

The Millennium Development Goals Report



UNITED NATIONS

2011

Western Asia records progress on the survival and health of mothers and children

BUT IS STILL FACING SERIOUS CHALLENGES ON MANY OF THE GOALS – UN

BEIRUT, 7 JULY 2011 — According to the *Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Report 2011*, Western Asia has made good progress in improving the survival and health of mothers and children. Maternal deaths in the region declined by 52 per cent between 1990 and 2008, largely owing to increases in skilled attendance at birth, skilled antenatal care and contraceptive use, as well as a drop in adolescent childbearing. However, progress in the reduction of adolescent pregnancies has stagnated since 2000 and the adolescent birth rate remains high at 52 births per 1,000 women 15-19 years old.

Similarly, the death rate of children under the age of five declined from 68 per cent to 32 per cent between 1990 and 2009. And the proportion of children under age five who are underweight decreased from 11 per cent to 7 per cent over the same time frame (excluding Yemen). But the proportion of children aged 12-23 months who received at least one dose of measles vaccine decreased from 84 per cent to 82 per cent between 2000 and 2009, threatening some of the recent progress on child mortality.

The number of tuberculosis deaths per 100,000 people decreased from 8 to 5 between 1990 and 2009, putting Western Asia on track to meet the Stop TB Partnership target of halving 1990 mortality rates from tuberculosis by 2015. On HIV/AIDS, Western Asia also showed strong progress, with 57 per cent of the population living with HIV receiving antiretroviral treatment – the widest antiretroviral therapy coverage among all regions worldwide.

POVERTY REDUCTION AND GENDER EQUALITY ARE STILL DISTANT TARGETS

Western Asia is one of three regions that are not on track to meet the poverty-reduction target of the MDGs. The proportion of people in Western Asia living on less than \$1.25 a day – the international poverty line defined by the World Bank – increased from 2 per cent to 6 per cent between 1990 and 2005. Popular protests and uprisings across Western Asia and Northern Africa since the beginning of 2011 have led to a temporary stagnation of economies of the countries of the region. According to UN experts, the economies of countries such as Yemen, Syria and Bahrain will be particularly affected, which may make it even harder for Western Asia to reduce poverty in the region until stability is restored.

Western Asia made some progress on access to primary education, but will unlikely meet the target of universal primary education by 2015. The region reached 88 per cent enrolment in 2009, up from 83 per cent in 1999.

Girls, however, remain at a distinct disadvantage, with only 92 girls enrolled in primary, 86 girls in secondary, and 87 girls in tertiary education for every 100 boys in 2009.

On employment, the MDG Report says progress in reducing “vulnerable employment”, characterized by informal

working arrangements, lack of adequate social protection, low pay and difficult working conditions, stalled following the economic crisis. The proportion of people employed as either own-account or unpaid family workers increased from 28 per cent to 29 per cent between 2008 and 2009.

Access to paid work for women remains a challenge, with fewer than one in five paid jobs outside the agricultural sector held by women in 2009.

Women's participation in politics also remains among the weakest in the world, with only 9 per cent of seats held by women in single or lower houses of national parliaments by end-January 2011.

On environmental sustainability, the report says the limits for sustainable water resources have already been exceeded in Western Asia, where around 2005, more than 100 per cent of the internal renewable water resources were withdrawn.

The Millennium Development Goals Report, an annual assessment of regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 25 UN and international agencies and is produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A complete set of the data used to prepare the report is available at mdgs.un.org.

For more information and press materials, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

MEDIA CONTACTS

In Beirut

Cynthia Khoury, email khouryc@un.org, +961 1 978 829

In New York

Newton Kanhema, e-mail kanhema@un.org, +1 212-963-5602

Wynne Boelt, e-mail boelt@un.org, +1 212-963-8264

Issued by the UN Department of Public Information – DPI/2570G – July 2011