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Summary

# MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS WITH EQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES



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This text is a summary of the document *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals with Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean: progress and challenges* (LC/G.2460), containing the findings of the second comprehensive appraisal of the region's progress towards fulfilment of the Goals, which was produced in close collaboration with 17 other bodies of the United Nations system.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

This summary sets out the main findings of a review of the countries' progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals contained in the 2010 inter-agency regional report on the Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main policy messages, analyses and conclusions included in the report, which was coordinated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, are the outcome of a joint effort by specialized agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations operating in the region.

This summary does not offer a detailed account of the topics and analyses contained in the different chapters of the report. Rather, it highlights the main outcomes in terms of the region's progress towards each Millennium Development Goal. From these outcomes derive policy messages and general guidelines with respect to both the most urgent problems the countries of the region face today and the more structural problems that have hindered their development.

As so often happens, the review of the region's progress towards the various Millennium Development Goals supports neither an entirely optimistic, nor an entirely pessimistic, conclusion. Positive outcomes have certainly been attained: the region has made considerable progress in meeting some targets, albeit with differences among countries associated largely with the gradual appropriation of the Goals in each country and their adaptation to specific national circumstances.

On the other hand, some elements of the assessment cast doubt on the likelihood that most of the countries of the region will achieve many of the targets. Indeed, at the current rate of progress, some countries will be far from attaining them, and others, despite significant progress, will continue to suffer from significant problems and lags as 2015 approaches. Lastly, until 2008, some of the countries of the region with the lowest per-capita income had progressed more slowly than the relatively more developed countries. This is evident with respect to the targets included

under Goal 1, which are a condition for achieving the full set of Goals: reducing extreme poverty, progressing towards the eradication of hunger and creating productive employment and decent work for all.

The headway made thus far has been the merit of a six-year period of favourable conditions for the region, which was interrupted by the global crisis. This has halted progress towards certain targets and even reversed some positive trends, such as the reduction in the percentage and number of poor, in addition to creating a scenario of uncertainty regarding the coming years. Hence, the region will find it more difficult to meet the commitments and fulfil the rights set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

If the analysis were confined to economic growth projections, it might be concluded that the outlook for the next few years is not so bad, but social indicators are known to recover more slowly than economic growth, and to take longer to return to pre-crisis levels. Suffice to note that the region's employment problems are worsening, the fiscal stance is projected to tighten, which in many cases will make it difficult to finance social policies, and official development assistance is expected to decline. All of this will have adverse consequences for the region overall, but the poorest countries will be the worst affected.

Nonetheless, significant progress was made from 2002 to 2008 and, in certain cases, the rate of progress towards certain targets increased. The review of the region's progress towards achievement of the different Millennium Development Goals shows, however, that it continues to face problems in meeting the all of the targets derived from the Millennium Declaration. These difficulties are associated with the historical impediments to development in the region: the inability to generate productive and decent work for all; the low levels of secondary education coverage and the very poor quality and relevance of education content overall; persistently high levels of inequality, which impede social cohesion; the failure to empower women and to foster their economic and physical autonomy; and the marginalization of population groups owing to the persistence of discrimination based on gender, on racial-ethnic origin and on socio-economic inequities that result from a highly unequal distribution of wealth and income. To these obstacles are added challenges stemming from current production and consumption patterns and the need to halt the loss of biodiversity

and the destruction of ecosystems, by mainstreaming the principles of environmental sustainability in development.

The following two sections provide an overall description of progress the Latin American and Caribbean region has made towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and targets, and outline the policy approaches and main messages that arise from each chapter of the Report. Except in certain cases, the review does not give a detailed description of national situations, which can be found in the document from which this summary has been extracted.<sup>1</sup>

## **B. REVIEW OF PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### **1. Achievements in poverty reduction: the full and empty halves of the glass**

The most appropriate point of departure for a review of the progress made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the region is the key element of the aims that shaped the Millennium Declaration and encapsulates much of the progress that may or may

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