

# The Millennium Development Goals Report



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## Northern Africa nears universal access to primary education, continues making gains on Millennium Development Goals

CHALLENGES PERSIST WITH WOMEN STRUGGLING TO ENTER WORKFORCE, SAYS UN REPORT

CAIRO, 7 JULY 2014 – Northern Africa has achieved near universal access to primary education and has made significant strides increasing its literacy rate. The region has also successfully halved extreme poverty rates, reduced the proportion of undernourished children and improved access to sanitation, according to *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*, launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York.

The report finds that Northern Africa has made impressive progress in expanding access to primary education as well as secondary and tertiary education, with higher enrolment rate for both boys and girls since 1990.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with many sub-targets, were agreed by all countries as an outgrowth of the UN Millennium Summit in the year 2000, with a target date of 2015.

Northern Africa, which had a primary education enrolment rate of 80 per cent in 1990, reached a 99 per cent enrolment rate in 2012. Between 2000 and 2011, more than nine out of ten pupils in the region who started primary school completed the last grade.

Youth literacy rates also increased greatly between 1990 and 2011, from 67 to 89 per cent. The region is also moving closer to the point where male and female literacy rates are equal because the rate at which young women learn to read is growing at a faster pace than that of young men. The female literacy rate rose 29 percentage points from 1990 to 2011, compared to 16 percentage points for young men over the same period.

Progress has also been made in improving gender parity in access to secondary and tertiary education. In 1990, only 77 girls were enrolled in secondary school for every 100 boys. In 2012, there were 99 girls enrolled for every 100 boys – and more girls than boys were enrolled in tertiary education institutions.

In addition, women are slowly increasing participation in their country's political processes. The proportion of women who held seats in parliament increased from three per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2014. One of the highest electoral gains for women in 2012 was seen in Algeria. With 32 per cent women members of parliament, Algeria is the first and only Arab country to have surpassed the 30 per cent mark.

Despite this progress, the gender gap in employment is acute in Northern Africa. Women's access to paid employment has not improved in the past two decades, with women holding less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. Access to paid employment remains a distant target for women in the region.

## ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION SHOWS SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

Northern Africa is very close to meeting the target of halving the proportion of the population without access to safe drinking water, and has already met the target of halving the proportion of the population without improved sanitation.

The proportion of people using an improved water source increased from 87 per cent to 92 per cent between 1990 and 2012, and the proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility increased from 72 per cent to 91 per cent between 1990 and 2012.

Among developing regions, Northern Africa recorded one of the highest reductions (57 per cent) in maternal mortality ratio, from 160 to 69 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2013, largely due to improved maternal care. Skilled health personnel attended 83 per cent of deliveries in 2012, compared to only 47 per cent in 1990.

The region has also reached other targets ahead of the 2015 deadline including halving the extreme poverty rate, halving the proportion of undernourished children, and reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds.

While it is still low, the proportion of people living with HIV who are receiving antiretroviral therapy increased from 27 per cent in 2009 to 42 per cent in 2012.

*The Millennium Development Goals Report*, an annual assessment of global and regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 28 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](http://mdgs.un.org)

For more information, see [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

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