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IISD REPORT

Global Goals and the Environment: Progress and prospects

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About this Report

This report has been prepared in support of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) activities to help UN Member States in their work on concluding the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring a suitable integration of the environment into the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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The views put forward in this report are that of the authors, who also hold full responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive overview of progress on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7, Ensuring Environmental Sustainability based on official indicators and data. The report covers all developing countries to which MDG-7 applies as well as developed countries, where MDG-7 targets were considered as reference points related to other global environmental commitments. In taking a detailed stock of progress at the global, regional and national levels, its purpose is to offer an authoritative perspective on movement toward or away from MDG-7 targets agreed by the international community in 2000 indicator by indicator. Relying on statistical evidence, the report pinpoints what goals and targets have been met, by when and where, and in what areas has progress been inadequate.

As is commonly known, coverage of the environment in the MDGs was little more than symbolic and many key dimensions were not represented. Progress was globally uneven for most targets, and the indicators in this report confirm earlier observations that no target can be expected to be achieved everywhere. Furthermore, consistent reporting is constrained by persistent data limitations in many of the countries covered. In some cases, lack of reliable data represents a major constraint for reporting. Without a major effort to improve statistical data collection and observation systems, these problems will continue to persist and undermine the ability of countries to visualize their progress toward new goals.

The table below presents key highlights regarding global and regional progress with MDG-7 goals by targets and indicators.

Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources (qualitative targets only)	
7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest (percent)	Forest area decreased from 32% to 31% globally between 1990 and 2010, with reduced forest quality. Significant decline in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Southeastern Asia and Oceania.
7.2 Carbon dioxide emissions (tonnes CO ₂ per capita/kg CO ₂ per US\$1 GDP in PPP)	Significant increase was observed in CO ₂ emissions from 21,550 to 31,387 million tonnes/year at the global level. There was a 26% drop in the share of developed countries in global emissions, accompanied by a rapid increase in developing regions, where per capita emissions grew from 1.66 to 3.16 tonnes/person/year between 1990 and 2010.
7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ozone depletion potential [ODP] tonnes)	Almost 98% of substances contributing to the destruction of the ozone layer have been phased out of production and use. Developed countries almost completely eliminated ozone-depleting substances, while developing countries achieved 86% reduction as compared with a 1990 baseline.
7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits (percent)	Out of 600 monitored marine fish stocks in 2009 29% were considered exploited beyond safe biological limits. Only about 10% of commercially valuable marine fisheries are monitored, mostly on an irregular basis.
7.5 Proportion of total water resources used (percent)	9.2% of total water resources were used in 2006, with no time series data available. High water use was noted, particularly in Northern Africa, Caucasus and Central Asia, Western and Southern Asia, with about 30% of the global population experiencing water stress.
Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss	
7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected (percent)	Terrestrial and marine protected areas increased from 8.3 to 14% between 1990 and 2012, with the highest increase in Latin America and the Caribbean (by 8.7% to 20.3%) and the lowest in the Caucasus and Central Asia region (by 0.8% to 3.6%). However, 6 out of the 14 global biomes have less than 10% protected, as identified by the applicable Aichi Target.
7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction (percent)	The number of species that are expected to become extinct in the near future increased from 7.9% to 8.7% between 1990 and 2012 at the global level. Northern Africa, West Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean recorded the largest increase.

Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	
7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (percent)	The target of cutting in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water was met by 2010, moving from 76% to 89%. The largest increases were in China, India and the broader Eastern and Southern Asia region, while a decline is observable in the Caucasus and Central Asia. An urban / rural divide persists, with only 4% of people without adequate access to water in cities, in contrast with 19% in rural areas.
7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility (percent)	In contrast with the target (sustainable access to sanitation for 75% of the population in the developing world) in 2010 the numbers stood at only 56%, making it very unlikely that the goal will be met by 2015. While significant improvement in access was recorded in Eastern and Southeastern Asia, in sub-Saharan Africa access improved only 4% between 1990 and 2010, reaching only 30% coverage.
Target 7.D: Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	
7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums (percent)	The proportion of population living in slums decreased in all regions of the world between 1990 and 2012 except West Asia. While South Asia and North Africa achieved 21% and 22% improvement, respectively; in Africa only 8.3% improvement was observed and 70% of the people still live in slums. Meanwhile the total number of people living in slums increased from 650 million in 1990 and 760 million in 2000 to 863 million in 2012.

Besides reviewing global and regional progress, assessing country-level environmental performance is also important. Comparing countries' performance to baselines might help explain progress (or lack thereof) and hence hint at opportunities for acceleration in the post-2015 period.

While individual indicators helped measure progress toward specific MDG targets, understanding why change happened in either a positive or negative direction requires looking at interlinkages between goals and indicators cutting across several themes. While detailed country-level analysis was beyond the scope of this research, connections between several MDG-7 areas could be identified. In order to establish that there is more to the connection than just co-occurrence of two unrelated factors, additional literature on the functional relationship between the respective MDG-7 factors was consulted.

The research found connections of varying strength between eight pairs of MDG variables. These connections clearly show that healthy ecosystems are a prerequisite to meeting some of the most essential goals of global development. Protecting the integrity of forests, the health of fish stocks or keeping the ozone layer intact are of fundamental, not tangential, importance for human well-being. This is particularly the case for the poorest and most vulnerable, who are the most likely to directly depend on the provisions of these aspects of the environment for their well-being and often survival. Efforts to reduce extreme poverty are inseparable from efforts to keep ecosystems and environmental conditions healthy and robust.

The area where the report found perhaps the strongest evidence of this relationship was between the global goals related to the need to reduce maternal mortality versus the need for improving sanitation facilities. Data from sub-Saharan Africa shows that countries successful in improving access to clean water and sanitation tend to also show significant improvement in maternal health, a finding also supported by more detailed literature on the interconnections of these factors.

Results based on the analysis of MDG-7 performance lend support to the view that strong environmental goals are a must for meeting some of the key human development objectives.

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Introduction

On April 5, 2013, the United Nations recognized there remained 1,000 days until the end of 2015—and the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In an event drawing attention to the limited timeline, Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, remarked that the MDGs constituted “history’s largest and most successful anti-poverty push,” while encouraging the world to accelerate action and increase commitment to achieving its eight global goals.

As MDG implementation is now in its final phase, it is important to qualitatively and quantitatively understand and analyze the progress that has been made toward these goals in the past 13 years and consider what we can learn for the future. The targets of MDG-7 on environmental sustainability represent a particularly important area for analysis: biodiversity, water, urbanization and the broader issue of environmental sustainability are prerequisites for socioeconomic development. They are critical for eradicating poverty, the provision of basic services and all other central development concerns. When assessing the global, regional, and national achievements of MDG-7, we need to understand the progress made and related lessons learned, while also taking into account other relevant changes in the world. Recognizing the inherent difficulty of the question, we have to understand whether progress toward goals can be attributed to measures directly aimed at them or some major external factor, such as the global financial crisis, the rise of new technologies, or new approaches to governance.

Progress toward the MDGs at the global level was comprehensively evaluated at the 2013 UN Millennium Development Goal Review Summit. In his report for the Summit, the UN Secretary-General called for accelerating progress on MDGs, and, in cases where the goals are not projected to be met, finish the required work by integrating MDG aspirations into the post-2015 development agenda (United Nations General Assembly, 2013).

Running parallel to this final push for MDG achievement are the efforts to define the global goals of the future—the post-2015 development agenda through the UN General Assembly (GA), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and its specialized agencies, programs and funds. The mandate accepted in the Rio+20 conference to agree upon sustainable development goals (SDGs) at the global level presents an important entry point for the themes of MDG-7 to be carried on into the post-2015 era, complemented by other key environmental priorities that are also essential for sustainable development but were not represented in MDG-7.

Given the interlinkages between the environment and human well-being in a globalizing world, a systematic integration of the environment into the global development agenda is necessary (Haas, 2009; Kanie, 2012;

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