

The Millennium Development Goals Report



UNITED NATIONS

2009



This report is based on a master set of data that has been compiled by an Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in response to the wishes of the General Assembly for periodic assessment of progress towards the MDGs. The Group comprises representatives of the international organizations whose activities include the preparation of one or more of the series of statistical indicators that were identified as appropriate for monitoring progress towards the MDGs, as reflected in the list below. A number of national statisticians and outside expert advisers also contributed.

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UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 2009

END POVERTY 2015 *Make it happen*
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Foreword

Nine years ago, world leaders set far-sighted goals to free a major portion of humanity from the shackles of extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. They established targets for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development. In short, they adopted a blueprint for a better world – and pledged to spare no effort in fulfilling that vision.

We have made important progress in this effort, and have many successes on which to build. But we have been moving too slowly to meet our goals. And today, we face a global economic crisis whose full repercussions have yet to be felt. At the very least, it will throw us off course in a number of key areas, particularly in the developing countries. At worst, it could prevent us from keeping our promises, plunging millions more into poverty and posing a risk of social and political unrest. That is an outcome we must avoid at all costs.

We cannot allow an unfavorable economic climate to undermine the commitments made in 2000. On the contrary, our efforts to restore economic growth should be seen as an opportunity to take some of the hard decisions needed to create a more equitable and sustainable future.

This report shows that the right policies and actions, backed by adequate funding and strong political commitment, can yield results. Fewer people today are dying of AIDS, and many countries are implementing proven strategies to combat malaria and measles, two major killers of children. The world is edging closer to universal primary education, and we are well on our way to meeting the target for safe drinking water.

However, the report also notes that many challenges remain and are likely to become even more difficult in the current economic climate. Early indications are that, not surprisingly, the poor have suffered most from the upheaval of the past year. The numbers of people going hungry and living in extreme poverty are much larger than they would have been had progress continued uninterrupted. Economic hardship has pushed tens of millions of people into vulnerable employment and increased the number of those who, though employed, do not earn enough for themselves and their families to rise above the poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

Rather than retreat, now is the time to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to strengthen the global partnership for development. If the global community responds constructively to the crisis, the goals can still be achieved. Honouring the commitment to increase aid is critical. Equally important is ensuring that the interests of the developing countries, and especially the poorest ones, remain central in negotiations on trade. We must also ‘seal the deal’ on a new climate change regime in Copenhagen in December. The timing is ripe for making the structural changes that are needed to move more decisively towards more equitable development and sustainability and to address the climate crisis.

The global community cannot turn its back on the poor and the vulnerable. We must strengthen global cooperation and solidarity, and redouble our efforts to reach the MDGs and advance the broader development agenda. Nothing less than the viability of our planet and the future of humanity are at stake. I urge policymakers and all stakeholders to heed the message of this valuable and timely report.



BAN KI-MOON
Secretary-General, United Nations

Overview

The Millennium Declaration set 2015 as the target date for achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which established quantitative benchmarks to halve extreme poverty in all its forms. As the date approaches, less than six years away, the world finds itself mired in an economic crisis that is unprecedented in its severity and global dimensions.

Progress towards the goals is now threatened by sluggish — or even negative — economic growth, diminished resources, fewer trade opportunities for the developing countries, and possible reductions in aid flows from donor nations. At the same time, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, with a potentially devastating impact on countries rich and poor. Today, more than ever, the commitment to building the global partnership embodied in the Millennium Declaration must guide our collective actions.

The grim repercussions of the economic crisis

This report presents an annual assessment of progress towards the MDGs. Although data are not yet available to reveal the full impact of the recent economic downturn, they point to areas where progress towards the eight goals has slowed or reversed.

Major advances in the fight against extreme poverty from 1990 to 2005, for example, are likely to have stalled. During that period, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion. In 2009, an estimated 55 million to 90 million more people will be living in extreme poverty than anticipated before the crisis.

Likewise, the encouraging trend in the eradication of hunger since the early 1990s was reversed in 2008, largely due to higher food prices. The prevalence of hunger in the developing regions is now on the rise, from 16 per cent in 2006 to 17 per cent in 2008. A decrease in international food prices in the second half of 2008 has failed to translate into more affordable food for most people around the world.

Not surprisingly, children bear the brunt of the burden. More than one quarter of children in developing regions are underweight for their age, stunting their prospects for survival, growth and long-term development. Meagre progress on child nutrition from 1990 to 2007 is insufficient to meet the 2015 target, and will likely be eroded by higher food prices and economic turmoil.

These ongoing crises may also hold back progress towards gender equality, by creating new hurdles to women's employment. The International Labour Organization estimates that global

unemployment in 2009 could reach 6.1 to 7.0 per cent for men and 6.5 to 7.4 per cent for women, many of whom remain trapped in insecure — often unpaid — jobs.

Other fallout from the global financial situation may be compromised funding for programmes to improve maternal health, the goal towards which there has been least progress so far. Since the mid-1990s, most developing countries have experienced a major reduction in donor funding for family planning on a per woman basis, despite the undeniable contribution of such programmes to maternal and child health.

The ability of countries to mobilize domestic resources for development is also in jeopardy. Export revenues of developing countries fell in the last quarter of 2008, with the collapse of commodity prices and exports more generally. Debt service to exports ratios of developing countries are likely to deteriorate further, especially for those countries that enjoyed increased export revenues for the last several years.

Economic necessity will doubtless continue to exert pressure on an already fragile global environment, where deforestation and the extinction of species proceed at alarming rates, and a global water crisis looms.

At the Gleneagles summit of the Group of Eight in 2005, and at the UN World Summit later that year, donors committed to increasing their aid. With most OECD economies in recession, even fulfilment of those commitments, which were expressed as a percentage of donors' national income, would imply a diminished amount of aid. For many developing countries, lower levels of aid would not only impede further progress, but could reverse some of the gains already made.

The successes so far

But the story is not all bleak. The report also portrays the remarkable advances that many countries and regions had made before the economic landscape changed so radically in 2008:

- Those living in extreme poverty in the developing regions accounted for slightly more than a quarter of the developing world's population in 2005, compared to almost half in 1990.
- Major accomplishments were also made in education. In the developing world as a whole, enrolment in primary education reached 88 per cent in 2007, up from 83 per cent in 2000. And most of the progress was in regions lagging the furthest behind. In sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, enrolment increased by 15 percentage points and 11 percentage points, respectively, from 2000 to 2007.
- Deaths of children under five declined steadily worldwide — to around 9 million in 2007, down from 12.6 million in 1990,

despite population growth. Although child mortality rates remain highest in sub-Saharan Africa, recent survey data show remarkable improvements in key interventions that could yield major breakthroughs for children in that region in the years ahead. Among these interventions are the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets to reduce the toll of malaria — a major killer of children. As a result of ‘second chance’ immunizations, dramatic progress is also being made in the fight against measles.

- At the global level, the world came together to achieve a 97 per cent reduction in the consumption of substances that deplete the Earth’s protective ozone layer, setting a new precedent for international cooperation.

Where accelerated progress is needed

These accomplishments demonstrate that the goals are within reach at the global level, and even in very poor countries. The MDGs must continue to provide a focus for our efforts, and the vision of a world without poverty must not be lost, even in these difficult times:

- Efforts to provide productive and decent employment for all, including women and young people, must be revitalized. The share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased only marginally over the years. And in Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, employment opportunities for women remain extremely low.
- The war against hunger must be embraced with renewed vigour, especially in the interests of our youngest citizens. In the countries hardest hit by the recent rise in food prices, we must implement measures to increase the availability of food, and strengthen social policies that address the negative impact on the poor.
- Work must be intensified to get *all* children into school, especially those living in rural communities, and eliminate inequalities in education based on gender and ethnicity, and among linguistic and religious minorities. The target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 has already been missed.
- Greater political will must be mustered to reduce maternal mortality, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, where negligible progress has been made so far.
- Rapid acceleration of progress is needed to bring improved sanitation to the 1.4 billion people who were doing without in 2006, with all its attendant consequences for the health of communities and the local environment. At the present rate of progress, the 2015 sanitation target will be missed.

- Efforts to improve the living conditions of the urban poor must pick up speed and extend even further. Although every region except one has made progress in this area, slum improvements are barely keeping pace with the rapid growth of developing country cities.
- Last, but by no means least, greater priority must be given to preserving our natural resource base, on which we all depend. We have not acted forcefully enough — or in a unified way — to combat climate change; our fisheries are imperilled; our forests, especially old-growth forests, are receding; and water scarcity has become a reality in a number of arid regions.

Learning from past experience, and looking ahead

Advances are most evident where targeted interventions have had an immediate effect, and where increased funding has translated into an expansion of programmes to deliver services and tools directly to those in need. This can be seen in the fight against malaria, in the dramatic reduction in measles deaths, and in the coverage of antiretroviral treatment for HIV and AIDS, which increased tenfold over a five-year time span. In contrast, progress has been more modest when it requires structural changes and strong political commitment to guarantee sufficient and sustained funding over a longer period of time. This is likely the reason behind the poor performance of most countries in reducing maternal mortality and increasing access of the rural poor to improved sanitation facilities.

Achieving the MDGs will require that the development agenda be fully integrated into efforts to jumpstart growth and rebuild the global economy. At the top of the agenda is the climate change problem, which will have to be regarded as an opportunity to develop more efficient ‘green’ technologies and make the structural changes needed that will contribute to sustainable growth. Achieving the MDGs will also require targeting areas and population groups that have clearly been left behind — rural communities, the poorest households and ethnic minorities, all of whom will have a hand in shaping our common future.

SHA ZUKANG
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

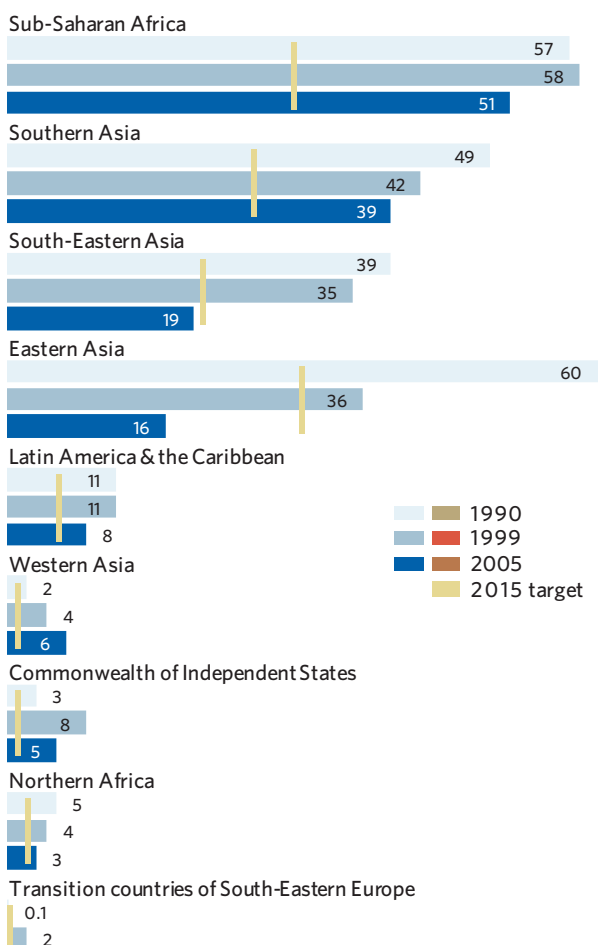


TARGET

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day

The global economic crisis derails progress against poverty

Proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day, 1990, 1999 and 2005 (Percentage)



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