Global Social Policy Digest 14.3

(April - August 2014)

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REDISTRIBUTION

The key themes in the period under review continue to be the ongoing job crisis (particularly youth unemployment), inequality, and the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process and the future development agenda (namely defining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS)). Migration is increasingly in focus as well (dealt with in the *Regulation* section).

However, little is new in much of the discussion on 'inequality' (Global Social Policy Digest 14.2 particularly focused on issues of inequality). The latest World Health Organization's (WHO) World Health Statistics once again provide evidence of inequalities between and within different countries, including a rich-poor longevity divide. The main finding of the World Economic Situation and Prospects mid-2014 is that 'recovery' from the global economic and financial crisis can be identified only for developed countries. While the growth prospects for developing economies have been revised downwards, which is not a promising finding concerning the reduction of inequality between states. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) addressed such issues in its report 'All on Board. Making Inclusive Growth Happen', and it its 'OECD Week 2014'. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) also dedicated its anniversary Public Symposium to "how widening inequality poses a challenge to sustainable development."

While employing a language of vulnerabilities rather than inequalities, the Human Development Report 2014 'Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerability and Building Resilience' (published in July 2014) recommends universal provision and access to basic social services, particularly health and education; stronger social protection (including unemployment insurance and pensions) and full employment. Duncan Green suggests that the report is "an interesting diagnosis and a few good new-ish ideas, followed by a pretty thin proposal for anything resembling a cure, while ducking most of the tricky questions."

Perhaps the ODI paper that asks "When is redistribution popular?" gets us a bit further, in reporting that the perceptions of social conflict are importantly influencing people's demand for redistribution. Given that these perceptions seem to be stronger at lower degrees of inequality, it calls on governments to "act quickly when inequality is starting to rise in order to capitalise the support towards redistributive policies" (also discussed by Duncan Green). Thomas Piketty's ideas, also elaborated on in his book 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century', continue to be discussed in media, academic and policy circles. Piketty's ideas go beyond the national level in addressing inequality, and he argues that "with disparities in income and wealth rising substantially over recent decades, a global progressive tax on individual net worth would offer the best option for keeping inequality under control." However, Piketty's views are contrasted by those of Robert J. Shiller. Shiller elaborates on the idea of an 'inequality insurance' representing "innovative scientific finance and insurance, both private and public, to reduce inequality, by quantitatively managing all the risks that contribute to it." He continues to explain that "[i]nequality insurance would require governments to establish very long-term plans to make income-tax rates automatically higher for high-income people in the future if inequality worsens significantly, with no change in taxes otherwise. […] inequality insurance because […] it addresses risks beforehand."

Turning to other issues of global social redistribution, the EU plans for the Financial-Transaction Tax are now increasingly focused on derivatives. This focus is of course not unchallenged as the UK continues to fight any such plans (see also the Guardian). Meanwhile, the BRICS created a new development bank (called New Development Bank (NDB), allocating S100bn for development projects. With headquarters in Shanghai and a first bank president from India, the capital for the bank will be split equally among the five participating countries. This is an important move considering the ongoing debates on representation and other criticism of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) welcomed this move, but also demanded "that these new financial instruments contribute to a more equitable distribution of income, sustainable development, food security and decent work." Some activists were less satisfied with the BRICS bank, as they found "the opportunity for real reform was lost." More information and discussion can be found at 'Recovery with a Human Face'.

The most prominent development in global social policy over the period of review, though, has been the processes around the post-2015 development agenda – a process all but easy to follow and to understand. Part of the confusion stems from the multiplicity of institutions and actors to engage in the process, and the high number of different high-level meetings. One distinction to be made is the following: there is a process on the content of the future development goals, and there is discussion about the future development financing and cooperation.

On the content of the future development agenda were the discussions that continued in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) (see also GSP Digest 13.2). At the OWG's 11th session, a working document, used as an initial point of departure during the session, lists focus areas and subareas for the future development goals and targets. The resulting outcome document from the 11th session identifies 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), including those related to poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, decent work, and climate change. Commenting on the outcome of the 11th session, civil society organisations (CSOs)—who participate in the discussion under "Major Group" designations—submitted to the 12th session a document with proposed revisions that demands a more rights-based approach with regard to the inequality goal, while further amendments submitted at the 13th and final session by Major Groups and other stakeholders propose explicit reference to taxation systems. The outcome document of the final session is the product of all the negotiations among OWG member states and consultations with Major Groups, and presents a list of the proposed SDGs. Proposed goal 10 calls for the need to "Reduce inequality within and among countries", and addresses income growth of the bottom 40% of the population, empowerment and promotion of social, economic and political inclusion of all, ensuring equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, adopting equality-achieving policies including social protection policies, encouraging ODA and financial flows to states where the need is greatest, and reducing the transaction costs of remittances. As reported by the Third World Network there has been significant discussion around the issue of whether or not inequality should be dealt with as a stand-alone SDG. In support of the stand-alone goal were the G77 and China.

Closely related was the United Nations Economic and Social Council's (UN ECOSOC) Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) themed 'Addressing on-going and

emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future'; as well as ECOSOC's 2014 Development Cooperation Forum under the topic of 'Bringing the future of development cooperation to post-2015'.

Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing[1] consultation on 'Co-creating New Partnerships for Financing Sustainable Development' in Helsinki, Finland focused on development finance. The specific focus of that meeting was on the role of the private sector. This meeting finds the "current commitments of business […] inspiring and encouraging", but also adds that these "moral commitments need to be turned into concrete actions."

On a similar topic, namely 'Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of financing for sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda', the ECOSOC's annual special high-level meeting with the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) happened in mid-April 2014 (for a summary see the outcome document). Almost at the same time, over 1500 development leaders gathered for the first High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in Mexico City. The communiqué adopted there talks about a paradigm shift "from aid effectiveness to effective development cooperation". A civil society organizations (CSO) statement to the event is critical, and claims that the high-level meeting was "characterized by an unbalanced featuring of the role of the private sector, in particular of multinational enterprises", and lacks to deliver on the 'how' of the post-2015 process (a feminist perspective is also available). In contrast to the above mentioned Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, though, that had focused on the role of the private sector, in Mexico City, the emphasis was on 'triangular cooperation'. The issue of triangular cooperation for development was also taken up in a High-Leven Event of the UN General Assembly in May 2014.

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[1] Comprised of 30 experts on sustainable development finance, nominated by regional groups; and tasked to prepare a report on options on effective sustainable development financing strategies.

A statement by the Righting Financing Initiative[2] strengthens the role of governments, which contrasts with the above focus on the private sector. Furthermore, a sign-on statement from CSOs, expresses a critical stance regarding the emerging trend of partnership with the private sector, and calls instead for a "just and transformative Global Partnership that will seriously tackle the global systemic issues at the root of the development concerns that the world face today and emphasises the need for governments to commit to their human rights obligations to their citizens and to the international community."

Also on 'Financing for Development' a Brookings Briefing Note, prepared for a retreat convened by the Independent Research Forum on a Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda argues that "[f]inancing for development must address these twin issues: the adequacy of financing to provide for sufficient public expenditures to meet desired social and economic investments, and the adequacy of long-term financing to allow economies to grow and develop their full potential."

Bringing together some of these debates, in early July, the second meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development[3] was focussed on 'Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals'. The draft ministerial declaration from this event, amongst other things, reaffirms "the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion."

As a further stream of processes around the future development agenda, the progress in developing *indicators* for sustainable development goals can be traced at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network website.

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[2] Steering committee members of this initiative: Association form Women's Rights in Development, Centre for Economic and Social Rights, Centre for Women's Global Leadership, Center of Concern, CIVICUS, Development Alternatives with Women for a New ERA, International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, IBASE (Brazil) and Social Watch.

[3] The main UN platform dealing with sustainable development; a meeting of Heads of State and Government every four years held at the UNGA and meetings with lower-level participation held every year at ECOSOC; replacing the Commission on Sustainable Development.

REGULATION

Over the last few months, migration has emerged as a key theme on the agenda in international fora. The ILO released its agenda on 'fair migration', engaging both with the meaning of migration and its role in it (a related statement was made by ILO Director-General Guy Ryder at the opening of the 103rd session of the International Labour Conference (ILC). The question on how to integrate migration issues in the post-2015 development agenda was focused on at the Global Experts Meeting on migration in Dhaka in April. A list of recommendations resulted from the meeting stressing the importance of migration in development, and – among its thematic recommendations are the access to health, education, employment and decent work. In mid-May, the 7th Global Forum on Migration and Development took place in Stockholm, themed 'Unlocking the potential of migration for inclusive development' (for more background documentation see here http://www.gfmd.org/docs/sweden-2013-2014). Following the meeting, a letter with recommendations was sent to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, making suggestions on how to include migration into the post-2015 development agenda, and names two important principles, the universal protection of human rights, and the recognition of migrants as enablers of development. The Commission on Population and Development came together for its 47th session in April 2014, and it its final report also includes the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants.

Linking the regulation and redistribution concerns is the area of migration and remittances. The World Bank, in its Migration and Development Brief, illustrates global and regional trends in remittances, and discusses, amongst other things, the Global Remittances Agenda and migration and the post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, a CGD collection of papers shows that the research on migration and development "is moving far beyond remittances."

Addressing illegal migration, the International Labour Organization (ILO) report 'Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour' "concludes that there is an urgent need to address the socio-economic root causes of this hugely profitable illegal practice if it is to be overcome. […] the continued existence of forced labour is not only bad for its victims, it's bad for business and development as well" (related is the report 'Strengthening action to end forced labour'). ITUC General Secretary, Sharan Burrow, commented: "The new ILO protocol must revitalize action to end forced labour, and we

are putting those who make money from slavery on notice that the international trade union movement and our allies will chase them down and bring them to account."

Apart from discussion around the SDGs that also concern issues of financing and debt sustainability (goal 17). Taxation was the focus of the G20 International Tax Symposium in Tokyo in May 2014, particularly base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) and international tax transparency. Furthermore, in June, an ECOSOC meeting on 'International Cooperation in Tax matters' took place (related draft resolution), and Special Meeting of ECOSOC on International Cooperation in Tax Matters was held in New York. The related draft resolution of the latter reports the decision to set up a number of subcommittees on special tax mattes, including transfer pricing, tax treatment of services, base erosion and profit shifting, extracting industries taxation and the negotiation of tax treaties. Meanwhile, the OECD released a 'Standard for Automatic Exchange of Financial Information in Tax Matters'. With a specific focus on children on the issue of taxation, Save the Children published 'Tackling Tax and Saving Lives. Children, tax and financing for development'.

RIGHTS

The importance of a human rights-backed development agenda was highlighted by the UN officials at the High-level Event of the General Assembly on the Contributions of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (9 - 10 June 2014). The event and recognition of human rights as central to the post-2015 development is welcomed but it remains to be seen how human rights achievements will be measured. Much of the discussion on human rights has been focused on civil and political rights given the crisis in Syria, Eastern Ukraine and Gaza. While social rights have been highlighted in all of these cases the immediate concerns over security of persons has remained prescient.

Still, some attention has been paid to ensuring more focus on social rights. On 26 June, the Human Rights Council extended the mandates of a number of special rapporteurs, including the rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. However, the UN has come under some criticism for the marginalization of the right to water and sanitation. In particular, the lack of attention in the development goals to access to water as a right is noted. This critique of the UN comes amidst the calls by UN experts on the

need to ensure right to water and sanitation if individuals cannot afford to pay the bills as was witnessed in the case of Detroit.

On 12 June, the 2014 World Day Against Child Labour dedicated the year's focus to the role of social protection in combatting child labour. After several high profile events, including statements from Pope Francis and Aung San Suu Kyi, and a thousand people on a beach in Brazil, the following month, Bolivia would become the first country the legalize some forms of child labour from the age of ten. On 30 July, the commemoration of the first World Day against Trafficking in Persons highlighted the vulnerability of this segment of the population. A group of UN experts, also noted that indigenous peoples and their rights cannot be left out of the post-2015 development agenda.

The rights of migrants have also received some attention (also see above *Regulation* section). UNHCR has called for urgent European action to stop the rising refugee and migrant deaths at sea. Antonio Guterres, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, urged European countries to provide swift asylum procedures as well as legal alternatives to the dangerous sea crossings. However, any significant response from the European countries remains unlikely due to the lack of political will to tackle these issues.

In all the different areas of human rights, women's rights, and the need for an effective gender perspective emerged. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held a half-day general discussion on girls' and women's right to education, in view of receiving inputs and contributions for its draft General Recommendation on the issue. Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted that while progress in the area of girl's education has been made much remains to be done as gender imbalances remain. A gender perspective is also seen as necessary in the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In particular, the experts involved in the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice (WGDAW) note that "Evidence reveals that a gender-neutral approach to policy-making renders invisible important gender issues and marginalizes women's experiences." As such, a specific gender approach has emerged as necessary in the policies and the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Still, whether this call will result in gender mainstreaming or more targeted approaches remains to be seen.

Global Social Governance

Not surprisingly, the processes around the post-2015 development agenda are not only about the content of the goals and issues of financing, but also represent struggles on who should have a say in formulating and shaping the SDGs. While any goals will see their final approval in the UN General Assembly (by UN member states), the process up to the final proposal of a set of goals has been shaped and accompanied by inputs of various actors. Philanthropic actors are one of these actors, addressed at an UN ECOSOC meeting in April, and followed up by a report entitled 'Philanthropy as an Emerging Contributor to Development Cooperation' followed in July (more on the topic at worldwewant2015.org). A CSO statement (see also *Redistribution* section) is concerned that "the space for CSOs is shrinking." At the International Day of Cooperatives (10 July), the focus was on how cooperative enterprises put social justice and equity at the heart of economic progress. A related report by the ILO and the International Cooperative Alliance summarizes the contributions of cooperatives to the post-2015 development debate (related is a report on the survey findings).

On the involvement of governments, there is a marked difference between the G7 Summit that took place in Brussels, 4-5 June 2014, and did not address the future development agenda (its Declaration has little new to offer on the issues discussed in this digest); and LDCs making a claim of being an "integral part of the U.N.'s post-2015 development agenda". In June 2014, the G77 and China celebrated its 50th anniversary – the summit was themed 'For a New World Order For Living Well' – and the declaration from the event calls "upon leaders of the developed countries to agree and commit to a new phase of international cooperation through a strengthened and scaled-up global partnership for development, which should be the centrepiece and anchor for both the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda." Martin Kohr (Third World Network) reports Ban Ki Moon's stress that "the SDGs require Global Partnership and the G77 has a key role to ensure its effectiveness. The Group should press for a fair trade regime, technology transfer and so on. The G77 and China plays a key role in the UN to formulate a post 2015 Development Agenda." A publication by the Committee for Development Policy, entitled 'Global Governance and Global Rules for Development in the Post-2015 Era' is not overly optimistic about the current patterns of international cooperation: "While developing countries must abide by and/or shoulder the effects of global governance rules and regulations, they have limited influence in shaping them. […] These deficiencies have contributed to the

generation of asymmetric outcomes among countries and have had important implications for inequality at the national level as well." Bhumika Muchhala (Third World Network asks that "multi-stakeholder partnerships in the post-2015 context will be held accountable to delivering development results that are equitable and rights-based aligned to national and local needs, and do not constrain the right to development and national policy space for developing countries."

Other than the SDG process, the 29th Spring meeting for the IMF and the World Bank group took place in Washington D.C., 11-13 April 2014, that again addressed the issues of IMF quota and governance reforms, a process that is still being referred to as "deeply disappoint[ing]." However, a discussion has started (related to the issues of migration and remittances discussed in the *Redistribution* section) on whether or not the World Bank should move towards becoming a 'remittance center'.

Global Unions (ITUC, GUFs and TUAC) had called on the IFIs to "follow through on their announced intention to pay greater attention to employment by helping boost aggregate demand in countries with output gaps and ensuring that their financial support maximises decent work creation" (section 2), and to "take steps to ensure that their concern with growing inequality is not counteracted by their own lending programs" (section 3).

At G20-related gatherings, the Labour 20 (L20) convened its first Forum in Melbourne, themed 'Jobs and Growth'. The L20 called on G20 governments "to agree on a jobs and growth pact." That included the strengthening of workers' rights and social protection systems with the aim of countering informal working arrangements. The C20 Summit in June concluded with a Communiqué that raised concerns over growing inequality (see also *Redistribution* section).

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The period under review highlighted the extent and range of issues on the global health agenda, which are all competing for policy priority in the post-2015 era. There have been concerns at the recent 20th International AIDS Conference to keep global momentum in fighting AIDS and bring an end to the epidemic. A special panel at the Conference on HIV and the post-2015 development agenda included calls for a new AIDS-related development target that will secure the end of the epidemic by 2030. As Helen Clark UNDP chief cautioned however, it is going to be important to be clear about what 'success' means here, ensuring that it is not "defined in terms of a background epidemic which has moved just far enough into the shadows so that many people no longer notice or care.".

Another issue competing for priority in the post-2015 era is that of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). A recently-released policy brief by members of the global health community urges all UN Member States to ensure that specific targets for the control and elimination of NTDs are included in the forthcoming post-2015 framework. Interestingly, NTDs are framed and 'sold' to global policy makers in the brief as an over-lapping and cross-cutting issue - a 'best buy' for global health - given that NTDs have far reaching effects on several other poverty and development interventions and that control and elimination are not only cheap, but are also effective and sustainable when integrated with other (water, sanitation, nutrition etc.).

Similarly, non-communicable diseases are also vying for global priority, as signified by recent discussions on NCDs at a high-level UNGA meeting. At this meeting, UN Member States reaffirmed their commitment to take action and pledges were made to intensify efforts to combat the 'growing menace of NCDs'. As a related article in the Lancet indicated, doing so will be an "ambitious undertaking", not only because multiple sectors need to be involved in addressing NCDs, but also because the disparate nature of NCDs means that they differ in their origins, courses, and possible interventions. As the article indicated, sustaining political commitment to address NCDs in the post-2015 framework is also likely to be difficult, given that there is "no real co-ordinated civil society voice agitating for change".

It is likely to be less difficult to sustain commitment to the issue of communicable diseases given continued concerns about the potential wider implications of the outbreaks of Ebola in West Africa and the advent of plague in China. As the ILO has indicated however, if we really want to meet health goals within the post-2015 development agenda then urgent action is needed more broadly on improving social protection in health. At the same time, and as reported by Chatham House, meeting the goals will also require a coherent global framework for health financing. While the post-2015 process is clearly important in securing global cooperation on health and wider development issues, operationalising the goals will be a completely different challenge. A recent article in the Lancet raised this issue, suggesting that while "global goals are important", it might actually be important to push for country-specific targets for 2030 given that these are likely to be more implementable.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

International organizations and others on the development scene continue to watch closely the rather intricate process of post-2015 agenda-setting taking place at the United Nations. Varying practical and political approaches to a wide range of development questions are reflected in a heavily—and at times contentiously—negotiated new document put forward by the UN's Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see also *Redistribution* section).

The OWG held its thirteenth and final session in July, and released the latest iteration of its proposal of SDGs, which is expected to serve as the zero draft for the final phase of negotiations to begin in September 2014 at the 69th UN General Assembly (UNGA) (see also *Redistribution* section). The ultimate fate of social protection in the agenda that will be adopted by the UNGA in September 2015 is unknown. However, it appears to have survived initial tests amid suggestions it may be more aptly considered as a means for achieving other targets, such as poverty headcount reduction, rather than as a target unto itself. Social protection targets now appear under several goals, perhaps the most notable of which is the first and overarching goal on poverty.

> *1. End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.*
>
> *[…]*

> *1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.*

While the target makes reference to the establishment of what could be comprehensive social protection systems and floors, it is important to note that the only time bound commitment is to achieve protections covering "the poor and the vulnerable" by 2030. Other references to social protection *policies* are also contained under the goals on gender and inequalities.

Elsewhere, discussions of existing (or non-existing) legal guarantees for social protection in accepted international agreements have garnered significant attention in recent months. The fifth session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing was meeting in New York at the time of writing, and would focus on the existing framework outlining the human rights of older persons, including the right to social security and social protection. In the initial discussions, members debated whether a new international legal instrument was needed to promote said rights, or whether agreements already in existence were sufficient. Related think-pieces have come out regarding the complementarity—and even compatibility—of various rights and obligations identified in relevant documents such as ILO Recommendation 202, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Meanwhile, the claim that member states had widely envisioned Recommendation 202 at the outset to serve as a human rights document "represents a creative interpretation" of sentiments during initial consultations, according to Gerard W Boychuk.

In development cooperation, the global partnership among UN, national and regional development agencies in the area of social protection continues to advance through the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), which held its fifth meeting in Geneva in May. High on the agenda was the development of social protection systems assessment tools, which constitute one of the more rapidly developing initiatives of the cooperation efforts thus far. The Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment, or ISPA, is in development and envisioned for application in-country by either SPIAC-B members or others as an "open source" tool—perhaps even for national self-evaluation, which some may find interesting. So far, it appears to include a diagnostic tool, a public works component and a beneficiary identification module, representing the collective thinking of SPIAC-B members who participate in

the tools' development. Meanwhile, the ILO released an inventory of lessons learned from implementing its own assessment tool in Asia and the Pacific since 2011. Assessment-based National Dialogue is designed for implementing SPFs specifically, and appears to include strong consultative components in the style of ILO-brand social dialogue, plus civil society.   There is also a costing exercise as part of the country assessment—something likely to be increasingly in demand as countries attempt to understand the implications of the commitments they make in any post-2015 agreement.

In June the World Social Protection Report 2014-2015, was released and is organized unsurprisingly into four sections corresponding the lifecycle guarantees contained in Recommendation 202, not least of which is a section on income guarantees to protect children from child labour and other forms of exploitation (see Rights section). Renamed from the World Social *Security* report, the new title is a slight change from the only previous edition released for 2010-2011.   Both contain information on contributory and non-contributory social protection around the world. The World Bank's annual State of Social Safety Nets 2014 was also released, which covers non-contributory social protection.

EDUCATION

In discussions on education, the remaining challenges in ensuring access to quality education remain important. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Second Replenishment Conference, held in Brussels in June 25 and 26 2014, called on the international community to commit to giving all children access to school and learning. However, new UIS data show no progress in reducing global number of children out of school. According to the UNESCO/UNICEF Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, despite major progress over the past decade, sub-Saharan Africa is still home to more than half of all the out-of-school children of primary school-age in the world. Moreover, millions who are in school are learning little (see the most recent studies of this initiative on the West and Central Africa Region and on East and Southern Africa). Adding to the complexity of the issue, written submission to CEDAW (*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*) on 'Privatisation and its Impact on the Right to Education of Women and Girls' highlights that more boys are enrolled in schools than girls, a problem that is exacerbated by the increasing privatisation of education.

The proposed education goal (goal 4) in the zero draft on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address such challenges. According to the UNESCO EFA GMR, despite we are close to the September UN Assembly, where the draft of the Sustainable Development Goals will be presented, the new education targets still need fine tuning. A related post-2015 global education framework was developed at the annual Global EFA (Education for All) Meeting in Muscat (Oman). The meeting concluded with the approval of the Muscat Agreement, that included suggestions on specific goals and targets. Furthermore, in the context of the ECOSOC High Level Political Forum in July 2014, Bokova called for anchoring science in the future post 2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals. Bokova declarations come in the light of the SDGs zero draft being strongly criticized for being vague on boosting science. More ideas emerged from the 7th Meeting of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA (CCNGO/EFA), held in Santiago (Chile) between May 21 and May 23 2014. The national, regional and international NGOs and networks from all parts of the world who gathered in the meeting produced a final declaration that demands an ambitious post-2015 framework.

FOOD

Food prices have continued to decline since April and, positively, the OECD-FAO reported that such falls are expected to continue over the next two years. While this news was welcomed by the OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, he also cautioned against complacency, indicating that "achieving gains in ways that are both inclusive and sustainable remains a formidable challenge". The FAO Crop Prospects and Food Situation Report also highlighted ongoing concerns about the global food situation, highlighting that threats to food security remain in conflict and drought stricken areas such as the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan. Interestingly, the issue of food security in South Sudan in particular came up at the recent meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Development, at which representatives from ECHO (the Commission's humanitarian aid arm) pressed for action here to be an EU priority over the coming year.

A number of other recent discussions, reports and events have emphasised the substantive challenges that exist to delivering the goal of global food security, some

examples of which are discussed here. First, a contribution to Devex's online conversation 'Feeding Development' by the Population Institute questioned the prospect of securing sustainable, resilient food systems in a context of global population growth. Here, it was argued that the new sustainable development goals should require countries to undertake realistic assessments of the demand for and potentially shrinking availability of resources such water, arable land and forests, so that planners have a clear understanding of the physical limits to growth. It was also argued that such activities needed to go hand in hand with renewed commitments to universal access to family planning and reproductive health, so that women are empowered to make free choices about pregnancy.

Second, an article on Reuters re-highlighted the issue of 'peak soil': the pressing need to prevent soil degradation and thus ensure soil fertility. Here it was indicated that we need to know about how much soil there is globally and what condition it is in. At the same time, we need to find ways to price the "true cost" of soil into food, including the environmental cost of soil degradation.

Third, the Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth which took place in The Hague highlighted that "unorthodox" steps would be needed in the future in order to restore productive and resilient oceans. This includes banning illegal fisheries and using subsidies only for sustainable fisheries in the future. The Summit was well-attended and involved a series of high-profile speakers, and so it seems that the aim of drawing wider global attention to the plight of our oceans was reached. Significantly, the Summit concluded with a call for oceans to be embedded as a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal in the post-2015 Development Framework, in order to ensure oceans continue to receive priority attention.

Many of these foregoing concerns have, to some extent, been embedded in recent efforts of UN Rome-based agencies to consolidate a new global development paradigm for sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition through the release of common food security and nutrition targets, which it is hoped will be incorporated into the goals for post-2015. Subsequent discussions about the targets have taken place in an attempt to ensure that all concerned stakeholders have an opportunity to engage in the post-2015 process. An important voice in such processes is likely to be Kofi Annan, whose recent interview with FutureFood 2050 emphasized that he is seeking to make

fighting for African food security a key development issue. In the interview, he emphasised the huge potential role that Africa has not only to feed itself, but also to produce surpluses that will help secure global food and nutrition security in the future.

HABITAT, LAND, HOUSING

As the discussions gear towards planning for post-2015 scenario for human development, one of the important concerns raised in the case of urban settlements is lack of adequate information, which is the backbone of any planning activity. This is particularly acute in developing countries where more than a third of urban population lives in shanties or slums or informal settlements. Contrary, some scholars argue that informal settlements have the potential to enhance citizenship voices due to the dynamism there. It is in this context, the first meeting of UN-Habitat's City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP) that was held in July this year in Spain as well as the call by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UN-Habitat Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos for turning cities and towns as centres of "crucibles of innovation and advancement" for the purpose of inclusive growth gains significance. Informal settlements, where poor people tend to live together, in urban areas is a testimony of huge disparity, since rich segments of population are also residing in same urban areas. Therefore, larger question is whether policy responses to address inequality is required or should cities live in inequality allowing living spaces for the poor people. UN progress Report on drinking water and sanitation makes it clear that addressing inequality is the best way to build our cities as well as to deal with challenges within sectors like water and sanitation. Inadequate data, due to informal settlements, and limits of planning also has huge implication for what kind of sustainability is feasible. Therefore, it is important note that taking global action to combat climate change has been identified as one of the proposed goals for post-2015 UN agenda despite of opposition from many countries.