



GOAL 1 Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

FACT SHEET

TARGETS

1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day
2. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
3. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Quick Facts

- * The number of people living under the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day declined from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion between 1990 and 2005.
- * The proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing regions dropped from 46 per cent to 27 per cent — on track to meet the target globally.
- * The economic crisis is expected to push an estimated 64 million more people into extreme poverty in 2010.
- * About one in four children under the age of five is underweight in the developing world, down from almost one in three in 1990.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

The world is on track to meet the MDG target of halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day between 1990 and 2015. Overall poverty rates fell from 46 per cent in 1990 to 27 per cent in 2005 in developing regions, and progress in many developing countries is being sustained. This is despite setbacks caused by the 2008-09 economic downturn and the effects of the food and energy crises. However, even if these positive trends continue, in 2015, roughly 920 million people would still be living under the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day, as adjusted by the World Bank in 2008.

Achievements so far are largely the result of extraordinary success in Asia, mostly East Asia. Over a 25-year period, the poverty rate in East Asia fell from nearly 60 per cent to under 20 per cent. Poverty rates are expected to fall to around 5 per cent in China and 24 per cent in India by 2015.

In contrast, little progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, where the poverty rate has declined only slightly, from 58 to 51 per cent between 1990 and 2005. Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia are the few regions not expected to achieve the MDG poverty reduction target.

The World Bank estimates that the effects of the economic crisis will push an additional 64 million people into extreme poverty in 2010, and that poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and beyond than they would have been without the crisis, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

The proportion of people suffering from hunger is declining, but at an unsatisfactory pace. Even though the proportion of people worldwide suffering from malnutrition and hunger has fallen since the early 1990s, progress has stalled since 2000-2002. The estimate of the number of people who will suffer chronic hunger this year is 925 million, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN — down from 1.023 billion in 2009, but still more than the number of undernourished people in 1990 (about 815 million).

Between 1990 and 2008, the proportion of underweight children under five declined from 31 per cent to 26 per cent in developing regions with particular success in Eastern Asia, notably China. Despite such improvements, progress is currently not fast enough to reach the MDG target, and particular focus is required in Southern Asia. This region alone accounts for almost half the world's undernourished children. In all developing regions, children in rural areas are nearly twice as likely to be underweight as those in urban areas.

WHAT HAS WORKED?

- **Subsidy programmes in Malawi and Ghana:** Since 2005, Malawi's voucher programme for fertilizers and seeds has helped boost its agricultural productivity, turning the country into a net food exporter after decades of famine as a perennial food importer. Malawi needs 2.2 million tons of maize a year to reach self-sufficiency. In 2005, the harvest fell to a low of 1.2 million tons of maize. The National Input Subsidy Programme resulted in a dramatic increase to 3.2 million tons of maize in 2007. Through a similar nationwide fertilizer subsidy programme, Ghana increased food production by 40 per cent, contributing to an average decline of 9 per cent in hunger between 2003 and 2005.
- **Investing in agriculture research in Vietnam:** Vietnam's investment in agriculture research and development helped cut the prevalence of hunger by more than half, from 28 per cent in 1991 to 13 per cent in 2004-06. The prevalence of underweight children was also more than halved from 45 per cent in 1994 to 20 per cent in 2006.
- **Innovative finance schemes in Nigeria and Bangladesh:** Nigeria's National Special Programme for Food Security helped almost double agricultural yields and farmers' incomes. Farmers were able to buy inputs using interest-free loans to be repaid following harvest. In Bangladesh, \$107 million is to be distributed in the form of Agricultural Input Assistance Cards, targeting poor households.
- **Employment programmes in Argentina:** In Argentina, the *Jefes y Jefas de Hogar* programme employed two million workers within a few months after its initiation in 2002. This contributed to the country's rapid poverty reduction from 9.9 per cent that year to 4.5 per cent in 2005.
- UNDP provided technical expertise to establish the **Ethiopian Commodity Exchange**, bringing together farmers, farming co-operatives, domestic traders, agro-industrial processors, commodity exporters and institutional buyers to meet and trade through a secure, low-cost platform. An estimated 850,000 small-holder farmers (mostly producers of coffee, sesame and other cash crops) are now involved in the Exchange system, which facilitates an average of 14,527 trades per day, equal to about US\$5 million to 10 million.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) provides **food assistance**, including cash and voucher transfers to the hungry, especially in the aftermath of a natural disaster. WFP's mapping tools and assessments of exactly where the hungry live help to ensure that food assistance is targeted to where it is most needed.
- The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides technical advice and support in many countries, such as in Nepal, and Liberia, on integrating **human rights** into MDG-based development planning.
- In Mali, UNDP is working with a **women's mango cooperative** which aims to give women farmers the right skills to grow and treat their produce for export. Thanks to the project, Mali's mango exports have risen sharply, from 2,915 tons in 2005 to 12,676 tons in 2008. The average price paid to the mango producer increased by approximately US\$70 per ton.
- The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2008-2009 carried out the first comparative **study of child poverty** in the region to promote inclusive, universal and efficient public policies for children and adolescents.

WHAT IS THE UN DOING?

- In India, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting the Mahatma Gandhi **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** which provides a right to a minimum of 100 days of paid work a year for landless laborers and marginal farmers, benefiting some 46 million households. Almost half of the beneficiaries are women.

Sources: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, United Nations; UN MDG Database (mdgs.un.org); MDG Monitor Website (www.mdgmonitor.org); *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? - An International Assessment 2010*, UN Development Programme (UNDP); UN Girls' Education Initiative, UNICEF (www.ungei.org); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); World Food Programme (WFP); UN Regional Commissions, New York Office.

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