

Prospects and Perils in the Delivery of Global Public Goods in an Age of Mega Trends and Threats

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I thank Dr. Zack Plantak and the Department of Religion at Washington Adventist University for this wonderful opportunity to be with you here this weekend, and to have been given the opportunity to lead the discussion on a set of topics that many of us, all of us here tonight I am sure care deeply about and seek to be engaged on in various ways. I will thus, particularly, look forward to our interactive Q&A part of our time together this evening.

We live in a truly beautiful world, which though marred seriously by millennia of sin and the consequences of sin, still comes with the potential to be a “paradise” of sorts. And yet, all of the episodes of joy, pleasure, beauty, exuberance, prosperity that people (indeed, many people) experience at one point or another notwithstanding, perhaps the majority of the people living on planet Earth would still, without any reservation whatsoever, resort to agreeing with the title and message of that epic poem by the 17th century English poet John Milton: *Paradise Lost*. Because, even a cursory examination and analysis of the state of our world would inevitably lead to the conclusion that so much, too much, in our world is not right, not just, not decent or promising. Indeed, the backdrop to our discussion tonight is

- Each year, more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive.
- Over 1.3 billion people—1 in 6 people around the world—live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.25 a day.
- Over 3 billion people, out of the 7 billion are considered to be poor (living on less than \$2 a day).
- Close to 1 billion go hungry each day.
- Over 100 million primary school-age children cannot go to school.
- Today some 25,000 children will have died from preventable diseases
- Almost 8,5 million children dying every year
- Some 60 million children died between 2000 and 2006
- Not to mention all of the violence and armed conflict ongoing and the pain that it inflicts on millions
- Paradise lost, indeed

Now, to exclude the possibility of misunderstanding or partial understanding of the nomenclature and terms that we'll be using tonight and in tomorrow afternoon's lecture, let me begin by establishing some definitions first so that we are all on the same page regarding what we are talking about here. I would like to define what we mean by 1) global public/social goods, and 2) mega trends.

Definition of Mega Trends:

A megatrend is defined as a major shift in environmental, social or economic conditions that will substantially change the way people live. A megatrend occurs at the intersection of many trends. E.g. the growing use of devices such as smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc., for digital financial transactions is a trend occurring in the financial/economic domain. But, the tectonic shift in economic growth and dynamism from West to East is a mega trend. Megatrends are relevant to contemporary decision making and may prompt a rethink of governance models, business processes or social systems.

Definition of Global Public Goods:

Global public goods are goods with benefits and/or costs that potentially extend to all countries, people, and generations. Global public goods are in a dual sense public: they are public as opposed to private; and they are global as opposed to national. Like publicness in general, globalness is in most instances a matter of policy choice.

Few global public goods are global and public by nature. Whether there will be peace in the world or a WWIII is a matter of public/social good, and also a matter of public/global policy. The ozone layer is another of these few naturally global and public goods. Most other global public goods are national public goods that have become interlinked in the wake of increasing openness of borders and as a result of increasing international regime formation and policy harmonization beyond national borders.

Policy Discourse frequently interacts with 10 Global Public Goods:

- Basic human dignity for all people, including universal access to basic education and health care.
- Respect for national sovereignty.
- Global public health, particularly control of communicable diseases (SARS virus, etc).
- Global peace and security or, put differently, a global public domain free from crime and violence.
- Communication and transportation systems harmonized across borders.
- Institutional infrastructure harmonized across borders to foster such goals as market efficiency, universal human rights, transparent and accountable governance, and harmonization of technical standards.
- Concerted management of knowledge, including worldwide respect for intellectual property rights.
- Concerted management of the global natural commons to promote their sustainable use (oceans, Amazon rain forest, etc).
- Availability of international arenas for multilateral negotiations between states as well as between state and non-state actors.

Also the 8 UN MDGs:

Three major developments as Related to Provision of GPGs:

Considering the topic of this Lectureship, the prolegomenon to our discussion tonight, of necessity, must be the recognition that the question of the provision of global public (or social) goods in the world today is characterized by three major developments that come with the potential (especially as they interface with each other) to determine the success or failure of duty bearers and all other actors involved (be they at the national, regional and global levels), in their efforts to deliver those goods. And the three developments are (to start with a positive one):

1. The unprecedented advances in science, technology, telecommunication capabilities/means, and the advancement of knowledge in general across domains. The capabilities to generate, incubate, disseminate and transfer knowledge to practically every corner of the planet is absolutely amazing and unprecedented, and it comes with an enormous potential and possibility for addressing the world's current and future challenges.
2. Massive and monumental threats and risks, both current and emerging, which already mitigate and will increasingly do so, against our ability to address the needs and challenges of the world.
3. The reality of the fact that the expectations and aspirations of the world populations to have the access to and benefit from at least the fundamental social and public goods have also grown exponentially over the past couple of decades, and will continue to do so in the future, both in terms of numbers as well as intensity.

Let me begin to unpack each of these three and intentionally spend more time in order to point to the interfaces and convergences that will likely have the greatest import and impact to the world's ability to deliver or fail to deliver on the most fundamental global public goods.

Unprecedented Advances in Science, Technology and Knowledge Transmission

The more we know, the faster we know more. Knowledge volume undergoes exponential growth, doubling and redoubling over time. Up until 1900 it was said that the accumulation of knowledge doubled every century. At the end of WWII every 25 years, Today – well anywhere from 1 to 1.5 years – Nanotechnology they say every 2 years – Clinical knowledge every 18 months. IMB predicts that soon information will double every 11 hours! Feeling overwhelmed yet?

One of the major outcomes of this sort of acceleration of knowledge has been the growth and advancement in technology; technologies that practically permeate every aspect of industry and sector and thus every aspect of life and reality. Take for instance telecommunications and transport, which, in the words of one of my favorite sociologists of modern times, David Harvey, have contributed to the amazing “compression of space and time.” So much so that because of telecommunications, people in Africa can vicariously participate in events and happenings 1000s of miles away in Australia. Because of transport capabilities, one can have breakfast in London, lunch in Chicago, and a late dinner in Tokyo; therefore within the space of 15-20 hrs day to span across three continents!

Important for our topic, advances in science and technology can and are proving in some respects as game changers in efforts to solve human problems and predicaments. Advances in science and technology can allow societies to mobilize new sources of energy and materials, fight disease, improve

and diversify agriculture, mobilize and disseminate information, transport people and goods with greater speed and safety, limit family size as desired, and much more.

Example: hundreds of thousands of mothers die every year in the process of giving birth to their babies. And in the vast majority of cases, the causes of their deaths are very preventable (unimaginable in the developed world)... sanitary issues, basic knowledge of how to, bleeding/hemorrhage, infections, unsafe abortions, etc. If they only had a medical worker present, most of them would live. And, so, the growing access to mobile phones in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, is being increasingly used to provide advice and guidance to uneducated mothers and untrained attendants while a mother is delivering a baby, via a cell phone by someone that might even be 1000s of miles away from such a glorious occasion of giving birth to a new life! Thousands of mothers and babies are being helped like that exactly because of technology.

Example: The so-called “Arab Spring” over the past 2 years. It was possible at all because of the internet and telecommunication capabilities, and social networks such as Facebook, etc.

Technology and science can be a game changer when it comes to the provision of global public goods in the 21st century.

However, there are major issues there: **1)** poor countries that can benefit the most from knowledge and technology do not have the resources.... Unfortunately, poor countries have largely been spectators, or at best users, of the technological advances produced in the high-income world. Poor countries have tended to lack large scientific and technological communities. Their scientists and engineers, chronically underfunded, move abroad for satisfying employment in scientific research and development. Private companies, moreover, focus their innovation activities on rich-country problems and projects, since that is where adequate financial returns exist.

Unprecedented Expansion of Expectations and Aspirations:

The aspiration for and expectation of higher living standards, the enjoyment of creaturely benefits, and even consumerist indulgence in the luxuries of life, are not any longer only the prerogatives of those of us living in the west/global North. Because of 1) economic growth and development in the developing world (3rd world), 2) greater access to knowledge, information and education to larger numbers of global populace, and 3) youth bulge. The issue imposes itself upon the question of the provision of global (or national) public goods.

Economic growth - We realize, don't we, that for a number of years now, developing countries have experienced higher and more robust growth rates than the developed countries. For the first time in history, in 2011 and 2012 for two consecutive years, the developing countries were responsible for more than half of the global economic growth in GDP terms. And that trend is expected to continue into the future. In Asia, countries are growing on average of 7-8% per year. In Africa, the last 5-10 years, almost all of its 40+ countries have grown consistently...one third of the African countries have had sustained annual growth rates of 6%+. That will continue so and will even accelerate. Latin America has slowed down a bit, but still growing at higher rates than N. America or Europe. The implications of this new

reality when it comes to expectations and aspirations for the enjoyment of public goods are enormous. To use a simple and well known example: China and India have close to 370 million consumers with very descent purchasing powers. That is more than the total population of Europe! And the increasingly well-to-do Chinese or Indians will no longer want to eat only rice. Many are expecting and partaking of meat, which obviously has in turn massive implications and demands for food, water and energy resources, etc. The developing world increasingly wants the iPhones and iPods, the flat screen televisions, the cars and the leisure, freedoms to travel, to holiday, to higher education, etc, etc.

Example: - 70% of all grains are used to feed animals that could feed the billions of starving people around the world.; - The world's cattle alone need massive quantity of food, equal to the caloric needs of 8.7 billion people.; - Amount of feed needed to produce just one 8-ounce steak would fill 45 to 50 bowls with cooked cereal grains.; - Reducing U.S. meat production by 10 percent would free grain to feed 60 million people.

Access to information – With the internet, television, now smart telephony, etc., the world is so much better informed about the opportunities and goods and services that could be theirs. With greater information and knowledge, grows the expectation and aspiration. The Caringtons, Dallas....

Youth bulge – a year ago in his second term priority manifesto, the UN SG stated something profound and monumental: “...the world is witnessing the greatest generation of youth the world has ever known.” In Africa (both Sub-Saharan and North Africa), we see that about 40 percent of the population is under 15, and nearly 70 percent is under 30. In some fragile states (will hear more about them tomorrow), more than 75% of the population is under 30. Three years ago I spent two weeks in Jordan, doing a feasibility study for the establishment of a sub regional office for WVI. One of the things that emerged as the most obvious trait of the sub-region of the Middle East was exactly the youth bulge and the economic, social and development implications of those. Namely, 65% of the populations of the ME/Arab countries are under 30. All of this means, massive expectations and aspirations of massive numbers for the provision and benefit of public goods, national and global.

Example: A **cup of coffee** takes 55 gallons of **water** (still water, not salty water from sea/ocean) to make.

Convergence of 3 Mega-Trends:

I am of the opinion that no other combination of mega trends amounts to the same threat for the successful delivery/provision of national and global public goods as that of what I call “the inconvenient convergence of 3 mega trends” (to make allusion to Al Gore’s expression) –

1. Continued rapid global population growth
2. Increasing scarcity of resources (most fundamental resources for life: water, food and energy)
3. Climate Change and all it promises to bring upon the world

Continued rapid global population growth:

Perhaps we all know by now that in October 2011, the world’s population reached 7 billion people. By 2050, the world population is expected to have grown to almost 10.5 billion people. By 2025, not too far

from today, the world population will likely be around 8.1 billion people. It took 123 years for the world to grow from 1 billion to 2 billion (1927), but since the 1970s it has taken between 12-15 years for the world to grow by 1 billion people! The most dramatic growth rates will be regional and national, Africa leading. Every 8th child in a few years time will come from Nigeria. Niger, now at around 40 million, by 20100 will be larger than Russia, more than 111 million.

Scarcities of Resources:

Our world's resources, especially those that are fundamental for human life and existence, such as food, water and energy are not without limits.

Food – In a bilateral discussion with now former Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Amb John Holmes, he told me: "for the first time ever, the issue is no longer inability to deliver food to those who are hungry but rather not having enough food to provide those who need it." No more logistics/supply chains, but scarcity and insufficient production. The notion that there is enough food to feed everyone is only theoretical. Ultimate perversion: nearly 60% of global land deals in the last decade have been to grow crops that can be used for biofuels, says Oxfam. Large swaths of arable land have been used to built factories, shopping malls, highways, housing developments, or other leisure structures."Large developing countries leasing/buying large areas of arable land in developing countries for the next 100 years. No wonder, for six of the last 11 years the world has consumed more food than it has grown." "Ever since agriculture began, carry-over stocks of grain have been the most basic indicator of [food security](#). From 1986 to 2001 the annual world carry-over stocks of grain averaged 107 days of consumption. After that, world consumption exceeded production and from 2002 to 2011 they averaged just 74 days of consumption," says Brown.

"An unprecedented period of world food security has come to an end. The world has lost its safety cushions and is living from year to year. This is the new politics of food scarcity. We are moving into a new food era, one in which it is every country for itself."

How many of you see major conflicts and wars over food coming up in the days ahead?

Water: Two thirds of the world's population could be living under water stressed conditions within 15 years. The implications of global water scarcity are immense and in convergence with other mega trends could lead to starvation, mass human migration and conflicts over resources. Globally, the problem is getting worse as cities and populations grow, and the needs for water increase in agriculture, industry and households.

If you don't believe a Macedonian, consider U.S. Intelligence Community Assessment of [Global Water Security](#). The document predicts that by 2030 humanity's "annual global water requirements" will exceed "current sustainable water supplies" by 40%. Without major policy interventions, water insecurity will generate widespread social and political instability and could even contribute to state failure. Some estimate that, for example, Egypt will run out of water entirely by 2025!

Food and water are the new oil, dear friends! And it's not difficult to see why there will likely be major conflicts and strife over these essential resources in the years to come.

Energy: In 2011, total energy use per person (or per capita consumption) in the U.S. was 312 million British thermal units (Btu). The world per capita consumption of energy¹ in 2009 was 71 million Btu.

Kg of oil per capita, in 2011 the US per capital was 7069, compared to 3,017 in the UK, or 1,800 in Chile (a middle income country), Zimbabwe, 764.

With the growing industrial expansion of many of the developing world countries, you can imagine what this means in terms of energy. Yet, oil and coal reserves are limited.

The debate about renewable sources of energy is a welcome one and needs to be supported, but there is no sufficient political will to invest in it, and much less prioritize it over other fossil fuels. An equally concerning problem is that at current rates of investment in R&D on new/renewable energy sources, it would take decades for new technologies and sources to begin to make a difference.

Why do you think China is investing in the extractive industries of Africa like crazy? Why do you think Russia anchored its flag at the bottom of the Arctic sea a couple of years ago, much to the annoyance of Canada, Norway and even the US? Energy. New sources of fuels. It will be crucial for the survival of nations!

Climate Change and its Consequences:

We have all heard much over the past few years about climate change, and so I will not be utterly detailed here. The starting point however for the brief discussion of climate change must be the unfortunate fact that by and large, for politicians and policy makers in general, economic growth is deemed more important than conservation and mitigation of climate change issues. Thus, we can safely assume that in the foreseeable future, it will largely be "business as usual." And with business as usual attitude, scientists expect a rise of up to 1000 p.p.m. to occur as a consequence of burning fossil fuels.

Under this scary scenario, the Earth's average temperature would likely skyrocket by as much as 11 degrees over the next 90 years. Some of the most notable effects would be: Many unique or rare systems would probably be lost, including Arctic sea ice, mountaintop glaciers, most threatened and endangered species, coral-reef communities, and many high-latitude and high-altitude indigenous human cultures.

Specifically, this includes:

- Extinction of some half of known plant and animal species on Earth would become much more likely.
- A sea-level rise of up to 10 meters after many centuries from the melting of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets would be possible.
- Tropical rainforests would become more vulnerable to wildfire, and in some models such forests would switch from carbon sinks to sources, adding yet more emissions.

- Damage to coral and oceanic phytoplankton, as their calcium carbonate skeletons could dissolve in acidified oceans.

"People would be vulnerable in other ways too," writes Schneider. "Asian mega-delta cities would face rising sea levels and rapidly intensifying tropical cyclones, creating hundreds of millions of refugees; valuable infrastructure such as the London or New York underground systems could be damaged or lost; the elderly would be at risk from unprecedented heat waves; and children, who are especially vulnerable to malnutrition in poor areas, would face food shortages."

Any economic benefit from a lower amount of warming would be lost at this catastrophic level. Schneider says that in "a 1,000 p.p.m. scenario current literature suggests the outcomes would be almost universally negative and could amount to a substantial loss of gross domestic product."

When one considers the convergence of these three mega trends, and the likely results and implications for the affairs of the world, one does not need Nostradamus and his apocalyptic predictions, nor are SDA prophetic eschatological interpretations needed to conclude that the future of our world does not look rosy! Forget about Nostradamus, just consider what these three and their interface means for our tomorrows....

Which is why I have humbly submitted for several years now to UN, governmental and NGO colleagues that the dominant future mode is most likely to be a humanitarian mode rather than a development mode; certainly not the development mode as we have known it for the last 6+ decades, of long term (almost leisurely) community development, etc? The development mode as we have known it will, I submit, become a luxury that the world and policy makers/actors will be unable to afford, as there will be frequent, radical, likely catastrophic events to be constantly responding to (with astronomical bills to foot), at national, regional and global levels.

Of course, I must not even inadvertently come across as purely a prophet of doom. Some great progress is being made on a number of fronts. For instance, in a number of countries the malaria deaths have been reduced by 75% over ? years; today 7256 few children dying every day mostly because of various health interventions, and the percentage of world population leaving on less than \$1.25 a day has been reduced over the past two decades by quite a few percentage points. Much of this is due to significant policy influence and advocacy efforts by many organizations and individuals over the past two decades. On the global health front, for instance, there has been an unprecedented mobilization over the past 5-6 years of actors/organizations from across various domains: governmental, non-governmental, corporate/foundations, academia, media, faith-based orgs. And such coalitions and efforts at partnering are absolutely crucial and must continue.

Nevertheless, one then has to ask the question: what does the inconvenient convergence of the three mega trends we discussed earlier mean for the delivery of global social/public goods in the years and decades ahead? How is the world to prepare for it? What are some of the possible interventions and solutions?

Well, I can tell you that the main response that policy makers have to this massive and frightening dilemma is: **innovation and ingenuity**; they say: "the world will have to, as it has throughout its history

so far, come up with innovative and ingenious ways to address these very complex and existential issues....” So, one of such innovations will be, the current issue of Time magazine tells us, to grow “meat” in the laboratory. But, I am not convinced enough that innovation and ingenuity will be the sole solution to these massive challenges the world is and will be facing.

So what are some of the solutions? Let me mention several:

- Innovation – yes indeed keep investing in innovation towards game changing solutions.
- Transfer of knowledge and technology
- 2ndary education mandatory (the goal of most development actors in the developing/poor countries has been to help children learn how to read, and at best to obtain elementary education. How can such educational level of the working age constituencies of poor countries contribute to taking their countries from poverty to prosperity? Impossible. Even secondary education (if made mandatory) would not be enough to take a poor country out of poverty and into prosperity (remember the rate of redoubling of knowledge?).
- Dealing with corruption (much of poverty in the world is due to corruption and poor governance).
- South-South cooperation and replication of successful initiatives and models of development and joint initiatives (e.g. developing countries were shielded from the 2008 financial crisis devastation mainly because they collaborated and interacted in financial matters among themselves than with the North)
- Public-Private Partnerships (collaboration and coherence)
- Greater involvement of the private sector in these matters (but in genuine and helpful ways)

Still, I cannot but feel like all of these proposed solutions are band aids; proposing solutions with “particularities” rather than “fundamentals.” I propose that what is needed and what comes with the greatest potential for position change and impact is a whole new **ethic**; as much if not more than all of the innovation and ingenuity the world can master. Indeed, what we need are prophetic engagements and responses to intractable issues, lack of political will, lack of leadership, etc.... Please don’t think this is language fitting only for Christian environments, such as this. Consider the lead vocal of the rock group, U2, Bono. He engages in more prophetic ways on this broader front of the fight against extreme poverty, global issues, etc., than many of us Christians, Christian denominations or institutions.

1. We need a new ethic and a prophetic vision and commitment to the wellbeing of the world and its people that will radically alter things and dispositions at the most fundamental level. We need a new ethic that will be committed to justice and equity in the world. A new ethic that will alter the prevailing national and governmental narrative that says that priority #1 on most of these matters is “what is in the national interest of America? Of UK? Of Canada, of Brazil? Of Russia? And so on... The narrative must shift from “national interest” to “what is just” and what would be in support of the “global common good?”
2. A respect and commitment to stewardship of creation and the environment.
3. Genuine commitment to human commonality, neighborliness and magnanimous equity for all. Which must translate in radical re-examination of rights, privileges, and aspirations. And here my proposals will not be politically correct at all, but it seems to me they are logical and inevitable. Namely,

- In the global North (the developed, industrialized world), there is needed a radical change in expectations and the unwritten notion of entitlement to consumption, consumerism and the access and enjoyment of socio-economic goods. We in the Global North cannot any longer expect to enjoy unlimited enjoyment of the planet's resources, or domestic resources, but enjoyed to such indulgence and extent that the wellbeing of others elsewhere on this lovely planet is seriously endangered and compromised. Cannot expect to use as much energy as we have so far. To eat portions that are 4 times larger than anywhere else on the planet. To drive 8 cylinder vehicles that operate more like tanks....etc, etc.
- In the Global South, all of the lovely promise of political, social, economic, cultural rights notwithstanding, the message must increasingly be: "we cannot expect to ever reach levels of consumption and indulgence in socio-economic goods as those in the North have had for a few decades." Our aspirations must be placed in proper context and the fact about scarcities of resources. We must not succumb to making "luxuries into necessities." As the West has done for decades.

We need a whole new radical ethic, and a prophetic commitment and vision for a world of greater justice.

One of my favorite preachers, Gardner Taylor, says in one of his sermons: "People cannot bring to pass the purposes of God in the world, but they can, as the prophet Isaiah said, "build a highway in the desert"; they can temper their malice, pride, and selfishness. Men cannot bring to pass the purposes of God, but they can make level the hills and mountains of prejudice and hatred...."

A new ethic is what the world needs; a new prophetic vision and commitment to a world much closer to the vision of the Creator Himself. And I pray that this institution, WAU, this denomination, and all of us individually will be agents of change who will embody this sort of new ethic and prophetic vision.

Thank you!