

The Millennium Development Goals Report



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Many Millennium Development Goals within reach in Western Asia, but mixed results for women and children, says UN

CONFLICT HOLDS WESTERN ASIA BACK ON ACHIEVING SOME MDGs

BEIRUT, 7 JULY 2014 – Western Asia made major progress on some Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but may miss other targets by the end of 2015 if greater efforts are not made throughout the region, according to *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*, launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York.

Western Asia is on track to meet the target of a two-thirds reduction in the under-five mortality rate. The under-five mortality rate fell by 62 per cent between 1990 and 2012, dropping from 65 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 25 in 2012. Babies delivered by skilled health personnel increased from 60 per cent in 1990 to 80 per cent in 2012. While the maternal mortality ratio in Western Asia decreased 43 per cent between 1990 and 2013 --considered major progress-- the region will likely miss the MDG target on maternal mortality by 2015. Maternal death is mostly preventable with increased access to regular check-ups.

The number of new tuberculosis cases fell by 53 per cent between 1990 and 2012. The region is on track to achieve the MDG target of halting the spread and reversing the incidence of tuberculosis.

Western Asia has made some progress in reducing its already low poverty rate. The proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day declined from 5.1 per cent in 1990 to 3.6 per cent in 2010. Western Asia may reach its poverty reduction target by 2015.

EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IMPROVING BUT NOT QUICKLY ENOUGH

Access to primary education in Western Asia continues to improve. The adjusted net enrolment rate grew from 84 per cent in 1990 to 93 per cent in 2012. Although Western Asia has made significant strides in improving gender parity in education, girls continue to face high barriers to schooling in all levels of education. Girls' enrolment ratios are still lower than boys' in Western Asia. At the higher level of tertiary education, Western Asia is within reach of meeting the target by 2015 for parity between men and women, if ongoing efforts continue.

The proportion of women holding seats in parliament increased in 42 of the 64 chambers renewed in 2013 worldwide. Saudi Arabia saw one of the world's faster increases globally, with an increase of more than 15 percentage points in its lower houses. The proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliament in Western Asia rose from four per cent in 2000 to 12 per cent in 2014.

MORE ADULTS GO HUNGRY AND IMPROVED WATER ACCESS COULD SOON BE SCARCE

Western Asia was the only developing region to see an increase in hungry people, largely due to increases in Iraq, State of Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic. The proportion of undernourished people in the total population increased from 6.6 per cent in 1990-1992 to 9.8 per cent in 2011-2013. However, the region has made significant progress in improving child under-

nutrition. The proportion of underweight children under age five declined from 14 per cent in 1990 to 6 per cent in 2012, which means Western Asia met its MDG target ahead of 2015.

Western Asia has made some progress in improving access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The proportion of the population using an improved water source increased from 85 per cent to 91 per cent between 1990 and 2012, which puts the region within reach of meeting its target by 2015. However, the report notes that excessive withdrawal from renewable water sources raises concerns about severe water scarcity in the region. The proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility increased from 80 to 89 per cent over the same period.

CONFLICT REDUCES MDG SUCCESS

By the end of 2013, a record high of 51 million people were displaced forcibly worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations. Five million were Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Syrian Arab Republic became a main source of refugee outflows during 2013. Nearly 2.5 million Syrian refugees came under the responsibility of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency.

Conflict can have a major detrimental impact on achieving the MDGs. An estimated 29 million out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas, even though these areas are home to only 22 per cent of the world's primary school-age population. Western Asia together with Northern Africa, account for 14 per cent of these children. For example, in the conflict-affected province of Najaf in Iraq, 27 per cent of children of primary school age from the poorest households never went to school in 2011, compared to three per cent in Al-Sulaimaniyah province.

The Millennium Development Goals Report, an annual assessment of global and regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 28 UN and international agencies and is produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A complete set of the data used to prepare the report is available at mdgs.un.org

For more information, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals

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