

1. ARE WE INSANE?

The MDG's self-imposed deadline runs out next year in 2015. There has never been a bigger collective global initiative against poverty. We had **15** years to get it right. Progress has been patchy at best and would have been **dreadful** by most measures, were it not for significant progress being made by the welcome **stand-outs** of China and India. So what might the less successful countries learn from the more successful, in this respect? Einstein is credited with suggesting: 'One definition of insanity is endlessly repeating the same process and expecting a different result'. By that definition, are we collectively planning to go insane after 2015?

2. WHAT WENT WRONG?

The issue with MDG's was not the bold **ambition**, nor even the necessarily concise **articulation**, but ultimately the practical **execution**. We have produced a separate **Research Paper** looking in detail at latest global expert views on what actually causes poverty (contributory causes versus root cause) and what are its many and variously proposed solutions. Plus we compare and contrast our own unique **integrated model** view alongside them. Against that intellectual context (which has the benefit of hindsight) the MDG's only ever sought to be a **focused and partial solution** to the wider backdrop of poverty challenges, but they are **so** high-profile, and **so** resource-hungry, that as solutions go (even partial ones), we will **all** benefit from understanding what went wrong – and what could do with going 'righter' next time. Assuming of course, something actually follows the MDG's.

Later in this article, we examine the original MDG's from the perspective of applying the popular 'SMART' business acronym to them, to unpack what went 'wrong' for the MDG's at the **basic** level of effective **goal-setting**. This should help inform a better approach when it comes to setting the goals for any 'MDG #2'. However, to increase our collective chances of getting it **more** right next time, it also pays to understand **poverty causes and poverty solutions** at a more analytical level, a little better than we appeared to do last time around.

And THAT'S where the **7 Layer Poverty Model and Systems Thinking** come in.

3. POVERTY SOLUTIONS AND SYSTEMS THINKING

We write more fully **elsewhere** on the underlying CAUSES of poverty. Here, we aim to use and build on that work, to consider effective SOLUTIONS in more detail. To that end, it is first worth recognising that the **removal** of an apparent poverty causal factor does not, in and of itself, produce an effective poverty **solution** – but it does reduce, or remove the risk of the same counter-productive poverty influences and associated poverty scenario recurring, **after** the given instance of poverty is itself overcome. Throughout our writings (including this paper), we implicitly use our **own** definition of 'poverty', in an attempt to minimise any subsequent confusion.

Using our chosen illustration of **a sailor and headwinds**, removal of the headwinds alone is not **sufficient** cause for the sailor to progress forwards. The sailor still has to **do his bit**. Similarly, consider a sickness like malaria. The removal of all malaria-carrying mosquitoes does not remove the debilitating effects of malaria in those **already** infected. There also needs to be a **remedial cure**. So it is with those who are **already in poverty**. We need to minimise, or limit the negative effects of



obstructive poverty headwinds, while **at the same time** facilitating progress of those in poverty **out** of their immediate circumstances.

This is where we come on to consider poverty from the perspective of Systems Thinking. Our own contention is that: ***poverty is a symptom of failings in some aspect of the people/process/technology combination, of an otherwise healthily functioning social system.*** You may want to read that again, as it is a lot to take in at one go...Got it? Good. Here's what we mean by it. Usually, if any **individual** was suffering from extreme poverty, they themselves would be highly-motivated to actively seek to identify its causes and overcome them. If they were **unable** to lift themselves out of their poverty circumstances alone, then their own **household** would typically intervene to help alleviate their situation – assuming of course, that they were **acting humanely**. If the whole household was affected by poverty, then the **community** would typically intervene. And so on, up to **national and international government** levels. Where poverty **persists** then, in **any** individual's case, is typically a symptom of various **dysfunctions** at these multiple levels – those levels collectively representing the 7 key poverty 'fixers' identified within the 7 layer Poverty Model.

If **numerous** instances of poverty thus provide evidence that the **system as a whole** is somehow poorly functioning in some way, System Thinking permits the further **breakdown** of the system's constituent components into distinct People, Process and Technology factors – for closer analysis and more accurate **problem diagnosis**. In short, Systems Thinking gives us an effective tool for examining any given complex system, under an enlightening analytical microscope. (Refer to our Research Paper on 100 Top Poverty Solving Articles for more detail on this). As Nobel Prize-winner Muhammad Yunus has himself claimed: ***"Poverty has been created by the economic and social system that we have designed for the world."*** On this point, we believe it is more accurate to say that **dysfunctions** in our various systems are primary **contributory** causes of poverty. We now aim to apply insights from Systems Thinking to help overcome it.

4. JUST HOW FAR DO WE MAGNIFY THAT ANALYTICAL MICROSCOPE?

Clearly, there is little point in us seeking to define ALL the possible things that might be poorly functioning in the case of the poorest 40% of the planet's population. All the more so, since our OWN model identifies **7 key poverty fixer categories** in the case of every individual in poverty, plus **7 key dimensional layers** to their poverty experience and **3 factors** within each layer that are of particular significance (attributes, access and availability). Just do the Math: $3 \text{ billion} \times 7 \times 7 \times 3 =$ an incredibly large number! A little shy of half a trillion in fact. So, do you want the GOOD news? That is NOT how we have to think about it – thankfully. With Systems Thinking **and** the 7 Layer Poverty Model kept firmly in your mind, you just have to be **aware** of which aspects of the overall system you happen to be looking at, in any apparently causally-complex human scenario – which instances of poverty **often** prove to be.

5. DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

By way of illustration, we will now describe an **imaginary** complex, compound poverty scenario, within a given **country** we shall call "Khasiland", or KL if we get bored of spelling it out. We consider the compound, inter-related, mutually-reinforcing problems that KL's country-level government might typically have to face. Then we are going to propose a THEORETICAL good-fit, starting model



for tackling those component issues from a structured, Systems Thinking perspective. We only say 'good-fit', as 'best-fit' necessarily has to be worked out iteratively by the System Thinkers on the frontline, in each and every scenario. With that given proviso, are you ready to encounter Khasiland?

6. KHASILAND'S COMPOUND INTER-RELATED MUTUALLY REINFORCING CAUSAL FACTORS

PEOPLE FACTORS:

- a. Poorly educated population, statistically low levels of literacy and numeracy relative to the rest of the developed world. Those having a university level education as a percentage of the total are among the lowest globally. High levels of illiteracy mean that you cannot solely rely on modern methods of communication - like writing, email, text, instruction manuals, the internet and spreadsheets - with wider audiences.
- b. Good people usually either leave the country to work abroad, or at least go into the better in-country jobs in private industry (rather than government), where they make good money and will not want to leave. Their first priorities are seen as supporting their **own** dependent family and creating a better future for themselves and their grandchildren.
- c. Consequent lack of available, good calibre people to support **any** kind of planned ramp-up of human resources in support of fresh aid, or development programmes. The good people are already busy doing good work – usually elsewhere.
- d. Poor organisation structures. Incompetent people stuck obstructively in positions of authority, given their position due to cronyism and family favouritism, not for their skill, merits or competence in the role. Replacing them would be almost impossible, as incompetence is so hard to pinpoint, when people habitually use lying and blame upon other factors, rather than their own lack of suitable abilities. Management styles are often dictatorial, confrontational and personality-based, with much internal conflict, turmoil, turf wars, unproductive feuds and empire-building.
- e. Poor KASE profiles. Unsuitable Knowledge, Attitude, Skills & Experience even for their present institutional role, let alone adequate ability to adapt and grow into the greater demands of any future expanded role as change-agents and change-champions.
- f. Consequent slow adaptation (even resistance) to change, at both the individual and the organisational level. The US Marine mindset of 'adapt, improvise and overcome' is more likely to be replaced with a defeatist attitude of 'don't try anything new, or give up early, because it will all fail anyway – we've seen it all before'.
- g. For the organisation, an inability to define simple things like whose job it is and whose budget will pay for newly-developing conditions. Fear of change as carrying a covert implication of loss of perks, income, job, role, title or status. Hence, often outright opposition to and obstruction of **any** change initiative. Destructive attitude of "if I can't keep it, I will destroy things for the next guy" at an operational and political level.
- h. Lack of social systems and civil structures supporting the basic Rule of Law. Impunity for the blatantly guilty and no protection for the innocent, or falsely accused. Bribes and vulnerability to corruption are endemic and systemic as an 'inescapable' way of life. Seen by many as practically necessary.
- i. Fatalist mindset, that things are as bad as they are because they are made so by divine order. Who wants to resist the will of the divine?



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- j. Cultural tendency to obscure difficult truths, rather than provide honest and accurate feedback mechanisms, for fear of embarrassment, reprisals and other ramifications.
- k. High price of perceived failure. Credible threats to life, health, freedom, or wellbeing, even for those seeking to do right.
- l. Absence of communication with those who actually need to know relevant information. Lack of suitable information access for those who need to know it, to guide their own decision-making.
- m. Personal value-, or faith-based obstruction to policy changes, or strategies to achieve goals. For example, opposition to use of contraception to limit the spread of AIDS, if contraception itself is deemed morally wrong, or such action seen as tacit approval of promiscuity, or homosexual practice, contrary to strongly-held religious beliefs.
- n. Civil War or unrest. Speaks for itself. Translates into multiple security issues impacting people factors, plus costly and inefficient process and technology workarounds to adapt.
- o. We could go on, but you get the general idea. There are clearly a lot of People-factor problems in Khasiland – but they are sadly NOT alone.

PROCESS FACTORS:

- p. No definitions, or adequate monitoring of Key Performance Indicators. No confidence in associated data collection methods either. Hence near zero project impact data analysis.
- q. Insufficient personal, or organisational incentives to prioritise poverty & MDG-driven actions, versus other economic, social, or politically-driven agendas.
- r. Allocation of tasks, without suitable allocation of adequate resources (principally people, departmental remit, co-operation and budgets) to achieve them.
- s. Culturally, or socially inappropriate deployment strategies with consequent limited effectiveness in the given target geography.
- t. Ineffective processes that have just 'always been done that way', without question.
- u. Manual process dependencies for things that should be automated.
- v. Heavy reliance on paper based documentation, which cannot be searched, retrieved or shared easily. Subject to frequent losses and information gaps.
- w. Poor information access, security and process controls, combined with lax record-keeping.
- x. Lack of financial controls, or supervision, lack of separation of powers, facilitating corruption, compounded by impunity.
- y. Non-standard processes, procedures and lack of common agreed standards, or even agreement that there should be such things. No sharing of good practice. Protectionism.
- z. As processes are not documented, people develop bespoke, self-defined processes that are hard for others to learn – or alter, to improve. Compounded by a desire to make oneself vital to the organisation, to increase job security, or conceal incompetence, or corruption.
- aa. Process factors often developed inefficiently as a necessary workaround to various issues with other technology, or people factors.
- bb. Limited, or no audit trail of manual actions.
- cc. Poor communication, co-operation and even outright hostilities between departments in key end-to-end process cycles.



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- dd. Long delays to required **Outputs**, due to issues ensuring correct **Inputs** and suitable processing thereafter. Eg visas, approvals, sign-offs, receipts, passports, permissions, applications, supporting documentation, certificates, etc.
- ee. Confusion over departmental asset and resource ownership, legal direction, division of responsibilities, and/or associated budget burden.
- ff. Lack of training on correct use of relevant technologies, leads to frequent *misuse, abuse, or disuse*. Sometimes even '*refuse*'.
- gg. Restrictive and uncompetitive existing supplier contracts and agreements.
- hh. Senior management attention remains obstinately blinkered on the wrong root causes:
 - i. "Millions of people are dying from diseases that we can easily and inexpensively prevent, diagnose, and treat. Why? Because even though we know exactly what people need, we just can't get it to them. They are dying not because we can't solve a medical problem, but because we can't solve a business *logistics* problem". (Bing & Epstein, Pharmacy on a Bicycle)
 - ii. USAid: "A child dying anywhere is heartbreaking, 6.9 million children dying a year from *preventable* causes is unacceptable".
- ii. And there's more. Enter 'Technology'.

TECHNOLOGY FACTORS

- jj. Lack of basic infrastructure: road, rail, air, fuel, power, water, sanitation, telephones, IT, healthcare, markets, bank accounts, maintenance, parts, logistics, literacy, public facilities (schools, prisons, courts, police presence, military control, government administrative offices, etc)
- kk. Lack of basic equipment to support roles.
- ll. Inability to purchase assets required to support necessary role functions.
- mm. Existing assets unreliable, or broken, due to inability to repair – skills and/or parts.
- nn. Threat to any existing, or deployed assets, due to security, theft, abuse, violence, lack of proper maintenance, harsh operating environment, etc.
- oo. Incompatibilities between technologies, hampering process integration and relevant information sharing.
- pp. Ignorance leading to poor and restrictive technology purchasing decisions.
- qq. Proprietary technology lock-in. High cost of transition to other better platforms, due to associated new equipment and retraining costs & interim loss of productivity and team morale during the transition. Problem of having to accept that things will have to get worse before they get better, post-transition. Resource scarcity of those available 'on the bench' skilled at managing such transitions smoothly – compounds technical challenges and negative operational impacts, resulting in disillusionment with new technology itself.
- rr. Politically, or bribe-motivated technology purchasing practices – past, or present.

7. NATIONAL SOLUTION: OVERCOMING COMPLEX OBSTACLES AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

- a. Some, or perhaps all of the above theoretical issues may apply in your own case. You may want to ADD to the above list, or ADAPT it to better reflect your **own**, real-life starting position. We know nothing about the **specifics** of your own Khasiland-equivalent, but if **any** of it seems strangely familiar, it is just because these things are



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typically **globally true** –because systemic failures are similarly **global realities**. This is **not** to assume they are ubiquitous, but just widespread and often seemingly *pandemic*. We do not need to know the details of the specific problems you face, or the unique personalities and organisations involved. We simply know that the **irresistible logic** of Systems Thinking means that your own specific causes and circumstances will produce common and familiar poverty **outcomes, symptoms, or results**. So then, what can be done?

- b. Overcoming complex challenges of this nature can be likened to draining a swamp, before tackling the alligators within it - just one at a time. You need to drain the swamp so that you can actually identify the alligators you are tackling, then set about overcoming them in some kind of agreed order, rather than all at once. You may not get them all, but you certainly improve your chances with the ones you choose to take on.
- c. Firstly, you are unlikely to succeed **alone**. So identify and select a 'virtual', or actual CORE team of those who will help get the overall job done. A 'virtual' team member is someone that you do not manage full-time, but who will give you a **portion** of their time and resources to **assist** you achieving your goals – whether officially, or unofficially and whatever their underlying motives. You and your team need to be reporting in at the **highest and most relevant ranking level** within any organisation, to get things done. There is little value in theoretically reporting to the nation's President, if you seldom get any access to them for briefing, escalation and decision-making purposes. Otherwise, if the task is a national one (as MDG's typically are), then the team should report to the country's most senior political figure, as the issues encountered and obstacles raised to progress will often **only be resolved** at THAT level.
- d. If you do not have access to the necessary level of decision-maker, you should not expect that the key decisions will go your way – and the project will be weakened, delayed, obstructed and frustrated to that exact degree. You would be better off CHANGING your agreed scope of operations to MATCH the political level of your direct reporting lines. If a nation's, or organisation's president will not give you direct access, you are better off reporting at a lower divisional level and directing ALL your efforts and energies there. This way, you can at least demonstrate the IMPACT you CAN have, when given **proper** access. **SUCCESS at a lower level may eventually earn you ACCESS at a higher one.**
- e. Three levels of hierarchical **escalation** must be recognised, regardless of your operational and organisational starting position:
 - i. **Prioritise**: put some tasks 'ahead' of others, in terms of time, efforts, energy, attention and resources within your power to control, direct, or influence; change the order of existing workload (your own and that of others).
 - ii. **Resources**: allocate necessary additional funds, people and things to accomplish the work, beyond previously budgeted, or agreed levels.
 - iii. **Policy**: obtain relevant approval to change organisational policy, to permit those things that are **necessary**, but that cannot even be completed with the prioritisations and additional resources from the previous levels of escalation.
- f. An early step within any team of this **nature** is to make sure you and your chosen team ALL understand Systems Thinking and how it applies to your situation. Your team needs



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to start *seeing the world through Systems Thinking spectacles*. You may not choose to verbalise it as such with others you deal with, but certainly it should be a familiar grammar and vocabulary between you and your team. Regarding poverty, the same applies to the 7 Layer Poverty Model.

- g. The next step is for your team to begin to collate, create & maintain a **single** common view of **all the problems** you face and believe you must overcome on the way to achieving your stated goal(s). These are your ALLIGATORS. We find **spreadsheets** work really well for this, for multiple reasons: ease of use, powerful functionality, built-in data-sorting tools, widespread recognition and ease of sharing & copying. You can keep on adding new, relevant columns and rows that you may not have thought about from the beginning.
- h. Then you will want to start finding ways of **annotating and categorising** those problems in ways that are significant and relevant to you. Use short codes where necessary to help keep columns (and the overall sheet width) narrower, for ease of review. Typical 'problem' attributes might include:
 - i. Unique reference identifier for each line item
 - ii. Problem description
 - iii. Date registered, target completion, next action date
 - iv. Next action description
 - v. Separate link document reference (eg action list, project plan, URL etc)
 - vi. Problem owner
 - vii. Problem department, or 'type' identifier (there may be several)
 - viii. Problem 'type' in Systems Thinking terms (people/process/technology/multi)
 - ix. Problem **Importance** ranking; Problem **Urgency** ranking; Problem **Ease** ranking
 - x. **Compound** problem ranking score
 - xi. Colour coding of cells for ease of review
 - xii. Filters on each column, for easier sorting
 - xiii. Budget allocation
 - xiv. Project phase status
 - xv. Others: There is no real limit, other than each column should be useful
- i. TEAM SELECTION: Select **new** recruits with suitable fresh **attitudes** and **skillsets**. For example, having up to 2 years' experience out of University, or training institution, before they are locked into any career stream, but already educated, used to processing large amounts of often written material, and ideally aware enough of how things are 'normally' done – but without having become 'institutionalised'. Yet also not so vital to the **existing** corporate, or political structure that it will be materially weakened, or collapse without them. Otherwise, possibly those already identified as 'high-flyers'.
- j. Encourage them to build secondary and supportive **virtual teams** themselves and their own trusted, productive social networks, perhaps even based on things like Yammer, Linked-In or Facebook equivalents. Whichever suits their purpose. In finding solutions, a large part of it can be finding the **right person** to speak to about it first – professional social networks that you can **trust** enable you to make better decisions more quickly, instead of researching every issue from scratch.



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- k. Extranet libraries of useful documentation, with a CONSISTENT library filing structure. This cannot be allowed to be free-structured, as things will soon become hidden and lost inadvertently. Someone must **own** that structure & **all** must follow it, or negotiate a valid change with the library structure owner.
- l. The vast majority of ANY senior job is **administration and budget/people management** – and a large part of the budget/people management is...administration! Administration is the **creation, consumption, sharing, processing of and acting on information**. With ALL such information, you typically have to do just 3 things: **Assess, Decide and Act (ADA)**. In most cases, that 'Act' will involve **Communicating** – creating a new input into someone else's ADA process. Consider all the professional **salaried** jobs that you know. How many of them actually involve anyone taking raw materials and physically making something, or doing something creative with their bare hands? In most cases, even then, it will involve multiplying their effects by using **tools** of some kind – ie some form of 'Technology', however basic or sophisticated. Imagine a dentist without a drill, a doctor without a scalpel, stethoscope, or medicines. Mankind **multiplies its effects** through the use of tools – ie Technology. Hence you will need the simple, yet powerful **administrative technologies**, to facilitate the primary role of Administration – between your team members themselves and between them and various other organisations. Prepare to get good at it. It never goes away.
- m. **Access** to all relevant **digital systems** is therefore vital. Otherwise it will be back to manual processes which may take 100 times as long – or worse.
- n. **Avoid Meetings**, unless vital. By definition, they involve multiple people. What is happening to their respective stacks of job tasks while they are in a meeting? Nothing. Meetings tend to be set for too long – typically 1 hour minimum. There is no need. The purpose of the meeting is "ADA". If you distribute a clear **Agenda** and supporting materials adequately beforehand & explain what any decision is to be between & why, together with potential implications – then the meeting can be held via voice, or video conference, not in-person, except for key meetings (eg the start of a project). Many meetings – especially long ones – are typically a symptom of **inefficient** organisation elsewhere. Always consider video/voice conferences instead, where feasible. Statistically, if you force people to meet, some will have to travel. Then, decisions have to be deferred until the meeting & the meeting has to be deferred until **all** can allow the diary time to travel to make it. Do time & poverty stand still while all that waiting occurs? No. This ALL slows things down. The more the meetings, the slower the decisions. This has to be an enforced discipline from the top of the organisation down. Where transport facilities in a country are poor, this aspect is exaggerated all the more. Find better alternatives. In fast-moving projects, meetings should be one of the last resorts – not the first.
- o. Good, remote mobile communications infrastructure. It has to be powered by electricity somehow and possibly overcome various land-barriers to viable signal strength. It is the modern equivalent to Roman roads and industrial revolution-era railways. Voice and data exchange rely on it. Make it a priority. If time is short, then satellite phones may be the best interim answer, if a suitable in-country mobile phone company will not assist.



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- p. Roads are better in the short term than railways, due to the costs of building rail per mile of track. Helicopters avoid the need to build runways for planes. If there is a lack of freedom of physical movement, this must be compensated for by 'digital' infrastructure.
- q. **Borrowing to Save:** If the cost of borrowing money for development projects is at 3% per year for example, the question is whether that loan money can even be spent that quickly and that effectively. But getting an **eventual** average 3% return from such spending per year should not be hard. The question is whether it will come as increased **tax** revenues to the country government that is **paying** the loan interest. If the other aspects of People, Process & Technology are not addressed, the danger would be a temptation to divert borrowed sums into fewer, larger construction projects, potentially concentrating too much money in too few hands – a recipe for potential corruption.
- r. By forming for yourself an effective, independent, possibly largely virtual, national administrative network, it becomes easier for the MDG Donors to **monitor** all expenditure from your chosen central point & stay in touch with the entire remote contact network. The 'digital' literacy of all your virtual team will remove that otherwise common system obstacle & excuse for lack of control, or **transparency**. Plus, the creation of such a **new** network means any new staff will not have had the time to build the same level of any corrupt relationships. The virtual team members will be an additional check and balance for each other. Then there is the 'digital policeman'.
- s. Such a digital network permits an effective digital **audit trail** of all transactions. It helps avoid, or minimise the **impunity** issue. There are forensic-level digital auditing products out there to further reinforce the necessary standards of accountability and transparency.
- t. Participating people must all start **creating capacity**, by clearing their own diaries and reducing their OWN current commitments to minimum levels, doing only the most important things. As a rule, aim for an **80%** workload reduction, with only a **20%** loss of overall productivity. This reflects **Pareto's Law**. Diminish, delay, delegate, drop and deny everything that doesn't **directly** contribute to achieving the stated priority goals. Delays and wasted time will **drain away** money just as surely as bribes will. Ruthlessly apply the 80/20 rule to all your own and team member actions and activities.
- u. Escalation routes must go all the way to the relevant top of politics and management.
- v. **Minimise** building brand new **IT systems**. Adopt what is already there: mainstream products that are already shown to work and interrelate. Then the product developers spend the money on future development and integration – not you.
- w. **'The A-Team'**: You need a CORE team of complementary **roles** and ideally character types, to de-risk the success of the overall programme, consisting of experts equipped to swiftly and reliably **overcome typical obstacles** most likely to arise. These include:
 - i. Trouble-Shooter: Team Leader, good with people and handling conflict; partly political and interpersonal skills; partly project and programme management skills; well versed in using inter-personal and management skills to overcome management and organisational obstacles. Language fluency in-country essential & language to communicate internationally (English typically) also very important. We can see a number of advantages to this role being filled by someone with a *Military* background:



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1. Holding a Military title **may** command an additional level of professional respect and attention that a mere civilian title does not
 2. Used to managing programmes, people and budgets
 3. Potentially already received privileged levels of additional management style and conflict resolution training
 4. Practice in keeping a cooler head in life and death situations
 5. Practice in getting things done, through adaptation and collaboration in the face of changing and difficult operating circumstances
 6. In most less-developed nations, there will typically already be a prominent role for the Military in maintaining public order
 7. There is likely to be a liaison aspect to the role with the Military anyway
- ii. Programme/Project Manager: managing the complex **matrix** of programmes, departments, reports and timelines, KPI's and progress indicators, alongside the overall Project Document Library. It will be administratively demanding. May often need to deputise for the team leader when they may be off trouble-shooting in person elsewhere.
 - iii. Accountant: this is a specialist skill, to prevent and detect potential fraud, proper accounting issues and other irregularities, to best-practice international accounting standards. Ensures and enforces good accounting practice.
 - iv. Operations: with relevant in-country expertise. Overcomes logistical and other process and operational obstacles, in terms of implementation on the ground.
 - v. IT: When IT doesn't work, it can bring just about everything else to a standstill. Glitches between systems and blocked access to relevant data sources, have pretty much the same effect as if there was no relevant information at all. Such IT obstacles need to be overcome once by the core specialist, who can **call on** higher grade expertise (even as paid-for-consultancy), as necessary. However, they need to be able to accurately **diagnose** the root cause before calling in expensive experts.
 - vi. Healthcare: The range of knowledge required regarding human health is such that it cannot be easily learned elsewhere. Probably advisable to have in-country expert here, familiar with the range of topics most specific to MDG's and ALSO most relevant to that country's own current medical infrastructure systems. Well-placed to co-ordinate with other equivalent roles within country, continent and similar time zones & language preferences, with other country representatives facing similar challenges - so each can share best practices.
 - vii. Legal Advisor: Legal roadblocks are another major potential obstacle to progress, as any initiative typically cannot go further unless they are overcome. This must encompass both the national **constitution** and local **legislation and policy** practices. This may not always be full time as a **reactive** role, depending on circumstances, but the same skills can be applied usefully elsewhere as a **proactive** role within the core A-Team.
 - viii. Depending on the scale of operation and team expected, each role may have a junior-level assistant to deputise for them, or handle part of the administrative workload generated, such as recording actions and publishing meeting minutes,



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reports, etc. Alternatively, the entire team may benefit from a single, central administrative support function to the Team Leader, but that role could easily become overwhelming, trying to serve so many busy 'masters' simultaneously.

- x. Capacity Collaborations:
 - i. **Capacity** can be built **in parallel** with NGOs and certain other MDG-relevant groups, where in-country government bodies alone are insufficiently resourced, or otherwise unsuitable, or undesirable, for whatever reasons. However, in-country government support and collaboration must be a serious pre-requisite for continued MDG investment & strategy, when seeking national-level MDG outcomes.
 - ii. Seek relevant **peer evaluation** of the appropriate **coalition of the willing** in-country and potentially internationally.
 - iii. Recognise the challenge to **retain** developed skills within the NGO and minimise poaching between organisations.
 - iv. How are NGOs rewarded, or otherwise motivated to maintain participation? This needs to be clear to all from the outset.
 - v. Establish clear division and demarcation of respective roles and responsibilities.
 - vi. Facilitate each organisation playing to its **perceived strengths**, within pragmatic limits. It will not be ideal, but it will be **better** than no collaboration at all.
 - vii. Delineate role of in-country faith groups and community organisations, as potential local **delivery mechanisms, facilitators, or communicators**. Identify those who are already trusted community leaders who can minimise obstacles and facilitate adoption of new ideas and processes **locally**.

8. MACRO SOLUTION: A TRILLION DOLLAR FUND TO SUPERCEDE MDG'S

- a. So here's the plan. Ever heard of the fractional reserve banking system? Probably not, but it is behind the global financial system at work all around you. You may have been brought up being told "Money doesn't grow on trees" and "You can't create money out of thin air". Well, it's technically a lie. With the fractional reserve banking system, you can. In the past, it just used to be called 'printing more money', but the creation of new lines of credit for a Government to fund and repay, through the generation of future tax revenues, works just as well. The danger is that by doing so, you create too much **inflationary pressure**. Inflation is too much money chasing too few goods & thereby forcing those goods prices up. But in a recession, this is less likely. So when there is risk of a recession, or an economic slowdown, you get initiatives like "quantitative easing" in the USA. That amounted to hundreds of billions of dollars a month at one stage, being created out of thin air and pumped into the American banking system and economy. So that got us thinking...
- b. Let's get the USA to create another US\$1 Trillion out of thin air, to place in a Global Action Poverty Fund – or 'GAP', for short. There is little inflationary danger, as we won't spend it all at once and we certainly won't spend it all in the USA. In fact, we aim to spend it elsewhere, where the economies are struggling, but it tends to get well spread out around the world anyway. The reason we choose dollars is because they are accustomed to creating this level of new money already and the US dollar is perhaps the



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most robust currency to do this with. And after all, the USA committed to come up with 0.7% of GDP to help fund achievement of the MDGs first time around and came nowhere close to that. So perhaps they will pay closer attention this time around, now that it is “their” money being spent – although it is not really theirs, as it has been created out of thin air, remember?

- c. Have you ever had to split something nice between 2 of you when you were young, and so you both agreed to the principle: “**You cut, I’ll choose**”? That way, the person who cut became desperate to ensure the thing was cut absolutely **fairly**. So we thought we’d apply that same principle here. So let’s make Europe responsible for paying the **interest** on that Trillion dollar fund, which at current rates would be under US\$20 billion a year. Of all the global countries, or international bodies, you can trust Europe as being on a broad economic par with the USA. So the USA can hardly say that it doesn’t “trust” Europe to pay the interest back, as Europe managed to keep funding its own contributions towards development & aid during the recent economic slowdown at levels well above the USA – so who looks to be the more committed to making this whole development model work?
- d. If US\$20bn a year seems like a lot of money to find, it may interest you to note that individual US **citizens** apparently donate over US\$200 billion a YEAR to charity. That is ten times the figure we are looking to the whole of Europe’s governmental structure to find. Remember how much they managed to find to fund the Euro Zone bailouts?
- e. So, USA generates the GAP Fund from thin air & Europe (possibly in the guise of the European Union) pays the interest on the ‘loan’. If it suits them, Europe can choose to deduct it from their CURRENT aid & development funding budgets, by an equivalent amount each year, as their contributions towards those activities already amount to many billions of dollars annually anyway (some US\$70bn a year, we estimate). And we **trust** the Europeans to be as smart about keeping the Americans honest about it all, as the Americans would be smart about finding wiggle room and workarounds if they could. One to cut, the other to choose. It keeps BOTH parties more honest. Europe has ‘skin in the game’ – but America trusts Europe. Europe is shelling out REAL money each year to pay the interest payments on the loan – but has less to pay towards aid and development activity overall, now that the GAP fund activities will replace much of the former aid and development programme spend.
- f. Given that it is a Trillion dollar fund, we imagine a LOT of politicians around the world will suddenly get VERY interested in it – and hence MDG #2. So who should **decide** how it is **spent**? Good question. The Americans would LOVE it to be them, we’re sure – but who would trust them to do it right? There is always the World Bank, but it seems their own reputation is somewhat tarnished among other international experts too.
- g. So we need some kind of **expert body** that doesn’t yet exist. Interestingly, there IS an equivalent body for **climate change**. It is called the **IPCC**. It has all kinds of respected experts and authorities contributing and peer-reviewing data from around the world and advising various global policy decision-makers. If you had up to a Trillion dollars to spend, I am sure that plenty of poverty experts would show up out of the woodwork, to participate in such a prestigious global endeavour. But who would be qualified to select them?



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- h. Well, why don't we make it the job of a community of top experts recognised in their respective fields already and allow them to co-opt people on as absolutely necessary and practical? One community equipped to vote, all others to be eligible for election onto the panel, to maintain a division of powers. For example, you might have older people on the electors group, who would not want the job of jetting round the world and may already have prestigious teaching posts they do not want to give up. That same voting panel could also be a coaching, advisory and external consulting group to those elected, once it came to actually doing the job. We need both thinkers AND doers.
- i. India and China will be happy about this, as they will potentially be implicit beneficiaries of this fund, given that they share over a **third** of the world's population between them and perhaps **half of the world's remaining poor**. Plus, they will also likely benefit from boosts to their exports as other countries buy more of their products and services as they themselves grow. So far, so good.
- j. The associated boost to the global economy should also benefit Europe indirectly – certainly, we would guess, after the full US\$1 Trillion had been spent effectively, it would be to the tune of another US\$20bn in collective tax revenues - or a fair chunk of it, at least. They just need to be smart about their own **tax collection legislation** – and who better collectively than the Swiss, the Germans and the British to know about tax loopholes, right? (Anyone who just said “global corporations” – shame on you!)
- k. Another dimension to this approach, is that developing economies might sometimes claim to struggle under an ‘impossible burden’ of debt that they ‘can never repay’. Is that true? It may be, for a few countries, but is it true for all? If our expert panel (we will call it the International Policy Panel for Poverty, or **IPPP**) decided that it WAS true - and that relief of that given country's debt burden would result in **direct and proportional progress** against the MdG #2 goals - then clearly they could use a small portion of their Trillion dollar fund and BUY, or guarantee that national debt on behalf of the ‘struggling’ countries. They might also renegotiate more favourable and affordable **terms** for the affected country government. However, the IPPP should be no commercial pushover. Any agreement should enable them to apply the same kinds of **commercial protections** and rights to enforcement, if the relevant beneficiary government failed to deliver on its commitments to repay. Given that the Trillion dollar fund should have its debts repayable at the rate of around 2%, then anything it subsequently gets paid back above that figure from an in-country government, would actually be a form of **returned profit** for the Fund. Risk and reward in action.
- l. However, if the IPPP decided that this diversion of funds was NOT the best use of the money, who on earth would be **better placed** than them to contest such a decision? Of course the in-country government would complain that it is ‘an impossible burden’, as it exonerates that government from ultimate blame for poor handling of its own economy and government finances. Conversely, to keep everyone honest, everyone would **know** that if the IPPP spent some of its own available funds on helping **that** specific country out, then there would be **less** available for OTHER deserving MDG #2 purposes. So it cannot afford to be naïve. One cuts – the other chooses, see? It encourages **all sides** to be more open and honest.



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- m. This creates a more balanced basis for debate between qualified experts assessing risks and impacts, rather than persuasion by those who stand to **benefit the most** from a given decision, who may otherwise suffer from **bias**. There would now be a fund which was BIG enough to address all but the most stubborn, local pockets of extreme poverty, typically those instances with a significant **personal** cause component. However, funds are not unlimited, therefore considered **choices** have to be made between competing alternatives – and agreed collective **priorities** established. Furthermore, that basis for decision-making needs to be **transparent and visible to all**, with the minutes of the relevant meeting published for all to review, in a timely manner.
- n. It forces the adoption of the “building consensus” model, where the majority of experts have to be on-board. Acumen have a saying: “None of us has all the answers and all of us are needed to find them”. The relevant experts will all still be subject to influence and perhaps even bribes in some of the worst cases – but then isn’t that true of every system of Government globally? Just consider the current systems in the USA and the UK for example. Is there any in-country government which emerges free from blame in such matters, with its own reputation untarnished? Those found guilty will lose their place – and a lot more besides. No chance of **impunity** on the IPPP – the world will be watching.
- o. Thankfully, by separating powers between the **policy makers** and the **politicians**, we give ourselves a better chance of succeeding and we are less vulnerable to the accusation of bias and American domination, that the World Bank seems to be subject to currently. Presumably, given that the World Bank itself sees the eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 as its goal, it would not mind if it was achieved by this **independent** route. The task is too important to be partisan about it, right?
- p. One of the MDG #2 principles should be that **effectiveness and success**, by agreed and independently validated KPI criteria, should be **rewarded**. Conversely, **abuse** of the system by any individuals, or governments, should result in a public scaling back of support, until that individual and/or government is **superseded**. This is not direct meddling in in-country politics, since ALL this aid and development money is a GIFT from the best consensus-driven expertise that the international community has to offer. No in-country government should EXPECT grants to be theirs by ‘right’. Any person accepting a grant or a loan should recognise and respect the reasonable conditions being imposed by the donor, or lender. Agreed?
- q. The IPPP will often be slower to act than some other poverty-tackling institutions. Inevitably. It is the price to pay for building a considered consensus. Thankfully, the IPPP will be free to determine its OWN internal politics, rather than be bound by multi-year election cycles and changing economic cycles. Any economic downturn simply means it will get more for the given money spent in worst-affected countries. Its own fund will not be subject to such volatility. The money is intended to last for a potential 40-50 year period, so it is reasonable to expect much of that total spend could be back-ended.
- r. There is clearly some merit in allocating various tranches of the funding to different **exploratory** ideas, which MAY work, but need to be proved in practice, possibly through local **multi-country pilots**. The mechanism of **randomised control trials** can help here. A win for one country trial will actually be a win for them **all**, as the **best practice** lessons learned can be shared, adapted and adopted elsewhere.



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- s. Over 40-50 years, at 2-2.5% average repayment each year, the entire fund could technically be repaid to the USA, at no net cost to itself, out of money it created from thin air in the first place. The prospect of a more robust, healthy global economy after 40-50 years of concerted expert investment, must be appetising to even the most ardent American capitalist, who does not agree with the principle of aid and the potential dependency it might create.
- t. Another core principle must remain PRODUCTIVITY impacts. If the extra funds are injected into any finite system and do not generate more economic output, then more money chasing the same outputs merely creates inflationary pressures. In some cases (as with America's own Quantitative Easing programme), some aspects of this inflationary pressure may be deliberate and desirable, to inject a form of confidence into the markets. If the IPPP is suitably advised by expert economists, there will be diverse opinion and estimates on this, but we would hope for a better consensus than would be achieved by an 'open outcry-based' alternative.
- u. Our above comments about increased outputs and productivity, are not merely theoretical economics. The UN says that current agricultural production will have to rise by **60%** in order to feed the extra **2 billion** people expected on the planet by **2050**. Who do you think is going to invest in ensuring that production? Individual farmers? I can see that the Chinese government would want to ensure food security for its own population, or potentially face widespread civil unrest. Perhaps India will follow their lead and do the same types of deals with African nations, for long-term access to sometimes dubiously-acquired African arable land. Or perhaps they will favour improving efficiencies in their own current in-country practices, promoting adoption of more intensive farming techniques nationally. But based on CURRENT TRENDS, African food production techniques would allegedly only be able to meet **13%** of the Continent's needs by **2050**, according to one Guardian newspaper article. The same article also states that African crop yields have been largely **stagnant** over the last **50 years**. What do **you** think needs to change, in order for things to change? Remember Einstein's definition of insanity? Our suggestion is materially **DIFFERENT** processes.

9. MDG #2: WHAT ELSE HAS TO CHANGE AT THE MACRO LEVEL?

The following is a SAMPLE list of MACRO level points, highlighting a number of core issues we need to address within MDG #2, if we want to do better collectively second time around than we did with the original MDG's. They are illustrative, not exhaustive.

- a. **PERCEPTION:** A poll quoted in the UK's Telegraph newspaper (24/07/07) asked respondents whether they thought: "aid is a good thing and should be increased", or "aid is largely wasted and stolen". Interestingly, the **largest** group of replies were not those who said yes to the first question, nor yes to the second, but those who said 'yes' to **both**. If aid is to increase, it needs to be spent more effectively. Demonstrably and transparently so.
- b. **GOVERNANCE:** Historically, the effectiveness of MDG aid is undermined not just by poor governance within **developing** countries, but also by poor governance by **donors**,



including: duplication, unreliability, top-down decision making and emphasis on aid inputs. In 2001, Tanzania had to produce more than **2,400** reports to donors, and government officials met more than 1,000 donor delegations. In Vietnam, it took donors 18 months and the time of **150** government workers just to buy **five vehicles** for a forestry programme. (Same Telegraph newspaper).

c. **URBAN VS. RURAL:**

- i. Throughout the poor countries of the 'Global South', the economic growth reflected in per capita GDP has been overwhelmingly commercial, industrial, and **urban**, with comparatively little direct impact on **rural** areas, where so many extremely poor people currently live. India has experienced almost **eight percent annual GDP growth over the past decade**, but according to the World Bank, **two-thirds of the population still lives on less than \$2 a day**, and there are still 300 million people who go hungry daily. (*Paul Polak*, at unreasonable.is).
- ii. Global trends indicate that by the end of this century, around 75% of the world's population will be living in urban areas. Think about that for a minute. If overall conditions were so **bad** in urban areas, then why does so much of the world's population seem intent on moving there? It is not like anyone is FORCING them to move. Nobody drives them away from rural areas in their millions and MAKES them show up to work for a job at the factory. They go there and STAY there, because they perceive they have NO BETTER ALTERNATIVE. They have no preferable plan. If they had come from rural areas, as many migrants seem to be doing, then they will surely be able to **compare** rural life with urban life and just go **back**. But it seems they don't. There may be multiple factors influencing such decisions, but the opportunity for a **steady income** in urban areas, compared to the conditions and **uncertainties** of rural living, will be significant among them.
- iii. If you could facilitate a substantially better life and experience for people in the countryside, THAT is where they will increasingly end up going – and staying. Until that pressing challenge is overcome, people will continue to flock to urban areas, despite their own sets of issues. The **difference that makes the difference** seems to be that rural life **lacks** comparatively productive and financially-rewarding employment – leading to a secure income. Until THAT changes, little else about this global internal migration pattern will.
- iv. If your given poverty reduction strategy includes educating the rural poor, so that they can get a decent **job**, where exactly do you think all those jobs will be **located**? On local farms? Or do you think maybe in the urban areas? We think the latter. Urban areas are 'naturally' structured to provide more of the better quality and better paying jobs, with more reliable incomes than the traditional types of rural labouring roles provide.
- v. One of the few things unlikely to change in the course of most Governments, is the geographic boundaries of their own territories. So let them find ways to get rural communities becoming more productive and more resilient, working land that they can own and protect and pass on to their children's children. If nobody OWNS the land, then nobody takes ownership of it – nobody feels responsible



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- for its care. Instead, they will only be thinking as far as next year's crop. Maybe not even that far.
- vi. If the national rural legislative policy is that the land can easily be taken away from you, but your own labour CANNOT be, then you will invest that labour in a JOB and not the LAND. The land and the climate above it, can often be volatile partners in the developing world. Crop yields can be unpredictable, cruel and occasionally devastating. By comparison, a job may provide the assurance of a weekly or even a daily return. If it doesn't, you can always walk away with only up to a week's labour wasted. With a crop, the waste of time and effort could be up to a whole year. By all means legislation should help improve factory conditions – but equally work to improve rural employment and livelihood conditions too. Whether they live in free democracies or not, people still tend to have a habit of 'voting with their feet'. Let's have more local, national and international government policies that work with this widespread and persistent human tendency.
 - vii. There is **some** good news about such high population concentrations in urban areas: it makes them relatively easier to reach with geographically concentrated poverty alleviation programmes. Bonus.
- d. **DISILLUSIONMENT:** History has many lessons for us. Appealing for peace 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy told the Irish Parliament, ***"The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics, whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were and ask, why not?"*** In April 2013, the Development Committee of the World Bank set the goal of ending extreme poverty by the year **2030**. More recently, the United Nations General Assembly working group on global goals concluded that "eradicating poverty in a generation is an ambitious but feasible goal." As Kennedy also declared a half-century ago, ***"By defining our goal more clearly — by making it seem more manageable and less remote — we can help all people to see it, to draw hope from it, and to move irresistibly toward it."***
- e. **CONSENSUS:**
- i. These ideas are not entirely our own. 'Academics Stand Against Poverty' describes itself as an organisation ***"aimed at building an inclusive academic consensus on the post-MDG framework"***. An inclusive academic consensus was conspicuously absent for the MDG's. If experts cannot reach consensus agreement, what hope for policy-makers?
 - ii. There is a compelling need for such a consensus. Despite some notable progress with MDG's, the OECD still states: "Though the proportion of undernourished people in the world has fallen, the pace of reduction has **slowed** and the absolute numbers remain stubbornly high. And a number of countries—mostly in Africa and South Asia—have seen **no improvement at all.**" Current strategies are clearly not achieving their desired outcomes.
 - iii. 'The Earth is one, but the world is not'. So it seems. If we cannot be united, then perhaps we can at least seek to build a form of expert consensus – rather than 'a limited consensus among some experts'. Such consensus is currently lacking. ForeignPolicy.com, in 2013 said: "State-of-the-art thinking in the development



field is in flux. There is no consensus on what works best to get rid of extreme poverty”.

f. **POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES:**

- i. A 2008 Global Health Forum report estimates that only about **5%** of the world's resources for **health research** are applied to the health problems of low and middle income countries, where **93%** of the world's **preventable deaths** occur.
- ii. Peter Singer noted that on Sept 11, 2001, 3000 people died in the World Trade Center attack; on Sept 13, 2001, 2 days later, UNICEF released its report indicating that **30,000 children under five had died that day** of preventable diseases & 30,000 every other day during the past year, some 10 million in all.

10. HOW CAN MDG #2 BE 'SMARTER'?

a. *WHAT DOES SMART STAND FOR?*

It is an acronym **STOLEN** from business. It specifically relates to the setting of Objectives in a business context, but it applies equally to **all** aspects of life and human endeavour to achieve things – ideal to assess the MDG's against, then. It is a reminder **checklist** EVERY time you, or a colleague seeks to set some kind of goal or objective as an aiming point – either for themselves or a wider group – that the objective should be **SMART**, rather than any **OTHER** kind of objective. For most people, the opposite of smart is 'STUPID'.

- b. As human endeavours go, 'business' has proven a pretty successful venture collectively over the centuries, as a replacement globally for feudal monarchies and military dictatorships. That is not to say that everything in business always works, but it is something of a **crucible** for ideas, so if a thing doesn't work, it gets dropped pretty quickly. **SMART** has managed to survive for quite a while. It focuses all 'stakeholder' minds on what you are **REALLY** trying to achieve and how you will track progress.
- c. You will recall that the third of our 3 Steps to solving global poverty, is to '**focus fixers**'. Using **SMART** objectives is one tool we suggest these fixers borrow from business, to help refine their own 'focus' in overcoming poverty. So now let's apply it to the MDG's.
- d. The goal guidance acronym stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-related.
- e. **The 8 Millenium Development Goals:** Consider MDG #1: 'To halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of the world's population living on less than \$1.25 per day'. Using this goal as an example, the MDG's actually appear pretty **SMART**. They are **specific**, with clear expressions in each of the 8 areas. They are also **time-related**, in that time runs out for them in 2015. They are **measurable**, in that there were ways of calculating the starting points and progress indicators for each of the 8 goals (with #8 being notably weaker on this point). They were also **achievable**, on the evidence available, in that each donor country had to allocate just 0.7% of its GDP for overseas aid and development, which they all agreed to do. In which case, the fatal **flaw** in the MDG approach to goal setting by this proven metric was: a lack of **realism**. Would you agree?
- f. Even so, it is not enough to say a primary cause of missing the MDG's (particularly if it were not for China & India's own relative successes) was a **shortfall in the area of realism** – and just leave it there. We have 2 reasonable **responses** from this point onwards. Either we decide to set ourselves more 'realistic' targets (ie set goals and



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expectations lower), or we discover **what it was** that made the original goals UN-REALISABLE, to identify what has to CHANGE for MDG #2. We have sought to do the latter, using Systems Thinking and the 7 Layer Poverty Model to help us.

11. SYSTEMS THINKING RECAP:

- a. To recap, Systems Thinking would suggest that an unwelcome output (ie poverty) from a system (in this case the complex, integrated world financial and social system), is the result of some failing(s) in the system's EXISTING underlying People, Process and Technology factor combination.
- b. We face such considerations for fixers at the MACRO, MICRO and SOLO scale levels. Therefore, we have multiple sets of stakeholder 'systems' to examine and consider, recognising that EACH will have its own people/process/technology considerations. We are not concerned here with ALL possible influencing systems (human or environmental). JUST the **7 key stakeholders**, or 'fixers' that we track within the 7 Layer Poverty Model: individual, household, community, NGOs, in-country government, social entrepreneurs and multilaterals.
- c. These are the 7 players that have a declared, or vested **interest** in actively helping the individual get themselves out of poverty circumstances. By implication, we cannot blame **business** for not fixing poverty, as business never saw that as its job. The idea here is that where these other systems are **correctly** functioning, there is a sequence of escalating 'fail-safes' that prompt the fixers to **intervene** on behalf of the individual – clearly including that individual intervening to help themselves. If such fail-safes do not **work** to intervene effectively, then that system becomes 'DYSFUNCTIONAL' in the experience of that individual – that is, it does not correctly, or adequately perform its intended intervening FUNCTION. And when such a function is deemed to have failed, THAT is when System Thinking can thankfully assist us.
- d. Let us be clear: this IS to find FAULT, but it is NOT primarily about laying BLAME. We find fault so that we can help fix what is faulty. Before you can hope to fix what is faulty, you have to identify who and/or what is at fault. It is inescapable logic, however **uncomfortable** it may prove to be for the person(s) at fault. There is too much at stake here to let egos obstruct remedies to blatantly faulty systems and system 'components'.
- e. As a whole then, at the GLOBAL level, it appears that the MDG's were not achieved due to a shortfall in the area of **realism**, when it came to SMART goal-setting. However, given that some countries individually **over**-achieved, while others consistently **under**-achieved, it proves that the failure to achieve the MDG's at specific **national** and **local** levels is the ultimate underlying **cause** of the overall MDG failures overall. And as we all now know, that will inevitably be due to the failure of **faulty underlying systems** in those specific failing **countries**.

12. GETTING SMARTER AT THE NATIONAL, LOCAL AND MICRO LEVELS

- a. So what about the NATIONAL, LOCAL and MICRO scales, down to community and household level projects? Do various governments, aid and development organisations set themselves SMART targets? One of the understandable biases among aid organisations is towards measuring their **inputs** to any given system, rather than the



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outputs, outcomes and impacts from it. Hence, it is easier to measure how much money was spent and even how many wells were dug for example, rather than how many are still working 3 years later and what percentage lifetime availability they maintain. Let alone how much ultimate, lasting impact it had on local health and mortality rates.

- b. Understandably, an NGO like Water Aid, which is a focused-issue charity, will not necessarily see its role as measuring the healthcare benefits, or impact on child school attendance, etc. Their own donors might prefer to see more money spent on digging wells and less on administrative supervision and **social impact studies**. Of course drilling wells makes the world a better place. Doesn't it? It is not that we disagree, but that more impact assessment and awareness might **focus** more attention onto long term understanding of **what makes the most difference for the most people over the longest time period, with the least overall resources**. Is that such a bad thing to want to know and compare? This is partly why randomized control trials have grown in popularity and visibility in recent poverty thinking.
- c. The **Simple Assessments** that we advocate (and share freely) can help here. Whether you canvas opinion from an entire community, or a statistically significant sample of it each time, you CAN reasonably measure quantitatively, the difference your activities have made, or at the very least, the CHANGES in the lives of the individuals you were apparently trying to help. Yes, we have anecdotal quotes from chosen individuals at the start of the project launch, but what about follow up?
- d. Simple Assessments can hardly be thought of as an expensive supplementary exercise. How much does it cost a local partner member of staff to go and conduct a Sample Study of say 50 people? They can then either make a phone call and relay the data back to 'NGO headquarters', or go to the nearest internet access point and email the results. Perhaps the local contact may even have a smart phone for the task. And what could be better to help deliver a SMART objective?
- e. WEARING YOUR 'MAGIC' SYSTEM SPECTACLES: We understand that the human mind can get a bit frazzled, when thinking of up to 3 billion individuals, plus all associated influences from the other 6 key fixer groups relevant to their own specific experiences, compounded with people/process/ technology considerations for each fixer. But that is merely to ADMIT the REALITY of the situation. There is no point in wishing it was otherwise. The GOOD news is this: now you FINALLY have a common **framework of understanding** by which you can start to MAKE SENSE of it all. THAT is what the 7 Layer Poverty Model makes possible. **Yes, it is understandably complex; but it is UNDERSTANDABLE all the same**. It is complicated, but it is not impossible to unravel. It is hard, but it remains achievable. We just need **accurate** data to work with.

13. WHOSE DATA CAN WE TRUST?

- a. "Truth is the first casualty of war" as the quote variously attributed to Aeschylus, the ancient Greek playwright, goes. In the war of words regarding the causes of and solutions to global poverty, this notion has a ring of truth. Consider St Clair's excellent article on 'Global Production of Knowledge and Politics' (2006). You can find it as one of the top 3 scholarly articles at the top of the first page, when you enter 'solving global poverty' as your search term into Google.



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- b. St Clair recognises that poverty can be seen as a 'complex and slippery problem'. [Note our Systems Thinking explanation of why that is, above]. At the same time, there are some fairly hefty **self-interested** parties sitting around the discussion table. Human history is filled with plenty of examples of productive, robust debate arriving at sound and actionable conclusions. It also has plenty of examples of **other** approaches. And this seems to be St Clair's point. She states that the World Bank sets itself up as the global best source for knowledge on the **causes of** and most effective **solutions to** world poverty. Her article identifies that **a number of other recognised 'experts' don't necessarily agree**. She therefore argues for the creation of what she calls a 'boundary organisation', operating at the divide between the scientists and the policy-makers. The issues that can arise **without** that are twofold. The issue of **delegation** and the issue of **moral risk**.
- c. St Clair argues that finding a true expert of global poverty can be a challenge. How do we assess their claims to any given expertise? How transparent and open is that knowledge? While the article is heavily peppered with academic language, it makes a number of compelling points.
- i. It provides a rather useful summary of other **source literature** on the subject
 - ii. It clearly highlights the problems of the current system, with the World Bank as both **principal** and **agent**
 - iii. It identifies what would really help progress debate and development of knowledge, in the form of **more effective models and measurement**
 - iv. It suggests that a **boundary organisation** be set up for poverty, in the same way as the **IPCC** (Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change), acting as a recognised, authoritative, independent and respected source of consolidated and tested knowledge, on a complex politicised subject, where there are many differing, strongly held and sometimes adversarial views, even among 'experts'
 - v. She differentiates between 'a consensus among certain scientists' and 'a scientific consensus'
 - vi. The 7 Layer Poverty Model comes as a welcome instance of what St Clair identifies as a global need. Along with the Simple Assessment method of data capture, this tool helps move us from economics driven, aggregated data, to the ability to provide highly granular detail about subjective experiences of poverty, on an individual case-by-case basis. That data is still capable of analysis at aggregated levels, but can also be drilled down into, to obtain individual answers and 21 data points regarding poverty, for every individual on the planet. Thus, it is an effective **alternative** to the World Bank's own **small area estimation** statistical models, which rely on **projections** from other aggregated data.

14. MDG #2: A POVERTY OF IDEAS?

- a. If you have a tough problem, you generally want the smartest women and men in the room working on it. If they are engaged elsewhere, that's going to become a bit of an issue. When you have a problem impacting several billion people on the planet and you don't have your 'Best Team' on it, then that's going to be a MAJOR issue. And if that problem EVER becomes a matter of life and death – then 'all hell' is probably going to



A 'SYSTEMS THINKING' APPROACH TO ANY MDG SUCCESSOR

break loose on earth. Now wait a minute – don't we **actually** have something like that happening already? (And no, Greenpeace, we don't mean global warming).

b. A REVIEW OF LEADING IDEAS

Given that time runs out for the MDG's in 2015 and there remains a persistent, pressing need for effective solutions to global poverty, we thought it would be a good idea to conduct a **Review** of prevailing good ideas on the subject, researching some of the best available material currently out there on poverty – why it exists and how best to overcome it. We admit from the outset, it is not a complete, structured assessment of latest published academic research and theses on the topic of poverty. It is something a little more 21st century. We thought it appropriate to start the review by going to where some 80% of the online world now goes first, to find things out. We ran a search on Google, with the search term: "solving global poverty", to see what it came up with. And then we dived into the **top 100** things we found. [At the time of writing, our own article entitled 'solving global poverty' was ranked number 10].

c. We also admit from the outset, that we began our research with a starting idea, or thesis, that we wished to test out against the best of them. We want to test the 7 Layer Poverty Model, not just in practice, but also in THEORY. That is, against the strongest and most compelling alternative models, insights, ideas and theses out there. Like an intensive, 'Darwinian dog fight', if you like. Except in this encounter, the goal is NOT to leave just the fittest 'dog' standing, but to help assess which of them have the DNA to become 'pack leaders' in the future.

d. IN ORDER TO WORK AT ALL– IDEAS MUST ALSO WORK IN PRACTICE

Our view is that if our Model does not work on the ground, it will be dropped just like dirt anyway. And rightly so. We want tools we can use. If they are good and if they work, we want everyone who needs them to have them. For free. Our Research Paper is necessarily a rather long read at 45 pages, but bear in mind we are saving you having to plough through the top 100 search result articles fed back by Google, like we did before writing it. So don't get too testy with us, ok? You're getting off easy.

15. ONE MODEL TO BIND THEM ALL?

a. The appeal of the 7 Layer Poverty Model is that **everyone** on the planet can see what their own relative 'score is', what makes up that score and what would need to happen to change it. We all start off somewhere on the spectrum. If you provide people with the prospect of steadily improving conditions, whole communities at a time working together towards a shared and common goal, then THAT is a compelling alternative to a lifetime of otherwise hard-pressed family toil in rural or slum areas, generation after generation.

b. At Give A Billion, we have put our Model 'out there' – Open Source style. If you can improve on it – please do. You will have our thanks and our blessing. If you apply it and find ways that it needs to be adjusted to fit your real world – then let the rest of the real world know too, including us. Agreed? We appreciate others out there who are doing the same with their own ideas on overcoming poverty. May all of our most helpful ideas gain increasingly widespread adoption - globally. Then MDG #2 stands a far better chance of succeeding - and you yourself will be part of that success.

