

The Millennium Development Goals Report



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REGIONAL BACKGROUNDER

Northern Africa

Northern Africa reached the target of halving the extreme poverty rate five years ahead of the 2015 deadline, with the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day falling from 5 per cent in 1990 to less than 1 per cent in 2015.

Northern Africa is close to eradicating severe food insecurity, having attained an overall level of the undernourishment rate below 5 per cent. The region also reached the target of halving the proportion of undernourished children, with the proportion of underweight children under age five declining from 10 per cent to 4 per cent from 1990 to 2015.

Northern Africa has made impressive strides in expanding access to primary education. In a region that had enrolment rates of 80 per cent in 1990, universal primary education was almost achieved in 2015.

One of the greatest increases in youth literacy rates between 1990 and 2015 was observed in Northern Africa (from 67 to 91 per cent). The literacy rate among young women is growing at a faster pace than that of young men. The female literacy rate rose 32 percentage points from 1990 to 2015, compared to 17 percentage points for young men over the same period. The region is moving closer to the point at which male and female literacy rates are equal.

Northern Africa has made the most significant progress towards equal access to education for girls and boys. In 1990, only 82 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys. Now there are 96 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. In secondary education, gender parity has been achieved in 2015, with young women seeing higher enrolment ratios in tertiary education than young men.

The gender gap in employment remains acute in Northern Africa. Women's access to paid employment has not improved in the past two decades, with women holding fewer than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. Access to paid employment remains a distant target for women in the region.

Women in the region are, however, gaining more power in politics. The proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliament increased from 4 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2015.

Northern Africa is one of only three regions that have met the target of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds ahead of the 2015 deadline. The mortality rate for children under five dropped by 67 per cent—from 73 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 24 in 2015.

Northern Africa is also one of the regions which recorded the highest reduction (57 per cent) in maternal mortality ratio, from 160 to 69 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2013. This is largely due to much improved maternal care. Skilled health personnel attended 90 per cent of deliveries in 2015, compared to only 47 per cent in 1990. Also, in Northern Africa, the proportion of pregnant women who received four or more antenatal visits increased from 50 per cent to 89 per cent between 1990 and 2014.

In terms of environmental sustainability, renewable water resources in Northern Africa have withdrawal rates exceeding 78 per cent, the limit of what is considered sustainable.

In the region, the protected terrestrial area—areas dedicated to safeguarding and maintaining biological diversity and natural resources, with their associated cultural value—grew from 3 per cent to 8 per cent of the land surface between 1990 and 2014.



Northern Africa is very close to meeting the target of halving the proportion of the population without access to safe drinking water and has already met the target of halving the proportion of the population without improved sanitation. The proportion of people using an improved water source increased from 87 per cent to 93 per cent between 1990 and 2015, and the proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility increased from 71 per cent to 89 per cent between 1990 and 2015.

In 2015, Northern Africa was one of the regions with the lowest prevalence of slum conditions. In Northern Africa the proportion of the urban slum population declined almost by half, to 11 per cent in 2014 from 20 per cent in 2000.

