

# **Sustainable Development Goals: The Conflict between Sustainability and Development\***

Summary

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## **1. The origin of the conflict: Universality**

Millennium Development Goals, which were symbolized with the term of “Poverty Reduction”, were taken over by Sustainable Development Goals. SDGs are a cocktail of sustainability and poverty reduction. It is yet to be determined which ingredient is stronger than the other.

Some did not like (or not care about) MDGs because they were for the sake of only a part of people in the world (i.e. the poor). Meanwhile, sustainability is for the sake of everyone on the globe. In this sense, sustainability is a “universal” goal while poverty reduction is only “development-focused” goal. There were debates around 2012 in the society of international development whether the substitute for MDGs could be as development-focused as MDGs or it should be “universal” in the above sense. In the end, the universality advocates pushed out those for development-focus, and SDGs which maintain the universality feature took over MDGs in this September.

There is intrinsic conflict between sustainability and development in terms of resource allocation because sustainability and poverty reduction are two different goals and because there is only a part of projects / programs contributing to the two goals together, and the rest of projects / programs contribute to either one. Some donors might want to argue that they are good at contribution to sustainability and to allocate their resources more for sustainability. Then, they would claim they did a lot for SDGs even though they did little for poverty reduction. In this way, duties towards poverty reduction seem more likely to be overlooked and may be comparatively discouraged under the new framework of SDGs.

## **2. Japan’s shifts towards non-poor countries and non-poor issues**

The concept of universality is further twisted in Japan, so that some proponents of this concept interpret this as “aid can go to non-poor countries” beyond emergency relief. What drives this twist forward in Japan was reconsideration of Japan’s philosophy of international cooperation, and taking over of ODA Charter which was established in 1992 by Development Cooperation

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\* The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not represent the official positions of either author’s affiliation or JASID.

Charter in February 2015. The new charter spells out Japan's "national interests" and expands its scope from ODA to "development cooperation" including (1) those with middle and high income countries and (2) security. In addition, the charter is oriented to reduce burden of the central government by encouraging involvement of the private sector, local government, non-governmental organizations, philanthropies, and PKO. This orientation is in line with the notion of "development effectiveness", which was posed at Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011, in the sense that the effectiveness not only by ODA but also with any other resources else matters more than just effectiveness of ODA (aid effectiveness).

### **3. Final remarks: What academia of North-East Asia should do**

Poverty and violation of human rights are still serious in a part of the world. Conflict, forced migration and climate change deteriorate the difficulties, and at this point of time, they are more likely to be outstanding in other regions than Asia. Therefore, people in North-East Asia can easily avert eyes from them and run into sweeter aspects of development such as win-win cooperation and burden sharing which pushes workload to non-public sectors.

Academia of North-East Asia should remind governments and nationals in the area of seriousness of ongoing poverty and human rights issues on the globe. Desperate people around the world are still looking for somebody speaking on behalf of them. Academia of North-East Asia has to be vocal about poverty reduction as much as sustainability.