

*A POVERTY REDUCTION ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATOR  
FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS  
AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS*

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**Abstract**

In codifying international agreements into a body of “international development law” and principles, this piece offers an easy-to-use indicator for scholars and practitioners to measure whether Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international government organizations, and government policies and projects meet the criteria for “poverty reduction” that have been established by various international treaties and that are recognized by experts in the field.<sup>1</sup> Though most of the “aid” interventions and spending by international organizations is claimed to be focused on “poverty reduction” as the primary goal, in practice the existing international standard is largely discarded when it comes to addressing underlying causes or applying best practices for results. Indeed, most current interventions appear to violate international treaty goals for protecting cultural differences, sustainability, and for addressing the real causes of inequities. This suggests that their real agenda is to treat symptoms and postpone poverty while promoting globalization and undermining the global legal consensus for poverty reduction that fits into the goals of peace, security and rights. The article offers a sample test of the indicator using the UNDP as a case study.

**KEYWORDS:** Poverty, Equality, Sustainability, Human Rights, Development, Dependency, Culture protection, UNDP



**INTRODUCTION**

Despite apparent international consensus on eliminating poverty (UN Millennium Declaration, 2000) that claims to build on decades-old international commitments, the measure of whether

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘treaties’ is used in this article to refer to both international conventions which are considered to be legally binding and to declarations which are not considered to have the force of law.

international interventions actually reduce (or create, or institutionalize) poverty is still subject to heated disagreement. Despite the debate on whether poverty reduction is actually occurring, most of the discussion of reforms and solutions is focused on how poverty should be defined and which activities should be undertaken. In fact, there may be a more fundamental reason for the confusion over success and failure. There have long been international laws and treaties that guide the approach to poverty reduction within the framework of the international legal consensus for global peace, security, and rights, but they have yet to be incorporated into a standard when it comes to guiding current activities in approaches to poverty. The result is not merely confusion (and failures on a number of measures for reducing poverty) but probably violations of rights and the undermining of the international agenda for peace, security and rights.

According to the World Bank, in roughly the past 20 years (from 1990 to 2008), some 663 million people moved out of absolute poverty and the percentage of people living in absolute poverty, defined as earning less than \$1.25 per day, fell nearly by half, from 40% to 18.4% (World Bank, 2012). But if absolute poverty is defined as \$2 per day, the Bank notes that the change in poverty in absolute numbers was almost nil, with the number of poor in 1990, some 2.59 billion people, dropping only to 2.47 billion (World Bank, 2012). According to statistics from the Food and Agricultural Organization, the number of undernourished people in the world actually rose from 832 million in 1995 to 923 million in 2007 (FAO, 2012).

Indeed, the number of people living in dire poverty in the world today, using the World Bank's figures of 1.29 billion, is more than the entire human population on the planet just several decades ago, in 1950, while the 2.47 billion living on less than \$2 per day is equal to the world's entire population in 1950<sup>2</sup>.

Generally, these numbers are also accompanied by caveats, explaining that most of the people who have been moved out of poverty are vulnerable to falling back into poverty as resources disappear, as populations continue to rise, and as high consumption and production make populations vulnerable to resultant threats from climate change and pollution. In many areas, it seems that poverty has not really been "reduced" but simply "postponed" without any attention to its long term causes. It is almost as if it is by design.

Many question whether the reduction in poverty is at all sustainable or simply a short-term treatment of symptoms. Benefits may be illusory results of transfer of technologies or outputs that, themselves, are based on short-term exploitation of resources (fossil fuels, ground water) and postponement of costs (chemical pollution, climate change, desertification and other ecological damage). Current "poverty reduction" may actually be setting the stage to ratchet up poverty and misery in the not so distant future.

The figures that the World Bank and United Nations do not present in seeking to justify their "poverty reduction" efforts are those of relative poverty. Calculations of income inequality over the past 200 years show that income inequality, as measured by the gini coefficient, steadily

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<sup>2</sup> The world population figures are from the United Nations and can be found quickly on the "World Population" page of Wikipedia. For most recent poverty data see <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty> (Accessed 28 September 2015) (Editors).

worsened from 1820 to 1913 (from .43 to .61) and that it has continued to worsen (to .68 in 2005, slightly down from its high point of .71 in 2002) (Milanovic, 2011).

What these data also do not show is what sacrifices – and direct violations of international law -- may have occurred to achieve the absolute changes in “poverty reduction” that are sometimes regarded as positive. Most of the gains in reducing the percentages of people in the most absolute poverty have come from technology transfer and urbanization. In 1820, when some 75% of the population lived on less than \$1 per day (Vasquez, 2001), when most of the global population was rural, it was also much more culturally diverse. Over the past 20 years, in introducing technologies that raised the lowest incomes, some 600 human cultures may have disappeared, partly as an unintended result of industrialization (whether or not under the name of “poverty reduction”) but, more likely, as a result of intended cultural genocide (Krauss, 1992, Lempert, 2010)<sup>3</sup>. We know that hundreds more cultures perished in the colonial era due to the forced removal of populations and theft of native lands as well as the result of war, disease, urbanization and other cultural contact in prior decades. Indeed, the current approach to “poverty reduction” in practice, that is promoted by international organizations today, may be criminalizing and eliminating cultures that are defined to be poor, as well as to limiting community choices.

The international community’s consensus on “poverty reduction” *activities* appears to have been chosen (and may continue today) in violation of international agreements. One reason this occurs is because the international community does not offer any screening or indicator of whether any actions claimed to be in the name of “poverty reduction” actually meet international standards that have been established by international laws and treaties. With no screening for compliance with international law and principles, it is easy to understand why interventions just be “industrialization” or “colonialism” (resource and labor exploitation) under a different name, and how they have come to be labeled “poverty reduction” simply by using whichever arbitrary measure is selected by donors for “poverty” and its short-term symptoms.

The purpose of this article is to refocus the international community on the agreed goals and standards for “poverty reduction” that come out of international laws and treaties but seem to have disappeared from both theory and practice. In the same way that legal scholars have taken bodies of law and created legal documents that establish various elements and principles to fulfill those laws, this article offers a tool for practitioners and scholars that can be used to measure compliance with the establish international standards for poverty reduction. Such “codification” of principles essentially places them within the framework of law in the area of “international development interventions” where such principles exist in laws and treaties but have yet to be codified. Indeed, for the peoples of developing countries and for professionals, an indicator can serve as the basis for initiating political or even legal action against invasive or harmful activities that previously were difficult to hold to a common professional standard by recognizing that they are essentially principles of “international law”.

Previously, this author has offered some 10 different indicators to measure whether international donors are meeting their obligations in international law and to professional standards in several of the most basic areas of “development” including “sustainability”,

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<sup>3</sup> These estimates use language disappearance as a proxy for culture and are derived using data from Krauss (1992) and more recent data.

“sovereignty/ freedom from dependency,” and “democracy”, “as part of an effort to establish accountability where little or none exists (Lempert, 2008). In a companion piece and other forthcoming pieces, the author is also offering a basic indicator of the international legal consensus on “international development” (Lempert, 2014) to be followed by an outline of “Universal Development Goals” that meet this agenda but that have only barely been incorporated into the United Nations’ “Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (UN Millennium Declaration, 2000). Though these indicators have been presented to practitioners as mechanisms for compliance, they in fact represent a codification of international development law in the form of an emerging “legal treatise” of core principles and elements in this new area of law that has yet to be codified in any such treatise. This article starts with one of the core goals and justifications of international aid itself; the very definition of “poverty reduction” that is at the heart of international aid and offers a new indicator for measuring compliance and performance by listing its essential legal elements.

The piece begins with the core concepts of “poverty reduction” and then shows how these concepts were incorporated as part of the consensus of the international community in basic treaties. The article notes the lack of any existing indicator of “poverty reduction” and the harms that have resulted. It then places the international standards into a new legal tool that can easily be used to promote compliance. It holds up different types of international organizations to the international standard using this simple indicator, noting how most international projects have strayed from the standards. The piece then offers some thoughts on returning to the international standard.



## **FINDING THE CORE CONCEPTS-**

### **The principles of poverty reduction**

The methodology for extracting the basic principles from a body of laws and treaties is one regularly used by lawyers and judges when trying to find the precepts underlying laws and is referred to as “statutory analysis”. Though bodies drafting laws do not always fully define the theories and principles that they use when they reach a consensus and draft a law or a group of laws, legal scholars and judges routinely use laws to reconstruct the underlying principles (Cross, 1995; Bennion, 2009; Sutherland, 2010). There is no body of “international development law” as such, and there certainly is no “case law” of judicial interpretations of the principles and elements of “international development” and its various aspects like “poverty reduction”. But there already are several international laws and treaties that define the basic elements of rights and dignity that are part of the international consensus. Some of these laws, for example, identify the essential elements for survival of communities and right to choice patterns of consumption for living sustainably (U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (“Genocide Convention”), 1948).

Identifying and systematizing them is similar to what social scientists also do in “deconstructing” texts to find the guiding logic underlying them. The empirical “data” used to explore human behavior and draw conclusions comes from the written texts, themselves. Not everything is

explicit, but there are also some implied conditions and elements for the overall principles to work. That method can be applied here.

Though they are often overlooked or short-cut in practice, the minimal, essential principles of poverty reduction that come out of laws and treaties are relatively simple, procedurally and strategically. Poverty reduction needs to address two types of poverty that have different causes and to assure, for both, the application of proper procedures.

Professionalism requires:

- 1) In general, using the *appropriate tools* to identify roots causes of problems and to identify behaviors to be changed in the context of specific cultures on two types of poverty:
- 2) Addressing *absolute poverty* that is a result of a cultural imbalance of a system that is not sustainable within its environment, and
- 3) Addressing *relative poverty* that is a result of structural inequalities either at the level of cultures requiring protection for their choices or at the level of individuals.

They can be quickly defined (posited) here and then linked to their basis in international agreements, to demonstrate how they are rooted in the goals of the international system, in the next section.

What is important to note here is that the founding documents under international development law do not offer a mechanistic standard for defining poverty. Much of the debate is over specific measures. What the international legal foundation does is provide the required elements and principles to be considered in choosing and using measures and defining interventions. It says that both absolute and relative measures are necessary, not just one or the other. And it puts them in the context of the goals of poverty reduction that include protecting and promoting certain community and individual rights, in the context of the natural environment and international system. It establishes “poverty reduction” not as an ends in itself but as part of a means to achieving the goals of the international system. It is this that has been lost in the debate and that needs to be placed again at the top of the poverty reduction discussion. That is what a legal codification (and indicator) can do.

### **Using the Appropriate Tools (Procedures) at the Cultural Level**

As in any policy intervention, and particularly international (cross cultural), there are standard procedures used in analyzing the underlying problems and identifying solutions.

The place to start in addressing both absolute and relative poverty, that comes out of the most fundamental of international laws and rights, is to approach poverty from within the cultural context where there is presumed poverty and at the cultural (ethnic, community) level and ecosystem, not at the country level. What international law protects and what social science recognizes is that the key to health (and wealth) is an appropriate balance of human groups with their environment (their assets). While there is poverty within groups, the basic key to analyzing poverty of groups is to assure that they are sustainably balanced within their resources and then to see how the distribution of the resources and protections of individuals works within that context. It is not to rush to find symptoms or people to “treat”

without seeing the context. Then it is to look at the balance of these stable groups with each other in the global context to assure that this stability of each group is protected, but not that there is homogeneity at every level. This is what the Genocide Convention and the initial international rights treaties specify, within the goals of the U.N. Charter (1945) for achieving international peace and security.

The first step is to distinguish the specific consumption patterns of a culture and the different distributions of resources within a culture, from problems of absolute and relative poverty. These consumption and distribution choices within a culture are essential parts of that culture in balance with its eco-system and are protected by international law. In some industrial societies where minority language and ethnic identity are no longer protected and where productivity is no longer at the community level and tied to specific eco-systems, the analysis might be at the country level, but even then there will be questions for the country as to how it is sustainable within its resource boundaries as its eco-system.

Once the problem of poverty has been correctly identified, the standard analytical tool to use is a Problem Tree/Root Cause Analysis within the cultural context, to determine why a culture has become unsustainable and to focus on behaviors either within the culture or from outsiders influencing the culture, that need to be changed to correct the problem and restore a balance. Analytical tools are not specified by international law and treaty but they have been developed by social scientists in connection with diagnosing problems and generating solutions.

The focus of the analysis needs to be clearly on behaviors and consequences of behaviors. What did the culture lose that created the poverty? What changed either from inside or outside? What mistakes are being made that prevent a balance?

The wrong approach is to simply compare consumption and consumption patterns of cultures and to question the differences. The question is NOT what the culture lacks compared with others. It is not, "What can we give them?, What do they need to become like us?, What should they copy to be richer?, or What can they produce with their resources that the world wants?"

### **Sustainable, Long-Term (Absolute) Poverty Reduction Factors**

Environmentalists and anthropologists have outlined the essential principles of long-term sustainability, which can be viewed as another way of defining absolute poverty reduction. The principles established at a United Nations conference in 1992, sometimes referred to as the Rio de Janeiro principles (the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992) describe this goal clearly. The Declaration saw "the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development", with poverty elimination and sustainability coming first, prior to any increases in population or consumption of a culture that would meet the goals of sustainable development (Principle 5). Since cultures have an internationally protected legal right to sustainability and to choice of consumption patterns that assure it, absolute poverty is thus recognized as the shortfall in needs for individuals when there is unsustainability.

The Rio Declaration is not international "law" in the same way that the Genocide Convention is international law. Nor do the various declarations on "rights" have the status of international

law. But these declarations offer lists of principles that can be fitted into the framework of the U.N. charter and of the fundamental international laws like the Genocide Convention to flesh out the principles. Like many legal declarations (and like court decisions, where there are bodies of law), they can be contradictory. But many of them have been subject to scientific analysis, like the concept of “sustainability”. In weighing the science and the legal principles, we can work to systematize the various elements.

By definition, sustainability (and long-term absolute poverty reduction) is a balance of consumption and productivity and can be stated in a simple equation. This equation is taught in the basic text of environmental science as the “IPAT” equation and is among its most fundamental precepts (Ehrlich and Holdren, 1971). Put in its simplest form, it has four variables: Population, Per Capita Consumption, Resources (a country’s or culture’s assets, including the environment) and Productivity per unit of resources. They can be put into an equation that has to balance over time (for two generations or more, for planning purposes):

$$\text{Population} \times \text{Consumption} = \text{Resources} \times \text{Productivity/Resource}$$

For a country (or culture) that wants to develop (increase per capita consumption or productivity, or both) and stay sustainable, the Resources factor has to stay fixed.

### **Eliminating Relative Poverty**

The third concept, that of eliminating relative poverty, comes out of political science and embodies two key rights approaches: protections of cultures as equals and protections of individual opportunity (Lempert, 2011). Generally, the way to achieve these is through rights based approaches that can be quickly placed in categories of:

1. *Federalism (as one recognized means to the ends of Cultural Sustainability Protections)* – a balance of power between groups; and
2. *Equity/Individual Rights (Symmetry)* – a balance of power in individual categories.

This idea of symmetry as the basis of political rights is the basis of social contract and law and also the essential principle for international law and the workings of the international system to achieve peace and security.

### **HOW INTERNATIONAL LEGAL DOCUMENTS OFFER PRINCIPLES AND CONSENSUS ON POVERTY REDUCTION**

Although there is no international treaty on “poverty reduction” and no standard or list of its elements, there are several international laws, covenants and declarations that demonstrate an international consensus and commitment to the principles of poverty reduction described above. Several different documents establish protections at the level of cultures, promote use of sustainable development criteria as a way of addressing poverty (and distinguishing treatment of poverty from “development”), and promote rights based approaches to equality in the protection of cultures and individuals.

The underlying goal of these treaties can be understood as promoting long term peace and security (essentially, human survival) through the protection of cultural differences and sustainable adaptation to environments. These are the core elements that were established in the charter of the United Nations and appear to underlie the different discussions at the time on the post-war international order, building on experiences with earlier international organizations (U.N., 1945). To be successful, this must be a long-term focus, not simply one of short-term targets. Appropriate poverty reduction is a means to achieving these ends.

### **Defining “Poverty” and Distinguishing it from “Development”**

While the United Nations system has tried to come up with some working measure of absolute poverty based on consumption, such as in its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (U.N., 2000), the actual basis for defining poverty is still set in a cultural context. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with the basic needs of “life, liberty and security of the person” (UDHR, 1948, Article 3) and describes “freedom from fear and want” as the highest aspiration of the common people (Preamble). The Convention on the Rights of the Child then broadens the basic needs of humans, beyond just animal needs, as “happiness, love and understanding” (CRC, 1989, Preamble) within the context of family, community, and culture. The understanding is that absolute poverty is not a fixed concept in all of its dimensions but is culturally defined, combining basic physical and cultural needs within the context of a living culture.

Recently, the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), that fleshes out the basics of culture that are protected in the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), establishes the right to equality of cultures and, by implication, their definition of what constitutes basic human needs within that cultural context. The Declaration recognizes “the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different and to be respected as such (UNDRIP, 2007, Preamble). The Declaration states further “that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust” (Preamble). The Declaration and several earlier rights treaties, such as the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, also affirm the “right of self determination” of cultures (CESCR, 1966, Article I).

It is important to note that most of the treaties also distinguish the meeting of basic animal needs from “development”; something based on the full set of human needs and their promotion at the level of culture and the individual within each distinct culture (Lempert, 2014).

### **Recognizing the Keys to Sustainability as Part of Absolute Poverty Reduction**

The principle of sustainability that is embedded in the Rio Declaration, as noted above, also protects the specific choices of each culture with regard to consumption, population, production, resources, and, by implication, “poverty”, as do a number of other international documents. This is important because it suggests that any intervention that seeks to change a culture in any way, in its relationship to consumption, population, production, and resources,

without assuring the integrity or sustainability of that culture, even in the name of “poverty reduction”, is in violation of basic international agreements.

The UNDRIP, that reinforces the international law on genocide, makes it clear that “Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture” and that any kind of attempt at economic integration, even in the name of poverty reduction, that smacks of “Any form of forced assimilation or integration” requires prevention and redress (UNDRIP, 2007, Article 8). This is also clear for specific factors of consumption, population and productivity.

*Consumption and population:* The Rio Declaration reiterates the focus on lowering consumption and controlling population to achieve sustainability, noting that, “To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies (Rio Declaration, 1992, Principle 8). Increasing productivity and consumption may thus be inappropriate in poverty reduction and may be indicative of forced assimilation or integration where it is promoted in international interventions in the name of poverty reduction.

*Productivity Choices:* Treaties also affirm that introducing, imposing or proselytizing new forms of production to reduce poverty may be inappropriate. “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities” (UNDRIP, 2007, Article 2). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first to assert the international agreement that “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment” (UDHR, 1948, Article 23)

### **Promoting Rights-Based Approaches to Equality in the Protection of Cultures and Individuals**

Equality has been established as an essential rights principle in several documents and it is seen as integral to the international system because it is a means of reducing conflicts between cultures and between individuals. “Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law, [A]ll are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination” (UDHR, 1948, Article 7). The principle can then be placed in the context of equality between cultures and then, in their cultural context, within cultures.

*Equality of cultural groups/ through means like federalism or autonomous power:* Several international treaties are designed specifically to assert the principle of cultural equality that underlies federalism and protection of self-determination and autonomy. These include the:

- U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) establishing the idea of cultural diversity and difference and protection of cultural groups as a key democratic principle;
- U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN ICCPR, 1966): “All peoples have the right of self-determination. ... economic, social and cultural development” (Article 1) and then reinforcing cultural rights under Article 27.

- U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), itself described as “an integral part of the development of ... a democratic framework based on the rule of law” with several statements of “full equality before the law” for cultures and minority groups (Articles 2, 4 and 8); and
- U.N. Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (2007) asserting that “indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples” and upholding the principle that “control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions”

*Equity/ individual rights:* The counterpart to international treaties for protections of cultural groups is the set of documents enumerating the types of individual interest groups that deserve political equality. These include the:

- U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN ICCPR, 1966) protecting individuals on the basis of their: “Race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property [class], birth or other status [state versus citizen]” in Article 2 and then reiterating that “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law” (Article 26); and the
- U.N. Declaration of Political, Economic and Cultural Rights (UN ICESCR, 1966) recognizing the “equal and inalienable rights of members of the human family.”

## **THE SEARCH FOR AN APPROPRIATE INDICATOR**

### **Critique of Existing Indicators**

Although the international principles for poverty reduction interventions are relatively clear, there does not seem to be any international monitoring, legal and professional compliance screening, or indicator used to protect peoples and ensure the integrity of the many activities that international actors claim in this category. Instead, the measures that do exist are only those of short-term impacts and economic efficiency in generating those impacts (on either productivity or consumption), often in violation of international treaties and standards. Interventions in the name of “poverty reduction” but that may be something else (economic investment, assimilation, or exploitation of labor) are assumed to be above reproach whether or not they are legal, professional, or harmful. It is as if motives of any kind of aid transfer cannot be subject to scrutiny and challenge on the basis of actual impact, professionalism or of “acceptance” by the “beneficiaries”, themselves, or their governments, who may be too weak or compromised to resist such interventions. Indeed, the interventions that may be of most help may be those most often prevented by elites who do not wish to see equality of cultures under their hegemony, or a merit based society. Often the most favored interventions today are favored precisely because of benefits to elites (subsidizing them directly or indirectly, through corruption).

In place of tests of whether “poverty reduction” activities actually meet the goals and legal requirements of international laws and treaties the discussion has been hijacked to that of impacts on symptoms and how specific symptoms are measured.

There are measures, for example, of absolute poverty or “basic needs” (Streeten, 1981) that have been incorporated into determinations of minimum income or consumption, noted in dollar values by international agencies. There are also measures of relative poverty in the form of income inequality or monetarized wealth equality, such as the “gini” coefficient. However, these are simply static measures of results at a given point in time; not measures of long-term sustainability and poverty reduction or of long-term, sustainable impacts on relative poverty as a result of systemic or institutional changes and protections. The MDG that is targeted at poverty reduction (MDG 1) only measures the numbers of people temporarily transferred out of poverty (“beneficiaries raised out of poverty”) through relief of their symptoms, rather than any long-term benefit or solution of underlying problems.

Measures in the international community continue to be those related to colonial investments in productivity, in terms of incomes generated even at the expense of resources and stability. There is little use of per capita measures of wealth or assets or eco-system health and viability. Further, none of the measures address impact on the root causes. Indeed, in most assessments, the root cause of poverty is simply assumed to be the need for technology transfer or wealth transfer

While the international system consists of countries with different political and economic systems, they have all seemed to agree on sets of measures that deny the sustainability of the ethnic groups within their country borders or to political equality for these groups. All seem to agree on leveling and homogenizing the peoples within their borders to accept the same aspirations for consumption and the same measures of wealth in ways that strips them of fundamental choices or of their cultures. Indeed, whether they are “capitalist” or “communist”; “democratic” or “authoritarian”; “Christian” or “Moslem” or Buddhist”, the current approach to poverty reduction that all seem to have agreed on in the international system is one that denies its very legal agreements and seeks to level populations within state borders.

The problem is easily seen, as well, in the key measure used in the international community of well-being. The major measure of development that is now used internationally is the “Human Development Index” (HDI) constructed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq in 1990 (U.N. Human Development Report). The inclusive measures for generating the index are really those of productivity without cultural or individual diversity. They are: life expectancy, formal State schooling/literacy, and average per capita incomes. Moreover, the index ranks countries, in violation of the basic principles of non-discrimination and support for diverse consumption choices that are established in international treaties. This index is NOT a development or poverty reduction index according to the international agreements.

Following the MDGs, much of the current approach to poverty reduction is based on generating an almost endless set of “rights” in treaties that offer lists of symptoms to be treated and that represent constituencies seeking to treat them in ways that also promote homogenization, common consumption and production patterns, and exploitation of resources (Lempert, 2009b). It is as if treaties have established everything from clean water to the equivalent of “pickled herring” as a right, along with even “business rights” as part of the basic set of economic rights (UNCESCR, 1966). Should everyone have a “right to pickled herring”, be considered poor if they don’t have it, and have to agree to sell their resources or accept work in a foreign invested factory in order to assure it? That, is, unfortunately, the current direction of the “rights based approach to poverty reduction” promoted by the international donor community and

particularly by the United Nations. With all of these lists of rights, little of the root causes, structural solutions, or professional best practices are identified. These are suggestions of “rights” but they are taken out of context of the actual international legal framework for rights to achieve the goals of the international system.

The typical procedural measure used for such projects is not analysis of the problems but “participatory rural appraisal” which means asking the beneficiaries, “what would you like us to give you most of all?” as if poverty reduction is little more than a “Santa Claus” gift.

The typical measure of impact and cost-benefit used by international agencies in evaluating their “poverty reduction” is a smile sheet (confirming that people are happier and consume more after the transfer) or an investment indicator, looking at productivity and income generation for given investments (e.g., a Return on Investment (ROI)) as well as who benefitted in terms of numbers of targeted “poor” who shared the wealth. Such measures are no more than acknowledgment of receipt of a technology transfer to those identified as “poor” or promotion of a policy to transfer some funds to the poor from some windfall gain favored by wealthy countries, such as oil sales (what they call “pro poor”). Such approaches seem to be designed to increase political stability and security of the foreign investment and resource (“Black Gold to Human Gold” projects for oil) and are detached from root causes. The measures here are simply transfer and leverage of transfer for the short term impact on symptoms.

### **What Goes Wrong without an Accountability Indicator**

In the absence of any real indicators or standards reflecting international laws and principles, “poverty reduction” appears to be little more today than a band-aid to relieve symptoms and possibly worse: a strategy to destroy cultural sustainability in environments, maintain inequalities, and create dependency. There are important identifiable causes of absolute and relative poverty including political exploitation or simply bankruptcy of cultures and communities within their resource bases, but the lack of attention to procedures directs attention away from the real problems and solutions in ways that threatens to make problems worse. Indeed, as many critics note, too often the root cause of poverty is simply covered up with an ideology of “growth” and need for technology transfer or wealth transfer that does nothing to resolve unsustainability and inequity, and that seems likely to assure greater poverty and conflict in the future. The current intervention agenda of most international “development” donors appears to be “poverty postponement” through treatment of symptoms, rather than “poverty reduction”.

There were attempts in the past to do it right in following the principles established by the international community. Several European countries established approaches to “democratic socialism” that offered these protections; in many cases directly following the international treaty agreements and leading the United States. Within the United States, the “War on Poverty” in the 1960s included elements of political equality (and sovereignty) for communities and for individuals, with access to opportunity and meeting of basic needs. At the international level, James Gustave Speth, an environmental lawyer appointed to head the United Nations Development Programme in the 1990s, established its goals as “sustainable human development” with a focus on both sustainability and enlarging choices as the keys to poverty

reduction, though he now laments the distortion of that agenda that has occurred (Speth, 2008). Amartya Sen, one of the economists responsible for the Human Development Index that undermines the international principles, also began to recognize at that time that his profession has been responsible for undermining the commitments to the international laws and principles. He recognized that economic theory requires supporting freedom of choice, not a single globalization agenda that forces conformity and assimilation through misuse of the term “poverty reduction” (Sen, 2001).

Many have documented what has happened, though few explain why international actors have chosen to abandon international law and agreements and to replace a carefully constructed system for long-term human benefit with one that simply meets short-term objectives with potentially dire long-term consequences (Lempert and Nguyen, 2011). The causes of absolute and relative poverty are well known, though it seems that the international community prefers to avoid mentioning and addressing them in its contemporary interventions. Many broken cultures are the remnants of former/ defeated empires pushed to bad land, facing cycles of exploitation and prejudice (internal colonialism and external dependency), unable to adjust sustainably to their environments without being pushed aside by other groups that are also unsustainable. In many cases, abuses of resources from technologies transferred in previous “poverty reduction” activities are now resulting in “bankruptcy” of communities, where populations and consumptions are unsustainable and where technological growth can never catch up with population and consumption demands. Among the solutions to these problems are protections and restructuring, not more production or gifts, and this is what root cause and sustainability analysis would easily reveal. Yet, as many critics note, the ideologies of donors and the relations of global trade seem to require that “exploitation” (unsustainability) be replaced with a dogma of “productive efficiency” and “growth”. “Poverty reduction” serves as a euphemism for outside determinations to “rescue” peoples who have been placed into crisis (often as the result of previous interventions). Cultures that are “poor” are assumed to be inferior in an evolutionary chain with donors bestowing technology and wealth or offering exploitation and production schemes where wealth is supposed to trickle down. Generally, only animal needs are considered as the immediate treatment. These interventions, offering little choice to desperate peoples, often come with paternalism and a sense of inferiority of the recipients, forced to accept whatever solution is offered, rather than being offered respect for their histories, environments, and cultures (Lempert, 2009; Gunder Frank, Cochroft and Johnson, 1972; Wallerstein, 1979; Baran and Sweezy, 1968; Lempert and Nguyen, 2008, 2011).

Whether it is conscious or simply an unconscious part of the ideology in development, many believe that the goal of current poverty reduction schemes is to promote a “hidden agenda”: to addict peoples to a path of global tastes that leaves them always relatively poor, forced to trade their resources, dependent on continued infusions of outside technology. Interventions shift cultures from nomadism to sedentary agriculture to move them off of more exploitable resources; then, with population growth, forces them into cash crop development rather than sustainability, all in the name of “poverty reduction”. This guarantees a cycle of poverty and dependency and also destroys culture and choice while depleting per capita wealth as it raises short term income to treat symptoms of desperate poverty. The result of the imposed cultural changes with enforced State primary schooling may simply be leveling or “proletarianization” similar to that which occurred during the industrial revolution in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As critics note, many projects under the name of “poverty reduction” have become little different from sweat shops for export products (even using child labor but disguised as “traditional,

household production”), export labor that destroys families to transport people for low-wage work, export processing zones under the name of “women’s rights” to exploit female labor, or creation of human zoos as “pro-poor tourism”; in forms of legitimized degradation not in line with treaties.

What are called “poverty reduction” schemes may in reality be nothing other than disguised productivity investments by the donors or efforts to protect the donors (from epidemics or from violence), or to buy off access to resources and to subsidize elites in dependent countries, not to increase the dignity of human beings (Piven, 1972).

Sustaining this “hidden agenda” of “colonial” or “neo-colonial” exploitation are a variety of international governmental and non-governmental organizations that have individual agendas, hidden and overt, that are linked to this approach to “poverty reduction”. Religious organizations seeking to continue missionary work or to assert the superiority of their way of life, happily participate in “poverty reduction” through “charitable” work of building Western type schools or transferring clothing and goods in ways that destroy local cultures. Organizations promoting interest groups like “women” or technologies like “banking” or latrines, intervene in foreign cultures with agendas that also distort cultures and prevent any sustainable approach to poverty reduction that respects the integrity of peoples in their environments.

The measures that have been chosen by the international community also reinforce these hidden agendas. The use of the Human Development Index and “relative poverty” measures do not work to eliminate political inequalities and protect rights and opportunities for cultural sustainability and integrity. Instead, they work to impose single standards of consumption and production in ways that destroy cultures and level populations within national borders; making populations easier to control. Measures for “absolute poverty” are similarly used to justify schemes for “job creation” that bring peoples into the global economy in ways little different from the colonial past, while also requiring that their resources be sold to fund the “income growth” needed to “raise them” out of poverty. Their wealth disappears and their per capita wealth plummets as their populations rise and they are brought “out of poverty” for as long as it takes to record the statistics.

Missing are cultural protection and sustainability; equality that would see human beings as equal to the donor. Some critics go so far as to see poverty reduction projects as little different from pig trough feeding or animal control projects; taking resources and transferring back subsistence incomes and some welfare spending.

It is as if the cultural patterns prior to World War II (and World War I), that international organizations were designed to change in order to prevent a return to colonialism and war, have reasserted themselves despite efforts by some in the early post-war period to established systems and principles of law that would protect humanity in the long-term. While there are different names for the phenomena that place the blame in different ways – blaming ideologies of “globalization” or “productivity” or “capitalism” or “imperialism” or “neo-classical economics and political economy” or religious beliefs – naming it is less important than understanding what has happened. A short-term agenda that benefits a few has replaced long-term humanitarian goals backed by international principles and rule of law.

At the recent Rio+ 20 international summit in 2012, held 20 years after the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, it was easy to see how a hidden agenda had corrupted the international agreements. No one could deny the history of environmental damage and disappearance of human cultural diversity that continued in the 20 years following the 1992 declaration. Yet, the 2012 conference was itself undermined by a hidden agenda of globalization and false “growth” (Lempert and Nguyen, 2013).

While the real motives (and they are often intertwined) for focusing on a risky short-term hidden agenda may be difficult to identify, it is possible to examine the results and the practices of specific interventions to see if they match the real goals of poverty reduction (with sustainable development, cultural protection and equity) and whether they follow standard best practices as recognized by the profession through the use of a simple indicator.

### **THE INDICATOR OF POVERTY REDUCTION THAT CAN MEASURE ADHERENCE TO RECOGNIZED PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF THE FIELD**

To make it easier for organizations and contributors to tell the difference between poverty reduction and other approaches in the name of poverty reduction, it is easy to transform the elements of development into an indicator with three categories and the full list of 12 elements that the international community has determined comprise development. Even non-experts can quickly use this tool as a litmus test of poverty reduction.

By simply asking whether a “development” organization or initiative meets the test of satisfying the international community’s list of elements for poverty reduction using “Yes or No” questions and then counting up the results, one can determine the relative compliance with development objectives by the following scale:

*Scale:*

10 - 12 points	True Poverty Reduction in line with the essential International Conventions that are the aspirations for humanity
6.5 – 9.5 points	Strong approach to poverty reduction that may lack either a focus on culture protection or equity or that may promote equity but not sustainability
0 - 6 points	Partial Solution that may endanger individuals or cultures
(-4) - 0 points	Failed Approaches to Poverty Reduction, with a hidden agenda

Note that the indicator is not an absolute scale since it is not offered as a social science research tool but as a project evaluation and selection tool. It is best used to show the relative value of different projects, with some leeway offered in judgments for calibrating the indicator for specific needs of the user and for application to meet the specific needs of countries. Like most indicators, answers to each question would need to be “calibrated” to assure that different observers make the exact same determinations. To do so would require a longer manual for standardized, precise answers across observers.

Note that it is not an impact indicator or project appraisal tool to evaluate the efficiency of spending in achieving “poverty reduction”.

Measures/ Sub-Factors: The scoring is the same for each element and one can refer back to the descriptions of the elements above, for reference. Most of the questions are clear cut “Yes” (1 point) or “No” (0 points or (-1) points where there are harms), but in cases where there is a judgment call, you can opt for a “Debatable” (0.5 points or 0 points, where there are potential harms).

The measures of performance can be placed into three categories, with the first category exploring the methods used (and exposing motives) while the other two categories examine impacts and professionalism on absolute poverty reduction (with cultural sustainability) and relative poverty reduction/promoting equity.

- I. *Exposing Hidden Agendas and Ideologies, included Suspected Cultural Genocide:* (4 questions).
- II. *Achieving Sustainable, Long-Term Absolute Poverty Reduction:* (6 questions)
- III. *Eliminating Relative Poverty by Promoting Equity* (2 questions)

The first category is itself a screening to test whether a project actually achieves anything in the area of poverty reduction at all, and whether it can even be scored within the overall category of poverty reduction projects.

**I. *Exposing Hidden Agendas and Ideologies, including Suspected Cultural Genocide:*** This category of questions screens out projects on the basis of hidden agendas. There is a set of clear standards for identifying the root causes of poverty in ways that would achieve equity and cultural protections and protect against exploitation or negligence that could increase vulnerabilities and ratchet up future poverty. If there are no attempts to follow the standards, this is good evidence of criminal negligence in interventions that suggests hidden agendas. (4 questions and potential scores of 4 points or (-4) points.)

**Question 1.** *Protection of Sustainable Cultures.* Does the project examine cultures within their eco-systems and look for ways of restructuring them sustainably, within those systems?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm  
Debatable or not relevant - 0  
No – (-1) (Loss of a point)

**Question 2.** *Sovereignty of Cultures in their Eco-systems without foreign conflicts of interest.* Is the poverty-reduction approach tailored to local sustainability within the local eco-system or is its goal to generate productivity through sales to foreigners and/or purchases of foreign products, detaching people from their eco-systems and/or promoting a transition from a traditional form of income to another kind of system that ultimately creates foreign dependency (and potential exploitation), such as shifting from hunting and gathering to sedentary agriculture, or from subsistence agriculture to cash crop or export crops, or promoting supplementary incomes that rely on foreign purchase?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm

Debatable or not relevant - 0  
 No – (-1) (Loss of a point)

**Question 3.** *Root Causes (political and social) of Absolute and Relative Poverty.* Does the project investigate the political and historical reasons for poverty or relative poverty of the group as well as social causes and seek to directly reverse or target these problems (land theft and marginalization, colonialism and disruption of cultural systems requiring protections, including “bankruptcy” requiring restructuring) or does it avoid these, define “poverty” or “lack of capacity” or lack of “cultural or social capital” or “lack of education” as the problem and solution?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm  
 Debatable or not relevant - 0  
 No – (-1) (Loss of a point)

**Question 4.** *Protection of human dignity.* Does the project approach demonstrate a concern for human dignity, choice, and respect for the full potential of the individual and of the culture or does it only offer a quick fix without a long term projection of population, per capita wealth, incomes and culture that suggests it is generating (intentionally or by omission) a future pool of poor and desperate people who will be easy to exploit?

Scoring: Yes – 1, if the project shows awareness of this and protects against harm  
 Debatable or not relevant - 0  
 No – (-1) (Loss of a point)

**II. Achieving Sustainable, Long-Term (Absolute) Poverty Reduction:** This section tests whether the project just seeks to treat symptoms and postpone poverty or whether it legitimately achieves poverty reduction over the long-term in ways that are consistent with cultural protections and sustainability. (6 questions and a potential score of 6 points)

**Question 5.** *Focus on long-term per capita wealth, not on short-term incomes.* Does the intervention focus on protecting long-term per capital wealth and offer reliable projections for assuring it, rather than simply transfer technology or “invest” in productivity in a way that boosts short term incomes?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
 Debatable - 0.5  
 No - 0

**Question 6.** *Culturally appropriate consumption.* Does the project respect the consumption choices of the culture even if that choice does not meet outside standards but still leads to sustainability for the culture at a lower level of consumption, without pressure to force the culture to change its consumption levels? Does the project focus on ways of changing harmful consumption patterns that may be a result of outside harms that destabilized the culture and that can safely be changed in ways that rebalance the culture (such as spending on substance abuse where treatment can help; spending on violence where conflicts can be mediated or a group protected, etc.)

Scoring: Yes - 1

Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**Question 7.** *Culturally appropriate production.* If improved productivity is viewed as a key to poverty reduction, does it promote traditional economic choices in ways that are appropriate to the environment and the culture and that seeks to re-establish a sustainable balance of production with consumption and resources? If industrial growth is the appropriate form of production, are there appropriate human investments in research and development to assure long-term sustainable growth within the resource base?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**Question 8.** *Culturally appropriate and sustainable population.* Does the intervention include a demographic policy that assures long-term sustainability such that any changes in health, productivity and/or consumption do not trigger population changes that will reduce per capita incomes/wealth over time and potentially ratchet up poverty and dependency?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**Question 9.** *Equitable (political rights) protections for cultures.* Does the intervention assure security and political equality/rights of minority cultures within countries and within the global system that assure their sustainability and ability to protect their lands, resources, traditional economic and political practices, and educational systems against military power and cultural hegemony, through political mechanisms such as federalism and/or realpolitik strategic alliances and support to check military and police powers and attempts at assimilation, homogenization or disintegration?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**Question 10.** *Equitable (promotion of identity) protections for cultures.* Does the intervention promote the rights of cultures to their identities and dignities within their countries and global systems in ways that assure them of equal treatment, respect and pride, so that their poverty is not viewed with prejudice and disrespect for their practices and culture in ways that de-legitimize or even "criminalize" it?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**III. Eliminating Relative Poverty by Promoting Equity:** This section goes beyond absolute poverty and addresses the mechanisms for achieving equity. (2 questions and a potential score of 2 points)

**Question 11.** *Impact on opportunity and equity for individuals.* Is the gini coefficient or another indicator used to assure that the interventions actually do have impact on distributions of wealth and incomes and is there attempt to use leverage to tie aid to known institutional changes and behavioral changes that result in more equity (such as progressive tax structures; assurances that aid is not enriching the rich or subsidizing elites)?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**Question 12.** *Reliance on human rights based approaches to promote opportunity and equity for individuals.* Does the project promote human rights based approaches that change political inequalities and promote opportunities, such as equal access to lawyers and equal access to education, and other approaches to de-link wealth from political power and opportunity?

Scoring: Yes - 1  
Debatable - 0.5  
No - 0

**How Some Organizations Do:** After understanding how the test works, it is easy to apply to every new case in just a few minutes and with close agreement among those using it. Standard, well-known approaches easily fall into three of the four scoring categories and offer a very clear revelation.

Indeed, the results appear to make a strong case for dependency theorists who suggest that most “aid” under the name of “poverty reduction” is not intended to create sustainability, long-term poverty reduction, or equity, at all, but is designed to treat symptoms, absorb cultures, and create neo-colonial dependency in a global system where the poor are forced to compete against each other everywhere.

- Democratic societies that pursue poverty reduction for their own citizens and to whom governments are accountable for protecting resources and peoples, are examples of strong, effective solutions.
- Some professional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have mandates for rights protections or sustainable development can be effective in promoting partial solutions.
- At the same time, almost all of the major actors in “international development” and “aid” today are actually promoting globalization and cultural genocide with little attention to sustainability, to equity or to rights, and with little accountability.

Note, though, that the effective approaches are mostly historical examples, in countries where policies are also changing (becoming increasingly stratified by wealth and income, with weakening democratic oversight and increasing homogenization) and that may also now be examples of internal dependency. Such examples may no longer be found in the current conditions of globalization.

- Strong Approaches: U.S. President Roosevelt (FDR)'s Post-Depression "New Deal" (1930s); U.S. President Johnson (LBJ)'s War on Poverty with Civil Rights (1960s); the Marshall Plan in Europe (post World War II), Social Democratic approaches in countries like Canada and Sweden in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century – In their own societies where people have voting power or where there are shared interests, there can be positive results on poverty reduction, with rights based protections. These approaches score well, (8 – 11 points) The points on which these projects fall short are on long-term sustainability (problems overlooked in the past that are now recognized) and minority protections (though in many cases they were respected, especially right after World War II or in the civil rights movement).
- Partial Solutions or Strong Approaches: Integrated rural development at the community level incorporating environment for sustainability, such as the Australian Foundation for Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP) in Viet Nam – Projects that are sustainability and eco-system based (watershed management), with a focus on education and building community can score as partial solutions or strong approaches (roughly 7 points). These projects fail to offer real cultural or individual rights protections but meet the goals of sustainable development. Other projects do less well if they just transfer infrastructure and create jobs even if they do have a partial sustainability focus. Note that environmental organizations that receive money from major "aid" agencies to protect the environment under the name of "income generation" and poverty reduction often do not even make it into this category of partial solutions because they fail to do long-term sustainability planning and simply offer short term protection schemes coupled with replacement income activities. Eco-tourism or sedentary farming or replacement farming schemes (farming of endangered species) do not slow population growth and overall consumption but just postpone and ratchet up poverty to the future.
- Failed Approaches, with a Hidden Agenda: UNDP and UN Agencies, World Bank and other Banks, Most Government Bi-Lateral "Aid" Agencies, Private Sector and Many NGO Charity Projects - Pro-poor sustainable tourism projects, including those of the UNDP/ILO (International Labor Organization), SNV (Netherlands Development), development banks and other projects like those of UNCDF (UN Capital Development Fund), CIDSE (a Belgian Development NGO), GTZ/GIZ (the German Development Agency), Belgian Aid, EC (the European Community), USAID, Luxembourg-Development that are no more than technology transfer in forms like irrigation and water infrastructure or handicraft development or agricultural extension or small credit and business investment, are little more than colonial projects all scoring in the negative ranges and simply treating symptoms without any long-term sustainability, no concern for real equity or for cultural protections. These are Santa Claus projects. Projects that focus on schooling or on health or small credit projects or policy projects to create distribution also have only limited impact and just deal with symptoms. A good example of the problem is in the agenda of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), founded in 1968, with the mission "to help people living in poverty". Its "Development for Results, 2010-11" (CIDA, 2010) agenda is simply "increasing food security, stimulating sustainable economic growth, and basic education for youth" to meet animal needs. It notes the "key development challenge" as "the Millennium Development Goals including lack of access to nutritious food, safe drinking water, adequate health care, and basic education" which are all basic animal needs. Approaches like these score anywhere from (-4) to up to 3 points where they focus on non-sustainable but

ecologically appropriate ways to relieve poverty. A detailed example of scoring in this category is the UNDP, analyzed below and scoring (-3) points.



<b>Scoring of UNDP on the 12 component questions of the indicator</b>
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<b>Preliminary Information for Assessment</b>	
<p>UNDP's Organizational Mission (Claim) and Mandate according to UNDP's founding charter: (UNDP, 2011)</p>	<p>UNDP's stated mandate is "human development" which it defines as "eradicating poverty through development, equitable and sustained economic growth, and capacity development." The measurements that it now uses are those of the Millennium Development Goals (UN Millennium Declaration, 2000). The UNDP's method is "capacity building and technical support" which includes direct funding for projects. There are no clear guidelines or sets of best practices offered by the UN on measuring and addressing specific root causes of poverty. There is a "country assessment" that is often conducted with the World Bank, that starts at a national level, not with cultures and communities, and looks at GDP and economic sectors for productivity.</p> <p>Besides the 60 uncoordinated target indicators (non-integrated, and all at the national level) used for the MDGs, the UNDP also measures performance, again at the national level and not by culture or community, by the Human Development Index (HDI), a ranking that also is correlated with consumption levels. UNDP defines the key to the HDI as life expectancy, literacy and forced schooling (in the State language, not in cultural knowledge and in State administered schools), and income measured in per capita productivity figures valued by what rich countries want to buy (GDP in dollars) rather than in per capita wealth.</p> <p>UNDP defines its goals as "raising people's choices" not just incomes, but does not define these choices in terms of cultural diversity or individual diversity through rights and freedoms (as can be found in treaties). The actual goals are vague, undefined terms, not linked to specifics other than to the development indicators in the HDI.</p> <p>In tracking the MDGs, UNDP has a belief that this is a checklist of outcomes that can be achieved independently of each other (with countries "progressing in their efforts" and reporting success on each measure), one by one, rather than a harmonious balance of interdependent objectives as part of sustainable systems.</p> <p>Accountability of the UNDP is to the governments (elites) of the member countries and not to people or to law or any independent oversight or standards.</p>
<p>UNDP's Activities in practice (from its website and UNDP, undated, Fast Facts): <a href="http://undp.org/poverty">undp.org/poverty</a> and UN Millennium Declaration (2000)</p>	<p>The Millennium Declaration itself does not focus on any strategy for poverty reduction other than mentioning debt relief and transfer of more funds to "poor" or "low and middle income" countries to "apply their resources to poverty reduction" (UN, 2000, Article 15).</p> <p>MDG 1 is "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" and it is defined in the Millennium Declaration in income "less than one dollar per day" with the goal to "halve by the year 2015" the percentage of people in this category (Article 19) and to achieve a "significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers" by 2020 (Article 19). This is the only mandate on poverty. There is no mandate on relative poverty or for sustainability. MDG</p>

	<p>7, that is not directly linked, is “Ensure environmental sustainability”. In most countries, UNDP prioritizes MDG1 to the detriment of MDG7. The real approach to the MDGs is to promote a global growth and trade agenda linked to the World Bank and goals of developed countries. UNDP notes: “UNDP focuses its poverty reduction efforts on supporting countries to accelerate progress towards MDGs and making growth and trade work for everyone. “ There are no mechanisms to enforce UN system laws on cultural protections to ensure that such growth and trade are not destabilizing or culturally destructive.</p> <p>The UNDP’s view of “equality” has largely come to mean “gender equality” to offer jobs for women in systems that industrialize and globalize. The ideological approach is stated this way: “Research shows that when men and women have equal opportunities and freedoms, economic growth accelerates and poverty declines more rapidly. “ In the Millennium Declaration, equality is also limited this way: Equality. No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured. This is to be done through “strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society” (Article 20) and “decent and productive work” for young people (Article 20).</p> <p>UNDP has worked with 40 countries to expand trade capabilities. It seeks to change government policy agendas to incorporate the MDGs with spending and policies directly to ad hoc health care, primary schooling and gender equity.</p>
Overall analysis of UNDP as an actor promoting poverty reduction	<p>UNDP itself describes its success on poverty reduction and the rest of the MDG’s on continued “growth” which means it has paid little or no attention to issues of equity or to sustainability. Indeed, the one MDG on which there is almost no success is environmental protection, which is also an admission by UNDP that it has abandoned sustainability as an integrated objective.</p>

Analysis		
Question	Indicator	Scoring
I.	<b>Exploring Hidden Agendas and Ideologies:</b>	<i>The ideology of the UNDP has become one of promoting globalization and industrialization in which quick generation of income is to be partly diverted to the poor, who are turned into workers for the global system even as their cultures and environments are destroyed.</i> (-4) points
1.	<i>Protection of Sustainable Cultures?</i>	No. Although the U.N. treaties on Genocide and the Rio Declaration explicitly recognize cultures as the basic unit for sustainable development and while they recognize “sovereignty”, all of their measures are at the country level with governments, and even at that level there is no focus on sustainability. (-1) points.
2.	<i>Sovereignty of Cultures in their Eco-systems without foreign conflicts of interest?</i>	The UNDP’s agenda is intertwined with trade and with growth, in promoting the agenda of globalism and working directly with “development” banks as well as in “partnerships” with business. It does not challenge government agendas to disrupt cultures and push peoples into the global economy as the approach to “poverty reduction”. (-1) points.
3.	<i>Root Causes (political and social) of Absolute and Relative Poverty are addressed?</i>	UNDP’s project documents no longer require problem tree analysis and examination of root causes but simply offer “situation analyses” that usually report on GDP and “growth” in line with international bank agendas. There is a reluctance to address political inequality and oppression since the UNDP essentially sees government elites that may cause the inequalities as its “partners”. (-1) points.
4.	<i>Protection of Human Dignity?</i>	The UNDP defines its measures as income and growth without commitment to diversity and full rights protections. (-1) points.
II.	<b>Achieving Sustainable, Long-Term (Absolute) Poverty Reduction (Total)</b>	<i>Though the UN treaties and statements may give lip service to sustainable poverty reduction, the UNDP itself admits that poverty reduction is coming at the expense of the environment, that it requires continued “growth” (that is likely unsustainable) and that it does no long term sustainability planning. People remain vulnerable and poverty may simply be postponed, with a quick attention to symptoms and perhaps simply “regulating the poor” as a form of short term political control.</i> 0 points
5.	<i>The focus is on long-term</i>	No. The UNDP makes clear that “per capita GDP”, a

	<i>per capita wealth, not on short term incomes?</i>	measure of short term income, fueled by “growth” is its goal. Though the environment is to be protected as one of the MDGs, there is no accounting for the value of environmental assets as wealth. <i>0 points.</i>
6.	<i>Culturally appropriate consumption is promoted?</i>	No. The UNDP uses the HDI, that focuses on a single standard of consumption, and it addresses poverty not through changed consumption but through “growth” in productivity. <i>0 points.</i>
7.	<i>Culturally appropriate production is promoted?</i>	No. There is no protection of traditional economic activities and the UNDP often includes funding specifically to change attitudes in order to promote production for globalization. <i>0 points.</i>
8.	<i>Culturally appropriate and sustainable population policies are part of the approach?</i>	No. Although the UNDP is linked to the UNFPA, its arm for population, and may offer family planning as part of women’s health, there is no demographic sustainability planning. <i>0 points.</i>
9.	<i>Equitable (political rights) protections for cultures are promoted?</i>	No. The UNDP takes a narrow view of genocide and intervenes only in civil wars when deaths are occurring, not to protect cultures in other respects. <i>0 points.</i>
10.	<i>Equitable (promotion of identity) protections for cultures are highlighted?</i>	No. While UNESCO has the mandate to protect culture and sometimes does now protect local languages, it seems to see language protection as a key to promoting globalization, and heritage protection as a way to promote tourism, rather than to protect identity and pride of cultures. <i>0 points.</i>
III.	<b>Eliminating Relative Poverty by Promoting Equity:</b>	<i>The UNDP rarely considers political and institutional or social changes to promote equity, given that it works directly with government elites, but some of its impacts do create a partial leveling effect.</i> <i>1 point</i>
11.	<i>Impact on opportunity and equity for individuals?</i>	Debatable. Although the gini coefficient is not used, some UNDP interventions do look at tax structures and at distributions, even though UNDP projects may actually be subsidizing the wealthy and cementing or skewing inequalities. <i>0.5 points.</i>
12.	<i>Reliance on human rights based approaches to promote opportunity and equity for individuals?</i>	Debatable. UNDP does promote opportunities for women in an urban, industrial system and sometimes pushes for more educational opportunity and legal access, though it has never called for equal education or equal access to lawyers anywhere and simply seems to

		create a floor with some basics for the poor rather than real equity. <i>0.5 points.</i>
<b>Total:</b>		<b>The indicator reveals the UNDP as essentially treating some short term symptoms of poverty while covering up larger systemic problems, in a way that destroys cultural diversity and promotes globalization. The approach to poverty reduction is unsustainable. (-3) points.</b>



## CONCLUSION,SOLUTIONS:

The irony of exposing the flaws in development projects today is that the “experts” who are in the position to make reforms often have little incentive to change, while those who are best protected by reforms are the least informed and organized about where or how to begin to push for reforms. Elites in donor countries and in recipient countries do have incentives to eliminate absolute poverty as a way to try to secure their markets and investments, but they have no short-term interest in protecting cultural diversity, equity (and competition), or sustainability. Keeping people poor benefits elites in the short-term by offering low wages of desperate populations. While there is a long-term interest in sustainability and equity, unless there are democratic controls, there is no way of holding elites accountable to the long-term interests of the peoples of the planet. An indicator can facilitate change, but like other improved tools, it must be in the hands of those willing and able to use them.

Organizations that score the worst on the new indicator in this article will likely not even recognize their failures because of their conflicts of interest and ideology.

- They are likely to say that principles of accountability are “too hard” to apply or that there is no real agreement, or they are likely to cherry pick the approaches to poverty reduction that best meet their hidden agendas, claiming that they are offering the “first step” in “many steps”. They may say that this business-like approach that introduces a variety of professional expertise takes the artistry and “humanistic” or “human” judgment out of their work, though in fact it does the opposite by applying their own standards to their work.
- At the same time that they criticize such an approach as “too hard” to apply, they may make the contradictory claim that the lack of “cost-benefit” analysis doesn’t tell them how resources should be allocated to their already ongoing projects that this indicator reveals as in violation of their own regulations, standards, and international laws, to which they turn a blind eye.
- They are likely to respond defensively to suggestions for more public oversight of their work, and to claim that accountability is a form of “policing,” even though they accept the idea of “accountability” as one of the key principles of good governance. They are likely to say that oversight implies “mistrust” and that their good faith is being questioned, in the premise that they are above the law and the public is (by their design) ignorant and uninformed about what they do. They may say that holding a government official accountable for results is unfair because there are “too many factors.”

Overall, such responses from many “professionals” will demonstrate exactly why many of the people in place in current systems are part of the problem and not the solution. Indeed, the only real solution is mobilization of the public.

This article offers one tool, a weapon of empowerment, to at least facilitate that effort. It takes away excuses that oversight is too difficult for ordinary citizens and that we must simply wait, pray, and rely on experts to change in ways they have little incentive to change, rather than to take on the burdens of citizenship to protect our own interests. As with any new social scientific and legal tool for measuring social behaviors, the next steps are for readers to apply it and to offer their own adjustments and additions as well as to work in collaboration to build a base of data using the tool for scoring additional organizations and projects and ultimately transforming this tool into actionable, enforceable law.

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