



# UN-HABITAT

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## Africa and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

### AFRICA CAN STILL ACHIEVE THE MDGS BY 2015

Rising food prices, record energy costs and climate change all threaten to reverse existing advances toward the MDGs. The World Bank estimates that high food prices and climate change could together drive over 100 million people into extreme poverty. This would undo most of the gains the world's poor have made over the last decade.

The MDG Africa Steering Group recommendations: *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa* launched on 1 July 2008 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, at the African Union Summit, calls for targeted investments in agriculture to launch a green revolution in Africa; stepped-up support to education and healthcare systems; major projects to fill critical gaps in the continent's infrastructure and trade networks; and improvements in national statistical systems so that progress on the MDGs can be tracked more effectively. The recommendations also call for increased ODA quality and predictability as disbursements increase to finance these investments.

With the momentum generated by strong economic growth rates in many African countries, increased commitment to domestic resource mobilization, improving governance and better policy performance, the Steering Group on the MDGs contends that the goals can still be achieved in Africa by 2015. These solid efforts by African governments need to be matched by follow-through on existing G8 aid commitments to help Africa make major gains in the fight against poverty:

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss.
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
- Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.

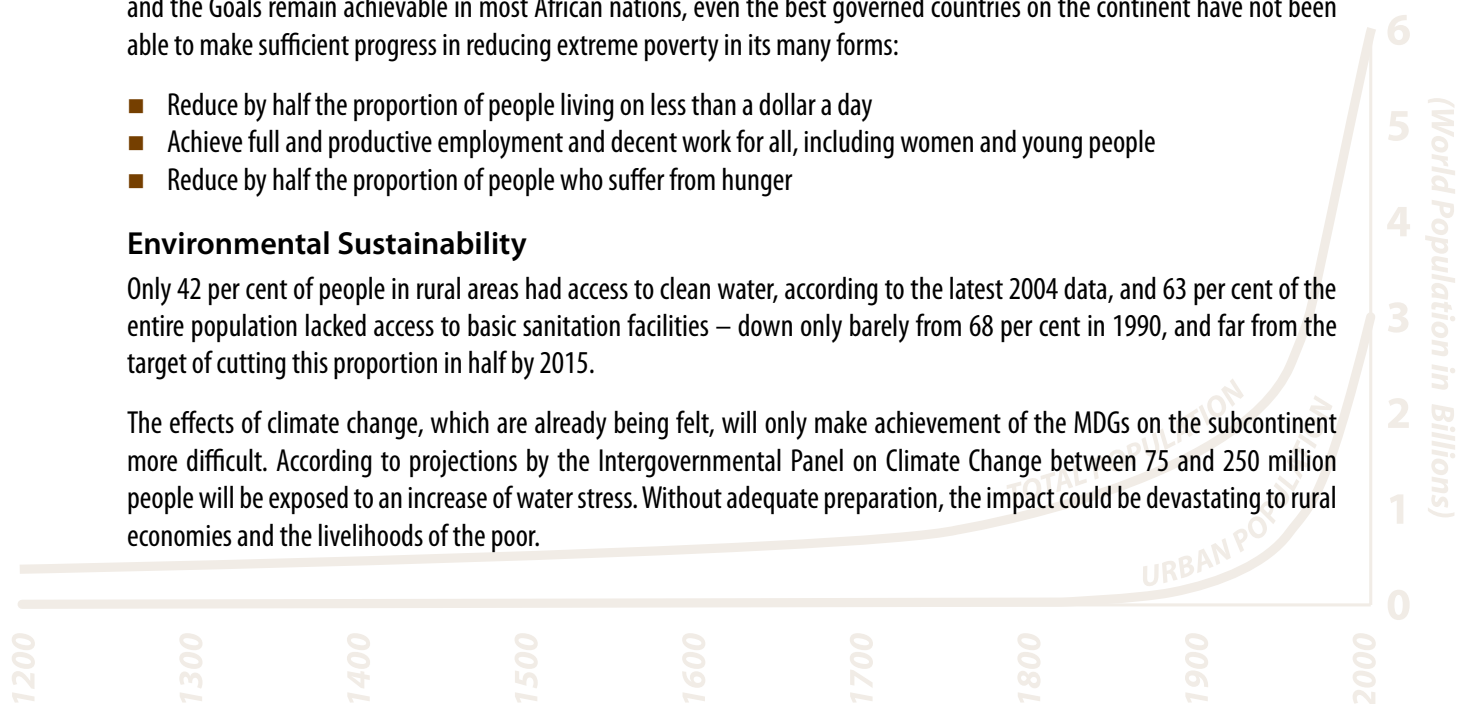
At the midway point between their adoption in 2000 and the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve any of the Goals. Although there have been major gains in several areas and the Goals remain achievable in most African nations, even the best governed countries on the continent have not been able to make sufficient progress in reducing extreme poverty in its many forms:

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

### Environmental Sustainability

Only 42 per cent of people in rural areas had access to clean water, according to the latest 2004 data, and 63 per cent of the entire population lacked access to basic sanitation facilities – down only barely from 68 per cent in 1990, and far from the target of cutting this proportion in half by 2015.

The effects of climate change, which are already being felt, will only make achievement of the MDGs on the subcontinent more difficult. According to projections by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change between 75 and 250 million people will be exposed to an increase of water stress. Without adequate preparation, the impact could be devastating to rural economies and the livelihoods of the poor.



## **SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: 2005 - 1990**

### **A Window of Opportunity**

While it is well known that the continent is the only region in the world where the number of extreme poor has risen over the past fifteen years, it may be less well known that African countries have experienced major improvements in key development fundamentals. Fuelled by improved economic policies and rising commodity prices, annual economic growth has averaged close to 6 per cent for the last three years. This growth has been spread fairly evenly among countries, and the IMF now envisages a short-term trend rate moving toward 7 per cent per year.

There is a downward trend in the number of civil conflicts. Export receipts have improved current-account balances in many countries, and recently granted debt relief has reduced macro-economic imbalances in the poorest nations.

African enterprises are generating stronger domestic investment and productivity gains. Many governments in the region have continued to become more transparent, less corrupt and more democratic.

Yet this progress remains fragile, as it is driven in large measure by a boom in commodity prices. African countries continue to depend on few primary commodities for export and lack the essential public investments in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure that are needed to strengthen capacity for production and trade, sustain high growth rates and create employment.

### **SOME SUCCESS STORIES**

Countries across Africa are demonstrating that rapid and large-scale progress towards the MDGs is possible when strong government leadership and good policies are combined with adequate financial and technical support from the international community. Recent examples include:

- In one year Malawi's voucher programme for fertilizers and seeds has led to a doubling of agricultural productivity during the 2006/7 growing season.
- Ghana is successfully implementing a national school feeding programme using locally produced foods.
- Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and many other countries have abolished fees for primary schools resulting in dramatic increases in enrolment during the space of a few years.
- In 2006, Zambia cancelled fees for basic rural health services and Burundi introduced free medical care for mothers and children.
- With support from the Red Cross Red Crescent, WHO, UNICEF and the US Centers for Disease Control, African countries such as Niger, Togo and Zambia have successfully launched national campaigns for measles vaccination and distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated anti-malaria bed nets. These campaigns were rolled out nation-wide within a period of two weeks and led to at least a halving of malaria incidence.
- In Niger, hundreds of thousands of people in rural communities greatly improved their livelihoods and reduced their vulnerability to droughts through large-scale reforestation driven by national policy reforms.
- Senegal is on track to achieving the water and sanitation goals through a national investment programme financed with donor support.
- Many African governments, with growing donor support, are now taking to national scale the lessons of the Millennium Villages – that local leadership and a combination of interventions can transform poor communities in a short period of time.

## MEETING COMMITMENTS:

### The Global Partnership for Development

Most African countries are ready to replicate and scale-up these successes, but they require more and better-quality official development assistance to finance public investments in the MDGs. Yet, while aid to sub-Saharan Africa increased during the first few years of the Millennium, it has remained virtually unchanged since 2004, if one excludes one-off debt relief and humanitarian assistance.

Donors need to accelerate their plans to scale up assistance, to maintain the credibility of their 2005 pledge to double aid to Africa by 2010. Moreover, donors need to issue country-by country timelines for how they are going to increase aid, so that African governments can plan for essential investments and prepare supporting macroeconomic frameworks.

Not only the developed but also many developing countries are granting duty free access to least developed countries in Africa, in accord with the Millennium Declaration principle of creating an environment “conducive to development and the elimination of poverty”. But even the African LDCs suffer from supply-side constraints and often unreasonable rules of origin on their products. On a broader scale, progress on the Doha round of talks to create a development-friendly world trade regimen has stalled and must move forward.

Despite the lack of progress towards the MDGs, the Goals remain achievable in most African countries. Yet time is running out to make the needed practical investments. Existing commitments made and reaffirmed by world leaders at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and the 2005 World Summit are sufficient to meet the Goals. At the midway point of 2007, these commitments must be urgently translated into practical plans with systematic follow-through.

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory, includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction— nationally and internationally
- Address the least developed countries’ special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries’ debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies especially information and communications technologies

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