SDG1 — NO POVERTY

CONCISE GUIDES TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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SDG1 – NO POVERTY

Making the Dream a Reality

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CONTENTS

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LIST OF TABLES

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the international community has, for many decades, put efforts into eliminating extreme poverty, it is estimated that around 800 million people still live below the international poverty line of $1.90 a day. That figure reflects a decrease in the global poverty rate. However, around 40% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to subsist in conditions of extreme poverty. Additionally, looking ahead, we must recognise the challenges posed by demographic trends: it is estimated that the world population will reach more than 9 billion by 2050, with the population of Sub-Saharan Africa set to more than double. It is further predicted that to satisfy increasing demand, global agricultural production in 2050 will have to increase by 60% over 2005 levels and water use could increase by 50% by 2025. This could cause around 5.5 billion people (two-thirds of the projected global population) to live in areas facing severe water stress (EU, 2013). The increase in the average age of the world's population, armed conflicts and climate changes also need to be taken into consideration. This data indicates that the global community is

perhaps at its final crossroad in finding a way to solve the problem of poverty, not only for the sake of the human dignity of the poorest but also to prevent negative consequences for the entire population of the world.

Economic growth still seems to be the most important issue when we consider sustainable development. However, we can see that there are those who have been left behind, living in conditions that prevent them from profiting from global or even national growth. We shall consider some new approaches to tackling the eradication of poverty. However, we also need to recognise that when we talk about those living in poverty and those with a right to development, we are not talking about the same group of people. No one can argue against everyone having the right to development; equally, it is not possible to contend that everyone is free from extreme poverty (Cichos, 2016). There are always poor people in developed countries who have access to basic health care, free education and initiatives that can support them; however, there are also those who live in extreme poverty without access to education, health services, assistance, or even water. The question is whether the world's community should treat everyone (i.e. those who live in extreme poverty and those who do not) equally, or perhaps concentrate its particular attention on those who have been left behind.

On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, adopted by world leaders in September 2015, officially came into force. The aim of Agenda 2030 is to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change. The SDGs follow and expand on the Millennium Development Goals (2000) (MDGs) which were agreed upon by governments in 2001 and expired at the end of 2015. The main aim of the SDGs is to complete the action taken by the world community to implement MDGs and to ensure that no

one is left behind. Goal 1 aims at ending poverty in all forms everywhere and, as this first target indicates, at eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030. Although Agenda 2030 provides 17 goals, the first of these seems to agree with the central assumption that no one should be left behind. There is no doubt that it will be judged a global failure if we achieve even the very challenging goals and targets recommended by Agenda 2030 without providing basic living conditions to the poorest.

This book is about those who have been left behind and concentrates on asking what can be improved within the legal framework and practice. If we consider that there is frequently no rational explanation for the existence of poverty (such as war or a humanitarian disaster), we should ask the important question of how we deal with those countries and societies needing assistance and how we deliver aid in the most effective way while preventing corruption and other abuses. This book offers a new look at global problems and presents solutions to show how the global community can eliminate poverty and achieve its global promise, SDG1, today. It means that the vision of ending extreme poverty and providing dignity to all human beings will no longer be just a vision. It is time to bring it about, and we contend that the international community already has all the necessary instruments and knowledge to do this.

The first part of the book explains what poverty and development are, asking whether the right to development constitutes an international commitment to eradicate poverty. It also presents the current framework of international assistance in eliminating poverty (including the UN, OECD, WB, AU and EU's policies and practices in development cooperation aid). The second part concentrates on the SDG strategy. It examines the proposition of SDG1, evaluating the first actions taken in this area; it further presents the best practices

(including 13 case studies) of the recent frameworks for poverty eradication and outlines the challenges to implementation. The final section offers a number of proposals and recommendations for consideration in making global action more effective. These include such aspects as concentration on a more local/regionally oriented development policy, returning to solutions within local communities, a focus on basic human needs like health and education, reform of development institutions, funding and a proposal for a new (possibly binding) agenda. The aim is to present a broad and comprehensive picture of global efforts (both as a legal and policy framework and implementation practices) to eradicate poverty and achieve SDG1.

CHAPTER 2

POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1. THE MEANING OF POVERTY

It is important to define what poverty is and to understand development in the context of SDG1, which aims at eradicating poverty. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. Economists distinguish between two main classifications of poverty: absolute poverty as a condition where household income is below a necessary level to maintain basic living standards (food, shelter and housing) and relative poverty as a condition where household income is a certain percentage below median income. A common monetary measure of absolute poverty (defined by the World Bank as the international poverty line) in 2008 was receiving less than US$1.25 a day (Ravallion, Chen, & Sangraula, 2008); in October 2015 this was reset to US$1.90 a day. According to the World Bank, poverty means deprivation in well-being and has many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses 'low levels of

health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life' (World Bank, 2001).

The United Nations also distinguishes between absolute poverty (extreme/chronic poverty) and relative poverty (generally referred to simply as poverty). According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in light of the International Bill of Rights, for example, Article 11 of ICESCR, 1966) poverty is 'a human condition characterised by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights' (Economic and Social Council, 2001, para. 8). Extreme poverty has been defined as 'the combination of income poverty, human development poverty and social exclusion' (Human Rights Council, 2008, para. 13), emphasising that 'the lack of basic security leads to chronic poverty when it simultaneously affects several aspects of people's lives, when it is prolonged and when it severely compromises people's chances of regaining their rights and of reassuming their responsibilities in the foreseeable future' (Economic and Social Council, 1996). The Human Rights Council in 2012 recognised that 'persons living in poverty are confronted by the most severe obstacles – physical, economic, cultural and social – to accessing their rights and entitlements'. Such people experience many interrelated deprivations, including 'dangerous work conditions, unsafe housing, lack of nutritious food, unequal access to justice, lack of political power and limited access to health care, preventing them from realising their rights and perpetuate their poverty'. Additionally, people who experience life in extreme poverty are exposed to a 'vicious cycle of powerlessness, stigmatisation, discrimination, exclusion and material deprivation, which all

mutually reinforce one another' (Human Rights Council, 2012). Moreover, persons living in extreme poverty should be the object of particular concern because 'their marginalisation, exclusion and stigmatisation often mean that they are not reached effectively by public policies and services. Obstacles, insecurity and structural factors frequently render it impossible for them to claim their rights and to fulfil their potential independently; they need active support from the State and other relevant stakeholders' (Human Rights Council, 2012). Consequently, we need to distinguish between those who live in poverty and those living in extreme or absolute poverty. Therefore, the action to eliminate poverty highlighted in SDG1 should be understood as an action for the elimination of extreme poverty.

2.2. THE MEANING OF DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AID

Initially, development was seen in purely economic terms, in the sense of creating economic growth through financial measures to increase the gross domestic product (GDP). The leading figure in this concept was the founder of the Bretton Woods Institution, the British economist Keynes (1936). Based on the experience of the use of funds allocated under the Marshall Plan, Keynes and his successors suggested that development is caused by economic growth, which can be increased through investment. They also defined the role of development assistance as bridging the gap in national economies by increasing foreign capital (Rostow, 1960). The first period of development aid is characterised as development by increasing GDP and covers the years 1950–1965. This was reflected in institutions such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, 1944) or the

International Finance Corporation (IFC, 1956), which form part of the World Bank Group.

Despite initial enthusiasm for the economic concept, at the beginning of the 1960s there were calls for a need to consider the social and technological aspects of aid and development. The lack of expected results from assistance that had been provided generated a global discussion about aid. In 1969, the OECD countries for the first time defined Official development assistance (ODA), whose main purpose was the promotion of social and economic development in developing countries by giving financial support on preferential terms (Führer, 1994). The preamble to the Declaration on Social Progress and Development in 1969 (UN, 1969b) stated that economic development depended on social development and each influenced the other. This was the beginning of a different concept of development which concentrated on the importance of basic needs and economic and social aspects. It played an important role from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, when the concept of sustainable development began to dominate. The idea of sustainable development was summarised in the first sentence of the World Commission on Environment and Development's report (Brundtland Report) *Our Common Future* (1987), which states that 'humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (p. 27). The report's development vision is based on three pillars: economic growth and equitable distribution of benefits, conservation of natural resources and the environment, and social development. These are interconnected, overlapping and interdependent. It also stressed that the creation of a fully sustainable model of life requires a variety of activities in regions all around the world. (Stoddart, 2011).