have increased substantially.
- Globally, 147 countries have met the drinking water target, 95 countries have met the sanitation target, and 77 countries have met both.
- The proportion of urban populations living in slums in the developing regions fell, from approximately 39.4% in 2000 to 29.7% in 2014.
- Official development assistance from developed countries increased by 66% in real terms between 2000 and 2014, reaching \$135.2 billion. Meanwhile, the proportion of external debt service to export revenue in developing countries fell from 12% in 2000 to 3% in 2013.
- Much of the world has now become connected through technology. As of 2015, 95% of the world's population was served by a mobile-cellular signal.
- Internet penetration has grown from just over 6% of the world's population in 2000 to 43% in 2015. As a result, 3.2 billion people are now linked to a global network of content and applications.

However, despite significant achievements attained worldwide on many of the MDG targets, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are still being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity, or geographic location.

The “Philippines Fifth Progress Report on the MDGs,” written in 2014 as the country’s penultimate report on the MDGs, shows that the Philippines is on track to meet only six of the eight following targets. These are:

(1) Providing universal access to primary education, (2) providing educational opportunities for girls, (3) reducing infant and under-five mortality, (4) reversing the incidence of malaria, (5) increasing the rates for tuberculosis detection and cure, and (6) increasing the proportion of households with access to safe water supply.

One-half of the population now has access to basic sanitation, effectively meeting the target on this goal. Yet, we are (officially) lagging behind in the following areas: (1) completion rates in elementary education, (2) maternal mortality, (3) access to reproductive health, and (4) control of HIV/AIDS.

The CSWCD and the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development

Students and graduates in Community Development, Social Work, and Women and Development Studies, know quite well the reasons behind the failure to attain the MDGs.

There are many field sites in our Field Instruction Program where the poverty and hunger of the residents are still very intense. Our fieldwork students interact with families whose children are out of school and working in dangerous and hazardous types of work. In the meanwhile, their fathers may have jobs but these tend to be non-regular, low-paying, and have no security. Their mothers are likely overburdened by unpaid care work, aside from having to sell, cook, and vend rice cakes, or do laundry to earn more.

Some of the CSWCD field partners are NGOs or government agencies with the goal of protecting the welfare of children and women. They bear witness to the different forms of sexual, physical, and economic

violence that these groups are subjected to. The perpetrators are usually men in intimate relationships with these women and children—their spouses, fathers, brothers, and other male relatives. Many other student groups have been assigned to localities visited by natural calamities and disasters. This provides exposure to the ways in which such calamities intensify the poverty of families and communities.

For many of the CSWCD faculty who have spent time living in vulnerable communities and interacting with the urban and rural poor and other disadvantaged sectors, it is difficult to accept that these realities still remain—the prevalence of poverty in the cities and the countryside, the lack of justice, the cruelty and violence against women and children, the high incidence of crime, incessant shooting and fighting in many corners of the country, the spread of corruption, the continuous increase in the gap between the haves and the have nots, and the massive harm wrought on the environment.

Because of these alarming realities, continuing advocacy and the molding of CSWCD students persist in accordance with the mission of the College: “academic excellence in the service of the nation and the global community.” This mission is meant not only to advance the disciplines of community development, social work, or women and development studies. It is being pursued through participatory, gender-responsive, empowering, and transformative development praxis. The vision of the College is “justice, peace, and sustainable well-being for the Filipino people and the global community.” This vision is meant to be attained through the CSWCD’s core values: people’s participation and empowerment, personal and social transformation, solidarity with the marginalized, and gender responsiveness. These were formulated ten years ago.

This year, 2017, is the second year of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will continue the global struggle against poverty which the MDGs began. According to Helen Clark, UNDP administrator:

This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens’ aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet. - UNDP website, Sustainable Development Goals, <http://www.undp.org/>

In the document signed by the member countries of the United Nations, the following is stated:

We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.

Inclusive Growth and Our Development Agenda

The SDGs are the basis of a new social contract between the governments of the world and their peoples. They address the rights of different peoples and identify the obligations of all states in promoting these rights. Unlike the MDGs which are equity goals mostly addressed by developing countries, the SDGs are transformative in nature and reach out to all, rich and poor economies alike. Underlying the SDGs is a solemn promise to leave no one behind—*walang maiiwanan*. This is the essence of the SDGs: inclusive and sustainable growth—*pangkalahatan at likas-kayang kaunlaran*.

In the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), 2011-2016 (NEDA, 2016), inclusive growth refers to growth that is “rapid enough to matter” (NEDA, 2011). It is sustained growth that creates jobs, draws the majority into the economic and social mainstream, and continuously reduces mass poverty. In its analysis, the PDP concludes that “Growth has not only lagged, it has failed to benefit the majority, who feel increasingly alienated because their political institutions provide little relief and have drifted beyond their control. Growth, in short, has failed to be inclusive.” (NEDA, 2011, p. 18). Many sectors have been left out of development.

The PDP traces this situation to low economic growth, weak employment generation, and persistently high inequality in the country. Furthermore, growth for all has failed because of deeper structural underpinnings, such as (a) an inadequate infrastructure, inefficient transport network and unreliable power supply; (b) weak institutions and failures in governance, which weaken the civic spirit and erode people’s trust in the rule of law; (c) inadequate levels of human development, as in

unfavorable health, nutrition, and education outcomes, and (d) the poor and degraded state of the environment and natural resources (NEDA, 2014).

Thus, to attain inclusive growth is to reverse these shortcomings. It requires massive investment in physical infrastructure and the improved attainment of property rights, especially in agriculture. Underpinning inclusive growth must be governance that promotes transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and effective and impartial performance of the regulatory function of government. It should involve the active participation of private business, civil society, and the media as partners of government, so that the State can become more responsive to the needs of citizens.

Together with physical investment, capitalizing on the country's human resources is key to a sustained and broad-based growth (NEDA, 2011, p. 28). This necessitates equitable access to basic social services, stronger social safety nets, and social protection. For our planners, inclusive growth also entails employment generation—i.e., opening the widest “legitimate channels for all forms of employment, whether in the form of formal wage or self-employment, whether in firms, homes, or local communities, whether at home or abroad” (NEDA, 2011, p. 29).

Inclusive growth is also best achieved within the bounds of ecological integrity. Natural disasters and calamities are known to nullify hard-won gains in economic and human development by damaging physical infrastructure, endangering human lives and health, and destroying the means to livelihoods. Thus, it is important to devise and adopt measures that will conserve and improve the state of environment and natural resources, enhance the resilience of natural systems, and improve the ability of communities to cope with environmental hazards, including climate-related risks.

The PDP's discussion on inclusive growth translates the Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) own framework into one that can be applied to the Philippines. Inclusive growth is one that enhances opportunities and equalizes access to these opportunities (Klasen, 2010). It could refer to broad-based growth that includes nondiscriminatory participation. For ADB, income growth is inclusive under the following conditions (Klasen, 2010):

- It allows participation and contribution by all members of society, with particular emphasis on the ability of the poor and disadvantaged to participate in growth;
- It is associated with declining inequality in non-income dimensions of well-being that are particularly important for promoting economic opportunities, including education, health, nutrition, and social integration.

Despite the inclusion of broad-based participation and non-discrimination as components of inclusive growth, this construct still rests on economic growth. As one author declares, “The strong primacy of economic growth as the foundation of all efforts to promote inclusive growth is not questioned.”(Klasen, 2010, p. 3)

Should social workers, community development workers, and women and development professionals frame their own work on inclusive growth within these parameters? Or, rather, should they enrich the operational meaning of inclusive growth by drawing from their own practical experiences?

To begin with, to attain inclusive growth is to realize that the category ‘poor’ or ‘disadvantaged’ is not unidimensional or homogeneous. Rather, these constructs refer to a diverse set of communities, sectors, or vulnerable groups. The aim of inclusive growth to “leave no one behind” requires a thorough realization of diversity and differences.

Development praxis has revealed that poverty is experienced in many ways. For example, even if the environment surrounding indigenous communities is rich in plant and animal life and other produce from the land, they may have no roads or bridges to enable them to transport and sell these. There are other communities that are suffering because their land has been occupied by loggers and miners. There are farmers whose fields, because of climate change, are affected by severe drought or floods. There are persons with disability who are very intelligent but remain at a disadvantage because they have no access to educational and work facilities. Worse, they are not even accepted in these facilities.

Disadvantage is experienced not only by those who have no work. Gender discrimination is experienced by women in various spheres of society—in the family, school, office, factory, and even in the church. In other countries, discrimination is intense because of religion. In Bangladesh, for instance, Christians have been killed by Muslims. In Europe, Muslims

find it difficult to access good jobs. Retirees and other older persons do not enjoy enabling laws and benefits. In fact, they are not even mentioned as a specific sector in the SDGs.

Sustainable human development for all should also focus on the need to preserve local culture and language. Part of this is the promotion of literature, music, and arts based on the nation's vision and values. In a world dominated by globalized sources of communication and entertainment, there is a danger of being inundated by animè, Korean pop culture, and the likes of Justin Bieber. Let us celebrate instead the achievements of Filipino writers, artists and artisans, and our nontangible heritage expressed in traditional crafts. Moreover, the measure of a good movie from Filipino film-makers should not be allowed to descend to "poverty porn," the romantization or idealization of life in the slums, and of other decrepit conditions of the vulnerable sectors. This is an insult to their being, and to the developmental aspirations of all Filipinos.

The processes required to attain inclusive and sustained growth and development are manifold. Drawing from the CSWCD experience, community organizing, consciousness-raising, capacity building, leadership training, and collective action, among other expressions of human agency, need to accompany asset reform and the promotion of human rights. These dynamic processes take time to be realized. The strengthening of human capacity for the transformation of society does not happen overnight. It may not even happen after a year or two. Thus, all that may be achieved in a two- to three-year project are outputs, with no significant outcomes or impacts yet. Development partners need to realize this.

So many development projects are now anchored on the principles that the CSWCD worked with and struggled to refine over the years. Social scientists and other implementors are now talking about community organization and people's participation as the answers to good governance, disaster risk management, heritage conservation, minimization of corruption, and innovations in education, among others. It has become a "magic wand" for the attainment of different goals. There is no certainty, however, that these individuals or groups are speaking the same language, or referring to the same sets of processes as we are.

CSWCD graduates are fortunate because they have learned the theory and practice of various concepts related to organizing, consciousness-raising, vulnerability, resilience, empowerment, and equality. They know

the latitude of what needs to be done to completely develop the various sectors of society. They know that patience, critical thinking, reflection and analysis, creativity, solidarity with others, and humility are necessary ingredients in this process. Other development workers need to acquire these competencies as well, so that they can serve the people and the global community with a firm commitment to inclusive and sustainable development that promotes the well-being of diverse sectors.

For development workers, the words of Apolinario Mabini still resonate today:

Those who are capable of serving others have achieved freedom of mind. Those who are not, are yet bound to their animal instincts.

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