



## GOAL 7 Ensure Environmental Sustainability

FACT SHEET

### TARGETS

1. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
2. Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
3. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
4. Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

### Quick Facts

- \* Some 1.7 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990. Yet 884 million people worldwide still do not have access to safe drinking water and 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines.
- \* The world has missed the 2010 target for biodiversity conservation. Based on current trends, the loss of species will continue throughout this century.
- \* Slum improvements are failing to keep pace with the growing number of urban poor. The absolute number of slum dwellers keeps rising, with some 828 million people living in slums today, even though the share of the urban population living in slums is declining.

### WHERE DO WE STAND?

**The world will meet or even exceed the drinking water target by 2015 if current trends continue.** By that time, an estimated 86 per cent of the population in developing regions will have gained access to improved sources of drinking water, up from 71 per cent in 1990. Four regions — Northern Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia — have already met the target.

Even though progress was made primarily in rural areas, those areas still remain at a disadvantage. Globally, eight out of 10 people who are without access to an improved drinking water source live in rural areas.

**With half the population of developing regions lacking basic sanitation, the 2015 target appears to be out of reach.** At the current rate of progress, the world will miss the target of halving the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation, such as toilets or latrines. In 2008, an estimated 2.6 billion people around the world lacked access to improved sanitation. If the trend continues, that number will grow to 2.7 billion by 2015. Wide disparities also exist by region, with sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia continuing to lag behind. Recent data show 69 per cent and 64 per cent of their populations still lack access, respectively. And the gap between rural and urban areas remains huge, especially in Southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania.

**The world has missed the 2010 target to slow the decline in biodiversity.** Nearly 17,000 species of plants and animals are currently at risk of extinction, and the number of species threatened by extinction is growing by the day. Despite increased investment, the main causes of biodiversity loss — high rates of consumption, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and climate change — are not being sufficiently addressed. Biodiversity is vitally important; billions of people rely directly on diverse species for their livelihoods and often survival.

Deforestation rates have slowed, but remain fastest in some of the world's most biologically diverse regions. Tree-planting programmes, combined with the natural expansion of forests in some regions, have added more than 7 million hectares of new forest annually. As a result, the net loss of forest area over the period 2000-2010 was reduced to 5.2 million hectares per year, down from 8.3 million hectares per year in 1990-2000. South America and Africa continue to show the largest net losses of forests.

**The target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers has already been achieved twice-over.** In the last ten years, more than 200 million slum dwellers have gained access to improved water, sanitation or durable and less crowded housing, greatly enhancing their prospects of escaping poverty, disease and illiteracy.

These improvements, however, are failing to keep pace with the growing ranks of the urban poor. Even though the share of the urban population living in slums has declined from 39 per cent to 33 per cent over the last ten years, the absolute number of slum dwellers in the developing world is growing and will continue to increase in the near future. The number of urban residents living in slum conditions in the developing world is now estimated at some 828 million, compared to 657 million in 1990 and 767 million in 2000.

The target set in the year 2000 was set too low, based on too small an estimated number of people living in sub-standard conditions. For governments to set meaningful country-specific goals, make serious commitments and be held accountable for continued progress, the target will require redefinition, such as, "Halve the proportion of slum dwellers by 2020."

### WHAT HAS WORKED?

- **Reducing ozone-depleting substances:** The 1987 Montreal Protocol resulted in the phasing out of 98 per cent of ozone-depleting substances by 2008. Many ozone-depleting substances under the Protocol are also potent greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. In 2007, almost all governments also committed to phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), currently the most widely used ozone-depleting substance.
  - **Installing water systems in Brazil, Burkina Faso and Sri Lanka:** Since 2002, Brazil has been implementing the One Million Rural Cisterns Programme to bring clean water to about 36 million people in semi-arid North-Eastern Brazil. In Burkina Faso, a water tower and pipe system were installed for 1,300 villagers in 2006, resulting in 20 litres of affordable clean water a day being available to each household. And in Sri Lanka, the introduction of rainwater harvesting tanks has enabled households to save on average \$31 per month.
  - **Expanding good sanitation practices in Kyrgyzstan:** In Kyrgyzstan, a community-based project focused on promoting good sanitation and hygiene practices in the rural north, where almost a third of children were infected with one or more intestinal parasites. Improved water supply to schools and hygienic education contributed to a decline in the incidence of lambliaisis by 76 per cent in the villages covered by the project.
- The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) helps governments and partners implement community-based **water quality surveillance** systems to screen for contaminants like human faeces, arsenic, fluoride and nitrates. UNICEF also promotes a range of low-cost sanitation, water and hand-washing facilities and helps improve sanitation and promote hygiene, like hand washing, in schools.
  - In the Arab region, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was tasked by the Ministerial Water Council of the League of Arab States to lead the establishment of a regional mechanism for **monitoring the water supply and sanitation** targets and other related indicators in Arab countries.
  - The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has supported the Russian Federation in the development of **Regional Biomass Action Plans** to help the private sector and regional governments integrate the biomass sector with the forestry, woodworking, agricultural, electricity, municipal heating, waste and recycling sectors.
  - The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is partnering with an NGO to help developing countries **turn trash into cash**. Launched in Bangladesh, the aim of the region-wide project is to enable cities across Asia and the Pacific to develop and implement solid waste management strategies that are decentralized, pro-poor, low-carbon and self-financing through the sale of carbon credits.
  - The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) leads the United Nations Decade of **Education for Sustainable Development**, which seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

**Sources:** *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, United Nations; UN MDG Database ([mdgs.un.org](http://mdgs.un.org)); MDG Monitor Website ([www.mdgmonitor.org](http://www.mdgmonitor.org)), UN Development Programme (UNDP); *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? – An International Assessment 2010*, UNDP; MDG Good Practices 2010, UN Development Group; One Million Rural Cisterns – The SEED Initiative ([www.seedinit.org](http://www.seedinit.org)); UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UN Children's Fund (UNICEF); UN Development Programme (UNDP); UN Regional Commissions, New York Office.

### WHAT IS THE UN DOING?

- In Tanzania, an initiative led by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided **solar energy systems** to some 8,400 households in the northern region of Mwanza, collectively reducing carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 0.93 metric tons per year by the end of 2009.

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