



The Millennium Development Goals

We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.

—UN Millennium Declaration¹

In September 2000 the world's leaders gathered at the UN Millennium Summit to commit their nations to strengthening global efforts for peace, human rights, democracy, strong governance, environmental sustainability and poverty eradication, and to promoting principles of human dignity, equality and equity.²

The resulting Millennium Declaration, adopted by 189 countries, includes urgent, collective commitments to overcome the poverty that still grips most of the world's people. Global leaders did not settle for business as usual—because they knew that business as usual was not enough. Instead they committed themselves to ambitious targets with clearly defined deadlines.

At the 2000 summit the UN General Assembly also asked the UN Secretary-General to prepare a road map for achieving the Declaration's commitments—resulting in the Millennium Development Goals, made up of 8 Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators.³ The Goals are unique in their ambition, concreteness and scope. They are also unique in their explicit recognition that the Goals for eradicating poverty can be achieved only through stronger partnerships among development actors and through increased action by rich countries—expanding trade, relieving debt, transferring technology and providing aid.

AN AGENDA FOR ACCELERATING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Millennium Development Goals address many of the most enduring failures of human development. Unlike the objectives of the first, second and third UN Development Decades (1960s, 1970s, 1980s), which mostly focused on economic growth, the Goals place human well-being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development objectives—an approach advocated by the *Human Development Report* since its inception.

The Goals and the promotion of human development share a common motivation and reflect a vital commitment to promoting human well-being that entails dignity, freedom and equality for all people. The Goals are benchmarks of progress towards the vision of the Millennium Declaration—guided by basic values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibilities. These values have much in common with the conception of human well-being in the concept of human development. They also mirror the fundamental motivation for human rights. Thus the Goals, human development and human rights share the same motivation (box 1.1).

Every *Human Development Report* has argued that the purpose of development is to improve people's lives by expanding their choices, freedom and dignity. Poverty involves much more than the restrictions imposed by lack of income. It also entails lack of basic capabilities to lead full, creative lives—as when people suffer from poor health, are excluded from participating in the decisions that affect their communities or have no right to guide the course of their lives. Such deprivations distinguish human poverty from income poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals are intended to ease the constraints on people's ability to make choices. Still, the Goals do not

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Values guiding the UN Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

As articulated in the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals are benchmarks for progress towards a vision of development, peace and human rights, guided by “certain fundamental values...essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include:

- *Freedom.* Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.
- *Equality.* No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- *Solidarity.* Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.
- *Tolerance.* Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted.
- *Respect for nature.* Prudence must be shown in the management of all living species and natural resources, in accordance with the precepts of sustainable development. Only in this way can the immeasurable riches provided to us by nature be preserved and passed on to our descendants. The current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants.
- *Shared responsibility.* Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role.” (UN 2000, p. 2.)

The Goals—building blocks for human development...

Human development is about people, about expanding their choices to live full, creative lives with freedom and dignity. Economic growth, increased trade and investment, technological advance—all are very important. But they are means, not ends. Fundamental to expanding human choices is building human capabilities:

the range of things that people can be. The most basic capabilities for human development are living a long and healthy life, being educated, having a decent standard of living and enjoying political and civil freedoms to participate in the life of one’s community.

The first three of these are incorporated in this Report’s human development index (HDI). Though the Millennium Development Goals contribute to these capabilities, they do not reflect all the key dimensions of human development, which is a broader concept.

...and human rights

Achieving the Goals will advance human rights. Each Goal can be directly linked to economic, social and cultural rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 22, 24, 25, 26) and other human rights instruments.

Recognizing that the targets expressed in the Goals are not just development aspirations but also claimable rights has important implications.

- Viewing the Goals in this way means that taking action to achieve them is an obligation, not a form of charity. This approach creates a framework for holding various actors accountable, including governments, citizens, corporations and international organizations.
- Human rights carry counterpart obligations on the part of others—not just to refrain from violating them, but also to protect and promote their realization. Human rights conventions recognize the need for an international order that

ensures that these rights be secured (article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 2 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and that establishes the counterpart obligations of governments and other actors to contribute to their realization.

- Viewing the Goals through a human rights framework increases understanding of the policies and institutional reforms required to achieve them. Full realization of the human right to education, for example, requires more than achieving universal literacy and primary education. It also requires that people participate meaningfully in public decisions about education. And it requires that measures for achieving education-related goals be equitable—not disadvantaging vulnerable groups or entrenching gender discrimination.

The full realization of economic, social and cultural rights requires far more than achieving the Millennium Development Goals. But achieving the Goals is an important step towards that end. Because rights to education, health care and an adequate standard of living depend on long-term economic growth and institutional reform, these rights can be realized progressively. But the acceptable pace of “progressive realization” and the obligations to achieve it are rarely spelled out, left instead to each country to define and debate. The Millennium Development Goals more explicitly define what all countries agree can be demanded—benchmarks against which such commitments must be measured.

How do human development goals relate to the Millennium Development Goals?

Key capabilities for human development

Living a long and healthy life

Being educated

Having a decent standard of living

Enjoying political and civil freedoms to participate in the life of one’s community

Essential conditions for human development

Environmental sustainability

Equity—especially gender equity

Enabling global economic environment

Corresponding Millennium Development Goals

Goals 4, 5 and 6: reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating major diseases

Goals 2 and 3: achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality (especially in education) and empowering women

Goal 1: reducing poverty and hunger

Not a Goal but an important global objective included in the Millennium Declaration

Corresponding Millennium Development Goals

Goal 7: ensuring environmental sustainability

Goal 3: promoting gender equality and empowering women

Goal 8: strengthening partnership between rich and poor countries

cover all the crucial dimensions of human development. In particular, they do not mention expanding people's participation in the decisions that affect their lives or increasing their civil and political freedoms. Participation, democracy and human rights are, however, important elements of the Millennium Declaration.

The Goals provide building blocks for human development, with each relating to key dimensions of this process. The Goals also reflect a human rights agenda—rights to food, education, health care and decent living standards, as enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The need to ensure all these rights—economic, social and cultural—confers obligations on the governments of countries both rich and poor.

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND FOLLOWUP

The Millennium Development Goals reflect key aims of various UN development conferences in the 1990s. Thus they are the product of many national, regional and international consultations that involved millions of people and represented a wide range of interests, including those of governments, civil society organizations and private sector actors. These conferences emphasized the multidimensional nature of development—with human well-being as its end.

The Goals also build on the momentum created by the International Development Goals, devised in 1996 by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to define how its 23 bilateral donors would work together to improve lives in developing countries in the 21st century. The OECD goals set an important precedent because they were time-bound and quantifiable, and so could be monitored and help mobilize support.

But because the International Development Goals originated in the donor community, they were never wholeheartedly adopted by developing countries or by civil society groups. A 2000 publication, *A Better World For All: Progress towards the International Development Goals*, was widely criticized by civil society groups for holding developing countries accountable for their progress without acknowledging the roles in the process of rich countries and multilateral institutions.⁴

So, although the Millennium Development Goals include all but one of the International Development Goals, they are seen not as the brainchild solely of rich countries. Instead they are truly global development goals that reaffirm the world's collective commitment to improving the lives of people in poor countries. The Goals also recognize the responsibility of developing countries for their development—while placing more concrete demands on rich countries.

Defining the responsibilities of all countries was crucial for developing countries. Goal 8, for a global partnership, has no time-bound, quantified indicator to monitor progress and hold actors to account, as Goals 1–7 do. But its inclusion in the Goals is a significant step towards “solidarity”—a basic principle of the Millennium Declaration.

The March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, reaffirmed the world's commitment to the Millennium Declaration and its development targets. The conference advanced new terms for a global partnership based on mutual responsibilities between developing and rich countries. It also reaffirmed the primary responsibility of national governments for mobilizing domestic resources and improving governance—including sound economic policies and solid democratic institutions. And it reaffirmed commitments by rich countries to work towards a supportive international environment and increased financing for development.⁵ These commitments received additional backing at the September 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (see chapter 8).

DO GLOBAL GOALS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

The global community, often led by the United Nations, has set many development goals since the first Development Decade of the 1960s—and has a history of many failures. For example, in the Alma Ata Declaration of 1977 the world committed to health care for all people by the end of the century. Yet in 2000 millions of poor people died of pandemic and other diseases, many readily preventable and treatable. Similarly, at the 1990 Summit on Children the world committed to universal primary education by 2000.

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But that target was also missed. And the failures should serve as reminders of past neglect to follow through on solemn global pledges.

But UN goals have also achieved many successes—some spectacular. An immunization goal dramatically increased coverage, from 10–20% in 1980 to more than 70% in 1990 in more than 70 countries. And even when quantitative targets have not been achieved by their target dates, they have accelerated progress. For example, by 2000 life expectancy had been raised to at least 60 years in 124 countries. In the 1990s child mortality was reduced by a third or more in only 63 countries—but in more than 100 it was cut by a fifth. Thus global goals can raise ambitions and spur efforts (box 1.2).

ADDRESSING THE CRITICS

The Millennium Development Goals have been widely acclaimed, inspiring new energy for action against poverty. But they have also been criticized for:

- Being too narrow, leaving out development priorities such as strong governance, increased employment, reproductive health care and institutional reform of global governance.
- Relying on narrow indicators—such as school enrolment gaps to track progress in gender equality, or numbers of telephones to measure access to technology.
- Being unrealistic and setting the stage for discouragement—and for being used to name and shame countries that do not achieve them.
- Distorting national priorities, possibly undermining local leadership by promoting a top-down, often donor-led agenda at the cost of participatory approaches in which communities and countries set their own priorities.⁶

These concerns point to what could go wrong if the Goals—particularly their numerical indicators—are taken out of context and seen as ends in themselves rather than as benchmarks of progress towards the broader goal of eradicating human poverty. Though the Goals reflect consensus on key global development objectives, they are not a new model for development. And while all are important, the priority placed on each should be determined by national development strategies.

The Goals are ambitious—reflecting the urgent need for much faster progress on development. They are intended to mobilize action, not name and shame. They place demands on all actors to identify new actions and resources so that they can be reached. The poorer the country is, the greater the challenge. Contrast what Mali will have to do to halve poverty by 2015, to 36%⁷ and reduce under-five mortality by two-thirds, to 85 per 1,000 live births,⁸ with Sri Lanka's task: cutting poverty to 3.3%⁹ and under-five mortality to 8 per 1,000 live births.¹⁰ That does not mean that Mali is destined to fail. Rather, it reveals the huge challenges facing the poorest countries—and the enormous efforts needed from the international community.

Moreover, success should not be judged simply by achieving the Goals on time. Halving poverty by 2015 is not the end of the road, because countries must continue to halve it again and again. And countries should not be condemned if they do not achieve the Goals on time.

GLOBAL GOALS MUST BE COUNTRY OWNED

Although the Millennium Development Goals originated in the United Nations, they are people's goals—and they can be achieved only if efforts are nationally owned and country driven.

STRONG NATIONAL OWNERSHIP

Developing countries have been pursuing the underlying objectives of the Millennium Development Goals for decades. But the Goals require new political momentum for faster progress on reducing human poverty—a process already under way in many countries. As governments begin to assess whether and how the Goals will be achieved by 2015, they also assess policy priorities and develop national strategies. Several countries have increased social spending and launched new programmes in support of the Goals. For example, Bolivia has aligned its social policies with the Goals. Proposals have been made to substantially increase spending on health and education, and two national programmes have been created towards that end. Cameroon has also boosted funding for education and health,

Do global goals make a difference?

Since the earliest days of the United Nations, its member governments have set global goals, with several recurring objectives. Ending colonialism was a major theme of the 1950s and 1960s. Accelerating economic growth and advancing other economic goals—such as employment, industrialization and international assistance—were major themes of the first, second and third development decades (1960s, 1970s, 1980s). Goals for literacy, schooling, health, survival and water and sanitation were set from the early 1960s into the 1990s, culminating in the 2000 Millennium Declaration.

UN goals are often dismissed as overly ambitious and rarely achieved. Yet many goals have been achieved:

- Eradicating smallpox (World Health Organization declaration, 1965)—achieved in 1977.
- Immunizing 80% of infants (before their first birthday) against major childhood diseases by 1990 (World Health Organization declaration, 1974, refined in 1984)—achieved in about 70 countries, though the achievements have not been maintained in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Reducing children's deaths from diarrhoea by half (World Summit for Children, 1990)—achieved in the 1990s.
- Cutting infant mortality to less than 120 per 1,000 live births by 2000 (World Summit for Children, 1990)—achieved in all but 12 developing countries.
- Eliminating polio by 2000 (World Summit for Children, 1990)—achieved in 110 countries. More than 175 countries are now polio free.
- Eliminating guinea-worm disease by 2000 (World Summit for Children, 1990)—by 2000 the number of reported cases had declined by 97%, and the disease has been eliminated in all but 14 countries.

Significant progress has been made on many other goals even though they were not fully achieved:

- Accelerating economic growth in developing countries to 5% a year by the end of the 1960s and to 6% in the 1970s (UN resolution, 1961)—during the 1960s, 32 countries exceeded 5%, and during the 1970s, 25 countries exceeded 6%. (Though the record in the 1980s and 1990s was far more disappointing; see chapters 2 and 4.)
- Increasing developing countries' share in global industrial production (United Nations Industrial Development Organization declaration, 1975)—the share rose from 7% in 1970 to 20% in 2000, though these gains were limited to a small number of countries.
- Raising life expectancy to 60 years by 2000 (UN General Assembly resolution, 1980)—achieved in 124 of the 173 countries that fell below this threshold (almost all of them among the least developed countries, with many in Sub-Saharan Africa).
- Reducing child mortality by at least one-third more during the 1990s (World Summit for Children, 1990)—63 countries achieved the goal, and in more than 100 countries child deaths were cut by 20%.
- Eliminating or reducing hunger and malnutrition by 2000 (Third Development Decade, 1980s; World Summit for Children, 1990)—in

developing countries malnutrition dropped 17% between 1980 and 2000, but in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of undernourished people rose by 27 million in the 1990s.

- Achieving universal access to safe water by 1990, then by 2000 (Third Development Decade, 1980s; World Summit for Children, 1990)—access increased by 4.1 billion people, reaching 5 billion.

Still, some goals have failed almost entirely:

- Increasing official development assistance to 0.7% of rich countries' GNP starting in 1970 (UN General Assembly resolution, 1970; International Development Strategy for the 1970s)—assistance has actually fallen as a share of GNP, and in the 1990s only four countries achieved the 0.7% target (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden).
- Allocating 0.15% of GNP for official development assistance to the least developed countries in the 1980s and 1990s (UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, 1981)—8 of 16 members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee achieved the 0.15% target in the 1980s, but only 5 of 20 did so in the 1990s.
- Halving adult illiteracy by 2000 (World Summit for Children, 1990)—illiteracy fell from 25% in 1990 to just 21% in 2000.
- Eradicating malaria (World Health Organization declaration, 1965)—although there was success in Asia and Latin America, the "global" anti-malaria programme of the 1960s largely bypassed Africa (due to the perceived intractability of the disease there) even though it suffers the largest malaria burden. Over the next several decades the international community devoted little attention and scant resources to malaria, leading to fragmented interventions.

Whether the numerical target of a global goal was achieved is an important but inadequate measure of success, because it does not indicate whether setting the goal made a difference. In many cases enormous progress has been made even though numerical targets have not been reached—as with the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade of the 1980s (UN General Assembly, 1980), during which hardly any developing country achieved universal coverage. But the setting of global goals drew attention to these needs, and in the 1980s access to safe water increased 130% and access to sanitation increased 266%, both much more than in the 1970s or 1990s. Yet the decade has often been viewed as a failure simply because the numerical targets were not met.

Once set, goals agreed to at the United Nations have been followed up in very different ways. At one extreme have been goals like accelerating economic growth, where there has been little mobilization for implementation by the international community. At the other extreme have been goals like eradicating smallpox, expanding immunizations and reducing child mortality, where the international community—led by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund—have supported country action.

Source: Jolly 2003.

and politicians are using data on progress towards the Goals in their campaign debates.

National ownership is not just government ownership. Action must be driven not just by politicians and government agencies but also by communities, local authorities and civil society groups. The political momentum for policy

change must come from a country's people, pressing for more schools, better health care, improved water supplies and other essential elements of development. The Goals provide an entry point for applying such pressure. They empower communities and people to hold authorities accountable. And they offer a scorecard

The Goals are a major step towards building a true partnership for development, and in defining what is meant by partnership

for people to assess the performance of political leaders—from local to national government officials, to parliamentarians, to opposition parties (see chapter 7).

Civil society groups—from community organizations to global networks—are supportive allies, helping to build schools and mobilize research on neglected diseases. But they also have an essential role as watchdogs, monitoring those responsible for delivering results and shaping democratic debates on economic and social policies in poor communities. In newly democratizing states open debate on policy choices has often been absent or inadequate, leaving people vulnerable to populist rhetoric. Thus social mobilization around the Millennium Development Goals can help nurture and consolidate democratic processes, with the voices of ordinary people influencing policy-making. Though civil society groups have started to engage with the Goals, many are unaware or suspicious of them.¹¹

COMMITMENT OF RICH COUNTRY PARTNERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The Goals are a major step towards building a true partnership for development, and in defining what is meant by partnership. The agreements that emerged from the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development advanced the consensus on the mutual responsibilities of developing and rich countries. Developing countries are to focus on improving governance, especially in mobilizing resources, allocating them equitably and ensuring their effective use. Rich countries are to increase concessional financing and debt relief and to foster trade and technology transfers (see chapter 8).

CLEAR DIAGNOSIS OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The world needs a clear analysis of why global poverty endures, where and what the biggest obstacles are and what needs to be done to tackle them. Every poor country has to prepare a national strategy that addresses its circumstances.

The international community also needs to set priorities on how to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. These priorities need to be based on objective analysis of the biggest challenges and main obstacles, on evidence of what has worked (and what has not) and on ideas for new actions to accelerate progress.

For this analysis the UN Secretary-General has established the Millennium Project, a research initiative that brings together nearly 300 experts from academia, civil society, international organizations and the public and private sectors around the world. This project will issue its final report in 2005.

This *Human Development Report* also helps identify global priorities, provides data and analyses new ideas. This Report has been prepared in close collaboration with the Millennium Project, drawing on its work and on other in-house and commissioned research. It describes:

- Overall global progress towards the Goals—and identifies areas requiring the most attention (chapter 2).
- The structural constraints to economic growth and human development and the ways to overcome them (chapters 3).
- Policy options for achieving the Goals for education, hunger, health, gender equality and water and sanitation (chapter 4).
- Appropriate roles for the private and public sectors in expanding basic social services (chapter 5).
- Policy options for achieving the environment Goal (chapter 6).
- The role of people in building political momentum for policy change (chapter 7).
- New policies for trade, debt relief, technology transfers and aid needed to support the implementation of all the Goals (chapter 8).

The Millennium Development Compact, at the beginning of this Report, is its main policy plank. The Compact presents a new approach to help countries escape poverty traps and achieve the Goals, identifies the responsibilities of stakeholders and builds on the principles of the Monterrey Consensus (adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development)—which takes a performance rather than an entitlement approach to development cooperation.