



PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON THE WORLD BANK
Parliamentarians & Development Series

Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that all 192 United Nations member states and over 20 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. Emerging from the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was signed at the Millennium Summit, the eight Goals in their current iteration were officially adopted in 2001.

Each goal has a number of targets (there are 21 in total), and each target has a number of measurable indicators, which allows us to track progress made by individual countries towards each goal.

Briefly, the eight goals and their targets are:

ONE: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Target 1A: Halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day
- Target 1B: Achieve employment for women, men, and young people
- Target 1C: Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

TWO: Achieve universal primary education

- Target 2: By 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling, girls and boys

THREE: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Target 3: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

FOUR: Reduce child mortality

- Target 4: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

FIVE: Improve maternal health

- Target 5A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
- Target 5B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

SIX: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

- Target 6A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Target 6B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
- Target 6C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

SEVEN: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources
- Target 7B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss
- Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Target 7D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers

EIGHT: Develop a global partnership for development

- Target 8A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
- Target 8B: Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDC)
- Target 8C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
- Target 8D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

How are we doing?

Progress towards meeting the MDGs varies widely between countries and goals. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in early 2010 released a comprehensive review of progress in meeting the MDGs, with the aim of assessing where emphasis should be placed in the remaining five years.ⁱ According to the report –which is based on the findings of 30 country MDG assessments –despite significant advances, if the world continues to follow current trends, most developing countries will not to meet many of the MDG targets.

The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) recently compiled a number of statistics to track regional progress towards the first five MDGsⁱⁱ. These regional snapshots reveal the following:

ONE: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: Only south-eastern and eastern Asia are on track to meet the targets of reducing extreme poverty by half and reducing hunger by half, while progress in western Asia has deteriorated for this goal.

TWO: Achieve universal primary education: Only southern Asia is on track to meet this goal. The lowest rates of primary school enrolment are in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than one in four children do not attend primary school. Progress towards education for all has regressed in eastern Asia.

THREE: Promote gender equality and empower women: Every region with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa is on target for girls' equal enrolment in primary school. However, only Latin America and the Caribbean are on target for women's share of paid employment, and at current rates of progress, no region will meet the target set for women's equal representation in national parliaments.

FOUR: Reduce child mortality: Sub-Saharan Africa and much of Asia are off track to reach their target of reducing under-five mortality by two thirds. Only Latin American and the Caribbean and South Eastern Asia will reach this target if current trends continue. Sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia are also off course to meet measles immunization targets.

FIVE: Improve maternal health: According to DfID, there has been virtually no progress in this MDG. Only one region, eastern Asia, is on target to reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters; and sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia have either made no progress or have back-tracked. Southern and eastern Asia appears on track to meet targets in access to reproductive health, with all other regions making insufficient progress in this area.

In addition, most countries have made insufficient progress towards achieving key sanitation targets, according to UNDP.

There are a number of resources available to track progress towards meeting the MDGs. The World Bank has compiled an on-line spreadsheet tracking world development indicators related to each of the eight goals from 1990 to 2008.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) pulled together national MDG reports from over 140 countries, all available on line.^{iv}

Where do we need increased effort?

Globally, more effort needs to be put into reducing infant and maternal mortality; increasing universal access to primary education; and increasing access to clean drinking water, according to French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, speaking in March at the Marketplace for Innovative Financial Solutions for Development.

UNDP has suggested that progress towards MDG achievements has been shaped by three key factors:

- Policy choices and program coherence that govern how a country participates in the global economy and whether domestic policies contribute to broad-based, inclusive growth both at the macroeconomic and sector level.
- Governance and capacity deficits that undermine the creation of an enabling environment needed to secure MDG progress.
- Fiscal constraints, both domestic and ODA, and development assistance practices that limit the capacity to scale up public investments necessary for MDG outcomes.

Addressing these over-arching governance factors could provide the biggest push in achieving the MDGs in the time that remains.

How can parliamentarians support the MDGs in general, and particularly in areas needing more effort?

Parliamentarians can help to ensure that the key governance factors in meeting the MDGs as outlined by UNDP and described above are moved to the top of the agenda.

In addition, the international community in September 2010 will come together in New York at the UN MDG Summit. Each delegation has been asked to bring with them a country action plan for reaching the MDGs in the time remaining, the summit will then generate a Global Development Action Plan based on the country plans. It is vital that parliamentarians contribute to and review their country's action plan, and that delegations to the summit include parliamentarians, who represent the concerns and priorities of the people. Most importantly, once agreed, parliaments must monitor the implementation of these action plans and hold their governments accountable for progress and results.

Donor country parliaments have an equally important role to play in holding their governments to account for promises made, agreements signed, treaties ratified and perhaps most importantly, monies pledged. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recently warned that six European countries will fail to meet commitments made at the 2005 Gleneagles G8 summit to reach a minimum ODA target of 0.51% of Gross National Income by 2010. Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal will all fall short.

The need for parliamentary oversight in donor countries extends beyond ensuring that ODA commitments are met to include honoring fair trade policies, strengthening corporate governance and transparency and fully implementing international agreements that favor economic development in LDCs.

Parliamentarians from both donor and partner countries can also support the achievement of the MDGs by holding their governments accountable to the principles of aid effectiveness as agreed to in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.^v In addition, the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) and European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) in an upcoming campaign will call on the World Bank, the world's largest multilateral aid provider, to increase its commitment to the principles of aid effectiveness throughout IDA 16^{vi} in order to support countries in meeting the MDGs. The campaign will also call on donor governments to fully replenish IDA funds by meeting or exceeding previous funding levels.

ⁱ The full report, *Beyond the Midpoint*, is available at http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=2223855. A six-page executive summary is available at http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=2224077

ⁱⁱ This DfID resource is available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/Conference-MDG-Maps.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ This resource is available online: http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/ddpreports/ViewSharedReport?REPORT_ID=1336&REQUEST_TYPE=VIEWADVANCED

^{iv} National MDG reports available at <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=87&f=A>

^v For more information on the principles of aid effectiveness and what they mean for parliamentarians, see the P&D series briefing on the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action

<http://www.pnowb.org/admindb/docs/Paris%20Declaration%20and%20Accra%20Agenda%20for%20Action%20-%20P&D%20series%20-%202021NOV09.pdf>

^{vi} The International Development Association – IDA for short – is the arm of the World Bank that provides funding to the world's poorest countries. Through interest-free loans and grants, IDA seeks to reduce poverty by increasing economic growth, reducing inequalities and improving living conditions. Currently, 79 countries are eligible to apply for financing through IDA, 39 of them in Africa. IDA is funded largely by contributions from 45 World Bank member countries in three-year replenishment cycles. 'IDA 16' is an abbreviation for the 16th replenishment cycle of the International Development Association.

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