

Millennium Development Goals update: Are we on target?



A fact sheet to accompany
Change the World in Eight Steps:
A set of posters and activities for 7–14 year olds investigating the UN Millennium
Development Goals

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) update: Are we on target?

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are international targets for reducing global poverty. They are the most ambitious such targets ever agreed, aiming to lift some 500 million people out of poverty by the year 2015. If the MDGs are achieved, fewer women will die in childbirth, fewer people will die from treatable diseases, many more boys and girls will go to school and the lives of millions of people will improve dramatically.

It is 2010, and there are just five years until the deadline for delivery of the MDGs. So, what progress is the world making towards the goals it set itself back in 2000?†

Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary General, summed up the situation in an address he gave to an MDG debate at the United Nations in April 2008:

'I am grateful for this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the emergency we face in the work to reach the Millennium Development Goals [...] More than halfway to 2015, the MDG track record is mixed. Compared to the year 2000, we can point to undeniable progress: three million more children now survive each year; an additional two million people receive treatment for AIDS; and millions more children are in school [...] Clearly, we have made a real difference. Yet we are falling short of what I know we can do. Just past the halfway point of the race to achieve the MDGs, many countries remain off track. This is particularly true across large parts of Africa and for many of the Least Developed Countries.'

†Unless otherwise stated, all statistics are from the *United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*. Often, statistics are only available up to 2004 or 2005, although they are the latest provided by the UN. This is because of lags in reporting and the complexity of gathering data of this type.

So, how well is the world doing on meeting specific goals?

UN to Review Progress on the Millennium Development Goals at High-level Meeting in September 2010

"Time is short. We must seize this historic moment to act responsibly and decisively for the common good."

With only five years until the 2015 deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon chose these words to strongly urge Governments to engage constructively in the preparations for a high-level meeting in September 2010 to review progress towards the MDGs and other international development goals.

The UN General Assembly took a decision in July 2009 to hold such a high-level plenary meeting at the opening of its 65th session in 2010. At the Assembly's request, the Secretary-General has issued a report setting out a proposed format and modalities for the event, which are expected to be agreed through consultations before the end of 2009. The Assembly has encouraged all countries to be represented at this important meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government.

In the 2009 Millennium Development Goals Report released earlier this year, the Secretary-General noted: "We have made important progress in this effort, and have many successes on which to build. But we have been moving too slowly to meet our goals". The 2010 high-level meeting, he hopes, will not only result in a renewal of existing commitments but also can decisively galvanize coordinated action among all stakeholders and elicit the funding needed to ensure the achievement of the Goals by 2015.

Achieving the MDGs will require that the development agenda be fully integrated into efforts to jumpstart growth and rebuild the global economy. At the top of the agenda is the climate change problem, which will have to be regarded as an opportunity to develop more efficient 'green' technologies and make the structural changes needed that will contribute to sustainable growth. Achieving the MDGs will also require targeting areas and population groups that have clearly been left behind — rural communities, the poorest households and ethnic minorities, all of whom will have a hand in shaping our common future.

SHA ZUKANG
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs
UN MDG Report 2009

Millennium Development Goal 1 – To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Those living in extreme poverty in the developing regions accounted for slightly more than a quarter of the developing world's population in 2005, compared to almost half in 1990. It seems likely that the first MDG target will be met in global terms. However, startling disparities between regions remain, with sub-Saharan Africa in particular a long way adrift from the target. While considerable progress has been made on reducing hunger in some regions, it is unlikely that this part of the MDG will be achieved in global terms.

Target – Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day.

The proportion of people living in extreme poverty (currently defined as an income of less than \$1 a day) is falling in most parts of the world. In developing regions, 31 per cent of people lived in extreme poverty in 1990. That figure had fallen to 19 per cent by 2004. Nevertheless, in 2008 1.2 billion people lived on less than a dollar a day, which is still around one in six people on the planet, and hundreds of millions of people short of the MDG target. Worldwide, the number of people living in extreme poverty in 2009 is expected to be 55 million to 90 million higher than anticipated before the global economic crisis, though the impact will vary across regions and countries. Current projections suggest that overall poverty rates in the developing world will still fall in 2009, but at a much slower pace than before the downturn. For some countries, this may mean the difference between reaching or not reaching their poverty reduction target. However, the UN states that if progress continues at the same rate, the target will be met in global terms by 2015.

While this would be an impressive achievement, it must be emphasised that success to date has not been shared equally across all regions. Most of the people who have escaped from extreme poverty are in Southern and Eastern Asia (including India and China), where rapid development has taken place in the last 20 years. By contrast, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty more than doubled in Western Asia between 1990 and 2004 (from 1.6 to 3.8 per cent), while in sub-Saharan Africa the figure still stands at 41 per cent (which is a small improvement on the figure of 47 per cent in 1990).

Most worryingly though, the reductions in poverty have been accompanied by rising inequality: the poorest are getting even poorer. Across all developing regions, the poorest fifth of the population shares only 3.9 per



cent of its country's national income, a share which has fallen since 1990 (when it was 4.6 per cent). While Eastern Asia has seen a dramatic reduction in the numbers of people living in extreme poverty, the poorest fifth of the region's population has suffered an equally dramatic decline in their share of national income – from 7.1 to 4.5 per cent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, and in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest fifth of the population shares just three per cent of national income. So, while development has meant fewer people living in poverty, there are still hundreds of millions of extremely poor people who have yet to see any of its benefits, and who go on getting poorer in comparison with their compatriots. In the years up to 2015, global efforts to achieve this target will need to focus explicitly on reaching the poorest of the poor, if they are not to be left further behind.

Target – Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

In 1990, a startling 33 per cent of children under five were going hungry in the world's developing regions. By 2005, that figure was down to 27 per cent. The declining trend in the rate of undernourishment in developing countries since 1990-1992 was reversed in 2008, largely due to escalating food prices. The proportion of people who are undernourished dropped from about 20 per cent in the early 1990s to about 16 per cent in the middle of the following decade. But provisional estimates indicate that it rose by a percentage point in 2008. Rapidly rising food prices caused the proportion of people going hungry in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania to increase in 2008. When China is excluded, the prevalence of hunger also rose in Eastern Asia. In most of the other regions, the effect was to arrest the downward trend. The use

of agricultural land to grow biofuels, and the effects of climate change, particularly drought, flood and unpredictable weather patterns have added to the problems caused by the economy. An estimated 3.5 million people die annually from malnutrition, and this number is expected to rise because of the continuing food crisis. Food price increases affect poor people much worse than those who are more economically secure because they spend a higher proportion of their income on food. When the price increases, poor people buy less food and often can't afford healthy food. Concerted international action is needed to assist farmers in poor countries in producing more food and to help poor countries protect themselves from the effects of climate change.

The combined effect of spiralling food prices and a lack of health care could be catastrophic for poor people, and the crisis could delay the attainment of several health-related Millennium Development Goals (1, 4, 5 and 6).

Adequate nutrition is vital for building children's immune systems and for their motor and cognitive development. Yet about one in four children in the developing regions are underweight. The consequences can be fatal: more than one third of child deaths worldwide are attributable to undernutrition. In the developing world, the proportion of children under five years of age who were underweight declined by only five percentage points from 1990 to 2007 — from 31 per cent to 26 per cent. This rate of progress is insufficient to meet the goal of reducing underweight prevalence by half — even without taking into account higher food prices and the economic crisis that developed in the meantime.

This calls for the initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, timely and appropriate complementary feeding from six months of age, and continued breastfeeding up to two years of age and beyond. Preventing low birthweight is also important. The nutritional status of mothers before and during pregnancy is a key determinant of the birthweight of her baby. Birthweight, in turn, has a critical bearing on a newborn's chances for survival, growth, long-term health and psychosocial development. Southern Asia has the highest incidence of low birthweight in the world — a quarter of newborns weigh less than 2,500 grams — as well as the highest prevalence of underweight children.

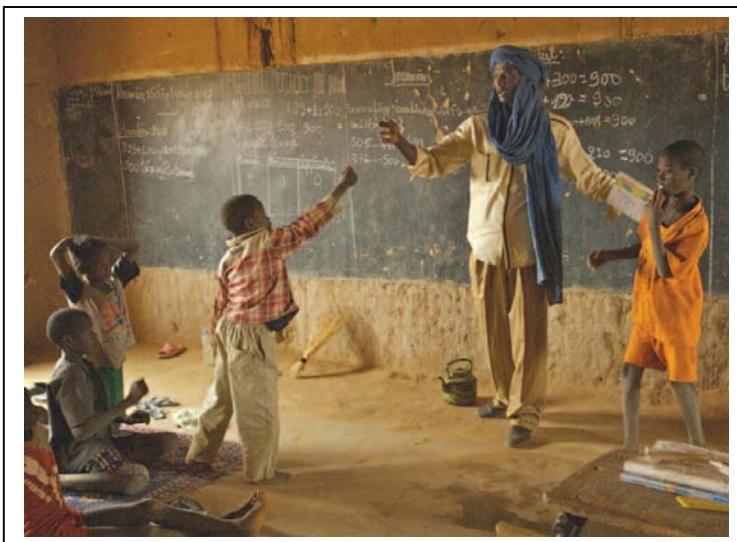
Child nutrition, particularly for vulnerable populations, must be given higher priority in national development.

Millennium Development Goal 2 – To achieve universal primary education

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

In the developing world as a whole, enrolment in primary education reached 88 per cent in 2007, up from 83 per cent in 2000. And most of the progress was in regions lagging the furthest behind. In sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, enrolment increased by 15 percentage points and 11 percentage points, respectively, from 2000 to 2007.

It seems unlikely that all regions will achieve this goal or even get close to it. Moreover, girls and rural children still have disproportionately poor access to primary schooling.



Target – Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

In developing countries there has been a lot of progress towards this goal, though sub-Saharan Africa has lagged behind the general improvements elsewhere. The figure for developing countries as a whole – including those in Asia and South America as well as in Africa – has improved from 80 per cent of eligible children having primary education in 1999 up to 88 per cent in 2007.

Achieving universal primary education by 2015 will require that all children at the official entry age for primary school have access to education by 2009. Some progress has been made: in 2007, almost 137 million children stepped into classrooms for the first time — 7 million more than in 1999. The gross intake rate, which measures the capacity of education systems to provide all children with access to schooling, increased by nine percentage points in developing countries over the same period. The biggest increase was recorded in sub-Saharan Africa, with a 25 percentage point rise.

Access to education, however, is only part of the solution. Completion of a full course of primary schooling is necessary to achieve universal primary education. Millions of children start school but eventually drop out. In many developing countries, school systems are chronically underfinanced and under resourced and often fail to deliver a high quality

education. As a result, too many children leave school without having acquired the most basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Addressing these concerns will require wide-ranging reforms and increased investments. Based on 2004 data, UNESCO estimates that, in sub-Saharan Africa alone, 3.8 million teachers will have to be recruited by 2015 if the goal of universal primary education is to be achieved.

Nearly nine out of ten children around the world now go to school. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, while there has been a marked improvement from 57 to 70 per cent of children in primary school, nearly one in three children is still missing out on a basic education. So, at the current rate of progress, some regions of the world are going to miss this goal by a wide margin. Within the overall statistics, it is important to think about the gender and other demographic differences in access to education. In 2005, of the roughly 72 million children who were still not getting an education, some 57 per cent were girls. This is the global pattern, and it is particularly pronounced in Western and Southern Asia where girls are still routinely denied schooling. Of those missing out, the vast majority are from the poorest sectors of society. However, the picture in cities differs from that in more rural settings. Nearly 50 per cent more rural children miss school than do city children.

Pastoralist and indigenous people often find language a barrier to sending their children to school, even where there is a school nearby to go to.

Millennium Development Goal 3 – To promote gender equality and empower women

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

The educational opportunities for girls, though still unequal, are improving. There have also been modest improvements in women's political representation worldwide, and in their access to the labour market, though global equality in the workplace is a very unlikely prospect within the MDG timeframe given entrenched cultural attitudes to women.

Target – Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

More girls than boys are still missing out on an education, but the disparity is getting smaller. The UN also uses indicators about women's participation in the worlds of work and politics to assess how work on equality for women is progressing.

Work must be intensified to get *all* children into school, especially those living in rural communities, and eliminate inequalities in education based on gender and ethnicity, and among linguistic and religious minorities. The target of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 has already been missed.

As of January 2009, women made up just 18 per cent of parliamentary representatives globally, up from 13 per cent in 1990. However, there is huge variation in progress worldwide. While Rwanda in East Africa is leading the way with 49 per cent of its representatives female – closely followed by Sweden and Costa Rica – only 19 countries have so far reached the 30 per cent target set by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. In the UK, women make up only 20 per cent of members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The National Assembly for Wales has done far better: 47 per cent of its representatives are women, and it has achieved this figure without the need to introduce a quota system.³ Even in some Arab states, where women have traditionally been excluded from political life, things are slowly starting to change. In 2006, women were allowed to stand for election for the first time in Kuwait



(two were elected); and in Bahrain, too, a woman was elected for the first time in history. There were 15 women serving as heads of state or government in March 2009, compared to nine in 2000 and 12 in 1995.

While more women are now gaining access to the labour market than ever before, the improvement between 1990 and 2005 was modest: the proportion of waged employees worldwide who are women rose from 36 per cent to 39 per cent. Again, the picture is different in different regions. In Northern Africa, only one in five paid employees is female; a proportion that has remained unchanged since 1990. In Southern Asia there has been a modest increase, but still only 18 per cent of paid workers are women, while in sub-Saharan Africa the figure has risen slightly to 32 per cent. Women continue to bear the brunt of unpaid household work and subsistence agricultural labour. It is hoped that women's increasing access to education should mean that in the future they will have more chances to participate in different forms of work – but the underlying cultural and religious attitudes towards women that result in them being treated unequally also need to be addressed. And it is highly unlikely

³ *Women in Parliament and Government* (2008), Richard Cracknell. House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/SG/01250.

that this type of fundamental change will be brought about before 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 4

To reduce child mortality

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Deaths of children under five declined steadily worldwide — to around 9 million in 2007, down from 12.6 million in 1990, despite population growth. Although child mortality rates remain highest in sub-Saharan Africa, recent survey data show remarkable improvements in key interventions that could yield major breakthroughs for children in that region in the years ahead. Among these interventions are the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets to reduce the toll of malaria — a major killer of children. As a result of 'second chance' immunizations, dramatic progress is also being made in the fight against measles.



Target – Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

There are few starker indicators of inequality around the world than child mortality (defined as the number of children who die before their fifth birthday). To put this in context, in Europe the level of deaths of children under 5 dropped from 27 per thousand live births to 17 per thousand between 1990 and 2005. In Southern Asia over the same time period child deaths dropped from 126 to 82 per thousand live births. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest child mortality: in 2005 166 children out of every thousand died before they reached five years old. This is a fairly insignificant improvement on the 185 deaths per thousand in 1990, and leaves the region nowhere near on target to meet the goal.

The UN states that these deaths (10.1 million globally in 2005 – equivalent to a sixth of the population of the UK) occur 'mostly from preventable causes'. But the reduction in the death rate has been seen mainly among children living in the richest 40 per cent of poor households, in urban areas and in households where mothers have had some education. In many countries where progress on this target is slow, AIDS is thought to be a major contributing factor (see MDG 6).

More access to simple vaccinations and basic healthcare has caused some of the overall drop in the child death rate (although in Southern Asia access to measles vaccinations and to basic health services has actually declined since 1990. Globally, levels of vaccination have grown rapidly since 2000. Increased access to healthcare services has

also given more children protection from malaria, worms and malnutrition.

However, the fact that healthcare facilities are available does not necessarily mean that they are used. Fees are often charged which are beyond the means of many poor people. In Georgia, for example, the introduction of fees for healthcare saw hospital admission rates fall by 66 per cent. When poor people have to pay for medicines, these can cost them as much as 50 to 80 per cent of their available income.

Making good-quality healthcare available free of charge to everyone is vital to meeting this MDG. To achieve this will require many developing countries to spend more from their national budgets on health provision, and all rich countries to provide more long-term, predictable aid to help strengthen developing world health systems.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, recent survey data show remarkable improvements in several key child-survival interventions that are expected to yield further declines in under-five mortality over the next few years. These include vitamin A supplementation, the use of insecticide-treated bed nets (to prevent malaria), exclusive breastfeeding and immunization. In addition, there has been wider coverage of critical HIV interventions in most sub-Saharan countries where HIV prevalence is high. This includes antiretroviral treatment for pregnant mothers who are HIV-positive, to prevent transmission of the virus to their babies.

⁴ *For All: Health and Education – What you need to know* (2008), Oxfam International

Millennium Development Goal 5

To improve maternal health

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Although there is a lack of up-to-date figures, this appears to be the most severely off-track of all MDGs. The risk of dying in childbirth or from complications of pregnancy is marked by obscene global inequality, with the lifetime risk of death from such causes over 200 times greater for sub-Saharan African women than for their European counterparts. An acute shortage of healthcare staff and poor availability of contraception are just two of the factors that converge to impede progress on this MDG in large parts of the developing world.



Target – Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate.

In sub-Saharan Africa a woman's lifetime risk of dying while giving birth or from complications of pregnancy is one in 16, compared with one in 3,800 in the developed world. In the developing world, one woman dies of pregnancy-related illness or in childbirth every minute of every day. A mother's death is of course a tragedy for her family, leaving children vulnerable and threatening the financial stability of the family. Maternal mortality is a problem of epic proportions. The biggest correlating factor between national deaths is the relative absence of appropriate healthcare before, during and after pregnancy. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia have both the highest maternal mortality rates and the lowest availability of skilled health attendants at birth. In developing countries, the levels of healthcare and advice available vary massively between rural and urban women, as well as between educated and uneducated women: in a survey of 57 developing countries between 1996 and 2005, 81 per cent of urban women and 84 per cent of women who had completed secondary education received skilled healthcare during childbirth, while for their rural and non-secondary educated counterparts the figures were 49 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. Preventing unplanned pregnancies alone could avert around one quarter of maternal deaths in developing

countries, including those from unsafe abortion. Some 64 million women use traditional methods of contraception, which have a high failure rate; and while use and availability of modern contraceptives is slowly increasing (up from 55 per cent in developing countries in 1990 to 64 per cent in 2005) rates remain extremely low in sub-Saharan Africa, at 21 per cent. Of course, cultural and religious factors greatly influence whether women are able to use contraception at all, and many husbands demand that their wives do not. Lack of health education and of money to pay for contraception and healthcare are other contributory factors to maternal mortality, along with a lack of trained nurses and doctors and adequately equipped clinics. The world is short of an estimated 4.25 million healthcare workers today. Young women are at additional risk of health complications in pregnancy. In regions where the adolescent birth rate was high in 1990 (sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean) there has been no significant decrease in the numbers of young women and girls giving birth. Since the statistics suggest that adequate healthcare greatly reduces the rate of maternal deaths, an urgent focus on making adequate free healthcare more widely available is needed if the world is to progress towards this goal.

Millennium Development Goal 6

To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

The global level of HIV infection has continued to rise in recent years, and the annual death rate has also increased significantly since 2001. Access to antiretroviral treatment remains very patchy, with barely a quarter of those who would benefit receiving it worldwide, though some developing regions (such as Latin America) are managing much better than others (such as Southern Asia). Worldwide action on malaria, too, falls far short of what is needed, in terms both of funding and of measures such as the use of bed nets to protect children from infection. The prospects for achievement of this MDG remain poor, with devastating social and economic implications for the countries most affected.



Target – To have halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

Globally, HIV infection has begun to level off, but it continues to rise in sub-Saharan Africa, where 59 per cent of those infected are women. More than 39.5 million people were living with HIV worldwide in 2006, and the number of AIDS-related deaths was 2.9 million. Across developing countries as a whole, the HIV infection rate is less than one per cent of the population, while across sub-Saharan Africa it averages six per cent (2006 figure), as it has done since around 2000. In 2006, 4.3 million people contracted the virus across the region. Prevention efforts – improving access to education and contraception, and removing the social stigma of talking about HIV and AIDS – need to be redoubled if this target is to be met. Moreover, treatment, though becoming more widely available, is still only accessed by 28 per cent of the people who would benefit, and access varies greatly in different regions of the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 72 per cent of people with HIV receive life-saving anti-retroviral drugs, while in Southern Asia the figure is just nine per cent. HIV and AIDS have devastating consequences for social structures and the family. For example, it is estimated that 15.2 million children worldwide lost one or both parents to AIDS in 2005, 80 per cent of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

Target – To have halted and begun to reverse the spread of malaria and other major diseases by 2015.

Insecticide-treated bed nets are one of the major strategies for preventing the mosquito bites that spread malaria, and increased funding has meant that more nets are now being used than in 1990. Yet the UN reports that only a few malaria-affected countries are close to the target aimed at for 2005 of 60 per cent of children sleeping under bed nets, and a survey of 30 African countries between 2000 and 2006 showed that only five per cent of children under five had a bed net. While international funding for malaria treatment has actually risen tenfold in the past decade, the amount available in 2004 was still only \$600 million – far short of what is needed to meet the target. Routine immunization for measles continues to expand worldwide. Coverage has increased steadily since 2000, reaching 82 per cent of the world's children in 2007, largely due to immunization campaigns and more concentrated efforts in countries with hard-to-reach areas. During this period, measles deaths dropped by an astonishing 74 per cent, with the largest reduction in sub-Saharan Africa. Globally, there were an estimated 197,000 measles-related deaths in 2007, down from 750,000 in 2000. Measles vaccine, at less than \$1 per child, is one of the most cost-effective health initiatives currently available. Measles immunization campaigns have the

added benefit of being able to deliver other health services at the same time, including the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and de-worming medicines.

Millennium Development Goal 7

To ensure environmental sustainability

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

At the global level, the world came together to achieve a 97 per cent reduction in the consumption of substances that deplete the Earth's protective ozone layer, setting a new precedent for international cooperation. The consequences of our irresponsible lifestyles are felt disproportionately by those in developing countries.

Access to sanitation, at least, has increased by half across the developing world as a whole (though a similar increase is still needed to meet the MDG target), but the target for provision of safe drinking water looks likely to be missed by a wide margin.



Target – Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

This target relates to the importance of halting deforestation and maintaining biodiversity (the range of species of plant and animal life on the planet). The UN is also monitoring greenhouse gas emissions as part of its reporting on the progress of this target. On almost every indicator, far from there being progress, things are actually getting worse.

Although the area of land and marine environments with 'protected' status has grown to about the size of China, the proportion of species threatened with extinction continues to increase. The world's fisheries are still at risk of collapse, with only 25 per cent considered sustainable, down from 40 per cent in 1975.

The proportion of land covered by forests (which 'capture' carbon dioxide) fell from 31 per cent to 30 per cent globally between 1990 and 2005; and, worryingly, rates of deforestation in biologically diverse regions are increasing the most rapidly. In addition to depleting biodiversity, deforestation causes between 18 and 25 per cent of human-related greenhouse gas emissions, as cutting down trees and disturbing forests releases about two billion tonnes of carbon per year into the atmosphere.⁵

Global carbon dioxide emissions increased between 1990 and 2004, from 9.7 billion tonnes to 12.5 billion tonnes emitted by developed regions, and from 6.9 billion to 12.4 billion tonnes by developing ones. Average global temperatures have risen 0.5°C since 1970.

However, developing countries produce far fewer greenhouse gases per head of population than developed ones: in 2004, developed countries emitted about 12 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person, while in sub-Saharan Africa just a tenth of this amount was emitted per person. Yet the burden of climate change looks set to fall disproportionately on the developing regions; for example, climate models predict less rainfall in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, which will have a devastating impact on food availability and crop yields.

Climate change is a hugely urgent challenge that is already making poor people's lives harder, leaving them more vulnerable to 'natural' disasters (perhaps themselves triggered by global warming), and less able to access clean water or to rely on predictable weather patterns.

World leaders need drastically to step up their efforts to shift to an economy less reliant on fossil fuels, discourage deforestation and in the meantime protect poorer countries from the worst effects of climate change.

Despite economic and other pressures, many developing countries have managed to protect vast stretches of both land and water. In 2007, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo established one of the largest protected tropical rainforests in the world. In Indonesia, seven new marine protected areas, covering a total of 9,000 square kilometres and containing 45 per cent of the region's shallow water ecosystems, were recently established.

Reducing deforestation and forest degradation helps mitigate climate change. Trees and plants absorb and store carbon, thus contributing to lower levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. But when trees are cut down or burned, carbon dioxide is released into the air. Forestry accounted for 17.4 per cent of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in 2004 (in terms of CO₂ equivalents), primarily due to high levels of deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries.

Action is being taken to limit the impact of fishing and other human activities on exploited fish populations. Nevertheless, the percentage of depleted, fully exploited or overexploited and recovering fish species has increased from 70 per cent in 1995 to 80 per cent in 2006. To make matters worse, climate change is gradually altering marine and fresh water ecosystems. Such changes are affecting the seasonality of certain biological processes, thus disrupting marine and freshwater food webs. This, in turn, has unpredictable consequences for fish stocks. The communities that are dependent on fisheries are also vulnerable to climate change, the extent to which depends on their adaptive capacity and on the type of changes that occur at the local level. Given the uncertainty of the impact of climate change on resources and ecosystems, a higher level of precaution is required in managing fishery resources.

Target – By 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Clean water and basic sanitation are vital to healthy living, yet this target is a very long way off being met. Indeed, some 1.6 billion people would need to gain better access to sanitation and safe drinking water between now and 2015 in order for it to be met: and on current progress the world is likely to miss the target by 600 million people. The drinking of dirty water and a lack of access to hygienic toilets are thought to cause 88 per cent of deaths of children under five from diarrhoeal diseases. In developing regions as a whole, access to better sanitation improved from 33 per cent of the population in 1990 to 50 per cent in 2004. As usual, however, some regions are doing better than others.



Householders collecting water from a tapstand in town of Shinyanga, Tanzania. The increase in the supply of clean water has reduced both the cost of water and the incidence of cholera and other water-borne diseases

Southern Asia, Eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are all unlikely to get anywhere near the target – in fact, if we look at the numbers of people (rather than the proportion of the population) with access to clean water and sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa, more people lacked access in 2004 (440 million) than in 1990 (335 million).

Improving basic services – for example providing cheap clean water and sewage removal – must now be a priority for international aid and for developing countries' development plans.

Target – By 2020, achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Half the world's population lives in cities and towns, and one-third of that urban population – one in six people worldwide – lives in slums with inadequate housing and poor sanitation, excluded from access to many basic services. It is noteworthy that the above target is to be met by 2020, five years later than the others: there are simply so many people living in slums that world leaders allowed themselves a little longer to reach it – although, even with this extra time, 'significant improvement' is hardly as clear and binding a measure as many of the other MDG targets. In fact, the number of people living in slums seems to be increasing: while the official UN figures show a drop in slum dwelling in developing regions from 47 per cent of the urban population in 1990 to 37 per cent in 2005, the UN notes that this is mostly due to a change in the

definition of slum dwelling, rather than to any real improvement. Once again, the picture varies in different parts of the world, and once again sub-Saharan Africa is faring worst. Some 63 per cent of urban dwellers there live in slums, compared with 43 per cent in Southern Asia and just 15 per cent in Northern Africa. The figures for other developing regions range between 24 and 37 per cent.

The forces that continue to drive poor women, men and families to cities are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. Land and water shortages and changing weather patterns – as well as people's changing attitudes to their life prospects as rural farmers or labourers, in part because of increased access to education – will all mean more poor people moving to cities. This MDG target looks certain to be missed, but massive investment in housing and infrastructure must continue to be a priority: work towards many of the other targets, particularly those for access to healthcare and clean water, is intimately linked with the multiple problems of slum dwelling.

Last, but by no means least, greater priority must be given to preserving our natural resource base, on which we all depend. We have not acted forcefully enough — or in a unified way — to combat climate change; our fisheries are imperilled; our forests, especially old-growth forests, are receding; and water scarcity has become a reality in a number of arid regions.

SHA ZUKANG
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs
UN MDG Report 2009

Millennium Development Goal 8

To build a global partnership for development

PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

This overarching MDG is central to the achievement of the other goals. Unfortunately, there are only sporadic indications that the developed world is rising to this challenge. While some trade barriers have been removed to the benefit of poorer countries, others have not, and the promised global agreement on this issue has not materialised. Neither has most of the financial aid that rich countries have been pledging to the developing world. There has been some progress towards the cancellation of developing world debt; but the obstructiveness of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF has limited the impact of this process. Small wonder that progress on the other seven MDGs has been so poor.



Target – Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and nondiscriminatory.

There has still been no overall agreement on measures to ensure fairer access to global markets for the least developed countries, despite agreements to do this by the end of 2004. Developed countries agreed to get rid of import duties and quotas on most goods from the least developed countries in 2005. Trade barriers have come down on some goods from some poor countries, but there is more still to be done. The percentage of goods from the least developed countries that are being allowed into developed countries without the exporting countries paying import duties has stalled at just under 80 per cent – which is roughly where it stood in 1996, having fallen and risen again in the intervening years. Rich countries continue to protect their interests at the expense of less powerful poorer countries.

Target – Provide more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.

In 1970 rich countries promised to give 0.7 per cent of their income as foreign aid. Thirty-eight years later the figure is still only 0.28 per cent and, worse still, this is only just over half of the 0.5 per cent that these countries were giving on average in 1962! Only five countries have so far met the 0.7 per cent pledge, and

overall aid levels have actually been falling, not rising, over the last two years.

At the 2005 Gleneagles G8 summit, developed countries pledged to give an additional \$50 billion more in aid by 2010. However, they are a long way from meeting this commitment. This year, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development completed a comprehensive survey of what donors are actually planning, which confirms this gap: 'Of the promised increases amounting to US\$50 billion in total ODA [Overseas Development Aid] by 2010, up to some US\$30 billion remains to be programmed if members' commitments are to be realised.' Rich countries, then, are failing to live up to their commitments. It is no wonder that hardly any of the MDG targets are on track to be met when the money pledged to help deliver them has yet to materialise. It is therefore imperative that all rich countries put in place national timetables for the delivery of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income as aid by 2015, at the very latest.

Target – Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems.

Unpayable and illegitimate debt is a major obstacle to the attainment of the MDGs. Considerable progress has been made on debt relief, but we still have a long way to go. Historically, rich countries, in response to pressure from global civil society, agreed that some of the world's poorest and most indebted countries were entitled to have their debts to the World Bank, The

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The African Development Bank fully cancelled. Forty-one countries were identified as eligible for this debt cancellation and were required to meet certain criteria in order to benefit. To date, 23 countries have now had the majority of their debts cancelled. Those that have benefited include Ghana, which has used debt cancellation to make education free, and Malawi, which is using the proceeds to train 4,000 additional teachers each year. Debt cancellation has led to a doubling of social spending in many countries – the initiative clearly works. Sadly, the process of debt cancellation has now slowed down. Unjustifiable conditions are still a part of the problem. Earlier this year Burundi's debt cancellation was delayed for as much as a year because it failed to meet a World Bank and IMF condition that it should privatise part of its coffee industry. Many more poor countries are not even on the list.

Bangladesh, where food price increases have led to riots, has not had any debt cancellation: it still pays \$2 million a day to rich countries. In a recent report,⁵ the Jubilee Debt Campaign calculated that \$400 billion of debt needs to be cancelled simply to enable poor countries to meet their basic needs. So far around \$88 billion has been cancelled.

A crucial aspect of the developing-world debt issue is that billions of dollars of poor countries' debts are illegitimate, arising from loans given to corrupt and oppressive regimes, for useless projects or on unfair terms. Rich countries need to audit the debts they are owed and cancel those which have arisen from irresponsible lending decisions of this kind.

⁵ *Unfinished Business: ten years of dropping the debt* (2008), Jubilee Debt

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Oxfam is committed to providing the best possible support to schools and youth groups and we wish to assess the impact of our work with young people.

Please use the slip below to tell us about your MDG lessons and projects or e-mail us at education@oxfam.org.uk

.....✂.....

Name of Teacher:

Age of pupils:

Name & Address of School:

Description of MDG learning:

Postcode:

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Oxfam Youth & Schools Team

Number of pupils taught about the MDGs:

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