

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-03191-3 - The Millennium Development Goals and Human Rights:
Past, Present and Future

Edited by Malcolm Langford, Andy Sumner and Alicia Ely Yamin

Frontmatter

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THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have generated tremendous discussion in global policy and academic circles. On the one hand, they have been hailed as the most important initiative ever in international development. On the other hand, they have been described as a great betrayal of human rights and universal values that has contributed to a de-politicisation of development. With contributions from scholars from the fields of economics, law, politics, medicine, and architecture, this volume sets out to disentangle this debate in both theory and practice. It critically examines the trajectory of the MDGs, the role of human rights in theory and practice, and what issues and criteria might guide the framing of the post-2015 development agenda. The book is essential reading for anyone interested in global agreements on poverty and development.

Malcolm Langford is a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Oslo, and Director of the Centre's Socio-Economic Rights Programme. He leads several international research networks; is an adviser to various UN agencies, governments, and NGOs; and has been a visiting Fellow and professor at various universities. He has published widely on human rights issues in law, economics, development, and political science. His books include *Socio-Economic Rights in South Africa: Symbols or Substance?* edited with Ben Cousins, Jackie Dugard and Tshepo Madlingozi (2013) and *Social Rights Jurisprudence: Emerging Trends in International and Comparative Law* (2008).

Andy Sumner is the Co-Director, King's International Development Institute, King's College London. He is an interdisciplinary development economist and a researcher within the field of global poverty and inequality with particular reference to middle-income countries. His research on poverty challenges the orthodox view that most of the world's extreme poor live in the world's poorest countries and that extreme poverty is minimal or 'residual' at higher levels of average per capita income; rather, he argues that poverty is the outcome of patterns of growth and distribution, and of social processes and structures. He has written six books, has published in journals including *World Development*, and is co-editor of the book series *Rethinking International Development*.

Alicia Ely Yamin is a Lecturer on Global Health and the Director of the Program on the Health Rights of Women and Children at the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University. Yamin's twenty-year career at the intersection of health, human rights, and development has bridged academia and activism. She has published, in both English and Spanish, dozens of scholarly articles and various books relating to health and human rights. Yamin regularly advises UN agencies on global health, human rights, and development issues.

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Preface

During the last decade, development and human rights have occupied increasingly prominent places in international relations. Traditionally, the fields were perceived as being largely exclusive and independent but now it is just as common to find the view that the two are highly complementary or downright contradictory. As a particular expression of international development policy, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are no exception. Debate over the relationship between the MDGs and human rights has been intense since the adoption of the former in 2001.

This volume seeks to delve deeper into these tensions and synergies. The chapters evolved from a workshop at Harvard University that was held on 22–23 March 2010 and hosted by the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, LEVE (Livelihoods in Developing Countries, University of Oslo), the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (University of Oslo), and the Institute for Development Studies (University of Sussex).¹ Since then, a number of chapters were added in order to address additional themes.

The resulting volume draws scholars and practitioners together from a range of disciplines and perspectives. The aim is not to provide a coherent view of the relationship between MDGs and human rights but rather a diversity of insights. We would like to deeply thank the authors for their invaluable contributions and their patience in dealing with endless questions and queries from the editors.

This book would not have been possible without the generous support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NORAD, UNICEF, UN OHCHR, and LEVE for the workshop as well as assistance with research assistance and dissemination. We would particularly like to thank Mindy Roseman, Academic Director

¹ The conference report can be found at: <http://www.jus.uio.no/smr/english/about/programmes/serp/projects/mdgs-and-human-rights/>.

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of the Harvard Law School Human Rights Program, and Kaitlyn Hennigan and Annie Berndtson, former Program Assistants at the Human Rights Program, as well as Tara Smith (formerly of University of Oslo) for organising the workshop. At the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, Cheryl Lorens, Sevda Clark, and Tara Smith provided tireless editorial assistance as did Rebecca Cantor at the Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University.

In the production of the book, we are very grateful to John Berger at Cambridge University Press for his deep support in driving the project forward; Adrian Pereira at Aptara, Inc., for shepherding the book through its various phases; and Gail Naron Chalew for her painstaking copyediting of the entire manuscript. Thanks also go to the *Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal* for allowing partial republication of an article in Chapter 4 of this volume.²

This book comes at a time when the debate over the post-2015 development agenda has intensified. The report of the High-Level Panel displays a growing sensitivity to human rights but is also subject to considerable critique.³ No doubt this debate will continue during the lead-up to 2015 with further reports, advocacy, and negotiations and will spill over into the next phase of implementation and evaluation. We hope this volume provides a basis in which the continuing role of the human rights in global development agendas can be critically analysed.

Malcolm Langford, Andy Sumner, and Alicia Ely Yamin

² Mac Darrow, “The Millennium Development Goals: Milestones or Millstones? Human Rights Priorities for the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, *Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal*, Vol. XV, March 2012.

³ *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, United Nations, 2013. For an example of a response, see CESR, *High Level Panel Recommendations Fall Short of the Human Rights Litmus Test*, <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/354228>.