

Abstract

This paper provides a chronological account of the evolution of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It examines their historical antecedents; the UN conferences and summits that provided their content; the role of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in formulating the International Development Goals (IDGs); the influence of the UN's Secretariat in drafting the Millennium Declaration; and the final negotiations between the UN, DAC, World Bank, and IMF to amend the IDGs into the MDGs in 2001. This account reveals the complexity and unpredictability of global policy-making processes. Although the overarching structures of economic and political power framed all negotiations, so the MDGs are largely a rich world product for rich world audiences, there are opportunities for norm entrepreneurs and message entrepreneurs to exercise personal agency. As the time approaches for the assessment of the MDGs, at the UN General Assembly in September 2010, it is useful to reflect on the 'chaos of accidents and purposes' that generated the MDGs in the first place.

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, Global Public Policy, UN, Global Poverty, Foreign Aid, Development Finance

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