

**Key points:**

- The process to negotiate a post-2015 development framework needs to begin immediately
- The process should be UN-led, inclusive, participatory, and reflect the voices of men and women most affected by poverty.
- A post-2015 framework should learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the current MDGs
- The Irish Government should use its Presidency of the EU Council in 2013 to promote the development of a strong EU position ahead of the September UN MDG Summit.

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## Where Next for the Millennium Development Goals? An opportunity to build the world we want

*“When the MDGs were first articulated, we knew that achieving them would, in a sense, be only half the job [...] We knew that too many men, women and children would go largely untouched by even our best efforts. That is why we are already working with all our partners to sustain the momentum and to carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda”*

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, addressing the MDG Summit, July 2011

### The world we have

In our 2010 *Leading Edge* report, Trócaire identified future trends in international development and the key challenges that we now face in the fight against poverty and injustice<sup>1</sup>. The world we now live in is one where extreme weather conditions are rapidly increasing the number and scale of humanitarian crises, the impact of the global financial crisis is being felt, the emergence of new actors (such as the BRICS) and population growth challenge development thinking and practice, conflicts based on the politics of natural resource scarcity are on the rise, and inequality (income and gender) is rapidly widening with the majority of the world's poorest living in middle-income countries.

Today's world, characterized by multiple crises and uncertainty, is a very different one from when the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established. At the turn of the millennium the world enjoyed relative

political and economic stability, multilateralism was the lingua franca amongst international leaders, with the United Nations (UN) enjoying a central place, there was growing public support for international development and an overarching development framework that placed poverty and human development at its heart.

Despite a comparatively more favourable context within which the MDGs were established, it still took some 10 years to develop and negotiate them. With only three years remaining before the current MDG deadline is upon us, and in a much changed and uncertain global environment, Trócaire believes that the process to negotiate a post-2015 development framework needs to begin immediately. Such a process offers a timely opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current MDGs, to draw valuable lessons, and to demand a successor framework that delivers the world we want.

<sup>1</sup> Trocaire, (2010) *Leading Edge 2020: critical thinking on the future of international development*

## The good, the bad, and the absent: lessons from the current MDG framework

Adopted by UN member states in 2001, the MDGs are a set of international development goals aimed at tackling a number of important, albeit limited, dimensions of poverty by 2015. They have been the focus of much critique since their inception<sup>2</sup>, but nevertheless are a key feature of the modern international development framework, development discourse and practice.

### Strengths to build on

One of the major strengths of the MDGs has been the role the framework has played as a rallying point for international development efforts. As a global consensus and framework they guide international responses to poverty, and, to varying degrees, have been integrated within donor bilateral programmes and recipient country national poverty reduction plans. Over 85% of 118 countries surveyed by the UN earlier this year appear to have adopted one or more of the MDG targets in setting national level development plans.

The MDGs broadened the focus of international development from income poverty to cover most visible dimensions of poverty, such as access to food, sanitation, water, gender inequality, healthcare and education.

The clear, focused and time bound nature of the international commitment to poverty eradication reflected in the MDGs creates the conditions for enhanced accountability and monitoring of development policies. The goals offer clear, agreed and quantifiable targets to galvanise efforts in the rich and the poor countries and to hold their leaders to account.

A correlation between increases in aid per capita to low income countries since 1999 and the advent of the MDGs<sup>3</sup> suggests the MDGs encouraged an increase in poverty focused ODA, and in specific sectors such as education. Furthermore, significant progress has been made towards a number of the individual Millennium

Development Goals – most notably Global Hunger (Goal 1) and Education (Goal 2). See Table 1 for an assessment of progress towards the MDGs.

### Gaps and weaknesses to avoid

A major criticism of the MDGs is their failure to reflect the multi-faceted nature of poverty; focusing upon symptoms and basic needs rather than the structural causes of poverty, within each of the goal areas<sup>4</sup> (See Box 1).

Ownership, participation, and partnership are the core principles that underpin development strategies that are pro-poor, reflecting the fact that people living in poverty are the best experts regarding their situation. The process that led to the MDGs excluded key players, including Southern governments and civil society, and as a result, there has been a lack of full national ownership of the global goals, which would ideally have been expressed in national definitions and indicators of progress in development.

The MDGs have been criticized for failing to cover a number of important dimensions of human development, many of which were identified in the Millennium Declaration, from which the MDGs were taken. These issues included: the impacts of climate change (see Box 2), human rights, good governance, social inequality and exclusion, and gender inequality (see Box 1). In this sense, the MDGs failed to provide an overarching framework that fully addresses how poverty is experienced by the most vulnerable and excluded. If the MDGs insufficiently reflected the reality of poverty when they were conceived over a decade ago, they are even less suited to today's environment.

Many of the world's poorest now live in middle income economies, climate change threatens much of the progress that has been achieved and inequality has deepened significantly since the MDGs were first agreed. Recent events in North Africa and elsewhere are strengthening calls for the full incorporation of equality including gender equality, justice and human rights dimensions to human development and poverty reduction, at global and national levels.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of each of the 8 MDGs, refer to Trócaire (2005) *More than a Numbers Game?*

<sup>3</sup> Melamed, C. and Sumner, A., (2011) *A Post-2015 Global Development Agreement: why, what, who?*

<sup>4</sup> Trócaire (2005), *More than a Numbers Game?*

What we now understand about poverty and how we address it has changed over the last decade and will need to be addressed in what will follow the current MDG framework. For a variety of reasons, in practice, progress towards reaching the MDGs has been mixed, across regions as well as between wealthy and poor citizens within countries themselves<sup>5</sup>.

A new framework will need to avoid this, and we believe this means drawing on lessons learnt, being holistic, globally owned, and crucially, strong political will to deliver them.

Table 1 briefly presents progress made and the remaining challenges towards meeting a selection of the eight MDGs:

<b>Table 1: Summary assessment of progress made and outstanding challenges for a selection of MDGs</b>		
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Reported Progress in 2011</b>	<b>Gaps Challenges</b>
Eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger (Goal 1)	By 2015, it is now expected that the global poverty rate will fall below 15 per cent, well under the 23 per cent target.	<p>Progress is uneven- mainly due to rapid economic growth in eastern Asia, especially China.</p> <p>Job losses and the financial crisis mean more workers and families are now living in extreme poverty. More workers, particularly women, are being forced into informal work.</p> <p>Hunger is increasing, one of the many dire consequences of the global food and financial crises<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p>The challenge remains to reverse a three decade decline of investment in agriculture, and to achieve higher levels of investment in sustainable agricultural systems (production, distribution, consumption) (see Box 2).</p> <p>Underinvestment in agriculture has had a disproportionate impact on women. Future responses to hunger need to be focused on smallholders, in general, and women smallholders, in particular. While women produce the majority of food in Sub Saharan Africa, many hunger projects do not integrate gender into their response.</p>
Achieve universal primary education (Goal 2)	Between 1999 and 2009, 7% increase making global school enrollment average 89%. From 2009, progress has slowed down greatly.	<p>Children in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are being left behind despite major efforts by Governments (76% enrollment rate in 2009).</p> <p>Being poor, female or living in a conflict zone increases the probability that a child will be out of school</p> <p>Issues of education quality are not covered by MDGs.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the proportion of girls in primary school, however this has not been mirrored in secondary school completion and there is still a large gender gap in youth literacy.</p>

<sup>5</sup> See Trócaire (2010) *Countdown to 2015*

<sup>6</sup> Whilst the actual number of people living in hunger has increased, a small decline in hunger from the peak in 2009 was registered in 2010.

<p><b>Goal</b></p>	<p><b>Reported Progress in 2011</b></p>	<p><b>Gaps Challenges</b></p>
<p>Promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3)</p>	<p>In developing regions, 96 girls were enrolled in primary and in secondary school for every 100 boys in 2009. This is a significant improvement since 1999, when the ratios were 91 and 88, respectively.</p>	<p>Extremely limited view of gender equality and women's empowerment.</p> <p>Equal access to education for girls remains an elusive aspiration in a number of regions- Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia.</p> <p>Wide gaps remain in women's access to paid work, even more than their male counterparts, in at least half of all regions</p> <p>Targets around women's political participation and Gender Based Violence were not explicitly addressed in the final set of goals and so progress has been limited.</p>
<p>Improve Maternal Health (Goal 5)</p>	<p>Of all the MDGs, the least progress has been made on the maternal mortality goal. In the developing regions as a whole, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by 34 per cent from 440 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births to 290 maternal deaths (1998-2009).</p>	<p>Many maternal mortality programmes do little to address gender inequality as an underlying cause.</p> <p>Maternal deaths are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, which together accounted for 87 per cent of such deaths globally in 2008.</p> <p>The likelihood of maternal death increases among women who have many children, are poorly educated, are either very young or very old, and who are subjected to gender discrimination.</p>
<p>Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases</p>	<p>We have halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV globally. The number of people accessing anti-retroviral treatment for HIV has increased to six million.</p>	<p>Universal Access to a full range of prevention, treatment, care and support services has still not been achieved.</p> <p>For every two people going on treatment there are five people becoming newly infected with HIV.</p> <p>Young women continue to remain more vulnerable to HIV than young men</p>

Source: Adapted from United Nations (2011) The Millennium Development Goal Report

### Box 1 – Gender equality and MDG 3: more than a numbers game

Trócaire's partner, National Alliance of Women Orissa (NAWO) works to increase women's political empowerment, to end violence against women and to ensure the economic rights of women in the state of Orissa, India. In 2010, NAWO conducted a review of progress on MDG 3 to promote gender equality and empower women in Orissa.

Orissa is one of India's poorest and most unequal states. India's rural maternal mortality rates are amongst the highest in the world, and the rate in Orissa is the highest in the country. Along with the rest of India, Orissa has experienced a significant increase in the number of cases of rape and murder of women, including dowry-related killings. The practice of sex-selective abortion is reflected by the alarming, decreasing sex ratio in the state. Gender inequalities are compounded by significant barriers to women's participation in politics at all levels.

In its review of MDG 3, NAWO examined progress in achieving educational parity for girls and boys. They noted that a number of state-level policies had been put in place since 2000 to increase the ratio of girls to boys in schools in Orissa, in response to MDG 3. Schemes have been introduced to provide meals and uniforms to all girl students and resources have been allocated for the education of under-privileged girls.

Despite this, however, the gender gap in literacy levels, at 25%, remains far higher than the national average, even higher again for castes, tribal groups and minorities that face further exclusion. Schools remain inaccessible to many girl students. In remote areas, distance from a school has a huge bearing on retention of girl students. Girls are often called on to do domestic work, leaving less time for school particularly if there are long travel times involved. Commutes to school can also leave girls vulnerable to assaults. Enrollment drives have failed to increase take-up of education even when available as there are a number of issues that can prevent a girl child attending school. The dropout rate in secondary schools remains high, up to 71% amongst girls from scheduled castes. While progress has been made in enrolling girls in primary school, there still remains a large gender gap at secondary level globally.

Schools are often residential, so unattractive to girls who are expected to help with domestic work in the family home. There is insufficient cultural sensitivity to the particular educational needs of girls. Since most single teacher schools are managed by male teachers, girl students do not feel comfortable attending. Lack of privacy for adolescent girls in the school is a major problem. **51% of schools did not have separate toilet provisions for girl students.** Adolescent girls without adequate privacy will tend not to come to school beyond puberty. Not much sensitivity is shown towards the education of Muslim girls. In particular, the school uniform supplied by the state does not allow for the standard dress worn by Muslim girls. **Sexual exploitation of young girls by teachers and other staff remains a widespread phenomenon,** especially in residential schools.

NAWO's analysis indicates the new policies which have been introduced as part of MDG implementation **are not reaching the girls who need them most,** often because they ignore local and cultural contexts, and the specific needs of girl children. When dealing with gender equality in a future MDG framework we need to recognise the systemic barriers to education and gender equality targets and goals which exist. We cannot rely on numbers and percentages which mean very little at the local level. When measuring progress, it makes little sense to talk about educational achievement across 'India' or even Orissa: the differences between tribal groups in southern Orissa are incomparable to those of a girl child in Delhi, or Bhubaneswar, the state capital. It is imperative that women and excluded groups be involved in the design and implementation of policies, to ensure that the particular barriers which they face are identified.

While MDG 3 looks to promote gender equality and to empower women, the only target under this goal is to eliminate gender inequality in education at all levels of education by 2015. While ensuring girls have access to education is a necessary step in promoting gender equality and empowering women, a number of other interventions are required in order to have impact.

### Box 2- Tackling climate change is essential in the fight against hunger<sup>7</sup>

Laurinda Muletche lives in a village called Mavinga, in Sofala Province in central Mozambique. Most people in Mavinga live from subsistence agriculture and the impacts of climate change are felt by everyone. Rains are more irregular and floods are more severe. This year floods occurred twice, much more frequently than in the past, and many families in the community lost their crops. According to Laurinda, in the past it was very different. "Our ancestors told us that floods were a good sign, a sign that there would be a good harvest that year. Now in recent years, floods only bring misery. We don't know why this has changed. We lack the explanation."

When the floods came early this year, families in Mavinga left their homes to higher ground. When the waters receded, they replanted, taking advantage of the moisture in the soil. When the crops had grown to almost half a metre, there was no more rain although it was still the rainy season, and the crops dried up. Cyclones have also become more frequent than before. They destroy farms, trees and houses.

Laurinda's family and others in Mavinga find it hard to cope with the changing climate. They see no solution but to wait for rains.

The price of food has become very high and people do not have purchasing power. Laurinda sees no alternative in her lifetime. There are many other widows in the community, and they lack the manpower to create irrigation systems and other measures to cope with climate change.

Trócaire's partner, Ajoago, has rehabilitated wells in Mavinga as part of a recovery project following a cyclone. This has ensured the community's access to clean drinking water. "There are other wells in the district that dry up, but this one never dries up. When the well was broken, we had to walk further to collect water, but now it has been fixed and this has helped us a lot." Trócaire and Ajoago are currently planning reforestation and irrigation activities to benefit Mavinga and other communities affected by climate change in the district.

Climate change considerations are central to the effective building of sustainable livelihoods, achieving long-term food security, and ultimately the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1).

<sup>7</sup> See also, Trócaire (2009), *Changing Lives: Climate Change in the Developing World*

## 1. The way forward: towards a framework to build the world we want

With less than three years to go, learning from experience will be essential to ensuring a successor development framework that builds on the strengths and avoids the weaknesses of the MDGs. For Trócaire this means:

**Revisiting the original purpose of the MDGs:** The Millennium Declaration, from which the MDGs were taken, has a longer and higher set of aspirations, places “human dignity, equality, and equity” at its heart, and reaffirms and strengthens the international human rights framework. The current MDG framework and the goals themselves have been heavily criticized as falling short of embodying these important principles. How can we ensure a post-2015 framework returns to the original spirit of the Millennium Declaration and effectively addresses human rights and inequality dimensions? It is also necessary to ensure that mainstreamed issues such as human rights and gender equality not only have a focus but also inform all development goals and are fully integrated this time around.

**Build upon existing initiatives:** Just as the MDGs were built on a decade or more of UN conferences, from education and gender to sustainable development, the post MDGs can build upon initiatives already afoot, such as the process being pursued in the area of food and agriculture through the reformed Committee on World Food Security and the climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC.

**Reflect the reality of poor people’s lives:** Some good goals and targets were dropped first time around (didn’t make it into the MDG framework – such as gender equality beyond education, fairer trade etc). Broad participation will ensure this does not happen this time around.

**Localising the global:** The MDG framework is intended as a guide for poverty reduction policies at a global and national level. To achieve this practical transformation on the

“ground”, the global goals and indicators require the development or integration into existing national strategies and plans.

**Business as usual is NOT an option:** The world we now have is markedly different from that of the turn of the Millennium when the current MDGs were developed. With recent global crises (food, climate, energy) continuing to unfold and holding direct consequences for global development efforts, any successor to the MDGs will need to be somewhat radical in its approach.

**A one world approach:** Geo-political shifts and interconnectivity between the development model pursued by rich countries and increasing and worsening crises and poverty in poor countries pose challenges to traditional development approaches. A successor MDG framework will need to be truly global, holding poor and rich countries accountable.

Although a formal process for negotiating a post-2015 framework has yet to begin, initial thinking has already been done on what such a framework should address. Based upon assessments and lessons learned from the current MDG framework, and looking at current trends in poverty, a number of proposals for a post-MDG framework are circulating (see Table 2). The range of current proposals reflects the view held by many development practitioners and policy-makers that a post-2015 framework needs to be more holistic, address the weaknesses and gaps of the current framework, and be responsive to a much changed global environment. This was a key finding of Trócaire’s *Leading Edge* report. All proposals make valuable contributions to the post-2015 debate, and the starting point must be the establishment of a participatory and inclusive process that engages people, particularly those living in developing countries, on the world we want and how to achieve it.

**Table 2: Summary of some existing proposals for the world we want<sup>8</sup>:**

**Millennium Consumption Goals**

The Millennium Consumption Goals (MCGs) seek to provide consumption targets designed to motivate the world's rich to consume more sustainably, and make the human development path more sustainable. The MCG idea was proposed formally at the January 2011 UN sessions in New York, during preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, UNCSD 2012 (or Rio+20) in Brazil. The most obvious and easily measurable MCGs would target:

- Carbon emissions reduction;
- Energy (conservation, renewable energy fraction);
- Water (conservation, quality); and
- Pollution abatement (air and water effluents, solid waste, and toxic waste).

Further areas might include:

- efficient transport; urban footprint and sustainable dwellings;
- land use, deforestation and biodiversity loss;
- food security, sustainable agriculture and healthier diets;
- sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles;
- reduced working hours and improved working conditions; and progressive taxation.
- Certain government expenditures could also be considered, like the US\$1.6 trillion per year currently spent on armaments worldwide.

**CIGI-IFRC Proposal**

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) convened a meeting of development experts, representatives from international organizations and research institutes, and policy and governance experts to discuss a post-2015 development paradigm. The goals and indicators suggested:

- Reduce poverty (indicator: Improving living standards)
- Assure adequate food and safe water (indicator: eradicating hunger; reducing obesity; and ensuring safe water for drinking and sanitation)
- Promote Healthier Lives (indicator: reducing diseases and preventable deaths)
- Reduce Violence (indicator: protecting citizens- particularly women, children and vulnerable groups- from violence and the threat of violence)
- Promote Gender Equality (indicator: empowering women and eliminating discrimination against women and girls)
- Improve Environmental Sustainability (indicator: ensuring better management of the earth's limited resources)
- Achieve Universal Connectedness (indicator: create ties that bind)
- Improve Disaster Reduction & Crisis Management (indicator: increasing capabilities to deal with disasters and crises)

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Beyond 2015 (2011) "The World We Want: Toolkit for National Deliberations on a Post-2015 Framework"



- Civil and Political Rights (indicator: fulfilling people's right to be politically active and engaged in decision-making)
- Good and Equitable Global Governance (indicator: ensuring fair participation, transparency and accountability in international institutions)
- Equitable Economic Rules (indicator: ensuring rules in our global economy that promote economic development)

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Colombia has proposed a set of SDGs as an input into the Rio+20 conference, aiming to translate the Green Economy / Sustainable Development debate into tangible goals. The SDGs would be based on Agenda 21 given that it already maps requirements for sustainable development. The Colombian proposal suggests a focus on the following:

- Commodity Markets and Policies
- Poverty
- Consumption
- Demographic Dynamics & Sustainability
- Protecting & Promoting Human Health
- Sustainable Human Settlement Development
- Integrating Environment & Development in Decision-Making
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption
- Land resources, deforestation and desertification
- Sustainable Agriculture & Food Security
- Biological diversity
- Protection of the oceans and freshwater resources

### **Gross National Happiness (GNH)**

The four pillars of Bhutan's GNH are the promotion of sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance. Through collaboration with an international group of scholars and empirical researchers the Centre for Bhutan Studies further defined these four pillars with greater specificity into eight general contributors to happiness.

- physical, mental and spiritual health;
- time balance;
- social and community vitality;
- cultural vitality;
- education;
- living standards;
- good governance; and
- ecological vitality.

A second-generation GNH concept, treating happiness as a socioeconomic development metric, was proposed in 2006. The metric measures socioeconomic development by tracking seven development areas. GNH value is proposed to be an index function of the total average per capita of the following measures:

- Economic Wellness;
- Environmental Wellness;
- Mental Wellness;
- Workplace Wellness; and
- Social Wellness;
- Political Wellness.

### Human wellbeing

Ideas around 'human wellbeing' are emerging as a complement to the more traditional and material ways of conceptualising and measuring poverty and deprivation. The commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (*Stiglitz Commission*) recently appointed by President Sarkozy of France is one of several recent attempts to look at alternative measures of progress. The commission, which included both Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, identified eight dimensions of wellbeing which are critical to happy and fulfilled lives:

- Material living standards;
- Health; Education;
- Personal activities including work;
- Political voice and governance;
- Social connections and relationships;
- The present and future environment; and
- Security, both economic and physical.

The original MDGs were written by a small, elite group of UN technocrats. The dangers of adopting a *business as usual* approach as we head towards 2015 have been well-documented<sup>9</sup>. The development of a post-2015 global agenda must not repeat the mistakes of the MDGs – the process must be participatory, inclusive and responsive to the voices of those directly affected by poverty and injustice. Full participation and ownership of a broad range of stakeholders, including ensuring a balance of women and men, will be key to the success of a post-2015 framework.

This vision is encapsulated in the approach of Catholic Social Teaching, which emphasises that human rights can only be fully realised through recognising mutual responsibilities. In particular, those most affected by poverty and inequality will need to drive the agenda, particularly at the local level.

To make the most of this opportunity to build the world we want, discussions on the post-2015 development framework need to begin immediately.

<sup>9</sup> Pollard, A. (2011) *Getting to a post-2015 framework. What are the scenarios?*

## 2. Recommendations

As a founding member of the *Beyond 2015* global campaign<sup>10</sup>, Trócaire is participating in a global effort to mobilize civil society around the world to participate in such discussions. We are calling for a UN-led multi-stakeholder process involving national and regional-level deliberations, ensuring the incorporation of the lessons learned and experiences from all stakeholders and the voices of those most affected by poverty drive the agenda. Such a process will greatly enhance the chance of securing a new framework that better responds to poverty in all its dimensions within the current global context, is locally relevant, and produces a more equitable distribution of potential outcomes. All of this places post-2015 planning under considerable pressure.

### **Trócaire calls on the Irish Government to:**

- Continue to commit to, and invest in, the delivery of existing MDGs
- Initiate critical thinking and engagement on what should replace the current MDG framework in 2015 as a matter of urgency. Use the opportunity of Ireland's Presidency of the EU Council in 2013 to actively promote and support the development of a strong and clear EU position on a successor MDG framework by hosting an informal ministerial on the issue ahead of the UN MDG Summit later that year.

### **Trócaire calls on the United Nations to:**

- Continue to commit to, and invest in, the delivery of existing MDGs
- Initiate and lead a strong, legitimate and inclusive process of post-2015 planning as a matter of urgency.
- Ensure the inclusion and participation of civil society and those most affected by poverty (both women and men) in a formal consultation process.
- Encourage discussion of post-2015 planning at the UN's Sustainable Development Conference taking place in Rio later this year (June 2012).

### **Trócaire calls on Southern and Northern civil society, including Irish civil society, to:**

- Proactively engage with post-2015 planning and develop clear and coherent asks in a participatory manner which are influential in the debate and respond to the voices of men and women directly affected by poverty and injustice.

<sup>10</sup> <http://beyond2015.org/>

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