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CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL PROCESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Research Report

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ACRONYMS

CBO	COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATION
CHAM	CHRISTIAN HOSPITALS ASSOCIATION
CSI	CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT
CSO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION
CSPR	CIVIL SOCIETY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION
CSPRF	CIVIL SOCIETY POVERTY REDUCTION FACILITY
DAC	DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE
DFID	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ERDT	EXPANDED REPORT DRAFTING TEAM
FBO	FAITH BASED ORGANISATION
GEF	GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
HIV/AIDS	HUMAN IMMUNO VIRUS/AQUIRED IMMUNO DEFICIENCY SYNDROME
IDG	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS
IDP	INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN
IMF	INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND
KZN	KWAZULU-NATAL
LCN	LESOTHO COUNCIL OF NGOs
MTSF	MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
NCC	NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
NDA	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
NPO	NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
MDG	MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS
ODA	OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
OECD	ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PRSP	POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PROCESS
PPA	PROGRAMME PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT
RDT	REPORT DRAFTING TEAM
RSA	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
SGP	SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME
SONA	STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS
STATSSA	STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA
SWG	SECTORAL WORKING GROUP
TWG	TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP
UK	UNITED KINGDOM
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNICEF	UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDRENS EMERGENCY FUND
WB	WORLD BANK

ABSTRACT

The Millennium Summit hosted by the United Nations in September 2000 adopted the Millennium Declaration, signed onto by 189 member states, including South Africa. The declaration outlined eight development priorities commonly referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight MDGs range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education with a target date of 2015. Pledging to the declaration along with member states were the private sector, foundations, international organisations, civil society and research organisations.

In respect of civil society, the declaration enjoined on country governments a commitment “to develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the pursuit of development and poverty eradication,” and “to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society in general, to contribute to the realization of the organisation’s goals and programmes (UN, 2000, A/55/L2) VIII, clause 30).”

In its third MDG progress report to the UN submitted in 2010, South Africa noted that while the process of drafting the report had been designed to be widely consultative and transparent, the draft country report was predominantly a government report and that participation of CSOs in the process was irregular. The report concluded that MDG processes must “*ensure that government, NGOs, and the private sector work together in partnership in order to ensure the complete implementation of the MDGs (RSA, 2010, p116).*”

As the 2015 deadline for the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals approaches, there is much debate on what shape the post-2015 arrangements should take, given lessons that have been learnt in the past. Concerns over Africa’s poor progress in meeting MDG targets have been noted. Amongst these is the importance of adapting the goal targets to suit country specific development challenges. While it is acknowledged that governments have to take the lead in MDG processes, it is also evident that different stakeholders have distinct and equally important roles to play. CSOs can and should contribute towards the progressive realization of the MDGs but they need the requisite capacity in order to maximise their contribution.

This study reports on the findings from a qualitative study conducted in 2013 drawing extensively on a literature review of CSO experiences globally in engaging with MDGs as well primary research involving a select group of CSOs and key informants from across South Africa. Key findings emerging from the study were that MDGs cannot be realised by governments alone and that CSOs can and do play a critical role in enabling the achievement of MDG targets. This was particularly in relation to the role they play in articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor; in filling crucial service delivery gaps and in modeling and innovating good practices. The Zambian Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) model of engaging multi-stakeholders (including CSOs) was noted as a model for replication both in terms of enabling multiple and diverse voices to be captured and in creating a space for debate and contestation. The study also noted that a “one size fits all” approach to supporting CSO engagement with MDG processes would not be appropriate.

Another significant finding was that South African government could draw important lessons from international experience of CSO involvement in MDGs beyond contributing to the writing of periodic progress reports.

The study concluded with two key recommendations for government to consider as a means of strengthening CSO engagements with MDGs namely:

- a. That governments must be purposeful in creating the means and strategies for strengthening partnership between Government and Civil Society around MDGs;
- b. Resources need to be provided to enable effective participation of CSOs in MDG process beyond an implementation role, particularly in influencing the policy, design of interventions and monitoring of MDG progress.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2000, a United Nations (UN) General Assembly attended by 189 countries signed the Millennium Declaration which outlined eight development priorities. South Africa, as a member of the United Nations, is a signatory to this declaration which places obligation on the state to progressively realise and not violate human rights (RSA, 2010). The eight millennium development goals (MDGs) are -:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development

In respect of civil society, the Millennium Declaration enjoined on country governments a commitment *“to develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organisations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication”* and *“to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organisations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organisation’s goals and programmes”* (UN, 2000, A/55/L2.) VIII, clause 30).

South Africa’s 2010 MDG Progress Report (RSA, 2010), its third report to the UN since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 noted that, while the process of drafting the report had been designed to be widely consultative and transparent, the draft country report was predominantly a government report with the participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the process being irregular. Noting this serious limitation and following consultations between government and civil society stakeholders, the final country report incorporated resolutions and recommendations from an MDG Summit convened in Cape Town by CSOs in August 2010 (RSA, 2010).

The 2010 MDG Report (RSA, 2001) concluded with several recommendations in respect of CSO engagement with MDG processes namely:

- *“Create means and strategies for strengthening partnership between government and civil society;*
- *Reporting on MDGs must include information on development aid received by all stakeholders, including CSOs;*
- *Government needs to have a programme for funding NGOs;*
- *Ensure that government, NGOs and the private sector work together in partnership in order to ensure the complete implementation of the MDGs” (RSA, 2010, p116).*

There is just over a year remaining towards projected attainment of the 2015 MDG target and an MDG progress report for Africa was recently presented to the May 2013 African Union Summit. The report noted that progress in this continent towards realising the MDG targets was uneven and insufficient, particularly in relation to halving hunger and in reducing maternal mortality and neo-natal deaths (UN,

2013). As preparations are being made in respect of the post 2015 development agenda, there is emerging consensus that CSOs are critical to accelerating progress towards achievement of MDG targets (Oxfam, 2012).

Evidence from international experience suggests that, in order to enable countries to achieve their MDG targets, this requires the participation of all stakeholders including CSOs and the private sector (Oxfam, 2012). Areas in which CSOs can engage with in the MDG process include the design of strategy level, implementation of the strategy, and in holding government accountable through monitoring the implementation of the strategy. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) recognised that CSOs may need different kinds of capacity support to enable them to play an effective role and identified three areas of capacity support namely:-

- **“Organizational capacity:** the ability of CSOs to perform certain functions, such as knowledge management or service delivery (i.e. to implement and manage projects).
- **Sectoral capacity:** the ability of CSOs to have more impact on their areas and issues of interest.
- **Institutional capacity:** the ability of CSOs to position themselves effectively in their dealings with other actors (such as governments, UN agencies, other donors and other CSOs).” (UNDP, 2007).

The National Development Agency (NDA) is a public entity established by an Act of Parliament (NDA Act 108 of 1998). It is primarily charged with the mandate to eradicate poverty through programmes implemented in collaboration with government and civil society.

The NDA, through its Research and Development Directorate, identified a need to call on service providers to conduct a rapid assessment of the nature of CSO engagement in the design, implementation, and review of country specific MDG strategies. Furthermore, the assessment would need to make recommendations on the role and contribution of the NDA in strengthening CSO engagement with country specific MDG processes in order to enable South Africa to meet its MDG targets.

1.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Against this background, the objective of this study therefore was to assess the extent and nature of CSO engagement in MDG processes in South Africa and to identify gaps and challenges in strengthening CSO engagement towards accelerating progress in meeting MDG targets.

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study components included the following:

- A rapid assessment of extent and nature of CSO engagement in MDG processes in South Africa; this will include a few case studies of the contribution of CSOs to MDG goals;

- A review of the regulatory, policy and programmatic environment within which CSOs are enabled and encouraged by government to participate in national MDG processes;
- Identification of potential roles for CSOs in the MDG process and the support required to enable effective participation;
- Making recommendations on effective interventions to be implemented by the NDA in supporting CSOs to effectively participate in MDG processes.

1.4. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The study design included a desktop literature review together with a limited qualitative survey of civil society organisations in South Africa who have had some engagement with MDGs and few key informants.

The literature review focussed on scientific literature as well as grey literature (for example, policy documents, web resources, reports) from both local and international sources. Colleagues within HSRC who had extensive experience of work on MDGs greatly assisted in sourcing relevant and up to date data.

The qualitative survey was aimed at understanding the experiences of civil society organisations in engaging with MDG processes in South Africa and in getting different stakeholder perspectives on the role of CSOs in MDGs and the nature of support required to strengthen their engagement.

The sampling of CSOs to be interviewed was purposive in that a number of key informants were consulted to help identify CSOs in South Africa who had some engagement with MDG processes. This included identifying key organisations and individuals who had contributed to producing MDG publications and consultations with the NDA to help identify CSO representatives who had represented CSOs as part of the country delegation to the MDG Summit hosted by the UN. The African Monitor, an NGO operating in the continent and based in South Africa and Oxfam, an international development organisation based in Cape Town also assisted in this regard. African Monitor provided a list of CSO/NGOs that attended the Southern African CSO Consultation on Post-2015 Development Agenda which their organisation had hosted. Oxfam identified a list of their partner organisations who were actively involved in MDG activities. Arising from this exercise a database of 25 CSOs were identified. The list was firstly stratified by geographical location of the organisation to get a good regional spread and was secondly stratified in terms of the MDG focus that the CSO were working on. This was done in order to ensure that those interviewed covered the spectrum of all 8 MDGs. It had been intended that 8-10 CSO interviews would be conducted telephonically and 3-4 key informant interviews.

To identify the key informants, a short list was drawn up by the research team comprising of key institutions whose views were critical to capture. These included Statistics South Africa, who chair the MDG committee for South Africa, the UNDP South Africa MDG Desk, Department of Social Development's Non Profit Directorate and a representative from the HSRC, who had assisted with the drafting of a previous country MDG report.

A total eight CSOs and three key informants were interviewed. A list of all the organisations which participated in this study is included as Annexure 1.

1.5. ETHICS APPROVAL FOR STUDY

In view of the study engaging in research with human subjects, ethics approval for the study was applied for and obtained. All interviewees were requested to sign a consent form, the details of which were explained to each of them. Respondents were asked to consent to voluntary participation in the study and were assured that their confidentiality rights would be respected.

1.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation that this study faced was the inability to conduct face to face interviews due to budget constraints. A second limitation was in terms of the timeframes within which this project was being implemented, resulting in some of the identified interviewees not being available to participate in the study in the requested time. A particular limitation was the inability to secure interviews with two key lead institutions within government that are engaged with MDGs namely Statistics South Africa and the Department of Social Development. Conflicting time commitments at the time of conduction of the study arising from the Nelson Mandela funeral arrangements and year end closure activities are noted as limitations. Despite these limitations, the qualitative survey managed to secure participation and quality inputs from other key informants.

1.7. OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Section one provides an introduction and overview of the research method utilised. Section two provides an overview of MDGs including their historical context. Section three profiles the enabling environment for CSO engagement with MDGs. Sections 4 and 5 respectively profile international and South African experiences of CSO engagement with MDGs. Section 6 documents the findings from qualitative fieldwork whilst the last chapter looks at the findings. Section 7 identifies key lessons and the final chapter summarises conclusions and recommendations to the NDA on strengthening CSO involvement with MDGs.

2. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2.1. BACKGROUND

This section reviews the experiences of CSOs globally and in South Africa in engaging with MDGs. Firstly, a historical background on MDGs is provided and thereafter the important role CSOs play in MDG processes is elaborated on.

The MDGs, adopted by 189 member states of the United Nations (UN), emerged from a UN Summit held in September 2000 in New York. Known as the Millennium Development Goals Declaration, these goals reflect the outcomes of a series of global conferences held in the 1990s aimed at building consensus on development priorities for the 21st century and serve as global framework by which development progress can be monitored (Hulme, 2009).

Galbraith (1979) and Myrdal (1970) argued that the idea of formulating international development goals as a systematic attempt to eradicate or dramatically reduce global poverty and address inequality has antecedents that go back to the founding of the UN; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the stalled Development Decade of the 1960s; as well as the many UN Summits of the second half of the twentieth century. However, the 1980s saw the stalling of global summitry and goal-setting and a dramatic change in the global intellectual environment. During this decade the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) influence increased as they imposed structural adjustment policies on the increasing numbers of poor countries seeking loans from these institutions. Liberalisation, privatisation and reduced government intervention policies were advocated for as conditions for loans. Towards the late 1980s evidence emerged of the damaging impacts of structural adjustment and the associated conditionalities on education, health and other essential services which at the same time were failing to deliver on the promise of growth and prosperity as a result of the fiscal restraint measures which they advocated, (Cornia, Jolly, & Stewart, 1987).

Hulme (2007) advances that against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War; the 1990s saw the arrival of the *World Development Report 1990* and the first of the UNDP's *Human Development Reports* with the World Bank recognizing the need for economic reform to be accompanied by social policies. Hulme (2009) suggests that the processes leading to the development of MDGs can be traced to the 1990 Children's Summit held in New York which articulated specific goals for mobilizing public support and generating political commitment through setting concrete targets to improve the prospects for the world's children. Similarly the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, the World Conference on Human Rights of 1993 in Vienna and the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 reaffirmed the principles that were to underpin the MDGs, particularly in advancing the recognition of the rights of women and in creating awareness of the linkages between the environment and poverty. Equally significant for the process of MDG evolution was the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing six months later. All these goal setting forums produced global consensus that poverty reduction was the priority goal for development (United Nations Development Programme, 1997).

Following these various summits, an "economic well-being" list of priorities was drawn up by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) This list focused on global goals of income poverty reduction, 'social

development' and environmental sustainability. International Development Goals (IDGs) were then articulated from this list. The IDGs were short lived as they appeared to focus mainly on developed countries whilst having little regard for the developing countries. In 2000 in preparation for the Millennium Summit the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, produced a report titled *"We the Peoples: Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century"* (UN, 2000) which outlined the global issues which the international community had to address. These were clustered around three themes namely:

- freedom from want;
- freedom from fear; and
- freedom of future generations to sustain their lives on the planet.

The "We the Peoples" publication was very different from the DAC's documents in that goals which had disappeared from international priorities such as gender equality, reproductive health and health were included in the Millennium document (Hulme, 2007).

2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Declaration identified 18 targets to be reached by 2015. These were grouped into 8 major goals (now popularly referred to as the MDGs), with 48 indicators to measure progress (Vandermoortele, 2011). A summary of the 8 MDGs indicating the goals and targets for each from the Millennium Declaration is provided in Table 1 below.

Interestingly, Vandermoortele (2011) posits that the choice of these 8 goals and the 18 targets was informed by high level political decisions that only targets which had agreed indicators and available data would be included in the declaration, hence the exclusion of targets pertaining to quality of education, human rights and affordability of water among others. The 2015 benchmark was identified because 1990 was identified as the baseline for most of the MDG targets and as the twenty five year period from 1990 to 2015 was the period associated with one generation.

More recently, the concept of MDG Plus has entered into the discourse, advanced by those who have complained of the MDGs not covering their specific focus, namely infrastructure, governance, human rights, etc. One frequently touted example is that of Thailand, which achieved most of its MDG targets in advance of the 2015 deadline (UNDP, n.d). In response Thailand adapted and localized the MDGs towards a much more ambitious agenda, including reducing poverty to 4% by 2009 and introduced other goals such as increasing to 30% the share of recycled municipal waste and doubling the proportion of women in parliament.

Fukuda-Parr (2004) and Vandermoortele (2011) advance a number of reasons why MDGs are important to set global development targets, namely that they:

- Are aimed at promoting human well-being;
- Provide a guide for aligning national priorities with MDGs;
- Provide a framework for accountability and are not just set targets;
- Go beyond stating ideals to defining concrete goals that can be monitored.

Table 1 Summary of MDG goals and targets.

#	MDG goal	Target(s)
1.	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce by half, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day; Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; Reduce by half, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2.	Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that by 2015, all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
3.	Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
4.	Reduce child mortality	Reduce by two thirds the mortality of children under five by 2015
5.	Improve maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015 Achieve universal access to reproductive health
6.	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
7.	Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse the loss of environmental resources Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020
8.	Develop a global partnership for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system; Address special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing States; Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt; In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries; In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

Source: Brinkerhoff, 2004

3. ENABLING CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WITH MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

3.1. DEFINING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The UNDP, 2000 defines Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as the multitude of associations around which society voluntarily organises itself and which can represent a wide range of interests and ties, from ethnicity and religion, through shared professional, developmental and leisure pursuits, to issues such as environmental protection or human rights. According to the World Bank (1990) CSOs include non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, faith-based organizations, indigenous people's movements, foundations and other non-profit making organisations. Governments interact with a range of CSOs who critically monitor the governments work and engage the government in policy discussions.

For the purposes of this report, CSOs will be described as per UNDP definition as those organisations whose activity is not associated with major institutional systems such as government and administration, but exist as grass-root organisations that are non-profit entities which complement government and business. Throughout the report, the word CSOs has been interchangeably used with NGOs and other types of CSOs mentioned above.

3.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDGs

According to Bissio (2003) CSOs played almost no role in the formulation of the MDGs. The UN General Assembly, where the Millennium Declaration was adopted, is essentially a structure involving Heads of States. In the preparation for summits the UN has often hosted preparatory meetings which have in some instances included CSOs. In respect of the MDGs a single parallel process was hosted several months before the declaration was adopted, not much is known about the outcome of that meeting except that Bissio (2003) concluded that as a result of this exclusion, CSOs did not have the same level of ownership of MDGs as they had with other development processes such as the Earth Summit. The Declaration itself specifically indicated the importance of CSO involvement in the MDGs at all levels.

According to the UNDP (2001) a reinvigorated partnership with CSOs is central to delivering on the promises of the Millennium Declaration within the context of the increasingly uneven distribution of costs and benefits associated with rapid global economic integration. Reasons advanced for the importance of CSO engagement with global and national priority setting includes the critical role that CSOs play articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor; in filling crucial service delivery gaps and in modelling and innovating good practices. In developing countries it is recognised that governments cannot on their own fulfil all the tasks required for sustainable human development and therefore the active participation and partnership of citizens and their organizations is needed. CSOs have vital roles to play as participants, legitimizers and endorsers of government policy and action, as watchdogs of the behaviour of regimes and public agencies, and as collaborators in the national development effort (UNDP, 2001).

Other values associated with the involvement of CSOs include the argument put forward by the United Nations Development Programme (2007) that CSOs can play an important role in providing critical data on outcomes that can serve as proxy indicators in countries with weak data environments. CSOs can serve as independent brokers where national institutions are weak, popularly discredited or politically contentious.

Prewitt (2006) advances that CSOs contribute to public policy and decision-making by mobilizing vulnerable constituents to participate in public affairs as well as in contributing through research and provision of alternative policy applications. CSOs are therefore important in adapting the MDGs to the local context to ensure that MDGs remain relevant. CSOs also promote transparency and information dissemination through publications/seminars on legal provisions, public expenditure allocations, and other matters of public interest that the government or traditional media outlets may be reluctant to share. CSOs can thus directly contribute to the enhancement of state performance and support public authorities in shaping, financing and delivering social (and other) services.

According to Bissio (2003), Clause 30 of the Millennium Declaration commits governments “to develop strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organisations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication” and “to give greater opportunities to the private sector, non-governmental organisations and civil society, in general, to contribute to the realization of the Organisation’s goals and programmes.”

Besides that stipulation, there does not appear to be any other prescriptions about the nature and extent of civil society input. The UN Guidance Notes on Country Reporting on MDGs (2001 & 2009) articulated the importance of civil society involvement in the preparation of country reports although it did not specify the nature of this engagement. Hence it is possible for reports to be prepared without any civil society input and be considered by the General Assembly without CSOs being able to participate even as observers.

This is contrast to the reporting mechanisms in respect of the United Convention on the Rights of the Child which involves much wider stakeholder engagement. Country reports are submitted to a Committee on Children’s Rights, comprised of a panel of independent experts who are elected by state parties and serve a four year term of office. In terms of article 45(a) of the UNCR Convention, the Committee may invite specialized agencies, UNICEF and other “competent bodies” to provide expert advice. This Convention is one of the few international human rights instruments which provides explicitly for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to monitor its implementation (Save the Children International, 1998) and provision is made for NGOs to submit “alternate reports” or provide additional information to that provided by state parties.

3.3. AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENTFOR CSO ENGAGEMENT WTIH MDGs

Fox et al (2002) in Brinkenhoff (2004) identified five roles for government which could contribute to an enabling environment being fostered for civil society organisations to participate effectively namely: mandating, facilitating, resourcing, partnering and endorsing. Each of these is elaborated on briefly below:

- Mandating refers to the legal and regulatory environment within which CSOs operate. Facilitating role is where government incentivises CSOs as service providers or provides information easily and in an acceptable format.
- Resourcing refers to the direct funding of CSO work. Partnering is where both parties gain mutual benefit through collaboration etc. An example of this is the South African National Aids Council which includes strong civil society membership and which collectively developed the national five year Strategic Plan for HIV, AIDS, TB and Malaria for the period 2012 to 2016.

- Endorsing refers to actions by government which recognise the contribution of CSOs, one such example is the work of the NDA in supporting CSO through grant funding, training and capacity building.

There are many definitions of “an enabling environment” with the following by Thindwa (2001:3), cited in Brinkerhoff, (2004, p3) being the most appropriate:

“An enabling environment is a set of interrelated conditions—such as legal, bureaucratic, fiscal, informational, political, and cultural—that impact on the capacity of ...development actors to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner”.

Table 1 below illustrates the agreed features of the enabling environment using five crucial categories: economic, political, administrative, socio-cultural and resources.

Table 1 Key features of the enabling environment category

Category of Environmental Factors	Key Enabling Features	Illustrative Government Enabling Actions
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-distortionary policy framework. ▪ Encouragement of free markets & open competition. ▪ Supportive of investment (including physical security). ▪ Low transactions costs, credible commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing red tape & unnecessary regulation. ▪ Managing macro-economic policy to control inflation, deficit spending, & assure stability. ▪ Reducing tariffs, barriers to investment (“level playing field”). ▪ Investing in physical infrastructure (roads, transportation, etc.). ▪ Controlling criminality (e.g. mafias) & violence.
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Democratic system that supports pluralism, accountability, transparency, & responsiveness. ▪ Processes that encourage participation, social contract, & state legitimacy. ▪ Rule of law, contract enforcement, respect for human rights & property rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducting free & fair elections. ▪ Making information widely available, promoting free media. ▪ Devolving power & resources to sub national levels of government. ▪ Limiting power & influence of interest groups. ▪ Supporting civil society. ▪ Assuring judicial independence.
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Efficient service delivery capacity. ▪ Low levels of corruption. ▪ Institutional checks & balances. ▪ Decentralization. ▪ Civil service meritocracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curbing abuse & corruption. ▪ Creating incentives for performance. ▪ Separating service provision from financing. ▪ Building cross-sectoral partnerships. ▪ Establishing monitoring & evaluation systems. ▪ Improving coordination across agencies & sectors.
Socio-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presence of social capital & trust. ▪ Tolerance of diversity. ▪ Norms of inclusiveness, equity, & fairness. ▪ Belief in the value & efficacy of individual effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting marginalized & disadvantaged societal groups—pro-poor affirmative action, need-based subsidies, safety nets, etc. ▪ Encouraging civic dialogue, social compacts, & consensus building. ▪ Discouraging ethnic-based politics & policies. ▪ Controlling violence (e.g., ethnic cleansing).

Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies & investments in health, education, workforce development, information technology, science & research. ▪ Adequate funding & institutional capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setting policies & incentives that encourage private investment & corporate social responsibility. ▪ Allocating public resources to assure maximization of social & economic potential
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Source: Brinkerhoff, 2004.

Funding is an important channel through which CSO engagement in MDGs can be facilitated. One such fund is the MDG Fund established in 2007 between the Government of Spain and United Nations. The fund is committed to eradicating poverty and inequality and changing people's lives around the world by working together with and in support of citizens and their organizations as well as governments to implement programmes that help advance the MDGs worldwide. The MDG-Fund has financed 130 joint programmes in eight programmatic areas in 50 countries around the world including programmes that focus on nutrition, youth and employment, gender equality, environment, culture, conflict resolution and peace building as well as water resources management, (<http://www.mdgfund.org/>).

A number of governments also provide financial support to enable CSO engagement with MDGs such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). Through its Programme Partnership Arrangements (PPAs), it has allocated grants ranging from £151,000 to £11 million in the 2011-14 funding approximately 41 civil society organisations globally (DFID, 2013).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) South Africa has a Small Grants Programme (SGP) as part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which is managed by the UNDP country office. This facility provides opportunities and financial support for South African Civil Society Organizations to participate in environmental projects that contribute significantly to national and global environmental and development imperatives. The SGP mainly supports interventions by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) working to achieve global environmental benefits through rural community initiatives. Grant funding up to a maximum of \$50 000 is available per project focussing on biodiversity conservation; reduction of climate change effects; prevention of land degradation; protection of international waters and elimination of persistent organic pollutants (UNDP, n.d).

The establishment of the MDG Fund as well as the provision of training for CSOs recognizes that significant challenges exist in keeping CSOs engaged in MDG processes and aims to assist in overcoming these challenges. This speaks to the critical role that governments can play in creating an enabling environment for CSO engagement.

It is important to note that access to funding for provision of services linked to the MDGs particularly in respect of the social services sector is extremely limited even in the context where civil society organisations are often the main or only service provider.

Another form of support for CSO engagement in MDGs is the training and capacity building interventions being implemented by various stakeholders including UN agencies. The UNDP has produced a training manual and runs training courses for UN country teams and development partners on how to engage civil society organizations in every step of the MDG process from problem assessment, goal setting, programme design to implementation and monitoring and evaluation (UNDP, 2007).

Government's role in mandating civil society is illustrated by the promulgation of South Africa's Non Profit Organisations Act (NPO Act No. 71 of 1997). The Act provides a regulatory and legal framework, outlining fiduciary responsibilities of NPOs, encouraging accountability and transparency and outlining democratic governance guidelines under which NPOs should operate.

4. INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDGs

A number of country MDG reports provide examples of international experience of CSO engagement in MDGs. CSOs function as catalysts in the achievement of MDG goals in both developed, emerging and developing countries. This section will examine key lessons that can be adopted from the international community on the country specific policy and enabling environment as well as institutional arrangements to facilitate CSO engagement in MDGs.

4.1. EXPERIENCES OF CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDGs

A number of civil society organizations have emerged, some of whom work closely with the UN, whose specific focus is to promote awareness. NetAid, a non-profit organization funded by an information technology company engages extensively in using the internet and social media to create awareness of MDGs. Between 2002 and 2003 it successfully mobilized 1, 8 million people globally to sign a petition in support of the “access to education for all” project. NetAid was entered into the Guinness Book of Records as the largest lesson ever thought through hosting a global classroom on the campaign. NetAid also runs an MDG quiz and an MDG essay competition (OECD, n.d) to generate interest and awareness of MDGs among school children.

In a working paper by Chowdhury et al (2006) the case of CSOs in Mozambique was highlighted. Following cooperation between 200 NGOs, churches and academics, the Land Campaign was established in all villages of Mozambique proclaiming that all male and female rural dwellers had rights to land through occupation. The law on the redistribution of the land stipulated that the rights of poor people would be acknowledged even in the absence of any title in their name. Land would be accepted as security for investment and a single system for land owned by families or private sector would be put in place, resulting in an end to dualism. The results of this more equitable redistribution of land were seen in a 9% increase per year in agricultural productivity, increased domestic and international investment, and a dramatic decrease in the number of landless people in Mozambique. The study showed that proactive policy engagement helped to institutionalize a culture of collaboration with the government that was dynamic, equitable and participative.

In Gambia, CSOs have been extensively involved in implementing programmes to advance the MDGs. Gambian CSOs mainly comprise of NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs) who have contributed to poverty reduction. Two examples cited are that of the Chamen Village Development Committee which deals with food security and poverty alleviation interventions and the Institute for Social Reformation and Action which is involved with Women Garden Projects in the Kombo East region of Gambia.

Similarly a Ugandan National NGO forum held in December 2012 produced a report which found that CSOs were mainly involved in the actual implementation of MDGs, whilst their knowledge of MDGs was limited (Uganda National NGO Forum, 2012).

Another exemplary case of CSO engagement in MDGs is seen through Zambia's proven experience of civil society participation in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process (Economic Commission of Southern Africa, 2002). In July 2002, the government of Zambia invited CSOs to participate in the preparation of the PRSP. These organizations then formed the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) whose involvement with the PRSP process was at two levels; firstly, within Government's Working Groups and in the Government's teams that undertook provincial consultations in May 2001 and secondly, within its own consultative group meeting and provincial hearings. The CSPR identified 10 themes which were centered around Governance; Industry, Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods; Agriculture and Food Security; Tourism; Macroeconomics; Mining; Health and HIV/AIDS; Gender; Education, Child and Youth; and the Environment. Each of these themes had a respective consultative group that would provide a forum for consultations among the concerned CSOs on that theme. CSOs from different parts of the country were involved in the first draft of the PRSP and were provided an opportunity to give feedback at a plenary session at the National Summit on Poverty Reduction. Although initially there was doubt about how effective and meaningful the government-civil society interaction would be, the consultative process progressed and in fact turned out to be a process of learning and mature appreciation of each other's' views .

The Commonwealth Foundation report on Malawi's experience of engagement with MDGs (2013) found that direct service delivery was the largest contribution Malawian civil society was making towards the attainment of the MDGs. This was through work in health, including maternal and child health, education, food security and nutrition, the environment and poverty reduction, through micro finance and public works programmes. As a reference, the next major provider of health care in Malawi, after the Ministry of Health, is the Christian Hospitals Association (CHAM), which owns 26 per cent of healthcare facilities (AHWO,2009) and employs 21.5 per cent of professional nurses and midwives (Nove, 2011).

In the formulation of Lesotho's Poverty Reduction Strategy, a more open dialogue was facilitated between government and parts of civil society, donors and the private sector and there was a realization of the increasing importance of CSOs as key stakeholders in Lesotho's development. This improved relationship was evidenced by the discussions the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) had with its constituent members following the release of its very first draft which they titled "the zero-zero draft" PRSP in November 2002. These discussions led to the formulation of a memorandum which was submitted to the government and was reviewed and incorporated into the draft Poverty Reduction paper. However, despite undeniable progress made in respect of the relationship between the stakeholders involved in the PRSP process at a national level, some concerns were raised. Amongst them was the issue that CSO representation (within the LCN) was a minority and there needed to be more participation beyond the LCN. To redress this situation, this then led to the formation of the Civil Society Poverty Reduction Facility (CSPRF), a laudable initiative that was transitory in nature and did not seem to build momentum (ECA, 2003).

In a meeting of Asian CSOs on civil society mobilisation on MDGs, the changing role of civil society in international development was noted, particularly in Indonesia where CSOs played a key role in achieving the MDGs through action campaigns and participatory monitoring and evaluation. One participatory methodology utilised was that of a Citizen Report Card on the MDGs, developed as a monitoring and evaluation tool (United Nations, 2010). A number of UNDP supported civil society activities to advance the MDGs in the Philippines were also cited such as the "*Stand Up and Take Action*" and "*I vote for MDG*" campaigns (United Nations, 2010) which demonstrated people's power to influence the authorities on policy, budget and implementation matters.

One of the key achievements of the MDGs is the significant extent to which they have aided in mobilizing of public and political support for development. This new trend can largely be seen by increase in aid pledges from donor countries, since 2005 and significant growth in broader campaigns such as *"Make Poverty History"* which have been calling for changes in global trade rules, debt relief and as well as an increase in aid for developing countries (Melamed & Scott, 2011). It is suggested that the MDG framework played a critical role in resource mobilization for development by stipulating the amount of aid need to reach MDG targets (Vandemoortele & Delamonica, 2010).

In developing countries, the MDGs have played a role in ensuring that priority is given to poverty reduction within national policies. A survey conducted with a sample of 100 civil society actors across the developing world noted that development had become a higher priority because of the MDGs (Pollard et al., 2010 as cited in Melamed & Scott, 2011). Millennium campaign activists argue that the MDGs have helped bring a more unified movement against poverty in many countries (Melamed & Scott, 2011).

The main criticism of the MDG program is that it is a donor led initiative and pays little attention to the local environment (Sumner, 2009; Shepherd, 2008) as cited in Melamed & Scott (2011). It is proposed that MDGs should be tailored to specific national circumstances (Melamed & Scott, 2011).

Vandemoortele and Delamonica (2010) note that it has been argued that the MDGs have excluded many crucial aspects of development such as climate change, the quality of education, human rights, economic growth, infrastructure, good governance and security and thus through initiatives such as MDG Plus, these can be extended. However they note a caution about extending the list of MDG targets which could weaken its implementation. Instead it is suggested that the current MDGs provide a sufficiently large canvass onto which all other development priorities can be linked (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010). Monitoring of the MDGs is based on average progress at national or global level and by measuring progress this way there is a risk that some people may fall through the cracks. According to Save the Children (1998), in some countries MDG progress may look impressive, while the situation for the very poorest may actually be worse (Melamed & Scott, 2011). In addition it was noted that only two measures among the MDGs focus on the gender-disaggregated measures of progress. Therefore many measures fail to understand the gender specific nature of most poverty problems and this may serve as a hindrance to achieving the target (Holmes and Jones, 2010, cited in Melamed & Scott, 2011).

4.2. CHALLENGES IN ENGAGEMENT OF CSOs IN MDGs

Some of the programmes implemented by CSOs are still far from being sustainable given the capacity challenges, limited funding and lack of vision on how to mobilise resources for the future. One of the gaps in CSO involvement in the implementation of programmes aimed at advancing MDGs is that of funding. Civil society organizations that are better organized and have stronger links to government and international organizations are generally more successful in competing for the limited resources despite the fact that similar problems prevail in other regions.

The lack of reliable and accessible data to evaluate and track civil society engagement in MDGs poses a challenge in meeting the MDG targets. The lack of an effective, outcome based monitoring and evaluation system carries both operational and reputational risks of under achieving the MDGs. There is a lack of contribution of CSOs in the MDGs monitoring process through data collection, dissemination of results and capacity building programs for youth on MDGs themes. The 2010 MDGs report for Sudan for example, mentions only one recommendation that is to improve the statistical capacity of the CSOs. Yet,

the absence of the role of the NGOs specifically in the monitoring of the MDGs can be one of the reasons for weak reporting about the MDGs.

The final example is provided by the case of CSOs in Malawi. They have identified reasons for their slow progress in engagement in MDGs as mainly due to the fall in official development assistance (ODA), insufficient commitment of resources, lack of visibility in the national budget, poor public service delivery, inadequate political will and limited public awareness of the MDGs. Other challenges identified included the lack of a law to regulate access to public information, unreliable data and their perception that many of the interventions introduced by government were short-term and clearly linked to electoral cycles (Commonwealth Foundation, 2013).

4.3. INTERNATIONAL LESSONS ON STRENGTHENING CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDGS

In 2004 a global survey of over 270 diverse CSOs mainly operating in the global south made a number of key observations relating to the manner in which governments were implementing MDG processes (WFUNA et al, 2004). These observations, summarized below, remain valid today as they did almost a decade ago.

- a. The study found that more than three quarters of CSOs surveyed were involved in activities aimed at promoting or achieving MDGs;
- b. The need for scaling up resources to effectively address MDG targets is urgently required;
- c. Lack of political will for forging effective partnerships is a barrier to governments honouring MDG commitments;
- d. Most participants believed that with greater partnerships, collaboration and consultation between government and civil society, achieving MDG targets could be improved;
- e. It was suggested that a more “inclusive and participatory decision making process will greatly increase the prospects that (the MDGs) will reflect the real needs of each country” (WFUNA et al, 2004, p 30).

The former Secretary General of Civicus¹, Kumi Naidoo, noted that MDGs provide political legitimacy for CSOs to drive the development agenda, and that despite the undefined role of CSOs, it provides enormous opportunities for CSOs to mobilize and advocate for development (WFUNA et al, 2004).

Cornwall and Brock (2005) present a critical view on the manner in which buzz words such as participation and empowerment have been appropriated in MDG processes as symbols of moral authority and legitimacy. To give real meaning to these terms requires more intensive engagement with MDGs and this must start with awareness raising.

The African CSO Handbook provides another example in identifying several obstacles to CSO engagement with MDGs (Osodo et al, 2003) of which three are outlined here. Firstly the authors contend that the low levels of understanding of MDGs among CSOs results in them affording MDG

¹ Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance established in 1993 by civil society leaders globally and with its global headquarters Johannesburg, South Africa. Its membership is comprised of over 150 organisational and individual members who represent members from over 100 countries globally across sectoral and geographical divides (www.civicus.org).

processes lower priorities. Many national CSOs in South Africa have been at the forefront of campaigns directly linked to MDG campaigns such as addressing hunger, access to quality education, prevention of mother to child transmission and advancing gender rights. At the community level, it is not clear what the level of awareness of MDGs is and how these link to the attainment of human and constitutional rights. Secondly the handbook suggests that MDG processes do not hold high priority within government planning processes and that this presents an advocacy opportunity for CSOs for more targeted and purposeful integration of MDGs in government plans.

Thirdly the lack of capacity within CSOs to engage with MDGs at a strategic level is also noted. The CSO Handbook noted concerns about the role of UN country teams in providing support and capacity building to all stakeholders. Some of the suggested ways they could assist with would be in supporting the development of user friendly campaign materials, supporting CSO efforts to monitor and also strengthening reporting processes. There is a need to recognize that governments may be reluctant to encourage CSOs to monitor progress because monitoring is less of a technical issue and much more a political one. Building CSO capacity to report and monitor is a key contribution to advancing MDG campaigns and interventions.

5. SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES WITH MDGS

Before proceeding to discuss South Africa experiences with MDGs, it is first necessary to outline briefly the connection between the South African national priorities and the MDGs.

5.1. NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE MDGS

South African National Government priorities have embraced the MDGs and nationalised them into the country's current development planning. In a presentation to Parliament on South Africa's progress towards MDG achievement in 2011, government pointed out that the MDGs had been integrated into the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2009-2014, leading to the translation of the five development objectives of the ruling party into ten strategic priorities for Government (DPSA, 2011). The five development objectives are:

- a) halving poverty and unemployment by 2014;
- b) ensuring a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and reducing inequality;
- c) improving the nation's health profile and skills base and ensuring universal access to basic services;
- d) building a nation that is free of all forms of racism, sexism, tribalism and xenophobia; and
- e), improving the safety of citizens by reducing incidents of crime and corruption.

Table 2 below is a schematic layout that maps the alignment of MDGs onto the South African National priorities.

Table 2 Links between South Africa's national priorities and the MDGs

Linkage between South Africa's national development planning and the MDGs		
MTSF Strategic Elements		Relevant MDGs
1.	Strategic Priority 1: Speeding up growth and transforming the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods	MDG1; MDG2; MDG3; MDG8
2.	Strategic Priority 2: Massive programme to build economic and social infrastructure	MDG1; MDG3; MDG8
3.	Strategic Priority 3: Comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security	MDG1; MDG2; MDG7
4.	Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen the skills and human resource base	MDG2
5.	Strategic Priority 5: Improve the health profile of all South Africans	MDG4; MDG5; MDG6
6.	Strategic Priority 6: Intensify the fight against crime and corruption	MDG2; MDG3
7.	Strategic Priority 7: Build cohesive, caring and sustainable communities	MDG2; MDG3; MDG7
8.	Strategic Priority 8: Pursuing African advancement and enhanced international cooperation	MDG8

It is important to note that South Africa was always a willing signatory to the MDGs because it aligned itself seamlessly with our Vision 2030 as it is espoused in our National Development Plan (NDP):

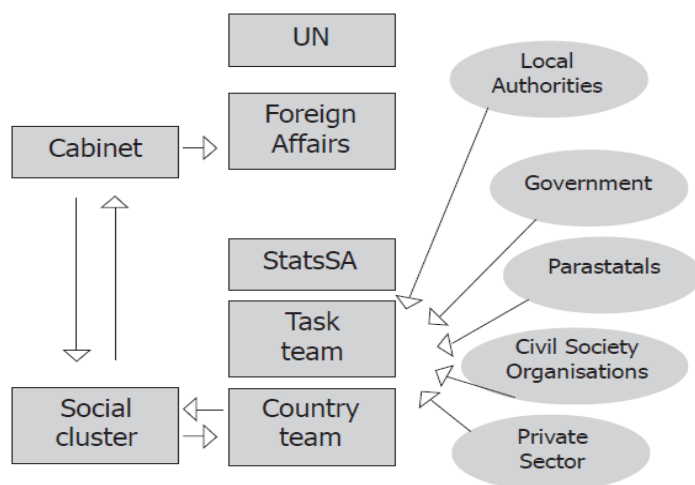
“By 2030, we seek to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. We seek a country wherein all citizens have the capabilities to grasp the ever-broadening opportunities available. Our plan is to change the life chances of millions of our people, especially the youth; life chances that remain stunted by our apartheid history.” (NDP, p5).

This clearly shows that South Africa is committed to the MDG goals and the achievement thereof. Notwithstanding uneven development experienced in the country, South Africans have mobilised behind Vision 2030 as outlined in the NDP to address and redress the continued imbalances and the stubborn persistence of unemployment, inequality and poverty.

5.2. GOVERNMENT PROCESSES FOR COORDINATING MDGS IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa responsibility for the implementation of MDGs lies with the Department of International Development (previously known as the Department of Foreign Affairs), which in turn has identified StatsSA as the body charged with MDG coordination. The figure below outlines the envisaged process employed by StatsSA to coordinate MDG activities, including the drafting of country reports. The MDGs secretariat in StatsSA is located within the National Statistics Systems Division of StatsSA (RSA, 2013).

FIGURE 1: MDG COORDINATING PROCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA



Source: EMG, 2005

Following a Cabinet directive to StatsSA in 2010 to institutionalise participation in MDG reporting processes, a number of new structures were created to strengthen existing initiatives. Prior to this the three structures which were responsible for drafting the MDG country report were the National Coordinating Committee (NCC), the Technical Working Group (TWG) and the Sectoral Working Groups.

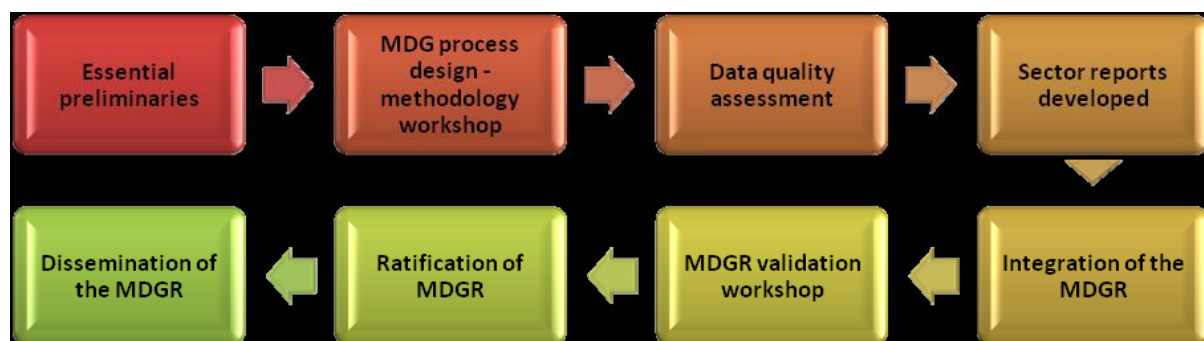
The new structures which were introduced came as a result of feedback from CSOs on the need to strengthen participation. The two structures were the Report Drafting Team (RDT) and the Expanded Report Drafting Team (ERDT) which was largely comprised of civil society representatives (RSA, 2013).

5.3. GOVERNMENT REPORTING ON MDGS

There have been a number of interventions implemented by the South African government in respect of the 8 MDGs and these are reported on in country reports such as the MDG 2010 Report (RSA, 2010).

For the preparation of this MDG 2010 report the process flow is broadly outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Process flow - 2010 MDG report



(Source: RSA, 2010)

The drafting process included a national methodology workshop held to adjust MDG indicators to local context; this was followed by methodology workshops in 4 provinces but including all nine provinces. In KZN it was reported that the Premier's office lead the initiative. Subsequently a validation workshop was held to enable critical review of the draft report by sector working groups. A national coordinating committee for the report was established and met several times before the report was validated. Interestingly the report was presented to Cabinet in August 2010 followed by a presentation to CSOs shortly after (RSA, 2010).

The 2010 Report noted that while the process of drafting the report had been designed to be widely consultative and transparent, the draft country report was predominantly a government report as participation of CSOs in the process had been irregular. Noting this serious limitation and arising from consultation between government and civil society stakeholders, the final country report incorporated resolutions and recommendations from an MDG Summit convened in Cape Town by CSOs in August 2010 (RSA, 2010).

A report of the CSO Black Sash et al, 2010, on the MDG Summit noted with concern the quality of the civil society engagement in the development of the South African Report on MDGs, 2010. This summit which was attended by over 55 organisations, made a recommendation that South Africa establish a streamlined MDG monitoring process and that essential to this was the need to improve communication, consultation and engagement between civil society and government.

These concerns were endorsed by President Zuma following a briefing from CSOs. In a press statement released by the Presidency (RSA, Presidency, 2010, p1) wherein he noted "*Equally important should*

be an emphasis on the need to form a strong partnership between government and civil society in order to ensure that South Africa succeeds in meeting the MDGs,".... "We cannot achieve these goals working alone, that is why we met today and have agreed to meet again regularly in future. As South Africa tables its report to the UN later this month, we are optimistic that the report will show substantial progress indeed."

5.4. NDA SUPPORTED CSOS ENGAGEMENT MDGs IN SOUTH AFRICA

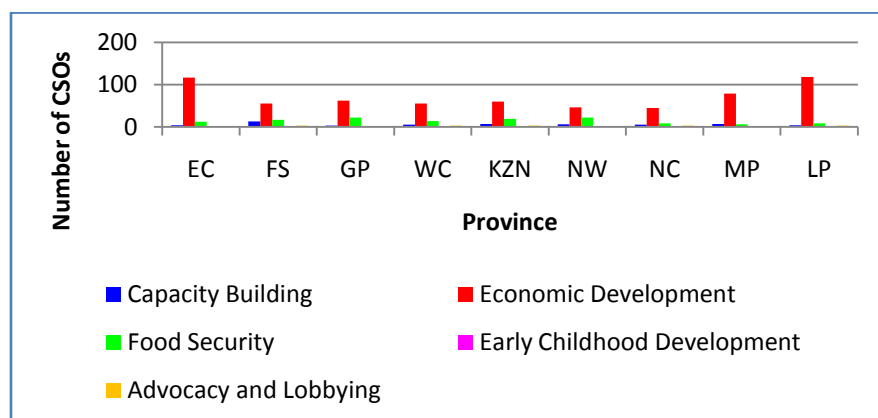
This section profiles a few civil society organisations funded by the NDA who are engaged in work related to MDGs.

5.4.1. OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The National Development Agency (NDA) is a government entity whose aim is to contribute towards the eradication of poverty and its causes by granting funds to civil society organizations. The funds are for the purposes of implementing development projects in poor communities and strengthening the institutional capacity of other civil society organizations that provide services to poor communities. The NDA also promotes consultation, dialogue and sharing of development experience between civil society organizations and relevant organs of state. The NDA provides development grant funding to civil society organisations in the focus areas of early childhood development, food security, income generation, capacity building and support of vulnerable groups (National Development Agency, 2011).

Over 800 Civil Society Organizations have received grant support through the NDA since inception to undertake various projects many of which contribute to the progressive realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. The figure below illustrates the scale, nature and distribution of NDA support to CSOs in South Africa.

Figure 2 Scale and nature of NDA support to CSOs in South Africa



Source: NDA database on CSOs

From Figure 2 above, it is clear that most of the CSOs supported by the NDA are clustered within the economic development sector (addressing skills development and income generation) contributing to

the MDG goal of halving extreme poverty and addressing unemployment mainly through implementing programmes to address MDGs. As shown by the graph, very few CSOs supported by the NDA are engaged in the advocacy and lobbying sector and early Childhood Development.

5.4.2. NDA FUNDED CSO ENGAGEMENT IN MDGS

Profiled in this section are some examples of the CSO projects funded by the NDA which are contributing to MDG targets. While the projects are not explicitly developed with the MDG as their goal, they are directly or indirectly contributing to the realization of the MDG goals. All the projects profiled are engaged in direct implementation of an MDG target.

In the Free State the NDA funded an emerging sheep farming project, Thaba Noka Cooperative (located in the town of Luckhoff in the Xhariep district in the Free State) to the value of R1 129 680 (National Development Agency, 2012). The cooperative is a product of farm workers seeking to empower themselves and create employment. Through the NDA fund, the farm workers were able to advance their skills in farming and management and were able to buy 205 Dorper sheep to breed and sell. The cooperative is recorded as making a profit from sales of sheep and has since expanded to cattle production. Given that farm workers remain amongst the most marginalized workers in the labour market in South Africa this initiative is directly addressing poverty eradication and food security.

The Umsobombvu Development Cooperative, another project funded by the NDA, was established in 2001 in the Chris Hani district municipality of the Eastern Cape by three unemployed women who had some skills in spinning, weaving and sewing. The cooperative now involves some 17 members who manufacture wall hangings, floor rugs, woven blankets, mohair scarves, woven curtains, place mats, school uniforms and traditional attire (Open Africa, 2013). The cooperative is also involved in community gardening, the products of which are sold in the local market. The Umsobomvu Development Cooperative members strive to operate as a successful and sustainable Wool and Mohair Textile and Clothing Cooperative with a reputation for quality products locally and internationally with the endeavour of creating even more jobs towards the social and economic development of their community as a whole. The MDG target being addressed here is gender empowerment and addressing hunger

An example of CSO engagement aimed at promoting gender equality and women empowerment is the Campbell Women's Ostrich project located in the Siyancuma Municipality in the Northern Cape. This project which was funded to a total amount of R773, 084.00 by the NDA, involves of 16 self-employed women who raise ostrich chicks to mature birds ready for the market. The chicks are purchased from a dedicated supplier for R300 each and then resold as mature birds back to the same supplier for R960 (National Development Agency, 2012).

5.5. OTHER CSO ENGAGEMENTS WITH MDGS

Three examples of civil society involvement in MDGs are provided below. All three of these examples profile MDG work in respect of advancing development through piloting innovations in income generation, gender empowerment and food security.

The Gubevu Community Project (Heifer, 2013) is exemplary of a CSO engaged in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger in the Eastern Cape. The project aims to reduce poverty through food production and income generation by the improved, productive keeping of livestock. The Eastern Cape is one of South Africa's least developed, most poverty-stricken provinces. The rural areas are particularly affected by their physical remoteness from significant commerce and the concurrent lack of local employment opportunities. Communities such as Gubevu experience unemployment rates greater than 70%, and families are highly dependent on agriculture for basic survival. As there is little access to agricultural technologies and resources, food insecurity and malnutrition are rife. Heifer International-South Africa works to improve food security in resource-poor rural communities by providing multi-level training and livestock to support improved nutrition and health, income generation and overall sustainable community development.

In Kwa-Zulu Natal, Africa! Ignite (2013) a non-profit organization (NPO), is involved in the eradication of extreme poverty as well as promoting women empowerment through rural development initiatives. The NPO focuses on Kwa-Zulu Natal's rural citizens particularly its women and youth through strong rural partnerships and access to an extensive footprint of rural development nodes and a network of trained youths and adults across the province. These include rural youth trained as researchers; youth development workers; water and sanitation outreach workers and journalists, photographers and storytellers. Through the programmes offered by the organization, youths, mothers and grandmothers are able to earn a decent living; develop useful skills; make their voices heard; improve their health and quality of life, and market their products and services. The effective implementation of programmes is largely due to the strong support of like-minded funding and implementing partners such as the NDA (www.africaignite.co.za).

The Millenium Development goal of ensuring environmental sustainability involves integrating the principles of sustainable development into county policies and programmes and reversing the loss of environment resources as well as reducing biodiversity loss. The West Coast Environmental Cooperative is a cooperative whose vision is to contribute to the integrated development of poor communities through facilitating income-generating environmental projects at the local level that are driven by local communities. The primary objective of the Co-operative is to clear the entire West Coast and secondary areas of invasive exotic plants to infestation levels of less than 0.1% within the next 20 years. This will ensure optimum sustainable water supply and indigenous Coastal Fynbos growth. This project involves unemployed individuals or SMMEs registered as contractors, which is also in line with productive employment opportunities of the MDGs (Capebiosphere, 2013).

6. FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE SURVEY

A qualitative survey was undertaken as part of this study, the findings of which are presented in this section. The survey included a sample of selected civil society organisations and key informants. A total of eight CSOs were interviewed and two key informants.

The interview tool developed for the survey focussed on exploring three main themes namely, knowledge and understanding of the importance of MDGs; knowledge and understanding of stakeholder engagement MDG processes in South Africa and finally experiences of involvement in MDG activities including nature of support provided to CSOs to strengthen engagement. Most of the CSOs interviewed for our study had extensive involvement in development work with some having more than 15 years experience. Findings in respect of these main themes is analysed below.

At the very outset one respondent queried the value of undertaking this study at this particular juncture:

“Is it not a bit late to be conducting this study and for the NDA to want to find out about the role of NGOs in SA towards MDG processes, given that everyone is now focusing on the post 2015 development agenda? I would query the lateness of this survey when there is only a year left to go and only now focused efforts are pushing for implementation”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

6.1. UNDERSTANDING OF MDGS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

This question elicited mixed reactions. On the one hand, some CSOs seemed to understand the MDGs to be independent of the NDP priorities while others perceived MDGs and the NDP priorities to be interlinked.

Another respondent articulated how the two are interlinked by putting forward the following explanation:

“We need to see the MDGs in a kind of nested approach. We need to ask ourselves: where do we want to be by say 10 – 25 years down the line? We need to set the aspirations for society similar to the long-term vision exercise for the country (that was undertaken) with the NDP2030. The visions contained within the MDGs must be the visions contained within the NDP2030. It has got to be an aligned process and they (the two) must be linked up otherwise the MDG agenda falls flat. For example, in Namibia, they took MDG goal 1, which is to halve poverty and they decided they were going to go beyond that and create an ambitious target and not just halve poverty but do more. Like our own NDP2030, for a highly unequal society like South Africa, we need to adapt our MDGs, to make sure that everyone has access to health services, education, etc.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

Respondents appeared to understand the MDGs as a broad framework that had to be cascaded down to all levels of society, right down to where the CSOs are most active – at the community level. Many examples were given to demonstrate an understanding of how this could be done practically. A few examples are cited below:

“On a national level, malaria is not an issue in South Africa but there are certain parts of Mpumalanga where that is a concern.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

“Localising the MDGs and how you interpret them in a macro way is one approach, the other one is unique statistics beyond the national average, e.g. bucket toilets and sanitation are not a national issue, but there are certain pockets in the South African society where they are widespread so that national averages can be very misleading.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

“Countries are not all the same. There are areas where we are doing well as a country and the MDGs are not relevant to South Africa in those areas. However, within the country as well, Gauteng is not the same as the Eastern Cape. MDGs therefore are important to localise in those critical areas. For example, education in South Africa is not such a critical issue, where access to primary education is at 99%. Issues of drop-outs and the quality of education however, are another story. Also important to note with localisation is that the geography and history of a particular country matters and differs in terms of context. For example, in South Africa we come from a history of apartheid. Localising the MDGs therefore means going down globally, even to the level of provinces and districts and local municipalities.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

An interesting aspect of the localisation of MDGs was provided by one respondent:

“All MDGs are linked and require support at the international level. These are international negotiations with an international relations perspective to them. The role of civil society becomes important in creating global partnerships, no matter what the theme is. For example, HIV/AIDS is related to malaria (MDG 6) and malaria is related to climate change (falls under MDG 7). MDGs are meant to measure the state of development in a country. It is important for all countries to set targets to be achieved in order to improve the lives of the citizens of that country. If the targets are not achieved, it is still important for these to be measurable. The more the country meets MDG targets, the better will be the social and economic life of the people. This will also change the way the people view their government but equally, the process will directly and indirectly force government to execute its primary constitutional obligation, which is to change and better the lives of the people.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

Another view point expressed on the importance of localizing MDGs articulated the following:

“Countries must be free to change the target of the MDG and that must be considered in terms of localising the broad national target. These MDGs were designed to guide countries, and for monitoring progress towards them. They were commonly agreed upon but can be adapted. Hence, in relation to the concerns about the post 2015 agenda and having missed the boat, these are unfounded because once you have achieved something within that region, you can set a new (and even more) ambitious target. Countries can add and supplement pre-existing targets with new ones. So for our education targets, for example, instead of universal access, we need to put in a new target for quality as well, textbooks, teacher-pupil ratios, distance to school, etc. and start adding to the original target. We missed the initial MDG phase (from 1990s when the initial South African process began²²) but this is correctable for the post-2015 agenda.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

²² The initial MGD targets were set in 1990 however the South African baseline was only established in 1994 (key study informant interview).

Indeed, most CSOs interviewed for the study demonstrated a clear understanding of MDGs in the context of national development priorities. There was a clear understanding of why MDGs were developed and why some of the key themes were selected namely education and gender. Study respondents generally understood that the UN sets the broad framework for these MDGs, and countries then need to adapt these to suit their particular contexts particularly at community level.

6.2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN MDG PROCESSES

The main institutions or stakeholders that were identified by respondents as being responsible for driving the realisation of MDGs in South Africa were national, provincial and local government institutions with a particular mention of the Department of Social Development, Department of Health as well as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the international community at large particularly the United Nations and International donor agencies.

“Government Departments, State Owned Entities, Parastatals and Chapter Nine (9) institutions are expected to play a leading role in realization of the goals. The private sector also has that responsibility. Statistics South Africa is one of the committed institutions in realising the MDGs including proper coordination of the programme.”, (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

It was noted by a few respondents that in South Africa government appeared to be driving the prioritization of the MDGs and that while it actively engaged with the international donor agencies it seemed to exclude any substantial engagement with civil society.

According to a key respondent Government’s approach to implementation of the MDGs has been issue focussed with specific goals being championed by specific government ministries such as education issues relating to the MDG being led by the Department of Education. It was further noted by this respondent that CSOs have been involved at the conceptualisation stages of MDG policy as well as implementation through their direct work with vulnerable groups such as children. It was suggested that policy tended to guide the state in identifying CSOs that can and should be supported in meeting the MDGs.

“For example policy will say we would like to see a situation where children are not being institutionalised but exposed as much as possible to a family environment. So we will then support those CSOs that make sure that if they will receive vulnerable children in an institution, that child should get foster care- that’s why we (government) would then support organisations that support foster care.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

Another key informant noted the challenges for the state in enabling active engagement with Civil Society Organisations mainly because CSOs are not a homogenous group and this means that government has to ensure inclusivity of CSOs in the process.

The majority of respondents confirmed the critical role that CSOs play in contributing to the realisation of the MDGs. In a selection of responses emphasised this as follows:

“CSOs are on the ground; they are implementers; hence, they fill the gaps that Government cannot reach. There should be a variety of roles from training to teaching to implementation.” (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

“It is important for CSOs to be engaged with MDGs because often they are working on the ground closely with the community and often they have developed a long term relationship with members of the community. This is significant because whilst government departments often work with many different groups and communities it is often in a more over-arching way.

Also CSOs are currently filling gaps that the government is struggling to. There is massive need out there and CSOs are providing a great deal of support. There are major problems relating to drug and alcohol abuse, violence, gang warfare, abuse, health, etc. The government is unable to manage this on their own therefore CSOs could partake in a coordinated response to the problems if government and the CSOs could collaborate and work together.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

In response to a question about the NDA’s role in strengthening CSO engagement with MDGs the following response was captured:

“The NDA and other state agencies and civil society voices have a key role to play in promoting understanding of the MDGs. The NDA could also help with playing an advocacy role and not to be unidirectional. They need to facilitate space to engage. The NDA can also help play an advocacy role, and in supporting the localisation of MDGs in terms of helping set common developmental targets at a more local level. They can assist in facilitating recognition of credible CSOs, and not just playing a facilitating role in terms of periodic reporting.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

An interesting and slightly different take of the stakeholder engagement process was articulated by one respondent:

“There should be children’s involvement as their voices are not captured. These should be captured in the decision-making processes. Other vulnerable groups should also be included such as the elderly and those living with HIV/AIDS. These should be organised and mobilised. Children’s parliament committees should be formed, as should be churches (faith-based) organisations and business / corporate. With corporates, they could be channelled into, for example, health education in a strategy that will ensure that all their corporate social responsibility (CSI) efforts take place in a coordinated manner. Now the way things are is that other people get to benefit twice.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

On the issue of who should be involved with MDGs one respondent elaborated on the need for different stakeholders to be involved in each of the MDGs:

“You should have a specialisation for each MDG goal. For example, government departments could deal with MDG 1 – extreme hunger and poverty. Departments such as- Rural Development and Land Reform, Public Works and NGOs such as the NDA, World Vision, Oxfam and Save the Children could be also involved in this same goal. For MDG2, you could have the Department of Education involved, as well as NGOs such as World Vision, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, etc. Corporates should also not be left out and those that can participate in this goal would be, for example, Nedbank, Old Mutual, ABSA (to construct laboratories in schools, etc.). This they can do as part of their corporate social investment programmes (CSI).”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

Indeed, the involvement of many stakeholders in the MDG processes in South Africa was a sentiment echoed by many of the study respondents.

A caution about romanticising CSO participation was advanced by another respondent *“it should be noted that CSOs should be vetted as not all of them are doing good work and some are in fact disempowering people. Therefore the quality of CSOs is important.”*, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

However, the lack of *coordination* of multi-stakeholder MDG process was broadly lamented. This role it was suggested could be a key role played by the NDA.

6.3. CSO EXPERIENCE WITH MDG PROCESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The study respondents were asked to share their experiences with MDG processes in South Africa. The activities CSOs were involved in with respect to MDGs included understanding and awareness raising of the MDGs, involvement in participatory planning processes, integration of MDGs into local development plans and in the coordination of responses to a greater degree.

Only one CSO interviewed reported having been involved with influencing policy through writing policy briefs and also participation in the drafting of local municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

Two of the CSOs interviewed reported involvement with monitoring and evaluating progress towards the MDGs. This included participation in the drafting of alternate reports. One of the CSOs reported that they had reported on their MDG work to their funders, the other CSO had had channelled the work they did on MDGs to StatsSA who subsequently engaged them in the writing of the UN country report.

It is clear that involvement in MDG processes was not limited to the writing of the country reports, although this appeared to be where the greatest effort has been expended in terms of garnering CSO participation in MDG processes. The report writing process was coordinated by StatsSA and this had been facilitated through MDG consultations and provincial road shows. General consensus was that the manner in which the report writing process unfolded did not lend itself to meaningful civil society deliberation and engagement and consultation on the MDGs.

A key informant explained that because civil society can be sometimes highly critical and radical in their responses, the state is sometimes hesitant to involve them. There was a tendency to de-politicise development by government. However it was noted that some of the goals are highly contested and civil

society is often seen as challenging the state on its progress or lack thereof. For example it was noted that with regard to the MDG on primary education while government may focus on the issue of access Section 27³ would be concerned less with issues of access to education and more with the quality of education being delivered.

“The 2005 country report submitted by government to the UN was rejected by South African NGOs and its credibility challenged arising from the non-participation of CSOs, who instead provided their own shadow report which was highly critical of government’s report. Government then realised that they must engage civil society. We were invited to participate after that as a member of a national alliance to ensure the participation of civil society.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

Exploring the extent to which CSOs had formed collaborative partnerships in respect of MDG-work one respondent reported:

“Yes indeed. We have collaborations with The Africa Monitor, Oxfam, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Environmental Affairs, to name a few. We have received a lot of international support from the UK, Germany, Brazil, and India - the BRICS countries. We also have informal working relations with local NGOs. With international organisations, we have formal relationships.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

This was clearly the exception as the majority of interviewees seemed to work independently and in the few instances where there had been some collaboration with other CSOs, this was not marked by a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

One issue that the study sought to unravel was in relation to the process employed by government in selecting South Africa CSO representatives who were included in the SA delegation to the UN MDG summit held in New York in 2013. One of the CSOs that attended this year’s event provided the following narrative:

“I form(ed) part of the CSO MDG committee which was chosen to go to New York. We requested StatsSA that civil society must have a delegation included in the President’s delegation to New York. This is because StatsSA is at the centre in facilitating the MDGs in the country so their task is to ensure that all stakeholders participate, including civil society at large. Provinces had to elect their own (one) structure in each and every province after which all those provincial structures had to come to Pretoria to discern how to come up with a national structure, of which the three CSOs that went to NY were elected. Forty people were elected; there were 9 representatives, one from each province, plus two others who were independently elected – a national coordinator and a provincial convenor. This is how the national committee of the civil society MDGs was established.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

Other viewpoints expressed regarding the composition of the CSO delegation to the UN included:

³ Section 27 is a South African public interest CSO seeking to influence, develop and use the law to protect, promote and advance human rights in South Africa.

“The National Planning Commission is the one that is responsible for coordinating this process. We wrote to (Minister) Trevor (Manuel) and asked to be given space as a national structure to go to New York. The NDA was not involved. We wrote to the NDA and asked them to increase this number (from the three participating CSOs), as well as funding for other activities when we got to NY so could choose which gatherings to attend. The NDA rejected our request and we were so disappointed.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

Furthermore one respondent noted:

“We had to report back to our structures when we got back (from New York) although the report drafting process still going on. This process did not happen effectively selecting only three civil society organisations. CSOs are diverse; some have high educational levels and some in civil society are not highly trained so there must be a programme for the illiterate. Moreover, the MDG goals after 2015 have to be increased because there are more challenges now.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

The importance of alternate perspectives being considered was emphasised by one of the key informants in the study.

“The objective of the MDGs is to create space for reflection and representation of progress and from a foreign affairs or international relations perspective, obviously you want to put the country in the best foot forward. Shadow reports from civil society are necessary if civil society feels increasingly that they are never going to effectively articulate and have its position reflected to a certain degree. There needs to be scope for shadow reports, in a process similar to the state of the nation address (SONA) and the shadow reports that come out around budget time. CSOs have a duty to relating their voice in relation to government’s progress reports. The coordinators of the MDG reports could then draw on these reports in all the stages of the drafting process for the UN country report.”, (HSRC, Key informant interview, 2013).

6.4. SUPPORT FOR CSO PARTICIPATION IN MDGS

In the current economic climate the civil society sector in South Africa has been experiencing financial sustainability challenges and it is within this context that the study sought to understand the extent to which support had been provided.

One of the CSOs interviewed noted the following:

“No support was provided except when performing Sector Working Group (SWG) work as part of the Extended Report Drafting Teams that were responsible for writing goals reports. I was also part of the team involved in the drafting of the country MDG Report.” (HSRC, CSO interview, 2013).

The interviewee noted that while support had been provided to cover travel and accommodation costs for attending meeting, it did not cover the time spent.

7. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarises the key findings from both the literature review and the qualitative survey conducted and presents a few key recommendation to the NDA on strengthening CSOs' participation in MDGs.

7.1. KEY FINDINGS

- a. There is overarching agreement that MDGs cannot be realised by governments alone and that CSOs can and do play a critical role in enabling the achievement of MDGs targets. It is widely recognised in the MDGs discourse that CSOs add value in relation to the role they play in articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor; in filling crucial service delivery gaps and in modelling and innovating good practices. Importantly article 30 of the MDG Declaration specifically enjoins on government a commitment to strong partnerships with civil society and the private sector towards the realisation of the MDGs targets (Bissio, 2003).
- b. South Africa's CSOs MDGs consultation and engagement processes can draw significant lessons from international experience of CSO involvement in MDGs beyond contributing to the writing of periodic progress reports. The Zambia Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) model of engaging multi-stakeholders (including CSOs) stands out as a model for replication both in terms of enabling multiple and diverse voices to be captured and in creating a space for debate and contestation.
- c. The Zambia example also demonstrated that an effective consultative process, is not episodic but rather a continuous process of engagement by the Government of civil society and all other stakeholders. Consultation must be an interactive and iterative process of deliberation between the Government and the civil society. It is only then that major public policy decisions can be truly transparent and accountable.
- d. The study confirmed that CSOs' engagement with MDGs processes in South Africa was generally poorly coordinated with the expectation that government would have led such a process. Where there had been significant CSO participation in MDGs it appeared to have been largely driven by the CSOs themselves.
- e. An equally important lesson is that there is no "one size fits all" approach to supporting CSOs' engagement with MDGs processes. In some country experiences CSOs formed part of the core drafting teams from the outset while in other instances they were invited to provide briefings to the drafters of the report. The manner in which the state engages civil society in the drafting of reports is equally important. It was noted that more often the process that unfolded was a top-down approach, mainly aimed at ensuring that CSOs were notified of the process but not encouraged or enabled to directly participate.
- f. The importance of establishing a coordination body which would promote stakeholder engagement on MDGs was identified as key to enabling effective participation. In South Africa this responsibility is held with Statistic South Africa. It is not known what capacity the institution has to manage this coordination function.

- g. Given the diversity and scale of CSOs participation it would be essential for civil society to be organised under an umbrella body which must be representative of all civil society voices and must ensure accountability. Although a structure was established to coordinate CSOs' input into the MDGs report and for representation in the MDG delegation to the Summit in 2013 it is not clear how the structure was established, how representative it is of civil society in South Africa nor what mechanisms are in place for ensuring and facilitating report back, communication and accountability of representatives to the stakeholders in the sector.
- h. The monitoring role of civil society is not limited to contributions to the periodic progress reporting processes. Importantly the option of civil society producing a shadow report should be considered where civil society organisations feel the country report does not present a true situation on progress in respect of MDG goals.
- i. Stakeholders were in consensus that it is important to establish common national goals that could be localised to deal with area-specific developmental problems. Indeed, the literature review study revealed that in comparison to some international experiences with MDG processes, South Africa still has some way to go before this process is well functioning. The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) model in Zambia on civil society engagement which had multiple stakeholder participation is submitted as a best practice.
- j. The study found that in South Africa and globally CSOs appeared to be engaged in predominantly service provision interventions directly addressing one or other of the MDG targets. The need to facilitate active involvement in policy advocacy and monitoring activities remains. This could have much to do with the lack of awareness of the importance and relevance of MDGs in enabling the country to meet its development priorities.
- k. The NDA did not appear to be playing an active role in enabling CSOs that it supported to participating in MDG processes or in enhancing levels of knowledge and understanding of MDGs. This was a lost opportunity and one which the NDA was well placed to serve. An example of this is the extensive support provided by the NDA to food security and income generation interventions implemented by civil society organisations as profiled in an earlier section of this report. In November 2013 the NDA hosted a food security symposium bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders including research institutions such as HSRC and universities, private sector stakeholders and

7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NDA IN STRENGTHENING CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDGS

7.2.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN CSO ENGAGEMENT WITH MDG'S

It is apparent that an enabling environment significantly influences the engagement of CSOs in different types of MDGs activities. While there appears to be increasing recognition of the role of CSOs in advancing MDGs it is noted that the sectors contribution can be maximised through actions taken by government to promote and an enabling environment.

Two key recommendations are put forward for government to consider implementing as a means for strengthening CSOs engagements with MDGs.

- c. Be purposeful in creating the means and strategies for strengthening partnership between Government and Civil Society around MDGs;
- d. Enable government to provide resources for CSOs to contribute effectively towards MDGs beyond an implementation role, towards influencing the policy, design of interventions and monitoring of MDG progress.

Ausaid has developed a framework for Civil Society Engagement which posits that for any government agency to respond to these two key recommendations it requires that they be guided by globally accepted principles for enabling effective CSOs engagement. These principles have been derived from the Istanbul Principles for CSOs Development Effectiveness (Ausaid, 2012) and are summarised below:

- a. Mutual accountability for results
- b. Open communication and consultation – recognizing that this can lead to better programmes. Facilitating shared learning – which helps all to learn from and adapt responses.
- c. Respect for independence – including protecting the right of CSOs to engage in debate without it impacting their funding status.
- d. Appreciation of diversity – acknowledging that the CSO sector is diverse and not homogenous and therein lies its strength. There must be commitment to ensuring that different perspectives are taken into account.
- e. Collaboration will enable us to reduce duplication and deliver effective aid
- f. Strengthen local systems for sustainability – build local capacity to ensure that interventions are sustained.

In addition to the suggestions noted above Malawian CSOs put forward the following points to improve the participation of civil society:

- A need to develop more structured mechanisms for engagement, and to expand the arenas where engagement occurs, such as parliamentary liaison and with the Office for Advisor to the President.
- The need for donors to designate a proportion of any funding for civil society organisations to enable their participation.

(Commonwealth Foundation, 2013)

7.2.2. Recommendations for the NDA

In terms of the NDAs contribution to strengthening civil society engagement in MDGs processes going forward a few recommendations are put forward:

Firstly, the NDA can support CSOs through creating an awareness of and the importance of CSOs' engagement with MDGs. There appears to be fairly low level of understanding MDGs and their contribution to meeting national development priorities. Actions which enhance this through

information sessions and the development and dissemination of awareness raising materials are recommended. This could be institutionalised as a core aspect of the agreement for funding by the NDA.

Secondly the NDA needs to encourage CSOs to understand and integrate MDGs actions in their programmes and their funding proposals. Civil society organisations have a very strong, localised footprint which will allow them to serve as a vanguard for promoting the localisation of MDGs. They should be encouraged to engage with local municipalities about their Integrated Development Plans to ensure that the plans are aligned to MDGs. Providing training and support to NDA funded civil society organisations to understand how their work relates to and can contribute to MDGs will facilitate this and could be included as an objective to be delivered as part of their funding agreement.

Thirdly, as a key institution in government, the NDA needs to engage with government coordinating structures, in this instance Statistics South Africa to facilitate meaningful engagement of CSOs on the various structures and processes beyond mere consultation. This includes involving CSOs in the design of MDG interventions, development of plans for scaling up interventions as well as the regular monitoring and evaluation of interventions towards meeting MDG targets.

Fourthly, the NDA is encouraged to design interventions which support CSOs to engage in policy advocacy interventions. South Africa has a rich history of CSOs policy advocacy experience on a range of issues, the best known of which is the activism in respect of HIV and AIDS which was led by CSOs such as Treatment Action Campaign. Drawing on the lessons of that and other more recent advocacy actions around quality education provides a rich bedrock of learning for enhancing the sectors advocacy and monitoring capacity. Providing training on advocacy and monitoring and evaluation for NDA funded organisations would be examples of the kind of support which could be provided by the NDA. South Africa civil society has a rich resource base of manuals, toolkits and guides on advocacy work which the NDA could draw on. Some examples of this including the media advocacy training which Soul City, a health and media NGO provides or the Advocacy Board game produced by the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS).

Fifthly, the NDA could support and facilitate processes for civil society stakeholders to come together to advocate for and to monitor government progress in meeting MDG targets. The NDA is extensively involved in supporting food security interventions targeted to the rural poor, especially for women (female households), the elderly, persons with disabilities, children and child-headed households.

According to the NDA, its strategic food security interventions are focussed on-:

- a) Funding of agricultural projects (providing grants to food security related community-based projects)
 - Partnering with organisations that are engaged in food security activities ((resource sharing and collaboration)
 - Capacity building (skilling people to effectively use the land they have at their disposal for food production etc.)
 - Research (continuously monitoring the food security status)
 - Facilitate stakeholder dialogue
 - Policy development, lobbying and advocacy

In October 2013, the NDA hosted a "Household Food Security Symposium" in partnership with UNISA and HSRC aimed at mobilising role players in the sector to develop actions towards addressing

household food insecurity in South Africa. A key resolution of this symposium was the need for a coordinated response from a multi-stakeholder alliance to advance food and nutrition security in South Africa. Given that this focus aligns fully with MDG 1 the NDA is well placed to support such an initiative and is recommended to consider this with the view to involving its civil society partners in this initiative.

8. CONCLUSION

While it is clearly acknowledged that governments have to take the lead in MDGs processes, it is also evident that other stakeholders including civil society and the private sector have distinct and equally important roles to play.

The experience of the past years with CSOs and MDGs in South Africa has illustrated the importance of adapting the goal targets to suit our country specific development challenges. This is more important now as we are about to embark on the next phase in the post 2015 agenda. Given the fragmented nature of engagement of CSOs in the past as evidenced by the findings contained in this report, it will be opportune to implement the recommendations in order to transcend the issues confronting the country before.

Given the diversity of the country, and to reflect the different challenges in the different regions (e.g. provinces), one pertinent recommendation will be to cascade the country reports and produce provincial MDGs reports. These provincial reports could precede the national reports, which is where current engagement with CSOs and MDGs is focused at. All this while taking cognisance of the diversity of CSOs in South Africa and understanding that different CSOs will contribute in different ways towards the realization of MDGs. This engagement therefore needs to allow for other forms of participation, such as advocacy and monitoring and evaluation. Employing a 'one size fits all' engagement strategy, as has previously been done, will constrain rather than enable effective CSOs' engagements with MDGs.

Bissio (2003, p8) contends that "the vibrant mobilisation of civil society around a strategy that is inspirational and viable is an asset that may be too difficult to measure, but essential for real changes". Strengthening CSO engagement with MDGs requires the political will of government. CSOs have the capacity to serve multiple and often contradictory roles including undertaking service delivery interventions on the one hand while engaging in policy advocacy to pressure for government for change. This is a challenge particularly when the relationship between government and CSOs is complex and often adversarial and with the recognition of the vast differentials in power that exist between the state and CSOs.

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ANNEXURE 1

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World Vision
Yatsar Centre
Ntataise
Vukukhanye
Soil for Life
Institute for Global Dialogue
<u>Key informants</u>
United Nations Development Programme
Human Sciences Research Council
Department of Social Development
<u>Civil Society Organisations who Attended UN MDG Summit</u>
National Alliance of NGO's in South Africa - National Representative
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