

“Meeting the Millennium Development Goals: Old Problems, New Challenges”

Panel Proposal: MDGs and R2P: Exploring the Links

The purpose of this panel is to highlight the many links between the goals of the Responsibility to Protect and those of the Millennium Development Goals. At both a theoretical level and through the discussion of case studies, the panel will explore the interrelationship between responsible sovereignty and the achievement of the MDGs. It will also consider the role of both long-term strategies and focussed interventions in meeting the goals of each program.

Topics

R2P and MDG: Commonalities and Opportunities for Collaboration

Deborah Mayersen

The Responsibility to Protect and the Millennium Development Goals represent two of the most ambitious United Nations projects in support of human rights. Fundamentally discrete projects, there is nevertheless considerable overlap in the kinds of actions needed in pursuit of each. While many of the MDG require long term strategies, for example, they are also at risk of severe disruption from the eruption of political and economic crises. Similarly, while R2P is often conceived of in terms of focussed interventions during such crises, its most important component – the responsibility to prevent – emphasises the key contribution of longer term, pre-crisis risk-amelioration strategies in the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. Factors such as good governance, economic development and environmental sustainability impact on the prospects of both MDG and R2P in any given nation. Marked deterioration in statistics of national debt, maternal and infant mortality and youth unemployment represent challenges to the MDG, but can also be harbingers of genocide or mass atrocity – as well as its legacy. This paper will explore the complex interrelationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the Responsibility to Protect, with a view to identifying opportunities to collaborate in the pursuit of these vital goals.

Botswana, R2P and the MDGs

Stephen McLoughlin

Botswana has been hailed by many as achieving a ‘growth miracle’ – with the economy expanding at a rapid rate since independence in 1966, in a region where bad governance and political upheaval has been responsible for setting GDP and development back for decades. While it has enjoyed high levels of export revenue from an abundance of diamond deposits, the existence of natural resources alone is not a sufficient explanation for the consistency of its economic growth. Behind this success has been the provision of improvements to infrastructure and social services such as health and education, as well as ensuring, through good governance and the rule of law, the preservation of individual and property rights. Such policies not only aid development, they significantly decrease the risk of rebellion and

upheaval, and subsequently the commission of mass atrocity crimes. Despite this, there are some notable problems with the country's development. Official unemployment is more than twenty per cent, one in three people live in poverty, and the country has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world. In addition, the government's continued efforts to remove the San Bushmen from traditional ancestral lands has resulted in the inclusion of Botswana on Genocide Watch's 2008 list as a nation at moderate risk. These strengths and weaknesses make Botswana an interesting case study to consider. Although there are still many obstacles to meeting some of the MDGs there, the low risk of instability and upheaval provide a good basis to attain them. Botswana is a clear example of the symbiotic relationship between economic growth and political stability. Using the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect's framework for the causes of mass atrocities, it will be demonstrated that the same factors conducive to economic growth have also been successful in mitigating inequalities that currently exist. This presentation seeks to highlight the links between MDGs and R2P by demonstrating that the same qualities of good governance, transparent democracy and the provision of social services are also instrumental in keeping checks on the conditions that are conducive to the commission of mass atrocities.

Underdevelopment, conflict and mass atrocity crimes: When states fail to prevent

Steph Cousins

Oxfam has extensive experience in development programming and responding to disasters and emergencies. Often the need for our services is a consequence of lack of government capacity or will to ensure all citizens, regardless of who they are, enjoy basic human rights and freedoms. Furthermore our poverty reduction work is often conducted in contexts where there is instability, conflict and at the worst end of the spectrum, mass atrocities being committed.

Our experience tells us that poverty and conflict mutually reinforce one another. Nevertheless, the international community, donors and humanitarian actors often fail to address the cycle because development and conflict work is separated out into their own monolithic silos. Oxfam has supported the implementation of R2P and the MDGs – and we are working hard to advocate for governments to live up to their commitments accordingly. We take the view that R2P is about preventing as much as ending mass atrocities, and helping to rebuild post-conflict societies to prevent further atrocities in the future. We believe that we must address the drivers of poverty, conflict and mass atrocity crimes committed both in peace and in wartime simultaneously in order to improve peoples' human security and enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

This presentation will highlight the relationship between the deprivation of marginalised peoples and the committing of mass atrocity crimes, based on Oxfam's experience in the horn and Central Africa. In all cases, deprivation of marginalised peoples is a precondition to the triggering of conflict and mass atrocity crimes, which again causes further deprivation. In order to break the cycle donors must ensure that development programming in pursuit of the MDGs is sensitive to conflict, and addresses the root causes of marginalisation. Furthermore, development practitioners have a role in predicting and preventing mass atrocities, by highlighting the deprivation of marginalised groups and ringing alarm bells when signs show violence is imminent. The presentation will cover some of the work Oxfam is doing in collaboration with other NGOs to begin predicting and preventing mass atrocities through our advocacy and international development work. In future the pursuit of development goals and

the prevention of conflict and mass atrocities must converge in order to ensure the human rights of all peoples, everywhere, are met.

Contributors

Deborah Mayersen

Dr. Deborah Mayersen is the Program Leader – Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities at the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, The University of Queensland. She has conducted considerable research on factors that influence the timing of genocide, and factors that both precipitate and inhibit its onset. Currently she is commencing a project on the role of political will in genocide prevention.

Stephen McLoughlin

Stephen McLoughlin is a researcher in the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, University of Queensland. He is currently doing a PhD on the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities, as well as working on an ARC-funded project on the early warning of mass atrocities in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Steph Cousins

Steph Cousins is the Humanitarian Advocacy Officer at Oxfam Australia. Her work focuses on advocating for changes to policies and practices so that men and women in humanitarian crises receive the assistance and protection they deserve and the underlying causes of conflict and disaster are addressed before emergency strikes.

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