

Health in the Post - 2015 Development Agenda

Briefing Paper 1

*Developing a new generation of global development goals:
process and consultation*

This note is one of a series of WHO briefing papers on the post-2015 agenda. It summarizes where things stand in September 2012 in relation to the process of developing a new set of goals. Briefing papers on content issues are in preparation.

A vigorous and competitive debate on what should constitute the next generation of development goals is underway. Given the widespread interest in this topic there are few organizations or countries that are not actively involved. The bias in this note is toward processes in which WHO is actively involved. A major challenge is to keep track of developments, identify opportunities for influence, and use limited resources to engage selectively and strategically.

■ UN CONSULTATIONS TO DATE

A representative UN Task Team co-chaired by UNDP and DESA convened at the request of the Secretary General submitted its report – *Realizing the future we want for all* - in June ¹. The Task Team's report was accompanied by a number of thematic papers, one of which is on health, developed by WHO in partnership with other UN agencies.

The report will be an input to a High-Level Panel (HLP) of eminent persons co-chaired by the UK PM and Presidents of Liberia and Indonesia. The High Level Panel meets for the first time on 25th September 2012 during the opening week of the UN General Assembly. The panel will be supported by a newly appointed ASG, Amina Mohammed. The new Deputy Secretary General will oversee the development agenda. WHO will support the work of ASG Mohammed.

In parallel, the UNDG is leading efforts to catalyze a "global conversation" on the post-2015 agenda through a series of at least 50 national consultations and nine thematic global consultations: on inequalities; population; health; education; economic growth and employment; conflict and fragility; governance; environmental stability; food security and nutrition. WHO will co-lead the health thematic process with UNICEF, discussions are ongoing with Botswana and Sweden as the lead Member States for this process (and see below) ².

The July meeting of H8 principals in London agreed that the post-2015 agenda is a priority and that all H8 agencies should support the thematic consultation on health. A joint paper setting out elements of a common position is being discussed by H8 principals.

As part of the preparations and follow-up to Rio+20 WHO has convened a multi-stakeholder consultation on how health can be used as a measure of progress in sectors such as sustainable energy that may be the subject of future goals. In addition WHO is working with UN Water and the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Water and Sanitation on framing a water-related goal. Using health as a measure of progress in other sectors, and framing goals which have a direct positive impact on health (such as water and sanitation) complements the overall strategy of framing one or more overall health goals.

The countries involved in the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative are preparing a resolution that could support the idea of using Universal Health Coverage as an overarching health goal. Foreign Ministers of the seven countries will meet in the margins of this year's UNGA.

¹ The report of the task team can be found at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/beyond2015.shtml>. This site also includes links to the work of other UN agencies on the post-2015 agenda.

² The inclusion of the Swedish Minister of Development Cooperation in the HLP and Sweden as a lead country on the thematic consultation provides an important link between the two processes.

■ THE BIGGER PICTURE

A major landmark in the process is the UNGA in September 2013. This will be the occasion for a final review of the current MDGs, and the delivery of the HLP report. It is also likely that this will be the start of inter-governmental negotiations on the next generation of goals – informed by the conclusions of the SG’s high-level panel.

In addition, this year’s UNGA will see the establishment of a Member State led process to follow up agreements at Rio+20 on the Sustainable Development Goals³ which will also deliver its report to the UNGA in 2013. The Rio+20 resolution notes that the process “needs to be coordinated and coherent with the processes to consider the post-2015 agenda.” It will be supported by an inter-agency technical support team and expert panels, and will be guided by “initial input from the Secretary-General in consultation with national governments.” It is currently unclear as to the status of these arrangements. Thus while convergence between the two processes is obviously desirable, it remains to be seen how it will be ensured.

Among the many other processes that have or are about to take off, the UNSG has also asked Professor Jeffery Sachs to lead a new Sustainable Development Solutions Network. This has the aim of influencing the next generation of goals from a very practical perspective, mobilizing the world’s academic community to support sustainable development initiatives in a wide range of areas including health.

The key issue at this point is to recognize that, in contrast to the development of the present set of MDGs that were developed by the UN secretariat, future decisions will be made by a political process driven by Member States. The challenge therefore is to develop a core set of ideas/messages on the role of health that can be adopted and used by WHO Member States in these negotiations.

■ CONSULTATIONS IN WHO

It was agreed that the process of developing WHO’s strategy and positioning would be led by the Director-General.

It was also agreed that consultations should be held across the Organization starting with a teleconference with Regional Directors prior to the 2012 season of RCMs. The high level results at impact and outcome level in the draft of the GPW are consistent with current thinking on health goals post 2015 (universal health coverage as a means of extending healthy life expectancy). This alignment will be sustained as both processes progress in coming months.

All WHO Representatives, both in the 50 selected countries and elsewhere, have been made aware of the UN consultation process noted above. Following agreement on WHO positions, they will also be equipped with guidance on WHO substantive positions. Consultations with HQ Directors and Regional officers are being organized.

As noted above, the eventual outcome depends on the positions adopted by Member States. Taking the example of Rio+20, where an early MS briefing yielded positive results, a Member State briefing led by the DG was held on 14 September. This will be followed by regular updates.

■ GLOBAL THEMATIC CONSULTATION

The global consultation on health will have a number of components: a web-based consultation; the development of a series of background papers, both on lessons learned from the current MDGs as well as future directions; and a number of consultative meetings – with Member states; with civil society organizations – to be organized by one of the civil society coalitions; with private sector partners; with academic and research institutions – possibly in conjunction with the Second Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in China. It will culminate in a high-level meeting in late February 2013. The final meeting will involve governments, NGO coalitions, key UN partners, and members of the UNSGs High-Level Panel. It will seek to incorporate ideas and lessons from other regional and country consultations thereby building a powerful consensus around key issues and recommendations on health to feed into the inter-governmental process that will start later in 2013.

³ Paragraphs 248 UNGA resolution on the Rio+20 outcome document states: We resolve to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on SDGs that is open to all stakeholders with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the United Nations General Assembly. An open working group... shall comprise of thirty representatives, nominated by Member States through the five UN regional groups with the aim of achieving fair, equitable and balanced geographic representation...., this open working group will... ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society, the scientific community and the UN system....It will submit a report to the 68th session of the UNGA containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.

⁴ A press release announcing the SDSN can be found at the link in the Footnote 1.