

The Millennium Development Goals Report



UNITED NATIONS

2011

Major progress towards Millennium Development Goals, but the most vulnerable are left behind, UN report says

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES WORLD LEADERS TO STEP UP EFFORTS TO MEET THE GOALS

GENEVA, 7 JULY 2011 – Significant strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been made, yet reaching all the goals by the 2015 deadline remains challenging because the world's poorest are being left behind, a UN report says.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011, launched today by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, says there is reason to celebrate, as major successes have been made since world leaders in the year 2000 established the Goals to reduce extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease.

“Already the MDGs have helped lift millions of people out of poverty, save countless children’s lives and ensure that they attend school,” Mr. Ban said. “They have reduced maternal deaths, expanded opportunities for women, increased access to clean water, and freed many people from deadly and debilitating disease. At the same time, the report shows that we still have a long way to go in empowering women and girls, promoting sustainable development, and protecting the most vulnerable from the devastating effects of multiple crises, be they conflicts, natural disasters or volatility in prices for food and energy.”

The MDG Report 2011 highlights development successes, and says many are due in part to continued economic growth in some developing countries and targeted efforts in critical MDG areas, such as health. Increased funding from many sources, it says, has expanded key programmes, such as treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS.

“Achieving the goals will require equitable and inclusive economic growth — growth that reaches everyone and that will enable all people, especially the poor and marginalized, to benefit from economic opportunities,” the Secretary-General said. “Between now and 2015, we must make sure that promises made become promises kept. World leaders must show not only that they care, but that they have the courage and conviction to act.”

Moving onto a more sustainable path is essential to achieving the MDGs, Mr. Ban said. Ecosystems must be protected to support continued growth and natural environments. The June 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, to take place in Rio de Janeiro and often referred to as Rio+20, offers a major opportunity for new progress.

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS CITED

- The world as a whole is still on track to reach the poverty-reduction target, and by 2015, the global poverty rate should fall below 15 per cent – well under the 23 per cent target – despite setbacks from recent economic, food and energy crises.
- Some of the poorest countries have made the greatest strides in education. For example, Burundi, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and Tanzania have achieved or are nearing the goal of universal primary education.
- The number of deaths of children under the age of five declined from 12.4 million in 1990 to 8.1 million in 2009, which means nearly 12,000 fewer children die each day.

- Increased funding and intensive control efforts have cut deaths from malaria by 20 per cent worldwide – from nearly 985,000 in 2000 to 781,000 in 2009.
- New HIV infections have declined steadily. In 2009, some 2.6 million people were newly infected with HIV – a 21 per cent drop since 1997, when new infections peaked.
- The number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy for HIV or AIDS increased 13-fold from 2004 to 2009, thanks to increased funding and expanded programmes.
- An estimated 1.1 billion people in urban areas and 723 million people in rural areas gained access to an improved drinking water source over the period 1990-2008.

NOT REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Progress, however, has been uneven, and there are still too many people being left behind, the report notes. Despite major improvements, large gaps remain between and within countries, and efforts need to be intensified.

“Progress tends to bypass those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are otherwise disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability or ethnicity,” Mr. Ban said. “And disparities between urban and rural areas remain daunting.”

The report shows that the poorest children have made the slowest progress in terms of improved nutrition and survival. In 2009, nearly a quarter of children in the developing world were underweight, with the poorest children most affected. Children from the poorest households in the developing world have more than twice the risk of dying before their fifth birthday as children in the richest households.

Being poor, female or living in a conflict zone increases the probability that a child will be out of school, the report says. Worldwide, among children of primary school age not enrolled in school, 42 per cent – 28 million – live in poor countries affected by conflict.

While stressing that achieving the MDGs largely depends on ensuring women’s empowerment and equal opportunities for women and men, girls and boys, the report also shows that achieving this goal remains a long way off. The report finds that opportunities for full and productive employment remain particularly slim for women. Following significant job losses in 2008-2009, the growth in employment that occurred during the economic recovery in 2010, especially in the developing world, was lower for women than for men.

Advances in sanitation, the report says, often bypass the poor and those living in rural areas. More than 2.6 billion people still lack access to toilets or other forms of improved sanitation. And where progress has occurred, it has largely skipped the poor. In Southern Asia, for instance, sanitation coverage for the poorest 40 per cent of households has hardly increased between 1995 and 2008.

First agreed at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, the eight MDGs set worldwide objectives for reducing extreme poverty and hunger, improving health and education, empowering women and ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015. At the UN MDG Summit in September 2010, world leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Goals and called for intensified collective action and the expansion of successful approaches; a Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health was launched and garnered over \$40 billion in commitments.

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, press materials and an inter-agency media contact list, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

MEDIA CONTACTS

In Geneva | UN Information Service, Palais des Nations, C-302
Tel. +41 22 9172302 or +41 22 9172325; e-mail fbernard@unog.ch or abeauclair@unog.ch

In New York | UN Department of Public Information
Wynne Boelt, Tel. +1 212 963 8264; e-mail boelt@un.org
Newton Kanhema, Tel. +1 212 963 5602; e-mail kanhema@un.org