



Progress Toward Achievement of the MDGs

One World One Hope

“The Millennium Development Goals is Common Vision and Global Commitments”

“Today, more than ever, the commitment to building the global partnership embodied in the Millennium Declaration must guide our collective actions”

Global Overview on MDGs

The Millennium Declaration set 2015 as the target date for achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which established quantitative benchmarks to halve extreme poverty in all its forms. As the date approaches, less than six years away, the world finds itself mired in an economic crisis that is unprecedented in its severity and global dimensions.

As a result of the food and financial crises, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed. Poverty will decline in 2009, but the World Bank estimates that about 55 million more people will live on less than \$1.25 a day (in 2005 purchasing power parity terms) in developing countries this year than expected pre-crisis.

MDG1 for poverty reduction remains achievable at the global level, but the crisis adds new risks. Low-income countries overall are likely to fall short of the target

The progress towards the goals is now threatened by sluggish - or even negative - economic growth, diminished resources, fewer trade opportunities for the developing countries, and possible reductions in aid flows from donor nations. At the same time, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, with a potentially devastating impact on countries rich and poor.

According to the progress report on MDGs of 2009 presents an annual assessment of progress towards the MDGs. Although data are not yet available to reveal the full impact of the recent economic downturn, they point to areas where progress towards the eight goals has slowed or reversed. Major advances in the fight against extreme poverty from 1990 to 2005, for example, are likely to have stalled. During that period, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion. In 2009, an estimated 55 million to 90 million more people will be living in extreme poverty than anticipated before the crisis.

Likewise, the encouraging trend in the eradication of hunger since the early 1990s was reversed in 2008, largely due to higher food prices. The prevalence of hunger in the developing regions is now on the rise, from 16 per cent in 2006 to 17 per cent in 2008. A decrease in international food prices in the second half of 2008 has failed to translate into more affordable food for most people around the world. Not surprisingly, children bear the brunt of the burden. More than one quarter of children in developing regions are underweight for their age, stunting their prospects for survival, growth and long - term development. Meager progress on child nutrition from 1990 to 2007 is insufficient to meet the 2015 target, and will likely be eroded by higher food prices and economic turmoil.

These ongoing crises may also hold back progress towards gender equality, by creating new hurdles to women's employment. The International Labour Organization estimates that global and 6.5 to 7.4 per cent for women, many of whom remain trapped in insecure - often unpaid - jobs.

Other fallout from the global financial situation may be compromised funding for programmes to improve maternal health, the goal towards which there has been least progress so far. Since the mid-1990s, most developing countries have experienced a major reduction in donor funding for family planning on a per woman basis, despite the undeniable contribution of such programmes to maternal and child health.

The ability of countries to mobilize domestic resources for development is also in jeopardy. Export revenues of developing countries fell in the last quarter of 2008, with the collapse of commodity prices and exports more generally. Debt service to exports ratios of developing countries are likely to deteriorate further, especially for those countries that enjoyed increased export revenues for the last several years.

Economic necessity will doubtless continue to exert pressure on an already fragile global environment, where deforestation and the extinction of species proceed at alarming rates, and a global water crisis looms.

At the Gleneagles summit of the Group of Eight in 2005, and at the UN World Summit later that year, donors committed to increasing their aid. With most OECD economies in recession, even fulfillment of those commitments, which were expressed as a percentage of donors' national income, would imply a diminished amount of aid. For many developing countries, lower levels of aid would not only impede further progress, but could reverse some of the gains already made.

But the story is not all bleak. The report also portrays the remarkable advances that many countries and regions had made before the economic landscape changed so radically in 2008:

- 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.
- Major accomplishments were also made in education. 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Where accelerated progress is needed

These accomplishments demonstrate that the goals are within reach at the global level, and even in very poor countries. The MDGs must continue to provide a focus for our efforts, and the vision of a world without poverty must not be lost, even in these difficult times:

- Efforts to provide productive and decent employment for all, including women and young people, must be revitalized. The share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased only marginally over the years. And in Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, employment opportunities for women remain extremely low.

- The war against hunger must be embraced with renewed vigour, especially in the interests of our youngest citizens. In the countries hardest hit by the recent rise in food prices, we must implement measures to increase the availability of food, and strengthen social policies that address the negative impact on the poor.
- 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.
- Greater political will must be mustered to reduce maternal mortality, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, where negligible progress has been made so far.
- Rapid acceleration of progress is needed to bring improved sanitation to the 1.4 billion people who were doing without in 2006, with all its attendant consequences for the health of communities and the local environment. At the present rate of progress, the 2015 sanitation target will be missed.
- Efforts to improve the living conditions of the urban poor must pick up speed and extend even further. Although every region except one has made progress in this area, slum improvements are barely keeping pace with the rapid growth of developing country cities.
- 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 imperiled; our forests, especially old-growth forests, are receding; and water scarcity has become a reality in a number of arid regions.

Learning from past experience, and looking ahead

Advances are most evident where targeted interventions have had an immediate effect, and where increased funding has translated into an expansion of programmes to deliver services and tools directly to those in need. This can be seen in the fight against malaria, in the dramatic reduction in measles deaths, and in the coverage of antiretroviral treatment for HIV and AIDS, which increased tenfold over a five-year time span. In contrast, progress has been more modest when it requires structural changes and strong political commitment to guarantee sufficient and sustained funding over a longer period of time. This is likely the reason behind the poor performance of most countries in reducing maternal mortality and increasing access of the rural poor to improved sanitation facilities.

The world produces enough food to provide every man, woman, and child with enough to eat. Yet, one million people suffer from chronic hunger. Why does hunger persist? Often, food does not reach those who need it most. This situation is sometimes referred to as “food insecurity.” Food insecurity can also be caused or exacerbated by “shocks” or circumstances that hinder normal access to food. These include:

- Poverty
- Conflict
- Natural disasters
- Poor Government

Poverty and hunger are intimately intertwined. The poor are often hungry, and the hungry are almost always poor. Today, an estimated 1.2 billion people survive on less than US\$1 per day; three-fourths of them live in rural areas. The poor do not have enough money to buy sufficient food for themselves and their families. Farmers sometimes can't afford seed for their crops. The poor become hungry, and the hungry can be too weak to work. The result is a vicious cycle of poverty and hunger that is hard to break and increasingly difficult to escape.

Conflict has been a cause of hunger throughout human history. Wars displace millions of people from their homes, resulting in some of the world's worst hunger emergencies. In war, food is used as a weapon. Soldiers starve opponents into submission by seizing or destroying food or livestock or destroying local markets. Fields and wells are often mined or contaminated, forcing farmers to abandon their land. This sets agricultural development back years and prevents food cultivation for even local consumption. Over 35 percent of food emergencies in the past decade were caused by conflict and economic problems.

Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and drought can drive people from their homes, harm agricultural production, destroy infrastructure and resources, and interrupt markets, all of which make it more difficult to get access to food. Natural disasters are affecting more and more people - almost 1 in 10 of the world's population - were affected by natural disasters. Disproportionately, those affected tend to be the poor, who often live in areas more susceptible to environmental destruction and who are already at a heightened risk of being hungry.

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.

Impact on Poverty Reduction and other MDGs

The sharp slowdown in growth can seriously set back progress on poverty reduction and other MDGs. Food price increases between 2005 and 2008 pushed around 200 million more people into extreme poverty, and about half of them will remain trapped in poverty in 2009 even as food prices recede from their peaks. While food prices have fallen since mid-2008, they remain high by historical standards, and the food crisis is by no means over. The slowdown in growth resulting from the financial crisis will add to the poverty impact of high food prices.

The International Labour Organization projects that some 30 million more people around the world may be unemployed in 2009, of whom 23 million could be in developing countries. A worse-case scenario envisages as many as 50 million more people becoming unemployed in 2009. Estimates of the poverty impact of the growth slowdown range from 55 million to 90 million more extreme poor in 2009 than expected before the crisis. These numbers will rise if the crisis deepens and growth in developing countries falters further. In Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which have high poverty rates, the growth slowdown essentially eliminates the pre-crisis prospect of continued reductions in the poverty count in 2009. Indeed, the poverty count is likely to rise in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2009, with the more fragile and low growth economies especially at risk. While poverty rates on average are much lower in Europe and Central Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, these regions could also see an increase in the number of the poor in 2009. Overall, on current growth projections, more than one-half of extreme poverty in the developing world is still expected to decline, but at a slower pace than envisaged before the crisis because of the slowdown in economic growth. The food crisis, and now the global financial crisis, are reversing past gains in fighting hunger and malnutrition. Before the onset of the food crisis in 2007, there were about 850 million chronically hungry people in the developing world. This number rose to 960 million people in 2008 and is expected to climb past 1 billion in 2009, breaking the declining trend in the proportion of hungry people in the developing world and seriously jeopardizing the goal of halving this proportion by 2015. These trends call for maintaining the momentum of recent efforts to boost agricultural investment and productivity.

The goal of gender parity in primary and secondary education has seen relatively good progress and is expected to be achieved at the global level. However, prospects for gender parity in tertiary education and other targets that empower women such as increased participation of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector - are less promising. The gender goals face added risks as evidence from past crises shows that women are in general more vulnerable to impact - heightening the need for attention to the

gender aspects in policy responses. Of greatest concern are the human development goals. Based on current trends, most human development goals are unlikely to be met at the global level. Despite substantial improvements in primary school enrolment and completion rates, the world is likely to miss the goal of universal primary school completion, although it could come close. Prospects are gravest in health. Large shortfalls are likely in reducing child and maternal mortality. There have been some encouraging gains in halting and beginning to reverse the spread of major communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, but progress must be accelerated if the MDG targets are to be met. Large shortfalls are also likely in improving access to basic all developing countries could experience a rise in the number of extreme poor in 2009; this proportion is likely to be still higher among low- income countries and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa - two-thirds and three-quarters, respectively. Experience suggests that growth collapses are costly for human development outcomes, which tend to deteriorate more quickly during growth decelerations than they improve during growth accelerations. Countries that suffered economic contractions of 10 percent or more between 1980 and 2004 experienced more than 1 million additional infant deaths. It is estimated that the sharply slower economic growth resulting from the current financial crisis may cause as many as 200,000 to 400,000 more infant deaths per year on average between 2009 and the MDG target year of 2015, which translates into 1.4 million to 2.8 million additional infant deaths during the period. In poor countries, education outcomes, such as school enrolment, also tend to deteriorate during economic crises - especially for girls.

The long- run consequences of the crisis for human development outcomes may be more severe than those observed in the short run. For example, the decline in health status among children who suffer from reduced (or inferior) food consumption can be irreversible, retarding growth as well as cognitive and learning abilities. Estimates suggest that the food crisis has already caused the number of people suffering permanent damage from malnutrition to rise by 44 million.

The financial crisis will exacerbate this impact as poor households respond to decreases in income by further cutting the quantity and quality of food consumption. The overall outlook for the MDGs, already a cause for serious concern, has become still more worrisome. Strong economic growth in developing countries in the past decade had put the MDG for poverty reduction within reach at the global level, but the triple punch of the food, fuel, and financial crises creates new risks. In the medium term, the proportion of people in developing countries.

According to the Global Monitoring Report 2009: A Development Emergency

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger concerned the WFWO

Targets:

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger Projections based on the new 2005 purchasing power parity (PPP) poverty data reveal that the share of people living on less than \$1.25 a day will fall from 41.7 percent in 1990 to 15.1 percent in 2015. The greatest poverty reduction has occurred in East Asia and the Pacific and is largely attributable to China. If China were excluded from the global calculation, the drop in poverty would be less drastic, from 35.2 percent in 1990 to 18.2 percent in 2015. East Asia and the Pacific exceeded its target; Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia are projected to be on target.

Extreme poverty is defined as the proportion of individuals in developing countries who live on less than \$1.25 a day (based on purchasing power parity 2005 constant prices). Poverty estimates are computed based on data covering 96 percent of developing countries â€™ population. MDG I Figure 1 shows that Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind, and based on current projections, this region will reduce poverty by only 20 percent between 1990 and 2015.

Of the 84 countries with available data (out of 144), 45 have already achieved or are on track to meet the poverty reduction target, but 40 are either off track or seriously off track. Four of 8 countries in East Asia and the Pacific, and 4 of 5 countries in South Asia with available data are not on track. Fifteen of 21 countries in Europe and Central Asia have achieved or are on track to achieve the target. Ten of the 12 fragile states with available data are not on track, so the prospect is bleak for fragile states to meet MDG 1. Fragile states are low-income countries or territories with no Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) score or a CPIA score of 3.2 or less.

Poverty data based on the new PPP estimates reveal that for all regions, the richest population quintile has a 40 percent or larger share in national consumption, which is far greater than the 2 to 9 percent consumed by the poorest quintile. Sub-Saharan Africa and the fragile states have the greatest disparity between the richest and poorest quintiles.

The prevalence of child malnutrition is measured by the percentage of children under the age of five whose weight-to-age ratio is more than two standard deviations below the international median. Standards of child growth were revised in 2006, and estimates of child malnutrition that conform to the new standard are being computed. The current assessment of progress toward MDGs achievement is based on child malnutrition estimates conforming to old child growth standards. According to this assessment, more than half of the countries with available data are not on track to achieve the target by 2015.

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The world must act decisively to support low-income countries that cannot respond to the effects of the crisis without burdening their poorest people. This underscores the urgency of increasing official development aid. [Click here to read the report on MDGs.](#)

The WFWO and its financial partners will continue contribute and to raise public awareness on to the implementation of the Eighth MDGs objectives.

Resources: UN/WB/UNDP



World For World Organization (WFWO)
Via Andrea Millevoi, n°35, Rome - 00178 (Italy)
Tel: + 39 0651530985 - Fax: +39 0651960227
E-mail: info@worldforworld.org - Website: www.worldforworld.org