Our story begins way back in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 at a global conference that is now referred to as the “Earth Summit.”

At this meeting, decision-makers from around the world came together for the first time to discuss solutions for global problems such as poverty, war and the growing gap between industrialized and developing countries. At the centre of this discussion was the question of how to relieve pressures on the global environment through sustainable development.

This meeting was the beginning of the global development agenda.

In 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the world came together once more to solidify its commitment to global development.

The Millennium Declaration that was agreed upon at the Summit led to the MDGs. The eight MDGs, were agreed upon by all Member States and leading development institutions from 2000–2015.

Here’s an overview of the eight goals:

Source: www.healthpovertyaction.org/policy-and-resources/millennium-development-goals
First, here’s a quick summary of the early stages of the global development discussion.

The MDGs ensured that national development plans were aligned with a global development agenda, and they did an incredible job of focusing attention, resources and money on the issues that they covered. As a result, a huge amount of progress has been made in areas like poverty reduction and primary education, but this progress varies widely from country to country.

However, this focus also meant that the issues not covered by the MDGs (issues like finance, climate change and sexual health) were left off the agenda, and they have struggled to get sufficient attention over the entire life of the MDGs.

Progress towards the MDGs also is uneven across the different goals, and it varies between countries and communities, meaning that some goals are much closer to being reached than others.

Finally, over the past few years—as efforts have accelerated to ensure that meaningful progress is made—the world has begun the crucial and daunting business of setting a new development agenda to build on the MDGs. This is the post-2015 development agenda, which we’ll now go on to explore.

The Earth Summit, officially titled “The UN Conference on Environment and Development” (UNCED), took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The summit focused on three broad concepts: an “Earth Charter” covering a number of principles aimed at development and the protection of the environment; “Agenda 21,” a global action plan for sustainable development; and a substantial increase in new funding for sustainable development in the Global South. The foundations for ongoing civil society participation in UN development processes also were established at The Earth Summit. For more on the original Earth Summit, visit www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html.

Rio+20—or “The UN Conference on Sustainable Development”—took place in Rio in June 2012, and it looked back on 20 years of sustainable development efforts that had taken place since the Earth Summit. Rio+20 also tried to lay the groundwork for the development of a new set of global sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Summit resulted in The future we want, an outcome document signed by participants at Rio+20 that expresses their continued commitment (and that of their government or organization) to sustainable development.


The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) began in 1994, when 179 governments adopted a 20-year Programme of Action that covers issues of gender inequality and poverty, health, educational attainment and sustainable economic development. Much like the MDGs, the Programme of Action is about to expire in 2014, and governments are considering ways in which the post-2015 agenda might incorporate the next steps of the ICPD for SRHR, gender and HIV.


The Millennium Declaration was agreed upon by UN Member States at the UN headquarters in New York in 2000; this led to the creation of the eight MDGs. Then, in 2010, the MDG Summit adopted a global action plan that announced new funding, resources and initiatives against poverty, hunger and disease. In the final countdown to the 2015 expiration date of the MDGs, efforts are accelerating to ensure that targets are attained.

To find out more about the history of the MDGs, the progress they have enabled and the next steps for completing them, visit www.un.org/millenniumgoals and www.odi.org.uk/programmes/development-progress.
Since 2010, momentum has been building in the international community towards creating not only a new set of goals, but a new global development agenda. At the 2010 MDG Summit, UN Member States decided to kick off the discussion on what would replace the MDGs.

Then, at Rio+20 in 2012, Member States also launched the negotiation process for a set of SDGs that would succeed the MDGs.

Simultaneously, governments also have been exploring issues of population, health and equality through the ICPD process (see the table on the previous page).

It is hoped that the new development agenda will find a way to encompass all of these tracks, and perhaps even more (e.g. climate change negotiations or world trade issues!)

Alongside all of these governmental efforts, the UN and civil society have been working to build a common vision for post-2015 through multiple consultations—a vision that is shared by both rich and poor, north and south, government, civil society and the private sector. We think you’ll agree that it is no easy task!

This has been very different to the way in which the Millennium Development Goals were created. They have often been criticized as being the result of a top-down process, with limited participation from governments (let alone from citizens, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders).

The process has been a complex one so far. A wide range of voices has contributed over the past few years, with young perspectives at the heart of the process. Ideas have been shared on both the broad principles of a new development framework and the more technical challenges of how to address specific issues within it (issues such as health, the environment, distribution of resources, etc.).

A series of global, regional and national consultations were initiated in early 2012 by the UN and civil society organizations (such as Beyond 2015) to seek people’s views on the new development agenda. UN country consultations have taken place in at least 80 countries, while nine thematic consultations have taken place online, hosted on the World We Want website: http://www.worldwewant2015.org/.

Civil society organizations, especially NGOs, also have led consultations with many different stakeholders. Consultations led by (and for) young people have featured prominently. These include:

- National youth consultations on post-2015 have happened in over 12 countries globally, with governance, human rights, employment, the environment and others emerging as top priorities. See the report at www.youthpost2015.org.
- The World We Want website hosted an online consultation on youth and inequality. You can read the results at www.worldwewant2015.org/node/290113.
- Over 1.4 million people—half of whom have been young people—have voted in the MyWorld survey. Participate now at www.myworld2015.org.


The UN High-Level Panel on Post-2015 (HLP) was announced by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2012 to guide the process of establishing a new framework for post-2015 development. The three co-chairs of the HLP were the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the President of Liberia and the President of Indonesia. The HLP carried out three outreach meetings to source input from civil society: in London (Nov 2012), Monrovia (Feb 2013) and Bali (March 2014). This research resulted in their report, A New global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development, which sets minimum standards for the next steps of the post-2015 process.

Young people were highly active in the HLP process from start to finish, and in May 2013, they wrote an open letter to summarize their top priorities. The letter was co-signed by some 60+ youth organizations around the world, and it succeeded in securing youth priorities throughout the HLP report, which was celebrated for its praise of youth-led development.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) began to debate and discuss the format and contents of the post-2015 development agenda. In September 2013, the UNGA produced an outcome document on post-2015 that committed Member State governments to creating a universal post-2015 framework that would combine SDGs with poverty eradication MDGs and be applicable to all countries. Young people attended the meeting, influenced governments and strategized on next steps. Read more about the UNGA and youth involvement at www.youthpolicy.org/development/2013/09/17/whats-happening-in-new-york-understanding-the-un-general-assembly and http://restlessdevelopment.org/news/2013/09/30/restless-at-the-un-general-assembly.

The UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) was created at Rio+20, and it is a group of 70+ Member States who have been tasked with preparing a proposal on SDGs, which will be ready in mid-2014. The OWG is co-chaired by Ambassador Körösi of Hungary and Ambassador Kamau of Kenya. Their first phase of work (which concluded in February 2014) gathered input on over 17 thematic issues (including transport, oceans and health) through keynote addresses, briefing papers by the UN Technical Support Team, interactive panel discussions with civil society and national statements. The Major Group for Children & Youth (MGCY), which is the UN constituency of children and young people engaged in post-2015, has been supporting youth participation in the OWG. Together, they’ve drafted interventions, run youth training sessions and developed a unified voice on priorities for next steps. Learn about the sustainable development track at http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org, and read about youth participation in the process by visiting http://childrenyouth.org.
The consultation process is coming to an end, and soon the intergovernmental negotiations will begin.

At the UNGA in September 2014, governments from across the world will come together to debate their priorities for the new set of goals, targets and indicators. It has been agreed that the new set of goals will cover areas of social, economic and environmental development. This is quite different from the MDGs, which were mainly focused on poverty reduction. It is not yet known how exactly the ICPD agenda will be integrated into the new set of goals.

Governments will aim to reach a final agreement by the end of 2015, just before the MDGs run out. Between now and 2015, though, we still have plenty of time to advocate and lobby decision-makers.

Here is a quick snapshot of your opportunities to influence your national decision makers:

The OWG continues the work that they have carried out so far. There are several final steps in their work to prepare recommendations for the new development framework:

- A zero draft of the OWG Report has already been released. It includes 19 thematic issues, and it was put together by the Co-Chairs.
- OWG members will meet in New York five times between March and June 2014 with the aim of creating a recommended set of post-2015 goals and targets. They may use the The future we want outcome document from Rio+20 as the narrative section of the report. Many people believe that anything that is excluded from this recommended set of goals and targets will be difficult to include in negotiations at a later date.
- The OWG will submit their final report to the Secretary-General ahead of the UNGA in September 2014 (at the latest).


The President of the General Assembly’s (PGA) events are a range of high-level sessions and thematic debates run by the PGA office between February and June 2014. These are intended to set the scene for the intergovernmental negotiations, and they included an event entitled “The contributions of women, the young and civil society to the post-2015 development agenda”.

For dates and more information, visit www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/settingthestage. To read young people’s priorities for the March meeting, visit http://childrenyouth.org/2014/03/06/mgcy-priorities-for-the-pga-dialogues-march-2014.

Ways of addressing HIV and AIDS post-2015 are being explored through platforms like the UNAIDS and Lancet Commission: Defeating AIDS—Advancing Global Health Global Commission on HIV and the Law (which includes a youth online review) and at the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia, in July 2014.


The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) was created at the Rio+20 Conference held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012, and it is the main UN platform dealing with sustainable development. It is also the future home of the next development framework. The next HLPF meeting is in July 2014, and it will be a key global moment for the youth to influence.

Secretary-General (SG) reports have been—and will continue to be—released throughout the post-2015 process, usually on an annual basis. These reports aim to synthesize the key information that has been generated through consultations, meetings and negotiations so far. It is quite likely that we can expect the next SG report—which is due midway through 2014—to cover the OWG report, the report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, the UN Sustainable Solutions Network report, the latest consultation reports, and more! Check out the latest report at www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/SG_Report_MDG_EN.pdf.

UN country consultations also continue to build on the consultation process to date. The UN Development Group (UNDG) are organizing a second round of country consultations in 2014, focusing on “implementation of the post-2015 agenda.” To support this process, UN Volunteers is currently fielding 15 volunteers with the aim of leveraging the voices of young people, youth organizations and volunteer-involving organizations in Algeria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Sri Lanka, Uganda and possibly Brazil. Information has yet to be properly circulated, but you can learn out more at www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?article4390.

Intergovernmental negotiations are the official member state decision-making process used by the UN to reach consensus on global decisions (for example, Rio+20). From September 2014 through September 2015, the UNGA will engage in an intergovernmental process under the Ugandan Presidency to agree on the post-2015 framework, and it will be encouraged to build on the priorities covered in the reports of the OWG and the SG. It is expected that negotiations will reach full speed in May, June and July 2015. The negotiations then will conclude at the Post-2015 Summit in September 2015, which will be co-chaired by Denmark and Papua New Guinea. For a detailed guide on how the negotiations work, check out www.un-ngls.org/orf/d_making.htm. The youth guide to negotiations at Rio+20, which paints a picture of the UN in action; the guide can be found at http://rioplustwenties.org/documents/Participation_Guide_Rio+20_web.pdf.

“Without young people’s ideas, we would be missing the best hope for a successful set of goals. Bring us your ideas.”
- Graca Machel, UN High-Level Panel
Half the world is under the age of 25, and young people are often disproportionately affected by development issues, including HIV. Therefore, young people must continue to be involved in the planning and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda if it is to be successful.

Young people have worked tirelessly over the past few years to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the post-2015 process. Youth participation has been vibrant, ambitious and incredibly valuable.

There is great momentum building within the youth sector, along with increasing engagement with key influencers in high-level political processes.

The next step is to work out how to maintain that as the post-2015 process shifts from global consultations to intergovernmental negotiations in September 2014—that is where the real decisions will be made by our national governments.

Below is a snapshot of key upcoming global networks that will support youth to influence the next steps of the post-2015 agenda at the global level.

The MGCY and the Beyond 2015 Children & Youth Working Group are both actively supporting children and young people to engage in the next steps of the post-2015 process. From the OWG to the HLPF, these groups will help youth navigate the process, build youth capacity and influence decision-makers over the next year.

Find out more and get involved by joining the MGCY at http://childrenyouth.org. Also be sure to sign up for email updates from the Beyond 2015 Children & Youth Working Group by contacting hannahs@restlessdevelopment.org.

The Global Partnership for Youth in the Post-2015 Agenda is facilitated by the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, who has launched an online crowdsourcing platform to seek youth priorities for post-2015 targets and indicators. This aims to bring together a wide spectrum of stakeholders and unify the voice for youth priorities in the post-2015 development agenda. Young people and youth-focused organizations are encouraged to contribute on five key themes that were identified as priorities by young voters in the MyWorld surveys: education, employment and entrepreneurship, health, good governance, and peace and stability. Visit the website for more information at https://crowdsourcing.itu.int.

Under the theme of “Mainstreaming youth in the post-2015 development agenda,” the World Conference on Youth 2014 (which will be held in Sri Lanka) aims to produce a joint outcome document that is agreed upon by UN Member States and youth. Find out more about the plans for WCY 2014 at www.wcy2014.com.