

# The Millennium Development Goals Report



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## Maternal and child health improved in Western Asia, says UN

### CHALLENGES REMAIN TO ACHIEVE SEVERAL MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

BEIRUT, 1 JULY – Western Asia successfully reduced maternal and child deaths and expanded access to primary education, according to *The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Report 2013*, launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Geneva. The region is also making progress in improving access to clean water and proper sanitation but lags behind in fighting hunger and gender inequality.

The 2013 report finds that Western Asia is on track to meet the target of a two-thirds reduction by 2015 in the under-five mortality rate, which was reduced by 52 per cent between 1990 and 2011. The region's maternal mortality ratio declined steadily over the last two decades, from 170 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 71 in 2010.

The eight Goals, with numerous sub-targets, were agreed by all countries following the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, most with a due date of 2015.

The region will likely achieve the MDG target of halting the spread and reversing the incidence of tuberculosis. The report says the number of new tuberculosis cases fell by more than 50 per cent between 1990 and 2011.

Progress in expanding access to primary education was also observed in the region. Enrolment grew from 83 per cent in 1990 to 92 per cent in 2011. Over the same period, the number of primary school age children out of school declined from 3 million to 2 million.

Western Asia has made some gains in reducing its already low poverty rate. The proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 5.1 per cent in 1990 to 3.6 per cent in 2010.

### MIXED RESULTS ON HUNGER AND NUTRITION IN WESTERN ASIA

Reaching the hunger reduction target remains a distinct challenge for the region.

“Western Asia is the only region that has seen a rise in the prevalence of undernourishment from 1990–1992 to 2010–2012,” the report notes.

The proportion of undernourished people in the total population increased from 6.6 per cent in 1990 1992 to 10.1 per cent in 2010 2012. On the other hand, the region has made significant progress in improving child undernutrition, with the proportion of underweight children under age five declining from 15 per cent to 5 per cent from 1990 to 2011.

### BARRIERS FOR WOMEN

Although Western Asia has made significant strides in improving gender parity in education, the report says that girls continue to face high barriers to schooling at all levels of education. For every 100 boys in Western Asia in 2011, only 93, 90 and 89 girls were enrolled in primary, secondary and tertiary schools, respectively. While the proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliament increased, Western Asia has the second lowest share of women in parliament, after Oceania.

Access to paid employment remains a distant target for women in Western Asia, and women are far less likely to be employed than their male counterparts. The report finds that the region has the lowest share of women in non-agricultural wage employment among all developing regions, with women holding only 19 out of every 100 wage-earning jobs in the non-agricultural sector.

## IMPROVEMENTS ON WATER AND SANITATION

Western Asia has made progress in improving access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The proportion of the population using an improved water source increased from 85 per cent to 90 per cent between 1990 and 2011. The proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility, such as latrines or toilets, increased from 80 per cent to 88 per cent over the same period. The report notes that accelerated progress is needed in order to meet the MDG target in the region.

A decline in the proportion of slum dwellers was observed across most regions. However, Western Asia is the only region with an increased proportion of slum dwellers, from 21 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2012.

## CONFLICT IMPACTS MDGs

The MDGs call for the support and protection of refugees and displaced persons. The UN report acknowledges that the “number of people uprooted by conflict or persecution is at its highest level in 18 years.”

By the end of 2012, some 45.1 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict or persecution. Excluding Palestinian refugees, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic are among the largest source countries of refugees.

*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 27 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, press materials and an inter-agency media contact list, see [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals).

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