

The Millennium Development Goals Report



UNITED NATIONS

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Northern Africa leads in tackling child health and other Millennium Development Goals

BUT LITTLE PROGRESS IS NOTED ON GENDER EQUALITY - UN

CAIRO, 7 JULY 2011 — Northern Africa continues to lead the world in terms of progress on many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), according to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2011*, a UN report issued today.

Northern Africa is the region that recorded the greatest success in reducing child mortality between 1990 and 2009. The proportion of children who died before they reached the age of five dropped by 68 per cent, making Northern Africa the only region to have already met the child mortality target. This success is partly due to widespread coverage of immunization against measles – 94 per cent of children 12-23 months old received at least one dose of measles vaccine in 2009 – a drop from 10 per cent to 6 per cent in the proportion of children under age five who were underweight between 1990 and 2009, and remarkable progress in expanding access to safe water and sanitation. Northern Africa is the only region that has already surpassed the MDG sanitation target, increasing coverage from 72 per cent in 1990 to 86 per cent in 2008.

Similarly, Northern Africa is among the regions that have made the greatest strides in reducing maternal mortality. Between 1990 and 2008, its maternal mortality ratio decreased from 230 maternal deaths to 92 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, largely owing to increases in skilled attendance at birth (from 45 per cent of deliveries in 1990 to 81 per cent in 2009) and contraceptive use among women of reproductive age who are married or in a union (from 44 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 2008).

Northern Africa has also made great progress in expanding access to improved sanitation. With 89 per cent of its population using a toilet or latrine in 2009, Northern Africa is the only developing region that has already surpassed that MDG target.

The region also leads the way in expanding literacy among youth, with its youth literacy rate increasing from 68 per cent to 87 per cent between 1990 and 2009. It has the third best record for improvement in primary school enrolment, with an increase in the net enrolment ratio from 86 per cent to 94 per cent between 1999 and 2009.

In terms of poverty reduction, according to the latest available data, Northern Africa is well on track to reach the target of halving extreme poverty by 2015. The proportion of people in the region living on less than \$1.25 a day – the international poverty line defined by the World Bank – decreased from 5 per cent to 3 per cent between 1990 and 2005.

The wave of popular protests and uprisings across the Middle East and Northern Africa since January 2011 has led to a temporary stagnation of the economies of the region. According to UN experts, the economies of non-oil producing countries in Northern Africa have been particularly affected by the “Arab Spring,” and the consequences may slow down some of the development progress in the region over the next few years, especially if no aid is given to the hardest-hit countries, such as Egypt.

LITTLE PROGRESS ON EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

The MDG Report notes little progress on gender equality. While gender parity has been reached in secondary and tertiary education, and almost in primary education (with 95 girls enrolled per 100 boys in 2009), gender equality remains a distant target with regard to paid work and participation in politics.

In terms of participation of women in paid work, the situation has remained practically at the same very low level since 1990: fewer than one in five paid jobs outside the agriculture sector was held by women in 2009. And despite major progress, women's representation in national parliaments was still very minimal, at 12 per cent, by end-January 2011.

On environmental sustainability, Northern Africa has exceeded the limits for sustainable water resources. It had already withdrawn 92 per cent of its internal renewable water resources by around 2005, the report notes.

The Millennium Development Goals Report, an annual assessment of regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 25 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 and press materials, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

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