

The Millennium Development Goals Report



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Latin America and the Caribbean make progress on child health and gender equality

But environmental sustainability needs shoring up, UN report finds

(Mexico City, 23 June) – Advances in child health and gender equality led progress on the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean region, according to a United Nations report released today. But rapid deforestation is hurting the region's record on environmental sustainability.

According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, the region has nearly reached the target of halving the prevalence of underweight children by 2015, with the proportion of children under five who are underweight dropping from 11 per cent in 1990 to 6 per cent in 2008.

The region also saw one of the greatest reductions in the mortality rate of children under five years, the report finds, with a drop from 52 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 23 in 2008. Particularly noteworthy, Bolivia reduced its under-five mortality rate annually by at least 4.5 per cent. If the region keeps the same rate of progress, it will be able to reach the target of a two-thirds reduction by 2015.

Latin America and the Caribbean also made strides on gender equality and the empowerment of women, the report finds. The share of women in top-level positions reached 32 per cent in 2000/2008, the second-highest rate among all regions. And the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women rose from 15 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2010, the highest among all developing regions.

On education, Latin America and the Caribbean have already met the target of gender parity in school enrolment, according to the report, with a ratio ranging from 97 girls per 100 boys in primary school to over 100 girls per 100 boys in secondary and tertiary education. School enrolment, however, increased only marginally, from 94 per cent in 1999 to 95 per cent in 2008, dimming hopes for universal primary education by 2015.

Despite disappointing global averages, a number of countries in the Caribbean have made progress in educating their young people on HIV and AIDS, the report finds. The proportion of 15 to 24-year-old women in Haiti who received HIV education more than doubled from 15 per cent in 2000 to 34 per cent in 2007. In the Dominican Republic the number shot up from 18 per cent in 1999 to 41 per cent in 2007, and in Trinidad and Tobago it increased from 33 per cent in 2000 to 54 per cent in 2007.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

On environmental sustainability, global deforestation is slowing, according to the report, but persists at a high rate in many countries. South America continues to show the largest net losses of forests among all regions, at just under 4 million hectares per year over the period 2000-2010.

Deaths and economic loss from natural disasters are on the rise. The horrific devastation from earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, and floods in Brazil, underscore the need to make the built environment more resilient in the face of potential hazards. In Peru, for example, incorporating risk reduction into development has led to benefits that exceeded costs by as much as 37 times, the report notes.

Regarding access to safe drinking water and sanitation, large gaps persist between rural and urban areas. While 97 per cent of the urban population in Latin America and the Caribbean use an improved water source, only 80 per cent of people living in rural areas have the same access. And while 86 per cent of people living in cities have access to improved sanitation – meaning toilets or latrines – only 55 per cent of the rural population do.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS SLOWS DOWN

The proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in Latin America and the Caribbean declined from 11 per cent in 1990 to 8 per cent in 2005. But since the economic crisis, the share of working poor – employed workers living in households with members subsisting on less than \$1.25 a day – increased slightly from 7 per cent in 2008 to 8 per cent in 2009, after dropping by nearly half from 13 per cent in 1998, the report finds. And employment declined, as the employment-to-population ratio fell from 61 per cent in 2008 to 60 per cent in 2009.

The proportion of the urban population living in slums in Latin America and the Caribbean dropped from 34 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2010, according to the report, in line with an overall drop in urban slum dwellers worldwide.

At a September UN summit, world leaders will seek agreement on an action agenda to build on successes and close the gaps in achieving all the MDGs by the target year of 2015. More than 100 Heads of State and Government are expected, along with leaders from the private sector, foundations and civil society organizations.

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. Produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the report has been designated by the UN General Assembly as an official input to the MDG summit. A complete set of the data used to prepare the report is available at <http://mdgs.un.org>

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

MEDIA CONTACTS

Martina Donlon, e-mail donlon@un.org, +1 212-963-6816
Pragati Pascale, e-mail pascale@un.org, +1 212-963-6870
UN Department of Public Information (New York)