

Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific

United Nations
Development Programme

PROMOTING THE



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

in Asia and the Pacific

Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction



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New York, 2003

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ST/ESCAP/2253

UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION
Sales No. E.03.II.F.29
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ISBN: 92-1-120168-3

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FOREWORD

The world's leaders met at the United Nations in September 2000 and issued the Millennium Declaration, affirming that they would “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty”. For this purpose they also established a set of clear time-bound objectives, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This report assesses progress towards those goals in Asia and the Pacific. It finds striking achievements in some areas, notably substantial reductions in income poverty, but also disturbingly slow progress in others.

The report also reveals considerable differences in achievement between different countries. This is not surprising across such a diverse region. Each of these countries is following its own distinctive human development path, and each has its own opportunities and challenges. Individual countries will also be preparing their own national MDG reports that can assess their own progress towards the goals.

It is also valuable, however, to take a regional perspective. Despite the diversity, there are still many common issues which connect the countries of the region. A report such as this can reflect on both the similarities and the differences and on how the more successful countries have made progress, and suggest how countries across the region can cooperate and learn from each other. Also, the report provides a regional perspective on the global partnership for development, which is embodied in Goal 8 of the MDGs.

The preparation of this report has also highlighted, however, a number of difficulties in taking a regional view, and in particular the scarcity of internationally comparable time-series data needed to make some detailed cross-country comparisons. One of the priorities for the next phase of MDG assessments as we move towards the major target date of 2015 must be to extend and strengthen national systems of data collection.

This report has been a collaborative effort, based on contributions from throughout the region and a series of expert meetings. We would like to thank all those who have contributed their time and expertise in this joint venture. We hope that their work will be of value not just to policy makers across the region but also to the many people elsewhere in the world who want to learn more about Asia and the Pacific and how in a period of rapid social and political change many countries in the region have achieved sustained economic growth and enabled millions of people to escape from poverty.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Promoting the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty Reduction has been prepared under the direction of Kim Hak-Su and Hafiz Pasha. Raj Kumar and J.K. Robert England provided valuable guidance during all phases of the preparation of the report.

An Advisory Panel guided the preparation of the report. The Advisory Panel was co-chaired by Kim Hak-Su and Hafiz Pasha. Other members of the Advisory Panel were: Babar Ali, Arsenio M. Balisacan, Li Binglong, Rosemarie Edillon, Kang Moon-Kyu, Vijay Naidu, S.R. Osmani, Brahm Prakash, Amara Pongsapich, Mohan Man Sainju, Sudarno Sumarto, Suresh Tendulkar and Muhammad Yunus. The first meeting of the Advisory Panel was organized on 28 February and 1 March 2002 to review and approve the outline of the report. The Panel met again on 12 and 13 March 2003 to review and finalize the draft report.

The report was prepared by a team of staff members and experts of the Poverty Centre, Office of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP. The report team was coordinated by M. Aynul Hasan. Other core members of the team responsible for the preparation of the report were Syed Nuruzzaman, Suk Bum-Yoon, Osama Rajkhan, Selma Guven and Nuankae Wongthawatchai. Andrew Flatt reviewed the statistical appendix and provided suggestions on data presentation in the report. Draft chapters of the report were reviewed by Subinay Nandi, B. Murali, Kanni Wignaraja, Jan Vandemoortele, Diana Alarcon, Rosemary Kalapurakal, Hakan Bjorkman, Thelma Kay, Nicholas Howen, Apichai Sunchindah, Alvaro Rodriguez, Takayoshi Kusago and Sirisupa Kulthanan.

A series of technical background papers were commissioned for the preparation of the report. These background papers were contributed by Nanak Kakwani, Peter Warr, Charles Myers and Binayak Sen.

The draft chapters of the report were presented at a meeting of the Inter-agency Thematic Working Group on the Millennium Development Goals held on 21 February 2003. Inputs to the report were provided by FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UNODC, UPU and WFP.

UNDP country offices and United Nations country teams in Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand contributed towards the preparation of the report.

The report was designed by Susannah Dixon and Nilubol Nutkumhaeng. It was pre-edited by Peter Stalker.

The logistics and production support for the report were provided by Woranooch Thiusathien and Supharat Kaewhonkaen, who were also responsible for administrative arrangements for the organization of the two Advisory Panel meetings.

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