

Ending Poverty: Millennium Development Goals Update

DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IF:

1. What if we could eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015?
2. What if we could achieve universal primary education for all young children by 2015?
3. What if we could promote gender equality and empower women in significant ways by 2015?
4. What if we could substantially reduce child mortality by 2015?
5. What if we could improve maternal health for all women by 2015?
6. What if we could make real progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other deadly diseases by 2015?
7. What if we could begin to ensure environmental sustainability by 2015?
8. What if we could create an effective global partnership for development for poor countries by 2015?



These eight questions are being asked by the United Nations in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Agenda, which was agreed to in 2000 by all UN members and by the world's leading development organizations.

Progress on the MDGs

The overarching goal of reducing absolute poverty by half is within reach for the world as a whole;

- In all but two regions, primary school enrolment is at least 90 per cent;
- The gender parity index in primary education is 95 per cent or higher in six of the 10 regions, including the most populous ones;
- Deaths from measles fell from over 750,000 in 2000 to less than 250,000 in 2006, and about 80 per cent of children in developing countries now receive a measles vaccine;
- The number of deaths from AIDS fell from 2.2 million in 2005 to 2.0 million in 2007, and the number of people newly infected declined from 3.0 million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2007;
- Malaria prevention is expanding, with widespread increases in insecticide-treated net use among children under five in sub-Saharan Africa: in 16 out of 20 countries, use has at least tripled since around 2000.
- The incidence of tuberculosis is expected to be halted and begin to decline before the target date of 2015;
- Some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990;
- The use of ozone-depleting substances has been almost eliminated and this has contributed to the effort to reduce global warming;
- The share of developing countries' export earnings devoted to servicing external debt fell from 12.5 per cent in 2000 to 6.6 per cent in 2006, allowing them to allocate more resources to reducing poverty;
- The private sector has increased the availability of some critical essential drugs and rapidly spread mobile phone technology throughout the developing world.





Progress Needed

Alongside the successes are an array of goals and targets that are likely to be missed unless additional, strengthened or corrective action is taken urgently:



- The proportion of people in sub-Saharan Africa living on less than \$1 per day is unlikely to be reduced by the target of one-half;
- About one quarter of all children in developing countries are considered to be underweight and are at risk of having a future blighted by the long-term effects of undernourishment;
- Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary school enrolment by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015;
- Almost two thirds of employed women in the developing world are in vulnerable jobs as own-account or unpaid family workers;
- In one third of developing countries, women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians;
- More than 500,000 prospective mothers in developing countries die annually in childbirth or of complications from pregnancy;
- Some 2.5 billion people, almost half the developing world's population, live without improved sanitation;
- More than one third of the growing urban population in developing countries live in slum conditions;
- Carbon dioxide emissions have continued to increase, despite the international timetable for addressing the problem;
- Developed countries' foreign aid expenditures declined for the second consecutive year in 2007 and risk falling short of the commitments made in 2005;
- International trade negotiations are years behind schedule and any outcome seems likely to fall far short of the initial high hopes for a development-oriented outcome.

Recent MDG Events

On September 25, 2008, world leaders met at the United Nations in New York to renew world-wide commitments to review the progress towards these eight goals and to set out new concrete plans and practical steps for action. \$16 billion dollars in new pledges were made by developed countries at the meeting to bolster food security (\$1.6 million), to promote education (\$4.5 million) and to wipe out malaria (\$3 million). Concern was expressed, however, because not all of significant earlier pledges have actually come through.

From October 17 to 19, over 100 million people around the world took part in events to demonstrate support through a "Stand Up—Take Action" campaign. Part of the October events was the call that world leaders do not use the financial crises as an excuse for breaking the promises made in 2000 to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In areas of the Middle East, for example, the United Nations agency charged with assisting Palestinian refugees reported that almost 500,000 schoolchildren across Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza stood up against poverty during the October campaign days.

Moral Challenge: A Prayer

In a world where so many go hungry,
Let us make the fruits of Creation
available for all.
In a world where one billion of our brothers
and sisters
do not have safe drinking water,
Let us help the waters run clear.
In a world where so many children
die so young,
And so many mothers die in childbirth,
And so many families
are ravaged by disease,
Let us bring health and healing.
In a world where women carry

such heavy burdens,
Let us recognize and restore
the rights of all.
Let us join together,
with a new sense of global community,
A new awareness
of our need for one another
And for this fragile planet,
To meet the clear challenges
of the Millennium Goals,
To bring hope as substantial as bread,
To make human dignity
as visible as wheat in the fields.

