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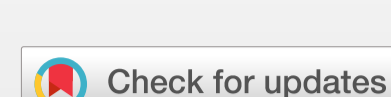
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Muddying the Water? Assessing Target-based Approaches in Development Cooperation for Water and Sanitation

Malcolm Langford  & Inga Winkler

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Abstract

In the debate on the post-2015 development agenda, a clear preference exists for simple and quantifiable targets. The water sector provides a useful perspective in which to evaluate the use of this strategy because it has been subject to quantitative target setting since 1976. We critically analyze two early periods of target setting together with their most recent incarnation in the Millennium Development Goals. In so doing, we identify two stories concerning the utility of such a turn to metrics: the first is a perennial and at times justified optimism in target setting, and the second is a more cautionary tale about the dangers of measurement and its tendency to gloss over challenging but significant issues. In addition, we offer some brief conclusions on the implications for the post-2015 agenda and some potential measurement alternatives.

Keywords: Human development, Measurement, Sustainability, Human rights, Inequality

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