

An Overview 2007 Millennium Development Goals Report by UN Economic and Social Affairs Undersecretary-General Jose Antonio Ocampo

The Millennium Declaration set 2015 as the target date for achieving most of the Goals. As we approach the midway point of this 15-year period, data are now becoming available that provide an indication of progress during the first third of this period.

The results are, predictably, uneven. The years since 2000, when world leaders endorsed the Millennium Declaration, have seen some visible and widespread gains. Encouragingly, the report suggests that some progress is being made even in those regions where the challenges are greatest.

The results achieved in the more successful cases demonstrate that success is possible in most countries, but that the MDGs will be attained only if concerted additional action is taken immediately and sustained until 2015. All stakeholders need to fulfil, in their entirety, the commitments they made in the Millennium Declaration and subsequent pronouncements.

The following are some measures of the progress that has been achieved:

- ◆ The proportion of people living in extreme poverty fell from nearly a third to less than one fifth between 1990 and 2004. If the trend is sustained, the MDG poverty reduction target will be met for the world as a whole and for most regions.
- ◆ The number of extremely poor people in sub-Saharan Africa has levelled off, and the poverty rate has declined by nearly six percentage points since 2000. Nevertheless, the region is not on track to reach the Goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015.
- ◆ Progress has been made in getting more children into school in the developing world. Enrolment in primary education grew from 80 per cent in 1991 to 88 per cent in 2005. Most of this progress has taken place since 1999.
- ◆ Women's political participation has been growing, albeit slowly. Even in countries where previously only men were allowed to stand for political election, women now have a seat in parliament.
- ◆ Child mortality has declined globally, and it is becoming clear that the right life-saving interventions are proving

effective in reducing the number of deaths due to the main child killers - such as measles.

- ◆ Key interventions to control malaria have been expanded.
- ◆ The tuberculosis epidemic, finally, appears on the verge of decline, although progress is not fast enough to halve prevalence and death rates by 2015.

By pointing to what has been achieved, these results also highlight how much remains to be done and how much more could be accomplished if all concerned live up fully to the commitments they have already made. Currently, only one of

the eight regional groups cited in this report is on track to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals. In contrast, the projected shortfalls are most severe in sub-Saharan Africa. Even regions that have made substantial progress, including parts of Asia, face challenges in areas such as health and environmental sustainability.

Moreover, insecurity and instability in conflict and post-conflict countries make long-term development efforts extremely difficult. In turn, a failure to achieve the MDGs can further heighten the risk of instability and conflict. Yet in spite of a technical consensus that

development and security are mutually dependent, international efforts all too often treat them as independent from one another.

The following are some of the key challenges that have to be addressed:

- ◆ Over half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The odds that a woman will die from these causes in sub-Saharan Africa are 1 in 16 over the course of her lifetime, compared to 1 in 3,800 in the developed world.
- ◆ If current trends continue, the target of halving the proportion of underweight children will be missed by 30 million children, largely because of slow progress in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- ◆ The number of people dying from AIDS worldwide increased to 2.9 million in 2006, and prevention measures are failing to keep pace with the growth of the epidemic. In



2005, more than 15 million children had lost one or both parents to AIDS.

◆ Half the population of the developing world lack basic sanitation. In order to meet the MDG target, an additional 1.6 billion people will need access to improved sanitation over the period 2005-2015. If trends since 1990 continue, the world is likely to miss the target by almost 600 million people.

◆ To some extent, these situations reflect the fact that the benefits of economic growth in the developing world have been unequally shared. Widening income inequality is of particular concern in Eastern Asia, where the share of consumption of the poorest people declined dramatically between 1990 and 2004.

◆ Most economies have failed to provide employment opportunities to their youth, with young people more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.

◆ Warming of the climate is now unequivocal. Emissions of carbon dioxide, the primary contributor to global climate change, rose from 23 billion metric tons in 1990 to 29 billion metric tons in 2004. Climate change is projected to have serious economic and social impacts, which will impede progress towards the MDGs.



This report also points to disparities within countries, where particular groups of the population - often those living in rural areas, children of mothers with no formal education and the poorest households - are not making enough progress to meet the targets, even where the rest of the population is. This is particularly evident in access to health services and education. In order to achieve the MDGs, countries will need to mobilize additional resources and target public investments that benefit the poor.

Rapid and large-scale progress is feasible

Several developing countries are demonstrating that rapid and large-scale progress towards the MDGs is possible when strong government leadership and policies and strategies that effectively target the needs of the poor are combined with adequate financial and technical support from the international community.

In particular, impressive results have been achieved in sub-Saharan Africa in areas such as raising agricultural productivity (in Malawi, for example), boosting primary school enrolment (as in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), controlling malaria (as in Niger, Togo, Zambia, Zanzibar), widening access to basic rural health services (Zambia), reforesting areas on a large scale (Niger), and increasing access to water and sanitation (Senegal and Uganda). These practical successes now need to be replicated and scaled-up.

As of mid-2007, 41 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had started the process of preparing national development strategies

aligned with the MDGs and other development goals agreed upon through the United Nations. During this mid-point year, the international community needs to support the preparation of these strategies and to accelerate implementation of the MDGs.

In general, strategies should adopt a wide-ranging approach that seeks to achieve pro-poor economic growth, including through the creation of a large number of additional opportunities for decent work. This, in turn, will require comprehensive programmes for human development, particularly in education and health, as well as building productive capacity and improved physical infrastructure. In each case, an effort should be made to quantify the resources required to implement these programmes. Implementation should be based on a medium-term approach to public expenditure. A sound national statistical system and enhanced public accountability are necessary to support all these efforts.

Success in achieving the MDGs in the poorest and most disadvantaged countries cannot be achieved by these countries alone. Developed countries need to deliver fully on longstanding commitments to achieve the official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) by 2015. In spite of these commitments, ODA declined between 2005 and 2006 and is expected to continue to fall slightly in 2007 as debt relief declines.

Aid has to be improved by ensuring that assistance is aligned with the policies that recipient countries have adopted, and that flows to individual countries are continuous, predictable and assured and are not tied to purchases in the donor country. To this end, donors should reduce the present unpredictability of aid by providing multi-year schedules of aid flows to each recipient country.

As a further element of their development partnership, and as agreed to in Doha in 2001, all governments should redouble their efforts to reach a successful and equitable conclusion to the present trade negotiations - an outcome that ensures that the international trading system and global trading arrangements become more conducive to development in all developing countries.

Addressing the challenge of climate change has to be a new but integral element of each country's development strategy. More importantly, however, it should become an enhanced part of the international development agenda: All development partners should collaborate intensively in devising a shared global strategy to address this global problem.

Source: *The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007*, by Jose Antonio Ocampo, UN Economic and Social Affairs Undersecretary-General. Published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs at New York. June 2007

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