

Policy Brief

Copenhagen Social Summit ten years on: The need for effective social policies nationally, regionally and globally

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*This policy brief addresses the question of what action is now needed ten years after the Copenhagen Social Summit to meet the commitments entered into in 1995, in the light of the subsequent articulation in 2000 of the Millennium Development Goals and the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization in 2004. We argue that the time is now ripe for the UN system to promote and seek to secure effective **social policies** at national, regional and global levels to hasten the advancement of the meeting of the Copenhagen Commitments and the MDGs. The brief goes on to emphasize the need to assess the role of social policies in processes of development and the necessity to consider social policies as a part of broader set of public policies rather than merely as relief of poverty. Social policies are about fair and just societies, human rights, reciprocity, and the enhancement of human security. Global, regional and national social policies are needed to secure the **'three Rs' of redistribution, regulation and rights** which are fundamental to our wider social vision. These policies should provide for:*

- systematic resource **redistribution** between countries and within regions and countries to enable poorer countries to meet human needs,
- effective supranational **regulation** to ensure that there is a social purpose in the global economy, and
- enforceable social **rights** that enable citizens and residents to seek legal redress where necessary against unjust or ineffective governments at whatever level.

The three R are mutually dependent, each upon the others. Social rights in some poorer countries can only be secured if a) resources are redistributed between countries and b) international business activities everywhere are effectively regulated.

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Earlier topics covered by the briefs:

1 Global Social Governance Reform by Bob Deacon

2 Global Health-Related Public-Private Partnerships and the United Nations by Eeva Ollila

3 The Impact of WTO Agreements on Health and Development Policies by Meri Koivusalo

4 International Non-State Actors and Social Development Policy by Paul Stubbs

5 Public-Private Partnerships and Health for All. How can WHO safeguard public interests? by Judith Richter

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The Copenhagen Commitments

Ten years have passed since the World Summit for Social Development, held from March 6-12, 1995 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Reflecting upon developments since Copenhagen this

policy brief argues that more effective social policies at national, regional and global levels are needed if the commitments made ten years ago are to be met. The case is made for reclaiming and reframing social policies to secure the future of social development.

The Copenhagen Declaration made ten commitments (*See Box*). These commitments were agreed and signed by 117 Heads of State or Government. They set the agenda for the Copenhagen Programme of Action which followed. The commitments set a challenge that is still to be met.

After Copenhagen: MDGs, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and PRSPs.

In terms of actual global social progress since Copenhagen there have been advances and set

backs. Some global indicators have improved: poverty has been reduced on aggregate, there are more women elected to government office, educational enrolment has increased as has, on aggregate life expectancy. On the other hand within some regions such as Africa and the former Soviet Union there have been increases in poverty levels and a reduction in life expectancy. Inequality continues to be a significant feature of global social life. At the same time there has been increased complexity in the architecture of global governance with the WTO becoming a major player and the UN

system adding new players and processes as part of its reform processes.

The Copenhagen social development agenda was to some extent broadened in the Geneva 2000 follow-up meeting and some aspects of it were given prominence as part of the Millennium Declaration and in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs contribute to the Copenhagen commitments in giving a time line by which some of the commitments are to be met as well as emphasizing again in MDG 8 (as in. Copenhagen 8) the responsibility of the international community to creating the global policy framework within which these targets might be more readily met and insisting that they be accompanied by a regular and visible monitoring process. On the other hand by emphasizing access of the poor to only **basic** education and health services the MDGs risk detracting from the broader Copenhagen commitment (no. 9 above) to **universal** access to education and primary health care. The MDGs are essentially outcome targets which contain no discussion of the means of achieving and sustaining them. In the context of the follow-up of the Copenhagen process it is clear that within the UN there is support and scope for a more comprehensive approach to social development issues. This is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General to the February 2005 Commission for Social Development (ECOSOC 2004) as well as in the address of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in the Third Committee where it was articulated that:

“In the context of an equity-enhancing growth strategy, other fundamental aspects of development, such as employment, education, health care and social integration, including adequate and stable funding for social policies and programmes, need to be forcefully brought back into policy formulation, if the causes of poverty and not merely the symptoms are to be successfully addressed”.
(DESA 2004)

The publication in February 2004 of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (WCSDG) commissioned by the ILO (2004) marked a further significant step forward in the global discourse taking place within and between international organizations about the management of globalization and how the world

Copenhagen Declaration Commitments

1. Eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country
2. Support full employment as a basic policy goal
3. Promote social integration based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights
4. Achieve equality and equity between women and men
5. Accelerate the development of Africa and the least developed countries
6. Ensure that structural adjustment programmes include social development goals
7. Increase resources allocated to social development
8. Create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development
9. Attain universal and equitable access to education and primary health care and
10. Strengthen cooperation for social development through the United Nations

might secure international social justice and effective social development. Its analysis and recommendations represent a shift from the earlier dominance in the globalization discourse and practice of the 1990s of the neo-liberal paradigm towards something which is much more recognisable as a global social market.

At the same time the World Bank has shifted policy and practice towards countries seeking debt relief from one of strict policy conditionality (which was usually a residual social policy conditionality) to one of requiring at least formally only that countries have in place a poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) that has been derived through consultation with affected social partners. In this sense the PRSPs do point in the direction of Copenhagen commitment 6. However Charles Gore (2004) of UNCTAD has recently suggested that the change is more formal than real and that

“no matter how much country-level officials from the World Bank and IMF stand back to enable national ownership, national officials find it difficult to take the risk of putting forward a poverty reduction strategy that is unorthodox in terms of prevailing notions of sound social policy reform”.

So the question of what social policies should be argued for at different levels of governance to secure effective and equitable social development is the crux of the matter.

Social Policies as Public Policies -From Targeting to Universalism

The Copenhagen declaration and agenda drew attention to the importance of the commitment to social policies in a comprehensive way that has not been so clearly articulated since. As an essential part of the social policy agenda it also emphasized the need to attain universal and equitable access to education and primary health care. This is in line with the growing evidence with respect to the effectiveness of universal social provision in comparison to targeted provision in meeting social needs (Mehrotra and Jolly 1997, Mkandawire 2004).

Social policies are part of broader public policies and essentially deal with the means and ways in which services, such as health and education, are provided, how social protection is organised and what kind of redistributive

measures need to take place to secure adequate financing for these services. Social policies are also therefore primarily about the ways in which distribution and redistribution takes place and the ways in which inequalities between different social, ethnic, area or age groups and between men and women are tackled in a society. The ways in which education, health and social security are organised has a fundamental relevance to citizens and their sense of human security.

The traditional great division in social policy debates has been between two approaches. The first promotes social policies as an important aspect of public policy with an emphasis on universal access to services and a focus on equity and distributional issues. This emphasis on social policies has been known as the institutional redistributive model according to Titmuss or as the social democratic model of social policies as addressed in the context of the welfare regime theory of Esping-Andersen (1990). The second approach advocates what is commonly known as “neo-liberal” welfare policies, which emphasize the importance of economic growth as a means of social progress and sees social policies as a residual measure to address the plight of the poorest and most vulnerable.

In the context of globalization the neo-liberal model has clearly been the predominant mainstream social policy model argued for by the World Bank and others with an emphasis on targeting publicly funded services for the poor and leaving the rest to private markets. This model has further been strengthened through the emphasis on the role of private welfare actors both commercial and voluntary agencies and nongovernmental organizations in maintaining and providing social services.

Both Peter Townsend (2004) and Judith Tendler (2004) have drawn attention to the domination within recent global social policy discourse concerning desirable national social policies of this concept of safety nets. Townsend charts the post Second World War rise of the Keynesian influence on social development policy and its subsequent demise and replacement by an era of the residualisation of social policy. He goes on to argue the case for a reconsideration of a universal approach to social welfare development and for reforms in the global governance architecture that might bring this about. Judith Tendler asks why social policy has been condemned to a residual category of safety nets and suggests this had to do, in part at least, with the projectisation of international

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aid and the large role played by NGOs in this activity.

Four reasons might be offered for the decline of the idea of universalism. Globalization as we have suggested in terms of the form it took in the 1980s and 1990s was primarily a neo-liberal political project born at the height of the transatlantic Thatcher-Reagan alliance. This flavoured the anti-public provision discourse about social policy within countries and contributed to a challenge to the idea of the EU's social policy agenda. Secondly, the collapse of the communist project coinciding as it did with the height of neo-liberalism gave a further push to the rise of the role of the markets. Thirdly, the globalization process as it became realized increased the movement of capital and the size and power of transnational corporations, which led to short-term policies aimed primarily at holding and attracting investments at the expense of social policies. At the same time social policies came to be seen as an adjunct to and similar to economic and financial policies emphasizing consumer choices in providing savings and in terms of individuals responding to risks. Fourthly, and most importantly, the perceived negative social consequences of globalization generated a new concern for the poor. This concern became reflected in targeted measures and the need to ensure that public resources are geared towards only the poorest.

The decline of universalism was also related to the relative roles of international organizations and especially the growing importance of the policies of the World Bank and the IMF in the social sphere. In the name of meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor the "premature" or "partial" welfare states of Latin America, South Asia and Africa (that the ILO had been so influential in building) were challenged as serving only the interests of a small privileged work force and elite state employees. A new alliance was to be struck between the Bank and the poor (See Graham 1994, Deacon 1997). The analysis of the privileged and exclusionary nature of these provisions made by the Bank was accurate. However, by destroying the public state services for this middle class in the name of the poor, the politics of solidarity - which requires the middle class to have a self-interest in public provision which they fund - was made more difficult. The beneficiary index measures of the Bank showing how tertiary education spending and urban hospital provision benefited the elite contributed in no small measure to

this development (Baldwin 1990). Once again American exceptionalism (in this case in terms of its residual welfare state) was sold as the desirable norm.

However, there are signs of a shift in the global discourse leading to a reassertion of the politics of social solidarity and universalism. A number of developments reflected in recent reports and publications from International Organizations, including the ILO, WHO, UNESCO, UNRISD, UN/DESA, UNDP and even some parts of the World Bank suggest that the case is again being put for finding ways of implementing universal public provisioning as part of an equitable social policy (Deacon 2004). These developments are not only present due to an increasing recognition of social rights and more equitable policy approaches, but also result from the technical and practical consequences of policies practiced. The realities of the practice of two-tier services, including the problems of targeting in low-income rural settings have gained more attention recently. At the end of the day, *services for the poor also tend to become poor services.*

Social policies are essentially about cross-subsidisation between rich and poor people and a balancing of risks and resources. Pro-poor policies cannot take place without addressing these crucial aspects. Mechanisms of resource gathering and financing of social policies do have distributional impacts as they set the ways in which social security, health services and educational services are organised. Targeting those poorest cannot be the sole strategy for social development especially in countries where differences between poor and non-poor are not large and in which both poor and non-poor are equally unable to cover, for example, the high costs of health care. Targeting can be a useful adjunct to universal policies in order to ensure equity, but cannot become a substitute.

Globalization and the Social Impact of Economic Policies: The Case for Global Social Policies

Just as social protection cannot be treated merely as a means of individuals addressing their individual risks, but must be about ensuring that these are pooled; so individual countries and especially poorer ones should not be left to cope with their own risks. There is a need for risk pooling and redistributive effort at supranational and global levels. Social

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policies are about human security, not about business prospects or increasing savings or investment opportunities. There is a danger that as part of the globalization process the risks of investors and corporations become increasingly reduced, shared and cushioned through international negotiation processes on trade and investment and at the same time the risks for citizens remain or become increasingly individualised in the name of portability, mobility and streamlining of public budgets. The conflict of interest between industrial and corporate aims and public health and health policy driven aims have, for example, become a global concern in the context of discussions and debates on access to pharmaceuticals and the ways in which research and development funds are allocated. It is becoming increasingly clear that there are common global interests in health that require reassessment of the current policies on intellectual property rights and commercial producers.

There is an increasing global concern at the strengthening of economic rights and the weakening and “localizing” of social rights and entitlements. There is also a growing recognition that inequalities within and between countries have increased and are increasing due to the current economic integration process. It is also clear that mechanisms for global redistribution are not used sufficiently. Tax-havens are allowed in spite of the growing evidence of the negative implications of these practices. *Global economic policies cannot be matched only with “national” or “local” social policies.* It is therefore important to ensure that social policies and policy priorities are articulated also at the global level. Global social policies of redistribution, regulation and rights are needed.

Global Redistribution, Regulation and Rights

The Report of the Secretary-General to the Commission for Social Development has addressed social policies in the context of the review of the Copenhagen Summit emphasizing the task of proper integration of economic and social policies, a better understanding and management of the social dimensions of globalization and the renewed conception of the relations between the public and the private spheres and of the role of states in the formulation and implementation of social policies (para 232, ECOSOC 2004). Inequalities and equity were also reflected in the statement

of the Under-Secretary-General to the Third Committee, which emphasized that

“The social aspects of globalization, the contribution of economic policies to social development goals, and the capacity of national Governments to define and implement their own social policies, are related problems that are at the core of the search for equity and reduction of poverty and inequality. They deserve particular attention in the context of the ten-year review of Copenhagen and the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration.”
(DESA 2004)

None-the-less the issue of global (and national) redistribution has not yet become a central feature of the global policy agenda, yet many of the proposed policies do have redistributive impacts both within and between countries. As part of global social policy agenda redistribution can be tackled at two levels: 1) In terms of necessary measures to redistribute resources between countries at global and regional level and 2) In terms of ensuring that global measures, agreements and policies allow and enable redistributive policies within countries. While the former is usually discussed only in terms of aid policies, we can envisage as alternatives to aid different types of global resource gathering and most importantly global taxation efforts. The latter involves permitting national policies to address redistribution issues with public policies dealing with land ownership, investments, financial resources, savings, taxation and provision of public services.

In the context of widening global inequity there is a case for establishing a global levy through international taxation and other means, such as abolishing tax havens, which has now also reached the agenda of the G8 (Labonte et al 2004). In terms of global resource gathering, the UNU/WIDER has recently published a book discussing various mechanisms to gain new resources for the support of Millennium Development Goals (Atkinson 2004). The role of private charity and donations has become more important during last years, but does have its limits. It is likely that steps towards a formal system of global redistribution that might eventually involve a Global Tax Authority and a mechanism for distribution of these resources which will build upon firstly existing ad hoc mechanisms and secondly proposals for such mechanisms that are already within the global

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policy debate.

In terms of *global social regulation* the role of the ILO and other UN specialised agencies need to become more central. The strengthening of UN agencies and their role in standard setting, ensuring respect for social rights and allowing policy space for social policies in the context of trade policies is now on the global agenda. A crucial question is the direction in which the emerging global social regulation will evolve and develop. The UN Global Compact encourages the voluntary adoption of international soft regulations for international corporations. It has been argued that voluntary and corporate driven regulatory measures have major problems and are questionable in terms of their regulatory capacity and aims. Such voluntary and corporate driven measures have been seen as poor substitute for compulsory global business regulation and indeed its existence may be seen as a block on such developments.

Globalization has also been recently discussed in the context of *global human and social rights* within the United Nations at the 59th Session (UN 2004). Major debates in the context of priorities of public health policies and global commercial rights have taken place - and continue - in the context of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Social rights have always been more problematic than human rights as their realisation requires addressing social needs and involve resource commitments to public policies. The Geneva based International Council on Human Rights Policy has recently reviewed the issue (ICHRP 2003). The review concludes that a major factor in the promulgation and realisation of international rights to secure global social justice is not so much the absence of agreement on the foundation of such internationally recognised rights rather it is “political and administrative capacity”.

“We may be fully aware that economic and social rights are being violated.. (but) the point at which transnational obligations break down..is..the incapacity of decision making and administrative systems to cope with the additional complexity of working outside the traditional national frameworks of governance and decision making that manage most societies and which underpin the international frameworks of governance that have involved”.
(ICHRP 2003: 75)

World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization

The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (WCSDG) addressed some of the aspects of the social dimension of globalization and made global economic and social policy proposals.

In terms of *global social redistribution* the report continues to side step the issue of global taxation but argues that; ‘A greater effort of resource mobilization at the international level is a basic requirement. The commitment to the target of 0.7% of GDP for ODA must at long last be respected (para. 453-458). A wide range of options for additional sources of funding should also be actively considered (para. 471-472). The potential of voluntary private contributions and philanthropic endeavours for global solidarity should be more fully tapped (para. 471-472)’. Interestingly it argues that “international action is likewise needed to support national social protection systems, in order to ensure that there is a minimum level of social protection in the global economy (para. 488-491)”.

In terms of *global social regulation* the report argued; “The rules of the global economy should be aimed at improving the rights, livelihoods, security and opportunities of people, families and communities around the world. That includes fair rules for trade, finance and investment, measures to strengthen respect for core labour standards, and a coherent framework for the cross-border movement of people (para. 361-367)”. It continues treading delicately around the ILO/WTO social clause/ labour standards issue by saying that; “The capacity of the ILO to promote respect for core labour standards should be reinforced. All relevant international organizations should assume their responsibility to promote these standards and ensure that their policies and programmes do not impede their realization (para. 426)”.

In terms of *global social rights* some of the above points also apply. In addition it is to be noted that the report links the issue of social rights to the resources needed for their realisation in practice: “Education, health, human rights, the environment and gender equality should all be addressed through an integrated approach to economic and social goals” (para. 511–514). The report does not only discuss fundamental workers rights, but

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also raises decent work for all as the aim for a global strategy and national policies. Decent work, in the context of the report, encompasses full employment, social protection, fundamental rights at work and social dialogue, which are all seen as key ingredients for achieving global social justice (para 492).

Global Social Governance

The realisation of “global social policies” requires reform to the existing architecture of global social governance in order to move progressively towards the implementation of global policies of redistribution, regulation and rights (Deacon 2003). Competition between the World Bank and the ILO, WHO, UNESCO and UNDP for which agency (the Bank or UN) is to act as the effective global ministries of social protection, health, education and development needs to be replaced by effective co-operation under agreed UN policies. Regional forms of governance need to be strengthened especially in relation to social policies.

The report on governing globalization (Foster 2005) from the track on “New Approaches to Global Problem Solving” in the Helsinki Process has raised three deficits that need to be overcome in global governance arrangements if we are to move forward. These are, firstly, “democracy” deficits as power is concentrated in the hands of a few governments (e.g G8), secondly, “coherence” deficits between Ministries within governments leading to conflicting international obligations, and we would add conflicting international organizations, and thirdly, “compliance” deficits as international institutions are failing to implement decisions they make. It is clear that these three deficits apply in the context of global social governance and global social policies.

Conclusions

There has been some progress towards meeting the commitments of the Copenhagen Summit since 1995. The MDGs are a clear declaration of the time scale for international action. However, more debate is needed on the proper means of achieving the MDGs as part of a more comprehensive and sustainable social policy agenda. It is thus necessary to be able to focus beyond MDGs on the structures, mechanisms and means of ensuring that both

action on MDGs as well as their realisation is sustainable and accompanied by broader social development. The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has put various global governance reform issues on the agenda and continued in many ways the Copenhagen spirit of broader articulation of social policies and policy concerns. However, its future relevance is dependent on the extent to which the process is continued and given emphasis at the global level. There is a danger that while reforms in global economic and trade policies proceed on the basis of negotiated agreements, the social dimensions of globalization remain recognised merely in reports and declarations. It is also clear that while encouraging new initiatives on global financing mechanisms have emerged, the issue of redistribution remains mostly untouched and feeds into growing social inequalities at all levels of governance. There is thus a need to reclaim social policies at all levels of governance as well as to ensure that national policy space for social policies remains and is respected in the context of economic and trade policies. Economic policies are - at the end of the day - a means to promote human well-being.

In the sphere of social policies there is an international shift back towards the recognition of the importance of universalism as a social policy principle. It is also increasingly recognised that the way in which social services and social policies are organised in a country do fundamentally matter to human security as well as to social and economic development. Social policies are about human security, prevention of hunger, illness and epidemics, redistribution of resources and pooling of risks as well as ensuring that all people are able to use their capacities on the basis of access to education, knowledge and skills. They are thus an essential part of public policies and require pooling of risks and resources beyond individuals, families and communities.

The shortcomings of the current global economic and trading architecture have gained greater recognition and also common social concerns have become more evident. The challenge for the future is in finding a way towards strengthening social and political alliances across the world to address these common concerns and to strengthen the UN with its own independent source of finance so that it is able to better address issues of *redistribution* and *regulation* globally and ensure the aspirations for the set of global social

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rights embodied in UN commitments are realised.

The report of the Secretary-General to the 43rd Commission for Social Development concludes in chapter 4 with a number of suggestions that the Commission may wish to recommend to the General Assembly through ECOSOC when it deliberates in February 2005 on progress towards meeting the Copenhagen Commitments. The recommendations in paragraph 234 dealing with “Strengthening the prospects of an enabling environment for people-centred development” are in our view the heart of the matter. These echo and develop some of the thinking behind the important 8th MDG target to develop a global partnership for development.

It suggests among other points:

- international action to support national capacity to restore the regulatory capacity of public institutions and restore the balance between the public interest and market forces;
- support for macro-economic policies at national level to counter the negative aspects of globalization and ensure effective fiscal policies for counter-cyclical purposes and

poverty alleviation;

- the establishment of a global minimum standard for social protection;
- reforms in the global financial architecture;
- greater coherence in international economic and social policies; and
- the generation of new finances for development.

All of these are important measures. This policy brief has suggested that for these measures to be realised:

- a more systematic approach to redistribution, social regulation and social rights needs to be advanced within the institutions of global and regional social governance;
- a more concerted approach to restoring universalism as a principle of social policy needs to be advanced at national level for countries at all levels of development; and
- a more concerted attempt needs to be made to strengthen fiscal capacity and to raise resources through taxation at global, regional and national level to underpin effective social policies at each level.

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