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SC7582

**ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION  
NINETEENTH ORDINARY SESSION  
15 – 16 July 2012  
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA**

**Assembly/AU/14(XIX)  
Original: English**

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE MEETING TO VALIDATE  
THE 2012 REPORT ON ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD THE  
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) IN AFRICA,  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 7-8 MARCH 2012**

*Summary*

# MDG Report 2012

**Assessing Progress  
in Africa toward  
the Millennium  
Development Goals**



African Union



Economic Commission for Africa



African Development Bank Group



United Nations  
Development Programme

# Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals

## MDG Report 2012

**Emerging perspectives from Africa on the  
post-2015 development agenda**

# Foreword

This year's report has been written against the backdrop of continued rapid economic growth in Africa, the Arab Spring in North Africa, a festering sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the on-going UN system-wide led consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. Economic growth, the Arab Spring and Europe's sovereign debt crisis will likely influence Africa's progress towards the MDGs while the Rio+20 negotiations and the post-2015 development agenda will invariably shape and define the future of the Goals.

The findings of this year's report confirm Africa's continued positive performance on the MDGs, underpinned by steady economic growth and improved performance on poverty indicators. Indeed, recent poverty data confirm that the continent's economic performance has been associated with a decline in both the poverty rate and the number of absolute poor. Indeed, Africa continues to sustain progress on several MDGs and is on track to achieve the targets on net primary enrolment, gender parity in education, prevalence among population aged 15-24 years; proportion of the population with access to antiretroviral drugs; and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament . Even so, the report acknowledges that more needs to be done to address issues of spatial and gender inequality, the sub-standard quality and unequal distribution of social services between rural and urban areas, the limited capacity of growth to generate adequate employment opportunities for Africa's youthful and rapidly growing population, and the scaling up and deepening of social protection for the vulnerable groups. The report urges policymakers to put greater emphasis on improving the quality of social services to ensure that investments in this sector yield optimal outcomes. Achieving the right balance between the access and the quality of social services is imperative for substantial progress on the MDGs.

The report observes that high rates of population growth, by placing greater strain on the provision of vital public services, continue to undercut some progress on the continent. Africa must translate this growth into a demographic dividend by transforming its growing youthful population into a productive and dynamic workforce that drives growth and human development.

A critical assessment of Africa's progress must be anchored by timely and reliable data as well as objective and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. Thus, African countries, with the

support of development partners, must continue to strengthen statistical monitoring and evaluation capacities in order to improve performance in tracking progress on the MDGs.

Moving forward, it is imperative that the lessons from Africa's MDGs experience inform the Rio+20 negotiations and drive the post-2015 development agenda. Cognizant of the importance of ensuring that Africa's priorities and development aspirations feature substantively in the negotiations on Internationally Agreed Development Goals, this year's report highlights the post-2015 development agenda as a thematic focus area. This section of the report articulates an emerging consensus on the post-2015 development agenda based on wide-ranging and ongoing consultations with African stakeholders by the partner institutions.

The priority areas identified by the consultations are illuminating and point to economic transformation, human and institutional capacity development, and technological innovation as critical drivers of sustainable development in Africa that should underpin the post-2015 agenda. Invariably, the sustainability of development outcomes in Africa must be underpinned by a transformative, inclusive and sustainable development agenda anchored by the principles of equality and framed by a commitment to deliver social services that meet minimum standards of quality.

We wish to thank all those who have contributed to the preparation of this report. We commend and encourage the report's commitment to take into account the views and experiences of leaders, policymakers and development practitioners who are promoting the achievement of the MDGs in Africa, especially in meeting the agreed targets.

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# Overview

With less than three years remaining until the 2015 deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, Africa's progress toward the various targets of the MDGs continues to be mixed. Remarkable advances have been made in some indicators such as net primary enrollment, gender parity in primary education, representation of women in decision making, immunization coverage and stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, the quality of education remains a concern and progress is too slow on health-related MDGs such as child and maternal mortality and access to sanitation. Reducing inequity in access to basic social services also remains a critical challenge for Africa and these inequities explain in large measure the continent's slow progress in attaining the health MDGs.

The time span left until 2015 for the African continent to achieve the MDGs is fast approaching and there is still no consensus within the development community about the fate of the MDGs post 2015. Given the importance of the post-2015 development agenda – particularly for Africa – this year's Report on *"Assessing Progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals"* identifies that agenda as an area of focus.

Any meaningful discussion of Africa's priorities after 2015 must, however, be grounded in Africa's experiences and lessons learnt with the MDGs. A review of earlier reports in this series suggests that the quality of social service delivery, inequality, unemployment (particularly among youths), vulnerability to shocks, economic, social and environmental sustainability of performance and inclusive growth are recurrent challenges in Africa and, consequently, should inform the post-2015 agenda.

The past decade has laid bare the vulnerabilities of countries to socio-economic and climate-related shocks – as seen in the global financial crisis, sharp increases in food prices, the intensity and frequency of natural hazards and recurrent conflicts. The post-2015 agenda must seek to promote African resilience by addressing associated vulnerabilities. Economic activity should reflect efforts to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as to move towards a low-carbon growth path. These broad outlines find expression in this year's Report and offer a perspective on the continent's development priorities for the post-2015 development agenda. Table 1 summarizes MDGs performance in Africa.

## Table 1 Africa's MDG performance at a glance, 2012

Goals and Targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	Status	Remarks
<b>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>	<b>Off track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$1.25-a-day poverty in Africa (excluding North Africa) declined from 56.5% to 47.5% during 1990–2008</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education</b>	<b>On track: net enrolment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average enrolment exceeds 80%</li> <li>• Issues of quality remain</li> <li>• Most countries are not expected to meet the completion target</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</b>	<b>On track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good progress at primary level but weak parity at secondary and tertiary levels of education</li> <li>• High representation in national parliament in many countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 4: Reduce child mortality</b>	<b>Off track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining, but slowly</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</b>	<b>Off track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining, but slowly</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>	<b>On track</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HIV/AIDS prevalence on the decline, especially in Southern Africa, due to behavioural change and access to antiretroviral therapy</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability</b>	<b>On track: improved water supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few countries have reforestation plans</li> <li>• Emissions minimal for most countries with little increase</li> <li>• Most countries reduced consumption of ozone-depleting substances by more than 50%</li> </ul>

Source: Computations from UNSD, accessed December 2011.

## Tracking Progress

### Goal 1

## Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

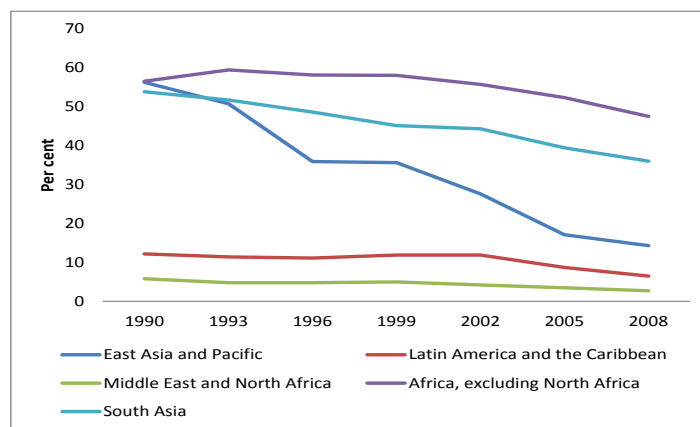


Progress on reducing income poverty has been encouraging across the continent. Several countries have made substantial progress, even if disparities exist within and among countries – for example, the dominance of rural poverty and the feminized nature of poverty should be given greater attention. Although Africa has strong potential to generate jobs over the medium term, addressing youth unemployment and increasing labour productivity are daunting challenges. Progress on malnutrition is slow, hence the need to accelerate efforts to meet this target by 2015.

Although Africa has experienced rapid economic growth in the past decade, this has not translated into commensurate reductions in poverty and hunger. Nor is the growth rich in jobs. Africa experienced a decline in the poverty rate as well as the absolute number of poor people. However, its rate of decline in poverty is too slow to achieve the target by 2015. For instance, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in

Africa (excluding North Africa) decreased marginally from 56.5 per cent in 1990 to 52.3 per cent in 2005 and further to 47.5 per cent in 2008 (Figure 1). The slow pace of poverty reduction has been linked to inadequate and inconsistent growth, high population growth, low growth elasticity of poverty<sup>1</sup> and persistently high levels of gender and geographical inequalities.

**Figure 1 Proportion of population living below \$1.25 a day (2005 PPP), 1990–2008**



Source: Compiled from World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?page=4>, updated February 2012.

Specific policies to promote inclusive growth, with a particular focus on agriculture and the informal sector, have the potential to increase the growth elasticity of poverty. Lessons from countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda show the importance of reducing inequality to facilitate a rapid decline in income poverty.

Policies to address population growth and to promote social protection are also vital for reducing poverty, as are national employment strategies that are formulated and implemented with full involvement of key stakeholders. Actions to expand jobs

<sup>1</sup> The growth elasticity of poverty measures the reduction in poverty associated with a unit increase in growth. The higher the growth elasticity the greater the effects of growth on poverty reduction.



and labour productivity should focus on widening access to complementary inputs such as machinery and equipment, strengthening the business environment in which private firms can thrive, boosting the quantity and quality of physical and institutional infrastructure, and improving working conditions.

## Goal 2

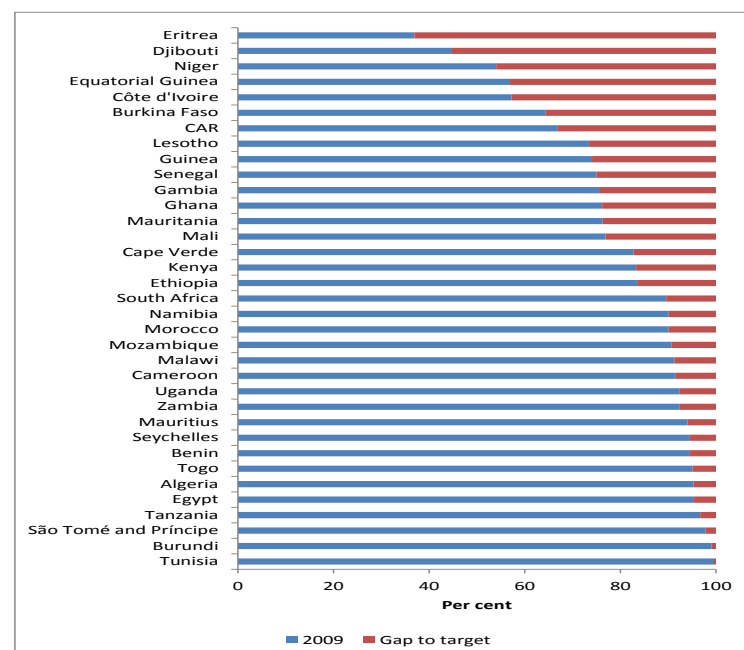
### Achieve universal primary education



Most African countries have made steady progress and are on track to meet the target for net enrolment in primary education by 2015, with most countries reaching 90 per cent. The aggregate net primary school enrolment for Africa rose from 64 per cent in 2000 to 84 per cent in 2009. Of the 35 African countries with data for 2009, 17 had net enrolment ratios above 90 per cent. Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tanzania, Togo and Tunisia have already reached or exceeded the minimum target to achieve 95 per cent net enrolment by 2015. Eighteen African countries are more than 10 percentage points away from hitting the target by 2015. Among these, seven show large deviations from the target,

with net primary enrolment ratios of about 33–63 percentage points off target in 2009 (figure 2). These countries need to introduce policies to address their binding constraints.

**Figure 2** Gap to net enrolment target in primary education, selected African countries, 2009



Source: Computations from UNSD, accessed December 2011.

Completion rates, however, are less satisfying, and some countries still have rates as low as 33 per cent. Youth literacy has seen progress, notably the number of countries with youth literacy rates of 95 per cent and above. Still, overall progress towards the target is slow and marked by gender inequity as women's literacy rates remain lower than men's.

The continent is generally on track for this target but challenges of increasing completion rates, reducing dropout rates, improving the quality of education and bridging the gender gap in school need urgent attention. Off-track countries could learn from countries that have strongly

advanced towards this target. In looking beyond the MDGs, countries must focus on education outside the primary level in order to meet the demands of changing economies. Increasing budgetary allocations for primary and secondary education and improving governance of the educational system are important. It is equally important to institute appropriate educational reforms. For example, policies that aim to improve educational quality and relevance through curricular and pedagogical reforms can go a long way in improving completion rates.

## Goal 3

### Promote gender equality and empower women



Improving gender equality and empowering women are pathways to ensuring sustainable human development and to achieving other MDGs (especially accelerating maternal and child health care, improving education and reducing poverty and hunger).

Progress on this goal is encouraging. Many countries are making notable progress – especially on gender parity in primary

school education and number of seats held by women in national parliament.

The ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary school<sup>2</sup> continues to improve in many African countries. Of 42 countries with comparable data between 1990/91 and 2009, 29 scored higher than 0.9 (90 girls compared with 100 boys), while three and eight countries scored 1.0 and slightly higher than 1.0, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Countries like Lesotho and Mauritius have been addressing the imbalance against boys in primary school enrolment since 2004 and 2000, respectively. Africa's performance over time, relative to other regions of the world, is promising but there is room for improvement. Data on secondary education enrolments are scanty, but point more to weak progress in gender parity at this level of education than at the primary level. Data for the tertiary level are even scantier and progress is slow.

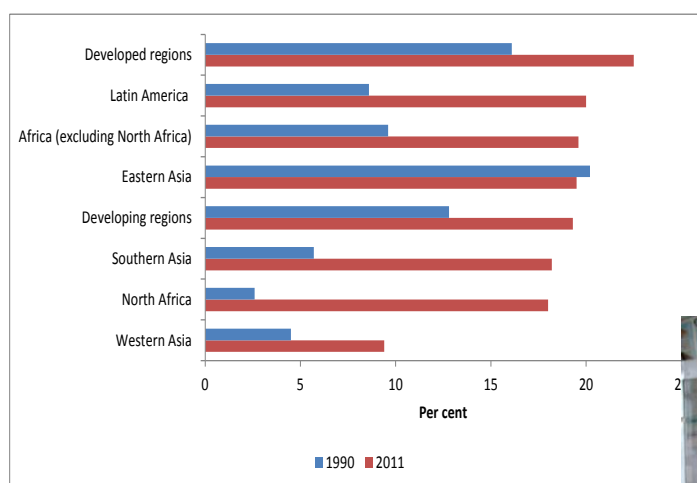
Africa is also making steady progress on proportion of seats held by women in national parliament relative to other developing regions. Its rate in 2011 was surpassed only by Latin America and developed regions (figure 3). North Africa showed the fastest growth among regions from 1990 to 2011. The adoption of legal frameworks that guarantee seats for women in the national parliament (as in Egypt, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda) was one key driver.

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as the gender parity index in primary school enrolment.

<sup>3</sup> Scores above 1.0 indicate disparity against boys.

**Figure 3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, 1990 and 2011**



Source: Compiled from UN (2011).

In addition, promoting women in paid employment outside agriculture is still a challenge. Cultural practices (including inequitable inheritance practices, early marriage and household power dynamics), few economic opportunities for women and too little political will still impede progress. For sustained advances, cultural transformation aimed at addressing the negative perception in society to gender equality and women's empowerment is imperative.

Policy changes should be directed at addressing discrimination against girls and women in educational systems, encouraging greater participation of women in productive and remunerative economic activities and increasing women's voice in making decisions at all levels of society. Economic and social policies that respond better to the needs of men and women – including affirmative action strategies, the reform of customary laws that discriminate against women and girls, and more human and financial resources to enforce and implement such laws – are crucial for meeting this goal. Countries with

educational disparities against boys are urged to address that issue.

## Goal 4

### Reduce child mortality



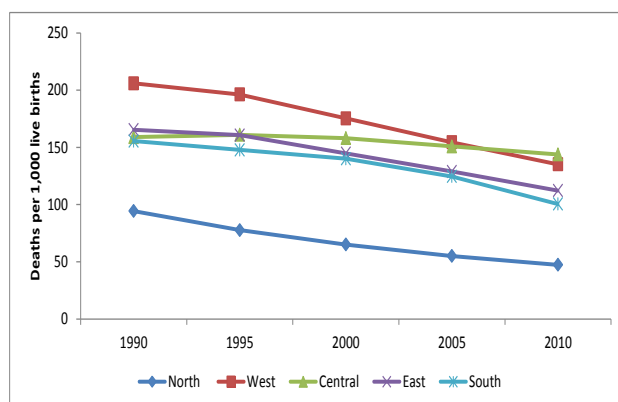
Child mortality is deeply interlocked with all the other MDGs: extreme poverty, gender inequalities in education, inadequate sexual health education for girls and women, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and non-sustainable environmental practices. Each one is a major contributor to poor and dangerous living conditions for children.

Most African countries have registered large gains on all the MDG 4 indicators, although the continental rate of progress is too slow to achieve the goal by 2015. And despite steady progress in reducing under-five deaths, children from rural and poorer households remain disproportionately affected.

Although slow, under-five mortality shows a declining trend in all African regions (figure 4). North Africa showed the most progress at 49 per cent followed by Southern Africa (35 per cent) and West Africa (34 per cent). Their progress is attributed to innovative approaches to delivering

interventions in areas with poor access to health, increased immunization, exclusive breast-feeding, vitamin and mineral supplementation, stronger malaria prevention and treatment, improvements in water and sanitation, and fighting pneumonia and diarrhoeal disease – the two biggest killers of children.

**Figure 4 Under-five mortality by African sub-region, 1990–2010**



Source: Computations from UNSD, accessed December 2011.

Note: The data are weighted by population aged 0–4.

As most child deaths are preventable or treatable, African countries should revitalize a comprehensive and integrated effort against the main diseases that cause child mortality, such as measles, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and HIV/AIDS. Accelerating the decline in under-five mortality is possible by expanding interventions that target the main causes of death and the most vulnerable new-born babies and children. Empowering women, removing financial and social barriers to accessing basic services, launching innovations that make the supply of critical services more available to the poor and increasing local accountability of health systems are all policy interventions that will enhance equal access to health services and reduce mortality.

## Goal 5

### Improve maternal health

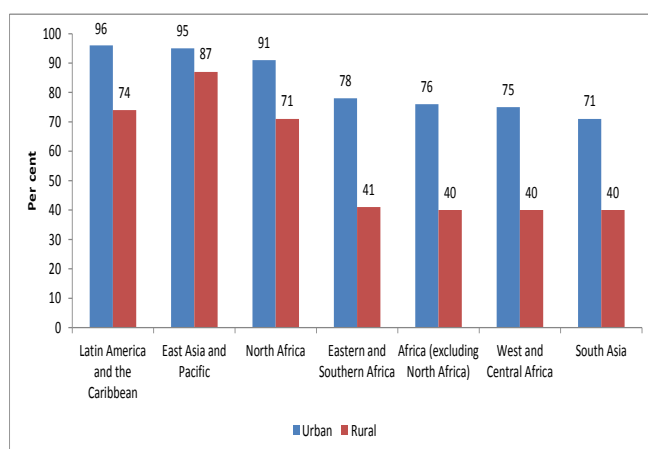


Maternal health is still a grave concern for most of Africa. The continent's average maternal mortality ratio (MMR) was 590 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008 compared to 780 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990. Lack of data on maternal health continues to be a major challenge to tracking progress. Latest available data revealed that Africa registered steady progress in improving maternal health. However, the slow rate of progress is insufficient to achieve this Goal by the target date.

Spatial and income inequalities remain a challenge for increasing access to skilled birth attendants. The world's widest urban–rural gaps are in Africa (excluding North Africa) where women in urban areas are almost twice as likely as those in rural areas to deliver with a skilled health attendant (figure 5), and where 80 per cent of those in the highest income quintile deliver this way against only 24 per cent for the lowest quintile.



**Figure 5** *Share of births with a skilled health attendant by region, urban versus rural, 2006–2010*



Source: Compiled from [www.childinfo.org](http://www.childinfo.org).

Note: No data for Libya, Sudan and South Sudan.

The inadequate access to and use of skilled birth attendants and inequity by location and income are serious impediments to reducing national MMRs. The use of contraception to space or limit births is an important factor in the continent's high MMR. Furthermore, reducing income poverty, improving education, boosting employment and empowering women, as well as fighting HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria will all have positive effects on maternal mortality. Better maternal health will have residual effects on child health and the economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.

## Goal 6

### Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases



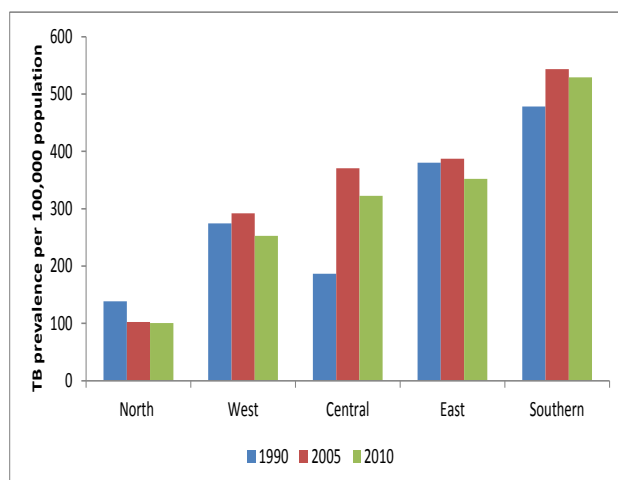
Africa's progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria is being sustained – even stepped up. This is noteworthy as there are worrying signs of regress in other developed and developing regions of the world, particularly for HIV/AIDS. There are early signs that the increase in access to HIV treatment is contributing to the rapid decline in new HIV infections. The decrease in young women's prevalence (15–24 years) is particularly encouraging.

The fight against malaria is seeing major advances. Increases in funding and attention to malaria control have led to a 20 per cent global decline in the number of malaria deaths in 2000–2009. Africa (excluding North Africa) made a large contribution to this steep drop through critical interventions such as greater use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) and artemisinin-based combination therapies, as well as adequate financing.

TB control is starting to bear fruit in Africa. After a peak in 2005, prevalence rates by 2010 had fallen in all sub-regions, and were lower than in 1990 in all sub-regions except two (figure 6). Southern Africa is still the sub-region most affected by TB. The

number of new infections is stable in North Africa, which remains the least affected sub-region. Improved ART coverage and the decline in HIV infection rates have also reduced TB infections, given the opportunistic nature of the disease.

**Figure 6 TB prevalence rate per 100,000 population by African sub-region, 1990, 2005 and 2010**



Source: Compiled from WHO (2011c).

Note: The data are weighted by the population in each country.

The Global Fund, the Abuja Declaration, Stop TB, the African Leaders' Malaria Alliance, and an update of the Roll Back Malaria partnership in June 2011 are just a few of the international and regional initiatives that show the high level of political commitment to tackle these diseases. These vertical funds – programmes that target resources at specific health problems, and deliver direct and measurable results – are among the reasons for the outcomes in tackling these three diseases.

And so more has to be done in addressing the capacity and resource gaps of national health systems as well as tackling inequities in access and use, particularly among low-

income groups, rural populations and women

## Goal 7

### Ensure environmental sustainability



Ensuring environmental sustainability has a great impact on reaching most of the other goals. Preserving and properly managing the environment is an essential foundation for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

In 1990, Africa (excluding North Africa) had 31.2 per cent of land area covered by forest; by 2010, this had shrunk to 28.1 per cent. This decline stems from over-exploitation and conversion of forests to other uses, driven by population growth, economic development and the need for people to meet their basic needs. During 1990–2008, 16 countries recorded declines in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at varying rates, with Gabon recording a steep reduction, probably on account of its high proportion of land area covered by forest. Equatorial Guinea and Seychelles recorded the highest increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The proportion of population with improved drinking water source during 1990–2010 rose from 56 per cent to 66 per cent. Although Africa's overall access to an improved water source in rural areas increased from 42 per cent to 53 per cent, access in urban areas fell from 86 per cent to 85 per cent. This decline may partly be attributed to rapid urbanization and growth of slums. This proportion of people with improved access marginally rose from 35 per cent to 40 per cent during 1990 and 2010. Two of the key constraints are the high cost of infrastructure and the low returns to investment for the private sector, especially in rural areas.

Several challenges are retarding progress. One is the lack of coordination among authorities, stemming from an unclear definition of roles and responsibilities, coupled with lack of harmonization of laws and policies related to environmental management. Inadequate staffing in government departments that deal with environmental issues is another factor. Devising and pushing through with appropriate climate change adaptation measures is another aspect that will underpin progress towards this MDG.

Still, opportunities can be exploited. These include new global resources that can be tapped to strengthen countries' sustainable development. Natural resource management strategies, including reforestation that have until now often been ignored, should be given priority. Innovative private instruments, too, should be promoted, particularly those for risk pooling and risk transfer. Similarly, well-thought-out public–private partnerships for addressing climate change should be brought into play.

African countries, supported by development partners, have already undertaken several adaptation and mitigation measures – nationally, sub-regionally and regionally – to address climate change impacts, directly or indirectly. Adequate implementation of these programmes is vital for progress.

## **Goal 8**

### **Develop a global partnership for development**



Developing a global partnership for development remains key for African countries to individually and collectively attain the MDGs. Progress, though, towards some of the targets has been rather slow. Access to affordable essential drugs still remains a challenge on the continent and partnerships with pharmaceutical companies need to be strengthened to achieve this target. Access to information and communications technology (ICT) is increasing slowly and at this rate the target may not be reached. Commitments that were made by donor nations at various

international forums to increase development financing towards the continent have largely been unmet.

Still, the international community has re-committed to meeting its pledges to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to meet other internationally agreed development goals. For example, at the September 2010 UN Summit on Accelerating Progress towards the MDGs, donor nations reaffirmed their commitments to increase official development assistance (ODA). Many committed to the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) as ODA to the least developed countries. For instance, the European Union (EU) pledged to reach the 0.7 per cent target by 2015.

The Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, also brought a number of aid recipients together with the donor community to take stock of recent efforts to improve the impact of aid. It recognized that development cooperation has a crucial catalytic role in poverty eradication, social protection, economic growth and sustainable development. Nevertheless, recipients resolved to reduce dependence on aid over time through reaffirming national policies that take advantage of opportunities presented by international investment and trade, as well as through expanding domestic capital markets.

The international environment, since the 2008–2009 global economic and financial crisis, has become less favourable for low-income countries, especially in Africa. Donors face sharp increases in budget challenges of their own, making their aid commitments more challenging, though no less important. Attention has thus turned to non-concessional finance for public investment in low-income countries. But higher non-concessional lending is at best a

very risky and imperfect substitute for more aid for Africa. The continent must avoid running into unsustainable debt that could trigger future macroeconomic instability.

## **Emerging perspectives from Africa on the post- 2015 development agenda**



With less than three years to the 2015 deadline, it is imperative that development partners and policymakers accelerate progress on the MDGs and assess the successes and failures of the current goals, in an attempt to shape and develop an inclusive and sustainable post-2015 development agenda. The question is not about having a set of international development goals after 2015, but rather, what the proposed framework will consist of. Underlying all these is the question of which option is likely to have the greatest impact on poverty eradication in Africa.

As the international development community evaluates the contributions of the MDGs and begins the process of defining a post-2015 global framework, Africa too must articulate its common position. Although the MDGs have led to socio-economic gains in the continent,



poverty remains rampant and much more needs to be done.

Feedback from African member States through the regional workshop in Accra and the electronic survey suggests that post 2015 agenda should reflect current and emerging challenges. This approach must comprise a judicious mix of development enablers and outcomes.

The post-2015 development agenda should include all policy areas currently addressed by the MDGs. Learning from the implementation of the current MDGs, a post-2015 development agenda for Africa must pay more attention to local context, go beyond social needs by emphasizing the productive sector (e.g. agriculture, inter-regional trade, and infrastructure) and address the needs of people below the national thresholds. Some of the strategic elements for consideration in the post 2015 agenda include focusing on equity dimension, stressing productive as much as on social sectors, creating jobs for youth, food security, addressing resilience issues and adopting the sustainability agenda especially confronting the challenges of climate.

2012-07-15

# Report of the commission on the meeting to validate the 2012 report on assessing progress toward the millennium development goals (MDGS) in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7-8 march 2012

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