

Man and Society in the Future

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have helped to change the lives of millions of people across the world from poverty, to overcome the deadly diseases and to ensure that children go to school. They have brought maternal deaths under control, expanded opportunities for women and increased access to clean drinking water. At the same time many countries have long way to go in promoting women empowerment, protecting the weaker sections of human race from devastating effects of crises like conflicts, natural disasters or volatility in prices for food and energy. Determined as the world leaders are, we are sure that they will achieve all the targets by 2015.

Keywords: Child mortality, Universal primary education, Gender equality, Women empowerment, Environmental sustainability, Global partnership for development.

Introduction

The millennium declaration made by the heads of the governments of member countries of United Nations at its millennium summit in 2000 captured the aspirations of the international community for the new century. It spoke of a world united by common values and reiterated decent standards of living for every man, woman and child.

Twelve years of sustained effort by world leaders since the declaration made, have helped to lift millions of peoples from poverty, save lives and ensure that children attend school. Their relentless efforts have reduced the maternal deaths, expanded opportunities for women, increased access to clean water and freed thousands of peoples from deadly and debilitating diseases. While all these are laudable, a critical look into the statistics reveal that we still have a long way to go in empowering women, promoting sustainable development and protecting the most vulnerable from the clutches of multiplies crises, whether they are conflicts, natural disasters or volatility in prices for food and energy.

It is observed that progress tends to bypass those who are at the lowest on the economic ladder or are otherwise disadvantaged because of their gender, age, disability or ethnicity. Disparities between urban and rural areas are also pronounced and daunting. Achieving the goals will require

equitable and inclusive economic growth, growth that reaches everyone and that will enable all people, especially the poor and marginalized, to benefit from economic opportunities.

Moreover, strong steps should be taken to protect the ecosystems that support economic growth and sustain life on earth. The enthusiasm shown by world leaders during last year's United Nations conference on sustainable development and the resolutions adopted during the conference generated momentum in these directions which is vital for achieving the MDGs. Between 2013 and 2015, it should be ensured that promises made become promises kept. The people of the world are watching. Too many of them are angry and anxious. They fear for their jobs, for their families and for their futures. World leaders must show that not only they care, but also they have the courage and conviction to act. The following section critically examines the ups and downs of progress made so far.

Lives Saved or Changed for Better

Poverty has reduced in many countries

Despite setbacks after 2008-2009 economic downturns, exacerbated by high inflation in food and energy, most countries are still on the track to reach poverty reduction targets. By 2015, it is

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expected that the global poverty rate will fall below 15%, well under 23% target.

This global trend, however, mainly reflects rapid growth in Eastern Asia, especially China. China's poverty rate was 60% in 1990. It has come down to 13% in 2012. Similarly, its hunger rate was 20% in 1990, which has come down to 10% in 2012. No doubt, these are great achievements.

Some of poorest countries have made the greatest strides in education

Burundi, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and United republic of Tanzania have achieved or are nearing the goal of universal primary education. Considerable progress has also been made in Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique and Niger where net enrolment ratios in primary school increased by more than 28 percentage points between 1999 and 2012. With 20% point gain between 1999 and 2012, Sub Saharan Africa is the region with best improvement records.

Targeted interventions have succeeded in reducing child mortality

During the period 2000 to 2008, the combined effect of improved immunization coverage and second dose immunization led to 70% drop in measles deaths, worldwide. These averted deaths are equal to 25% decline in mortality from all causes among children under 5. In absolute numbers, deaths of 'under 5' children declined from 12.4 million in 1990 to 8.1 million in 2009. Seen from other angle, nearly 12000 fewer children are dying each day.

Deaths due to malaria have come down significantly due to increased funding and control efforts

Governments around the world, international partners, community health workers and civil society, all worked hard to reign in the deadly disease of malaria. Their combined efforts resulted in reducing the deaths worldwide, from nearly 9, 85,000 in 2000 to 7, and 81,000 in 2009. Put in percentage form, it is as high as 20%.

All these were accomplished through critical interventions including the distribution of insecticide treated mosquito nets, which in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, are sufficient to cover 76% of the population at risk. The largest absolute drops in malaria deaths were in Africa, where all countries

have reduced malaria cases and deaths by over 50%.

Steady decline in HIV cases

Sub-Saharan Africa leads the way in reduction of HIV infections. In 2009, the new infections were 2.6 million only, a drop of 21% since 1997, when new infections peaked. Due to increased funding and expansion of major programs, the number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy for HIV or AIDS, increased thirteen times from 2004 to 2009. By the end 2009, 5.25 million people were receiving such treatment in low and middle income countries, an increase of over 1.2 million people since 2008. As a result, the number of AID related deaths declined by 19% over the same period.

Effective strategies against tuberculosis save millions of lives

Between 1995 and 2009, a total of 41 million tuberculosis patients were successfully treated and up to 6 million lives were saved due to effective international protocols for the treatment of tuberculosis. Worldwide, deaths attributed to the disease, have fallen by more than one third since 1990.

All regions of the world made progress in improving access to clean drinking water

Around 1.1 billion people in urban areas and 723 million people in rural areas gained access to improved drinking water resource over the period 1990-2008. Eastern Asia registered the largest gains in drinking water coverage, from 69% in 1990 to 91% in 2010. A major country of this region, China registered a gain from 67% in 1990 to 91% in 2010, a precipitous rate of achievement. Similarly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people using improved drinking water source doubled, from 252 million in 1990 to 492 million in 2008. In a representative country of this region, Cameroon, it increased from 49% in 1990 to 77% in 2010, which is a spectacular achievement.

The Downs of the Millennium Goals Achievement

Despite the progress, the most vulnerable remain unreached

Although most countries have demonstrated that progress is possible, they should target the hardest to reach; poorest of the poor and those disadvantaged because of their gender, age,

ethnicity or disability. Disparities in progress between urban and rural areas remain daunting.

The poorest children have made the slowest progress in terms of improved nutrition

In 2009, nearly quarter of the children in developing world was under-weight, with poorest children most affected. In Southern Asia, shortage of quality food and poor feeding practices combined with inadequate sanitation, has contributed to making under-weight prevalence among children highest in the world. In this region, between 1995 and 2009, no meaningful improvement was seen among children in the poorest household, while under-weight prevalence among children from richest 20% households decreased by almost one third. Children living in rural areas of developing regions are twice as likely to be under-weight as their urban counterparts.

Opportunities for full and productive employment remain particularly slim for women

Wide gaps remain in women's access to paid work in at least half of all regions. Following significant job losses in 2008- 009, the growth in employment during economic recovery in 2010, especially in developing world was lower for women than for men. Women employed in manufacturing industries were hardly hit.

Females or people living in conflict zones increase the probability that children will be out of school

The net enrolment ratio of children in primary schools has only gone up by 7% points since 1999, reaching 89% in 2009. More recently, progress has actually slowed, dimming prospects for reaching MDGs target of universal primary education by 2015. Children from poorest households, those living in rural areas and girls are most likely to be out of school. Worldwide, among children of primary school age not enrolled in school, 42% that

is, 28 million live in poor countries affected by conflict.

Improvement in sanitation often bypasses the poor and those living in rural areas

Over 2.6 billion people still lack access to flush toilets or other forms of improved sanitation and where progress has occurred, it has largely bypassed the poor.

An analysis of trends over period 1995-2008 for three countries in Southern Asia shows that improvements in sanitation dis-proportionately benefited the richer, while sanitation coverage to the poorest 40% of the households hardly increased. Similarly, rural populations remain at a distinct disadvantage in most regions.

Improving the lives of growing number of urban slum dwellers in developing countries remain a monumental challenge

Progress in ameliorating slum conditions has not been satisfactory. In developing countries, the number of urban residents living in slum conditions is now estimated at 828 million, compared to 657 million in 1990 and 767 million in 2000.

Re-doubled efforts will be needed to improve the lives of urban poor in cities and metropolises across developing world.

Progress has been uneven in improving access to safe drinking water

Coverage in improving access to safe drinking water in rural areas lags behind that of cities in all regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, an urban dweller is 1.8 times more likely to use an improved drinking water source than a person living in rural area

Region-wise progress reports on achievement of MDGs

The report on achievement of MDGs with regard to the eight goals specified by the UN is as follows:

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger		Target Half between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$ 1 a day.	
Sl. No.	Region	1990	2005
1	Sub Saharan Africa	58	50
2	South Asia	49	39
3	Caribbean Islands	30	26
4	Caucasus and Central Asia	25	19
5	South East Asia	39	19
6	Eastern Asia	60	16
7	Latin America	11	7
8	Western Asia	7	6
9	Northern Africa	5	3
10	Developing Regions	45	27

Table 1.Proportion of people living less than & 1.25 a day

Goal 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education		Target Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete full course of primary schooling	
Sl. No.	Region	1990	2009
1	Sub Saharan Africa	60	76
2	South Asia	78	91
3	Caucasus and Central Asia	80	93
4	South East Asia	90	94
5	Eastern Asia	93	96
6	Latin American & Caribbean	94	95
7	Western Asia	80	88
8	Northern Africa	90	94
9	Developed Regions	96	97

Table 2.Net enrolment ration in Primary Education

Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower women		Target Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015	
Sl. No.	Region	1990	2009
1	Sub Saharan Africa	90	92
2	South Asia	85	95
3	Caucasus and Central Asia	80	98
4	South East Asia	93	97
5	Eastern Asia	97	100
6	Latin American & Caribbean	94	97
7	Western Asia	61	92
8	Northern Africa	69	95
9	Developing Regions	78	82

Table 3.No. of Girls per 100 boys in Primary Education

Goal 4 Reduce Child Morality		Target Reduce by 2/ 3 rd between 1990 and 2015, the under 5 morality rates.	
Sl. No.	Region	1990	2009
1	Oceania	280	230
2	Sub Saharan Africa	850	640
3	South Asia	620	280
4	Caribbean islands	325	170
5	South East Asia	380	160
6	Eastern Asia	120	41
7	Latin America	110	80
8	Western Asia	120	70
9	Caucasus & Central Asia	100	54
10	North Africa	200	92
11	Developed Regions	26	17

Table 4. Maternal deaths per 100000 live births

Goal 5 Improve Maternal Health		Target Reduce by three quarter between 1990 & 2015 the maternal mortality ratio.	
Goal 6 Combat HIV/ AIDS Malaria and other diseases		Target Have halted by 2012 and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/ AIDS	
Sl. No.	Region	2001	2009
1	Caucasus & Central Asia	0.04	0.03
2	Sub Saharan Africa	0.57	0.40
3	South Asia	0.04	0.02
4	Caribbean	0.09	0.08
5	South East Asia & Oceania	0.04	0.04
6	Eastern Asia	0.01	0.01
7	Western Asia	< 0.01	< 0.01
8	Latin America	0.04	0.03
9	Developed Region	0.05	0.03

Table 5. HIV incidence rate (No. of New HIV infection per year per 100 people aged 15 to 49, 2001, 2009)

Goal 7 Ensure Environmental sustainability		Target Integrate the principles of sustainable development into countries' policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources.			
Sl. No.	Region	Net Gain		Net Loss	
		1990-2000	2000-2010	1990-2000	2000-2010
1	Asia		2.2	0.6	
2	Europe	0.9	0.7		
3	Africa			4	3.4
4	North & Central America		0	0.3	
5	Oceania			0.4	0.7
6	South America			4.2	4.0

Table 6. Net change in forest area between 1990 and 2000 and 2000-2010 (Million Hectare per year)

What Needs to be Done Next?

Achieving the MDGs by 2015 is challenging but possible. Much depends on achievement of MDG-8, the global partnership for development. The ongoing economic crises decelerating much of the developments must not be allowed to raise its ugly head. Let us build on our successes, we have achieved so far and let us not relent until all MDGs have been attained.

Achievement of MDGs will be, perhaps, the greatest service to the mankind and the society by the leaders of the world. Although impressive achievement has been made in eradicating poverty, improving public health, reducing child and maternal mortality, spreading education among masses, providing employment, still lot remains to be done in these areas. The rich and the middle class people should share their resources and love

with the have-nots of the world. Let us throw away our greed and make the world a better place for all members of human race.

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Goal 8 Develop a Global partnership for development							Target In co-operation with private sector, make available benefits of new technologies especially information and communication.									
S.No	Region	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	Least Developed Countries	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.8	2	2.4	2.8	3	3.5	4
2	Developing Countries	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.8	2	2.5	3.2	4	6	8	10	13	1.8	20	22
3	Developed Countries	5	7	10	18	25	30	35	40	46	50	58	62	65	69	72

Table 7.Number of Internet Users Per 100 inhabitants