There is presently a large emphasis being placed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as plans to implement these goals continue to be formulated and carried out. It appears that many have accepted the MDGs and now seek to attain these goals as a means of achieving further economic and social development in the new millennium. However, it was only after a controversial process, backed by the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, that the MDGs were eventually formulated and adopted by consensus of the General Assembly with some hesitation. The MDGs do not incorporate all of the objectives agreed on in the Millennium Declaration. The indicators that have thus far been included to monitor the progress of the goals fail to measure key variables of economic development, and those who reduce the discourse of economic development to reproductive health continue their efforts to advocate the inclusion of access to reproductive health services as part of the MDGs. Because the MDGs address the real needs of developing countries, they have the potential to serve as a key tool for the achievement of further real economic growth and social development in the 21st century. However, the realization of this potentiality to accomplish economic growth and social development will be determined by whether or not there is a serious effort to strengthen the institutions that are essential for economic and social growth and whether a strong political and economic commitment to meet the real needs of developing countries is present.
Although eventually extracted from a United Nation (UN) resolution, the MDGs actually originated from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD produced a report in May 1996 entitled, *Shaping the 21st Century: the Contribution of Development Co-operation*.¹ This report laid out six distinct goals for development which OECD intended to propose to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the regional development banks and the UN.² In the year 2000, Mr. Annan, introduced the language of these 1996 OECD goals for UN adoption at the World Social Summit for Development +5 (WSSD+5). The summit opened in Geneva on June 26, 2000. The goals were discussed, but the Secretary-General’s effort failed as there was no consensus achieved regarding the adoption of the 1996 goal’s language, much less on their inclusion or adoption.

As the negotiations began a UN/OECD/Word Bank/IMF report was released called *A Better World for All.*³ This report essentially adopted the same goals as the OECD 1996 *Shaping the 21st Century* report.⁴ The primary difference being that the 1996 goals were rearranged, increasing the number of goals to seven. The goals from the

---

² 1. A reduction of one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. 2. Universal primary education in all countries by 2015. 3. Demonstrated progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015. 4. A reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children under age 5 and a reduction by three-quarters in maternal mortality, all by 2015. 5. Access through the primary health-care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than 2015. 6. The current implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015.
2000 report, *A Better World for All*, are commonly known as the International Goals. This report was extremely controversial and was met with heavy criticism as both NGOs and delegates from UN member countries rejected the report, calling it a “farce” and asserting that it “made false claims about WSSD commitments and contravenes the UN character.” 5 The UN Secretary-General signed this report, without a mandate from the UN member countries. WSSD+5 continued for five days and at its close the UN adopted a document: *Further Initiatives for Social Development*. 6 This document did not contain the International Goals since no consensus had been reached on them, but did include ten distinct commitments agreed on for further economic and social development instead.

UN Secretary-General was still in need of the approval of the International Goals, which he achieved in September 2000 with the adoption of *The United Nations Millennium Declaration*.7 The commonly known MDGs were extracted from the Declaration, but essentially include all but one of the International Goals, which had previously been rejected by UN member countries.8 Because there was no consensus reached on it: “Provide access for all who need reproductive health services by 2015”, it was excluded from the MDGs. The inclusion of this goal was supported by some, who argued that reproductive health is integral to achieving women’s empowerment, equality, education and health and also that (assuming the Malthusian Theory of population) reproductive health is essential to achieving sustainable development and environmental preservation, to which people are the most important threat. But at the core of the

6 *Further Initiatives for Social Development* (Geneva 2000). (A/RES/S-24/2)
disagreement, the usual issues were present: “reproductive health services” may imply the inclusion of abortion, which is outlawed by constitution in the majority of countries, the negative impact that such services have on the youth, the rights of parents to the education of their children, and the confliction of these services with domestic law, ethics, and cultural values. In addition countries also opposed the goal simply because providing reproductive health services is not a priority development need of their people. HIV/AIDS is only the seventh leading cause of death and women are in need of more urgent basic needs such as access to food, clean water, housing, basic health, sewerage, and income generating venues. The Millennium Declaration also approved many other key objectives for development such as “Human rights, democracy and good governance”, “Protecting the vulnerable”, “Meeting the special needs of Africa”, and “Strengthening the United Nations”, all of which are ignored in the MDGs.

After the MDGs, with a certain degree of manipulation, had eventually been formulated, forty-eight indicators to measure MDG progress where laid out by representatives of the UN, OECD, IMF and World Bank in the document Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was presented to the General Assembly. The consensus language on these indicators stands as only a recommendation of the General Assembly who invites “…interested parties to consider the “road map” when formulating plans for implementing goals related to the Declaration.” These indicators are not a definitive list and as they presently stand are

---


12 Follow-up to the Outcome of the Millennium Summit, n.3. (A/RES/56/95)
unable to monitor certain economic aspects. Several additional indicators must be included in order to incorporate and monitor essential issues such as: the aging population problem, adolescent sexual health, strengthening the rule of law and other institutions, and democratization.

Developing countries hope for more trade, political commitment and funding from the developed world in order to achieve the MDGs and to obtain real economic growth and development. Developed countries desire to see strengthening of the rule of law as well as structural reforms in the developing countries before they are willing to commit additional resources. Although more funding is necessary for the realization of the MDGs, the achievement of the goals will also require the presently available financial resources to be used more efficiently. Funds must be allocated in an efficient manner, such that the real needs of the developing countries are met and real economic growth and development is obtained.

A summit, commonly referred to as the Millennium Summit +5, is scheduled to be held in New York on 14-16 September 2005. The General Assembly called for this summit to be “a comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfillment of all the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration including the internationally agreed development goals…”13 The summit will also serve as “a unique opportunity to inject new energy into the pursuit of the vision embodied in the Millennium Declaration.”14 To preserve the spirit of The Millennium Declaration several indicators, in addition to those previously chosen to monitor the progress of the MDGs,

---

13 Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. (17 May 2004).
must be incorporated. The Millennium Summit +5 has the potential to make a real impact on economic and social development, but this will require a serious effort from both developed and developing countries to address the strengthening of institutions that are key for real economic and social growth. In addition it will also require a strong commitment from the international community to address the real needs of the developing countries.