

VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

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THE
KARIBU
FOUNDATION

The Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

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IBON International is a service institution with an international character and scope of work. In our advocacy, we cooperate mainly with social movements and civil society constituencies in all regions of the world, especially in the global South and among marginalised groups.

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Measuring Development Inaccurately What the UN's Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) *Should* Be Measuring

With the expiration of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, the UN is now preparing to usher in a new era with the launching of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 17 goals and 169 targets have now been drafted, and they are all slated for discussion and official recognition at the upcoming UN General Assembly in September.

In March 2015, the UN called together a consultation civil society stakeholders to specifically discuss the proposed goals and targets outlined in the draft SDGs (including poverty eradication, food security, ensuring quality access to numerous basic services, environmental sustainability, among others) Karibu partner Maria Theresa (Tetet) Lauron of IBON International spoke at this consultation, raising a critique of the indicators and statistics used by the international community to demonstrate "poverty alleviation." She instead offered alternative indicators that can better demonstrate true development. In this month's "Voices from the South," we lift up Tetet's speech that was given during the plenary session of the UN Interactive Dialogue in New York, including a video of the speech.



By Tetet Lauron
IBON International

In the Philippines, like many other countries, statistics have been used to mask poverty and inequalities between rich and poor, men and women. A few magical waves of

statistical wands support governments' claim that poverty has been greatly reduced, and that globalization has been good for all.

But walk with me through Manila's slums and I'll show you that poverty, no matter how it's measured, is deeply felt by millions. Come to our rural communities and see how resource grabs, the privatization of water, energy, education and health are greater indicators of misery.

Statistics are political acts. They matter for those we choose to count. They matter even more for those we don't count.

This no more clearly demonstrated than in the continued use of policy makers, governments, and institutions of the World Bank-defined extreme poverty headcount ratio pegged at \$1.25/day that monitors the number of people living below this level of income. By using such a distressingly low level of income to define the poor, the World Bank is able to give the positive spin that the number of people living extreme poverty has decreased dramatically in the past three decades: from half the citizens in the developing world in 1981 to 21 per cent in 2010, even with a 59 per cent increase in the developing world population.

Being the arbiter of global poverty statistics, the Bank has used the \$1.25/day yardstick to promote neoliberal

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globalization as the ultimate weapon to combat poverty. Since the inception of the MDGs in 2000 up to now, it has consistently depicted the global poverty situation in rose-tinted glasses while effacing the millions victimized by the Bank's policies of privatization, liberalization, and globalization: women and youth who have no access to social services, workers who work under vulnerable and precarious conditions, and indigenous peoples ejected from their ancestral domain by the government and big business

The statistics we select should measure transformation. And it's not hard. We can measure:

- growing **wealth inequalities** between countries and between people;
- how much of the world's wealth sitting in **offshore bank accounts**;
- whether a country provides **living wages**;
- the **ratio between labour share and profits**. We could even measure the time it takes the world's richest person to gain what a Bangladeshi garment worker will earn in a year (which is one second, by

the way).

We can measure policies, not just outcomes. Let's measure:

- **military spending** and compare it to **versus public health spending**;
- **taxes paid by corporations and by the wealthy**;
- interest in **loans paid by developing countries**;
- how many **trade agreements** are subject to **human rights and gender audits**.

These are statistics that should measure poverty across a wide range of factors, not only in terms of income. We should come up with goals and indicators that express and reinforce the interlinkages of the three core pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development, and environmental sustainability.

We need to amplify the voice and increase the participation from civil society and developing country representatives in the deliberation and negotiation for the post-2015 development framework.

Civil society can play a powerful role in monitoring the

SDGs including through institutionalized participation at all levels, connecting local realities to global policy debates, and in building new paradigms for social transformation and development justice.

CSOs have continued monitoring these processes, maximising the official space provided for them to engage with key stakeholders in the intergovernmental sessions. It is unclear, however, whether their strong calls will resonate in the content of the Post 2015 Agenda. ■

Tetet's speech to the UN can be seen in full at <http://goo.gl/Ktl-ELz>. Jump to the 55 minute, 35 second (55:35) mark to watch.

Maria Theresa Lauron is currently the Programme Manager of IBON International's Climate Justice Programme; Coordinator of the Peoples' Movement on Climate Change (PMCC); CSO representative to the Building Block on Climate Finance; and facilitation group member of Climate Justice Now and the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice. She is also one of the Co-Chairs of CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, an open platform that unites civil society around the world in the subject of development effectiveness.

“Statistics are political acts. They matter for those we choose to count. They matter even more for those we don't count.”

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Photo credits:
 Page 1: Activists push an inflatable globe on a march during Rio+20, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 2012. Photograph: Felipe Dana/AP.
 Via <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/19/sustainable-development-goals-united-nations>
 Page 2: Tetet Lauron speaks at the UN Interactive Dialogue on March 25th, 2015. Via UN Webcast, <http://www.webtvun.org>

