

Millennium
Development
Goals



THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS:
PROGRESS IN ASIA
AND THE
PACIFIC *2006*



FOREWORD

Although the Asian and Pacific region as a whole is on its way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), progress by many countries individually is still slow and performance on some targets, particularly the health-related ones, including water and sanitation, is unsatisfactory. In terms of absolute numbers, the scale of deprivation faced by the Asian and Pacific region is daunting. It accounts for the major share of the world's population suffering from many attributes of deprivation, such as: population living in rural areas without access to sanitation; number of underweight children; people suffering from malnourishment; population living on less than a dollar a day; and number of TB cases.

The achievement of the MDGs by 2015 will depend crucially on the combined efforts of Governments and their national and international development partners. This report has been prepared to help sustain the regional momentum that has been generated through the regional reports. It updates the detailed analysis provided in the second regional report, *A future within reach 2005*, and presents a more refined regional picture and identifies sectors and countries of most concern. China and India are analysed separately and a comparison with developing regions outside Asia and the Pacific is added.

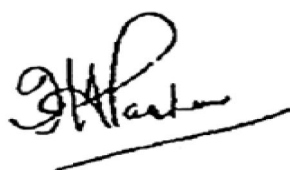
We trust that this update will provide useful information for public discussion on policy priorities for achieving the MDGs and help decision makers in the region to further intensify their pursuit of the Goals. Given the encouraging responses received from readers of the earlier regional reports, the tripartite regional partnership of ESCAP, UNDP and ADB has also begun the preparatory work for the third major regional report, to be released in 2007. Apart from tracking the overall progress of the region on the Goals, that report will focus on a regional perspective on MDG-based national development strategies.

This report is a small contribution to the region-wide efforts of a large number of stakeholders working to achieve the MDGs, which we hope will be attained by all the countries of the Asia-Pacific region by 2015.



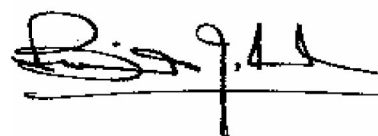
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The team that coordinated the preparation of the report consisted of Pietro Gennari (ESCAP), Omar Noman (UNDP) and Shiladitya Chatterjee (ADB).

The preparation of the report was led by the ESCAP secretariat, with Jan Smit as the primary author. Apart from the main coordinators, several staff members from the three agencies provided inputs and support. They included Haishan Fu, Ilpo Survo, Eric Hermouet, Christian Stoff, Zeynep Orhun, Nixie Mabanag, Sara Duerto Valero and Imae Ann Mojado, Yap Kioe Sheng, Mia Mikic, Ying Qui and Hitomi Rankine from ESCAP; Anuradha Rajivan, B. Murali and Santosh Mehrotra from UNDP; and Ajay Tandon, Kallidaikurichi Easwaran Seetharam and Jacques Jeugmans from ADB.

This report can be downloaded from the Millennium Development Goals Asia-Pacific website at <http://www.mdgasiapacific.org>.

Millennium Development Goals: Progress in Asia and the Pacific 2006

This report is the latest update on the progress towards MDGs in Asia and the Pacific. By zooming in on specific indicators, the report highlights the region's achievements and exposes issues on which much work remains to be done. It provides estimates of populations affected by social and economic poverty in the Asia-Pacific region and compares it to the two other major developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Asia-Pacific countries continue to make progress towards the MDGs, but on present trends many are likely to miss some vital targets, including those for infant mortality, HIV prevalence and access to water and sanitation in urban areas. Even more worryingly, some countries are at risk of failing to reach even two-thirds of the targets.

Asia and the Pacific is making much better progress towards the MDGs than sub-Saharan Africa. It is, however, a vast and diverse region. It includes China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, five of the world's seven most populous countries. As a result, although the prevalence of economic and social poverty is often lower than in sub-Saharan Africa, these five countries together, and sometimes individually, account for much larger absolute numbers of deprived people. As this report will show, the five Asian giants alone account for over two-thirds of all people living in rural areas without access to sanitation, underweight children, people living on less than a dollar a day, and of TB cases worldwide. Together, they also account for more than 60% of all people without access to water and of all people in urban areas without access to sanitation.

Asia also includes countries — like Afghanistan, Cambodia, Timor-Leste and parts of Central Asia — that have only recently started to recover from decades of war and civil strife, and whose performance in terms of progress towards the MDGs and poverty reduction is as weak, if not worse, than that of many sub-Saharan countries. This also applies to some parts of Asia's five giants, where enormous disparities exist between, for example, rural and urban China, north-

east and south India, and provinces of Indonesia.

The moderate performance on some goals, the lack of progress on a large number of targets in some countries, and the large number Asians affected by various dimensions of poverty begs the question whether countries in the region are doing enough either by themselves or with the help of the international community. This report will address this question from a few, selected perspectives.

Tracking progress

This assessment builds on the second regional report, *A Future Within Reach*, taking advantage of information that has become available in mid-2006 in the global MDG indicator database maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).¹ However, this section also extends the analysis of the second regional report in two ways. First, it emphasizes that looking at progress towards MDGs alone is not enough because countries that are on track to achieve their targets can still have unacceptably high rates of — for example — poverty and mortality, while off-track countries may be relatively close to the target. It is therefore also necessary to look at the latest available absolute indicator values to get a complete picture. Second, this report looks in a more holistic way at overall country progress.

The updated global MDG database contains additional data for the latest available year and more accurate estimates for prior years for some indicators. This data revision has in some cases led to a different assessment of country's performance than the 2005 report.

The availability and quality of data, although slowly improving, continue to be a major problem that limits our ability to monitor progress and the formulation of effective national policies (see box 1). As a result of data limitations and in order to focus on the most basic measures of social and economic deprivation, this report looks closely at the MDG indicators listed in table 1.

¹ See <<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx>> accessed on 7 August 2006.

Table 1: MDG indicators covered in this report

No.	Indicator	Short name
1	Proportion of population below US\$ 1 (PPP) per day	\$1/day poverty
4	Prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age	Underweight children
6	Net enrolment ratio in primary education	Primary enrolment
7	Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5	Reaching grade 5
7A	Primary completion rate	Primary completion
9	Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education	Gender primary Gender secondary Gender tertiary
13	Under-5 mortality rate	Under-5 mortality
14	Infant mortality rate	Infant mortality
16	Maternal mortality ratio	Maternal mortality
18	HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years Replaced by HIV prevalence, aged 15-49, because of data availability problems	HIV prevalence
21	Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria	Malaria prevalence Malaria death rate
23	Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis	TB prevalence TB death rate
25	Proportion of land covered by forest	Forest area
26	Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area	Protected area
28	Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone depleting CFCs (OPD tons)	CO2 emissions CFC consumption
30	Proportion of population with access to an improved water source, urban and rural	Water, urban Water, rural
31	Proportion of population with access to an improved sanitation, urban and rural	Sanitation, urban Sanitation, rural

Progress by indicator

On the basis of observed trends, this report places each country in one of four categories, following the methodology developed in chapter 1 of the second regional report.

- *Early achiever* — Has already met the target
- ▲ *On track* — Expected to hit the target by 2015
- *Off track — Slow* — Expected to hit the target, but after 2015
- ▼ *Off track — Regressing* — Slipping backwards, or stagnating

It should be noted that MDG targets apply irrespective of starting points and that some targets, in particular those under goals 1, 4, 5 and 7 (target 10), are formulated in relative terms. The potential pitfall of high initial levels of achievement is illustrated by the case of Mongolia. The primary enrolment rate in that country has fluctuated between 80% and 90% since 1991, but the latest recorded trend is slightly downward, so Mongolia is classified as regressing in relation to this indicator. Pakistan, on the other hand, has by far the lowest primary enrolment rate in the region at 66.2% (2004), which is more than 10 percentage points behind the second lowest achiever, but it is classified as on track for this indicator because of its even more dismal enrolment numbers in the early 1990s.

Box 1: Data constraints

Gaps in the MDG data are still a major impediment to analysis of regional progress. Although the number of assessments in table 2 seems large, many of them are based on two data points, too few to determine whether the progress is accelerating or decelerating. Had all MDG indicators been included in table 2, the white space, signaling time series with one or zero data points, would have been far larger. Maternal mortality is an example of an indicator that has a very specific target, reduction by two thirds, but for which there is still no data comparable over time. The shortcomings are particularly obvious among poverty, health and environment related MDG indicators.

The number of data revisions in a year (see Annex III) indicates that national and international statistical agencies are now working very actively to improve the quality of MDG indicator data. However, a recent ESCAP workshop (Workshop on Statistics for Monitoring the Achievement of the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 31 July-2 August 2006) concluded that coordination of data documentation, sharing and validation among statistical agencies, both at national and international levels, can be significantly improved. The capacities of national statistical systems to collect and disseminate data for construction of sound and internationally comparable development indicators must be strengthened. Success in that endeavour requires increased political commitment by the Governments and sustained and coordinated support from the international development community.

The difficulty that countries with large initial problems have in meeting relative targets may be illustrated by the case of Nepal. It reduced its infant mortality rate from 100 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 59 in 2004, an average annual reduction of 3.7%. This is just short of the 4.6% required for the target to be met in 2015 (it will be met in 2017 if the present rate of progress continues) and so it is classified here as off-track. The Solomon Islands, however, reduced infant mortality only slightly during the same period, from 38 per 1,000 live births to 34, an average annual reduction of just 0.7%, but it is classified as an early achiever for this indicator.

The Asia-Pacific region

The Asia-Pacific region as a whole is on course to achieve the large majority of MDG targets by 2015, as illustrated by table 2. The prevalence and death rate associated with TB have started to fall. Increases in forest cover² and protected areas and decreases in CO₂ and CFC emissions suggest a reversal of the loss of environmental resources has begun. Progress on halving poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, and eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education is faster than required to meet the targets.

The region's performance with regard to three targets is cause for concern. First, although child mor-

tality overall is falling fast enough to expect a two-thirds reduction from the 1990 level by 2015, progress on infant mortality is slow. Second, HIV prevalence in the region continues to rise. Third, access to basic sanitation in urban areas is improving only slowly, while the regional proportion of urban dwellers with access to safe water is actually declining.³

Moreover, although the region ranks as an early achiever or on track for the indicators under goals 1, 2, 3, 4, goal 6, target 8 and goal 7, target 9, considerable work remains to be done in these areas. This is for two reasons, the first of which is illustrated in figure 1. Although Asia-Pacific is on track to achieve its targets for access to water and sanitation in rural areas, \$1/day poverty, prevalence of underweight children and TB, its share in the global number of people affected by these dimensions of poverty exceeds its share of the world population, in some cases substantially. Of the 2 billion rural dwellers worldwide without access to basic sanitation in 2004, for example, over 1.5 billion — 77% — lived in Asia and the Pacific. In that year, only one-third of all Asians living in rural areas had access to basic sanitation, compared to 73% of the inhabitants of urban Asia. It is only because the rate in 1990 was even more abysmal (14.7% of rural inhabitants versus 65.1% of urban dwellers) that Asia-Pacific is classified as on track for access to basic sanitation in rural areas.⁴

² Forest cover, however, includes both natural forest and plantations. The area under natural forest cover continues to decline in many countries of the region. See, for example, <<http://earthwatch.unep.net/emergingissues/forests/forestloss.php>> and <<http://news.mongabay.com/2005/1115-forests.html>>.

³ See <<http://www.adb.org/urbandev>> for regional efforts aimed at accelerating urban development in the region.

⁴ See <<http://www.adb.org/water>> for the regional *Water for All* initiative.

Table 2: Asian and Pacific countries, on track and off track for the MDGs

Goal	1	2	3	4	6	7
	\$1/day poverty Underweight children Primary enrolment Reaching grade 5 Primary completion rate	Gender primary Gender secondary Gender tertiary	Under-5 mortality Infant mortality	HIV prevalence TBC prevalence TBC death rate	Forest cover Protected area CO ₂ emissions ODP CFC consumption Water urban Water rural Sanitation urban Sanitation rural	
Afghanistan	▲	■▼▼	■■	▲●●	▼▲●●●	
American Samoa					●	
Armenia	●	●●●	●●	▲▼▼	▼●▼●●●	
Azerbaijan	●	▼●●●▲	■■	▲●●▼	▲●●●●■	
Bangladesh	▼■	▲▼●▼	●▼	▲▲	▼●▼▼▼■▼▲	
Bhutan		▲		▲■	▲●●●●	
Brunei Darussalam		▲●●●●		▲▲▼▼	▼●●●●	
Cambodia	▼	●▼▲▲▲▲	▼▼	●●●●	▼●●●●	
China	●●	●●▲	●	▲●●●	●●▼▼▼■▲	
Cook Islands		▼	●●	●●	●▼▼●●	
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	▼			▼▼	▼▲●●●●	
Fiji		●●●●	●●	▲●●	●▼●●●▼▼	
French Polynesia					▼●●●●	
Georgia	▼	▼▼	●●●	■	▼▲●●●●●▼	
Guam					●▼▼●●●●	
Hong Kong, China		▼●●▼●	●	▲●●	▼▼	
India	▲■	▲▲▲▲▲	■	■■	●●▼▼▼●▲▲	
Indonesia	●▼	■▼●●▼	●▼	●●	▲▼▼▼▼■■	
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	●	▲▼■●●	●	▼	▲▼●●▼▼	
Kazakhstan	●	▲●●●	▼	▲▼▼	▲●●▼▼▼	
Kiribati		▲	●	■	▲●●■▲▲■	
Kyrgyzstan	●	■▼●●	●■	■	▲●●●●▼▼▼	
Lao People's Democratic Republic	▼■	▲▲■▲▲	■	▲▲	▼●▼●	
Macao, China		▲●●▼	▼		▼	
Malaysia	●●	▼●▼	●	●	▼▼▼●●●▼	
Maldives	▲	▼●●●	●	●	▲▼●●▼▼	
Marshall Islands		▲●▼●	▲■	●●	●●▼▲▲■	
Micronesia (Federated States of)				●●	▲●▼▼■▼	
Mongolia	▼▼	▼●●●	▲▲	▲	▲●●▼▼▼	
Myanmar	■	▲▲▲	●■	■	▼▼▼▼▼●●	
Nauru		▼	●	●	●●●	
Nepal	▲	▲■▲▲▲	■	▲■	▼●▼▼●●▲▲	
New Caledonia					▼	
Niue		▼▼		●●	▼▼●●●●	
Northern Mariana Islands				●▼	▼●●●●	
Pakistan	●■	▲	■▲▼	■	▲●●▼▼▼▲	
Palau		●●▼	●	●	●●●●■▼▼	
Papua New Guinea		▲▼▼▲	■	■	▼●●▼▼▼▼	
Philippines	▲▼	▲▼●●●	●	●	▼▼▼●■▲■	
Republic of Korea		●●●	■	●	▼▼▼●●	
Russian Federation	●	▲●●●	●	●	▲●●●●■▼	
Samoa		▲▲	●▼	●	●●▼▼▼	
Singapore			●	▲	▲●●▼●●●	
Solomon Islands		●	▲	■	▼●●●●●	
Sri Lanka	▲	●	●	●	▼●▼●●▲	
Tajikistan	●	●▼	▼▼▼	■■	▲▼●●●	
Thailand	●	●●●	●	●	▼▼▼●●●	
Timor-Leste	▼			▲▲	▼▲▼	
Tonga		●●▼	●	●	▲●●▼●●	
Turkey	●●	▼▼▼	▲▼▲		●●▼▼●●	
Turkmenistan	●			▼▼	▲▼●●	
Tuvalu		▼●	●	■▲	▲▲▲●▲▲	
Uzbekistan	■	●	▼	■	▼▼▼●▼▼▲	
Vanuatu		▲▲	▼▼	●	▲▼▼▼	
Viet Nam	●●	▼▲▲	▼■	●	●▼▼●●▲	
Asia-Pacific	▲▲	▲▲▲	▲▲▲	▲■	▼●●	
LDCs	■■	▼■▲	▲▲■	■■	▼▼▼▲▲▲	
South Asia (excluding India)	▲■	▲▼▼	▲▲▼	■	▼▼▼▲▲▲	
CIS in Asia	●	▲	▲	■	●●●■	
Pacific Islands		▲▲■	▼▲	■	▼▼▼■▼	

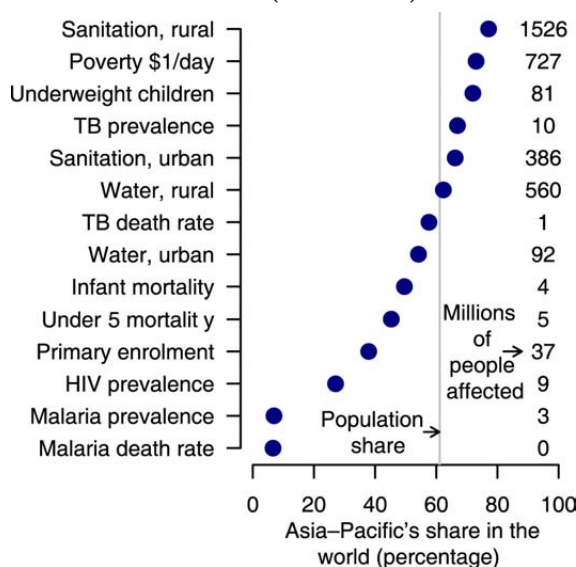
Key: ● early achiever; ▲ on track; ■ slow; ▼ regressing.

The second reason why much work remains to be done in Asia and the Pacific lies in the wide diversity of experience and achievement among countries of the region, which is also summarized in table 2.

Asia and the Pacific as a whole is on track to halve the prevalence of underweight children from its 1990 level of 36%, but almost two-thirds of the countries of the region for which data is available are not. The

region is on track to achieve targets for the proportion of primary pupils reaching grade 5, gender parity in tertiary education, child mortality and access to clean water and basic sanitation in rural areas, but more than one-third of Asia-Pacific countries with data are off track. The region is an early achiever for forest cover and CO₂ emissions, yet 45% and 59% respectively of its countries are off track.

Figure 1: People living in social and economic poverty in Asia and the Pacific (latest value)



As a group, the **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** in Asia-Pacific have the region's highest rates of child mortality, maternal mortality and TB prevalence and death. They are also off track for all indicators except the two TB measures. In contrast, the region's LDCs are on track to achieve, or already have achieved, the targets under goal 7, except in regards to the land area covered by forests.

There is substantial overlap between **South Asia**, excluding India, and the region's LDCs. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal belong to both groups. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that both groups of countries are rather similar, as shown in

into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources).

Progress in the **Pacific** sub-region is difficult to assess because the necessary data are often unavailable but the main areas of concern are similar to those of the Central Asian countries. Like them, the Pacific is also off track for child mortality (slow) and access to water and sanitation (regressing, except for water in rural areas for which it is slow).

China and India: impressive progress but huge disparities

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