

The Millennium Development Goals Report



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Mixed 2010 report card on anti-poverty goals highlights challenges ahead for September Summit

(United Nations, New York, 23 June) The economic crisis took a heavy toll on jobs and incomes around the world, but its impact does not threaten achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of cutting the rate of extreme poverty in half by 2015, the United Nations reports today in its annual MDG accounting. The report highlights a number of successes, while also assessing the human impact of lack of adequate progress on many of the Goals.

The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, launched today by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, helps to set the stage for a September summit at the UN. It comes out only days before accountability for aid commitments is discussed by the Group of 8 at their meeting hosted by Canada.

“This report shows that the Goals are achievable when nationally owned development strategies and policies are supported by international development partners,” says Secretary-General Ban in the report’s foreword. “At the same time, it is clear that improvements in the lives of the poor have been unacceptably slow, and some hard-won gains are being eroded by the climate, food and economic crises. Billions of people are looking to the international community to realize the great vision embodied in the Millennium Development Goals. Let us keep that promise.”

The UN report cites big gains in getting children into primary schools in many poor countries, especially in Africa; strong interventions in addressing AIDS, malaria and child health; and a good chance to reach the target for access to clean drinking water. But disadvantages that hurt the poorest, those living in remote areas or with a disability, or due to ethnicity or gender, have sapped progress on many other fronts.

Among the findings are that only half of the developing world’s population has access to improved sanitation, such as toilets or latrines; girls in the poorest quintile of households are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than those from the richest households, and four times more likely than boys from this background; and less than half of the women in some developing regions benefit from maternal care by skilled health personnel when giving birth.

The share of people in the developing world who subsist on less than \$1.25 a day, in constant US dollars, dropped from 46 per cent in the baseline year of 1990 to 27 per cent in 2005 – led by progress in China and Southern and South Eastern Asia – and is expected to tumble to 15 per cent by the target year of 2015.

But the *MDG Report 2010* also indicates that progress against hunger has been impacted more severely by economic troubles. The ability of the poor to feed their families was hit consecutively by skyrocketing food prices in 2008 and falling incomes in 2009, and the number of malnourished, already growing since the beginning of the decade, may have grown at a faster pace after 2008.

CRISIS TESTS THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

The UN assessment of Goal 8 – for a global partnership for development – indicates resilience in international cooperation in the face of recent economic difficulties. Official development assistance (ODA) rose in both 2008 and 2009, to reach a total of nearly \$120 billion per year; developing and poor countries continued to improve access to rich-country markets; and developing-nation debt burdens continued to ease, due to good debt management and ongoing debt relief for the poorest countries.

“Despite the setback to exports caused by the global economic crisis, the ratio of debt service to exports remained stable or again fell in most developing regions in 2008,” the report says. “Despite further losses of export earnings in 2009 and, for some countries, declining growth, debt burdens are likely to remain well below historical levels.”

But the jury is still out on the global partnership’s overall performance. The UN report cautions that the 2009 ODA increase sorts out as a mere 0.7 per cent over the 2008 total in real terms, and in current US dollars actually constitutes a two per cent decline. The report voices concern on projections for 2010 development assistance, which may possibly be jeopardized by fiscal difficulties in donor countries, and also notes a substantial gap in fulfillment of 2005 commitments to double aid to Africa. Moreover, hopes for completing the “development round” of world trade talks, under way since 2001, have been frustrated.

CLIMATE CHANGE CALLS INTO QUESTION ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Under Goal 7, covering the broad area of environmental sustainability, the UN reports that over the last decade the world lost 13 million hectares of forest each year – an alarming rate which is nevertheless a notch down from the annual average of 16 million hectares recorded during the previous decade.

Population increase and economic growth in the last two decades have produced a nearly 50 per cent increase in global CO2 emissions between 1991 and 2007, from 21.9 to 29.6 billion metric tons. Figures for 2008 are expected to show that the rate of increase has slowed, largely as a result of economic downturn. It is even possible that total emissions may have decreased in 2009. But the same estimates that produced these findings also suggest that unless decisive action is taken, emissions will again rise rapidly as the world economy reboots. The UN convenes the next round of international climate change negotiations late in 2010, in Cancun, Mexico.

WORLD LEADERS TO SET ACTION AGENDA TO 2015

First agreed at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, the eight MDGs set worldwide objectives for reducing extreme poverty and hunger, improving health and education, empowering women and ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015. The UN is convening a special summit in New York, 20-22 September, to agree on a plan to accelerate global action on the Goals. More than 100 Heads of State and Government are expected, along with leaders from the private sector, foundations and civil society organizations.

The *Millennium Development Goals Report*, an annual assessment of regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 25 UN and international agencies. Produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the report has been designated by the UN General Assembly as an official input to the MDG summit. A complete set of the data used to prepare the report is available at <http://mdgs.un.org>

For more information, press materials and inter-agency media contact list, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals

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