The Arab Millennium Development Goals Report

Facing challenges and looking beyond 2015

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The report is a product of collaboration between League of Arab States, the United Nations organizations members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the Regional United Nations Development Group for the Arab States, and coordinated by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Two years to go to 2015, this is the fourth and final Arab MDG report.
The Report: Objectives and Methodology

• The content:
  – Assessment of MDG progress
  – Rethinking a post-2015 development agenda for the Arab region

• Following the metadata guidelines, the report uses statistics from both national and international sources
Three main messages

1. Overall, strong progress on many MDG targets, but with deficits in addressing inequality, quality, governance and regional partnership.

2. Recent political transitions in some countries provide an opportunity to meet people’s aspirations, yet they are a current threat to MDG progress.

3. The post-2015 development framework should have, at its core, pillars that promote good governance; emphasize the *quality*, not just the *quantity* of development; empower women; reduce inequalities; and foster sustainable development for all.
1. Despite strong progress towards achievement of many MDG targets, inequalities remain between countries and within countries.
Primary net enrolment rates, per cent

- Primary school enrolment and literacy rates in the region have increased.
- The region is increasingly close to gender parity in education for primary, secondary as well as tertiary enrolment.
- But regional averages hide disparities across sub-regions for both MDG 2 and MDG 3, in particular slow progress by the LDCs.

Significant gains towards universal access to education and gender parity
Mashreq, Maghreb and GCC are on track in terms of reducing child mortality (MDG 4) and improving maternal health (MDG 5). But progress in the Arab region as a whole is slow in meeting the targets, mainly due to slow progress by the LDCs.

Three out of four sub-regions have made notable achievements towards reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.
Births attended by skilled health personnel

- On average the Arab region has improved access to health care, but the LDCs stagnate at a low level.
- Analysis at the household level reveals glaring disparities between rich and poor:
  - The richest quintile benefits from almost universal access to health care, while the poorest quintile suffers from widespread lack of access to services.

Progress towards universal access to reproductive health care is held back by geographical and economic disparities
Millions more in the region have access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation, even though the rural-urban divide deepened.

The destruction of infrastructure due to conflict prevents sufficient progress towards the targets of MDG 7 in some parts of the region.
Prevalence of undernourishment, per cent

- Food insecurity, due to factors including conflict, poor environmental management and volatile food prices, is severe in some countries.
- Above 50 million people in the region are undernourished, up from 30 million in 1990.

Too many people still suffer from undernourishment
Summary of MDGs: Despite deficits in MDG 1 & 7, Arab region has performed better than the average of developing regions.
Summary of MDGs: LDCs and countries in conflict lag significantly behind.

-70.9%  -59.0%  -44.8%  -37.3%  -35.2%  -35.1%  -32.3%  -30.5%  -17.3%  -7.4%  -4.8%  3.6%  5.8%  20.3%  27.0%  27.9%

Somalia  Sudan  Iraq  Djibouti  Yemen  Palestine  Mauritania  Comoros  Jordan  Morocco  Algeria  Saudi Arabia  Syria  Tunisia  Egypt  Oman
2. The recent events represent an opportunity for the region if the aspirations of the people are met, but also a challenge to MDG progress by 2015.
Extreme poverty is comparatively low in the region and has declined slowly from 5.5 per cent in 1990 to 4.1 in 2010.

Following the political turmoil and conflict witnessed in some countries of the region, the proportion of extreme poverty spikes to 7.4 per cent in 2012.

According to national poverty lines, poverty also rose from 22% to 23%.
Instability affected poverty, unemployment and hunger

- Unemployment is expected to have reached 14.8 per cent in 2013, which is above the 1990 level.
- The estimated increases in poverty and unemployment are expected to contribute to a continuing increase of people suffering from hunger.
- One out of five in the near future and up from 15 per cent in 2011.
Fiscal space for development expenditure in middle-income countries and LDCs is more constrained after 2010

- Mashreq and the LDCs are facing increased debt levels
  - Some middle-income countries are above the 60 per cent debt-to-GDP threshold for debt sustainability
  - All LDCs are above the 40 per cent debt-to-GDP threshold for debt sustainability

- Government fiscal deficits are rising
  - From 2011 to 2012, the deficits grew from 2.3 per cent to 4.5 per cent in the LDCs, and from 5 per cent to 8.4 per cent in the Mashreq countries
3. The post-2015 development framework should have, at its core, pillars that promote good governance; emphasize the quality, not just the quantity of development.
Drive and embody inclusive development through good governance

- The fact that some of the countries caught in the recent wave of political instability were also among the region’s leading MDG achievers raises important questions about critical issues that have been overlooked by the MDG framework.

- In the Arab region, in particular in the countries that have gone through political transition, the rebuilding of institutions is critical.
Declining voice and accountability along with rising income in the Arab region
Emphasize the **quality**, not just the **quantity** of development

- The quality of services that affect development (education, health care etc.) should be firmly incorporated in the post-2015 agenda.

- Not just rate of growth but quality of growth should be prime attention of measuring success in the new development agenda.

- Similarly, quality of life of men and women, and the personal freedoms they have needs greater attention in monitoring any set of development goals.
Rethink indicators to monitor poverty and inequality

- Reliance on the international fixed poverty line of US $1.25 raises concerns for many developing countries, especially in the Arab region.

- Measures of inequality should be more reliable and account for actual disparities.

- Measures need to go beyond just income poverty and inequality.
National efforts need to combine with regional and global partnerships for development

- ODA is far below what is needed for the LDCs, given their limited MDG achievements.

- ODA from Arab donor countries as a share of GNI has declined since 1990, but Arab donors are still more generous than OECD-DAC countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arab ODA / GNI</th>
<th>DAC ODA / GNI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-94</td>
<td>1.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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Finally, two years to 2015, countries need to prioritise critical policy interventions to accelerate MDG progress

- First, an Arab food security fund can expedite relief during food emergencies
  - Given the region’s acute food security issues, now is the time for implementation of a fund

- Second, Arab countries need to improve social protection
  - It promises income security and access to all essential services to all citizens, and is a way of ensuring progress across the MDGs.
The recommendations of the report resonate with the outcome of UNDG regional consultations and My World priorities

- Arab Development Forum -- Regional civil society consultation convened by Regional UNDG.
- Over 200 participants discussing a range of development issues for two days – most of the issues covered by the Millennium Declaration, including those reflected in the MDGs.
- National Consultations convened by UNCTs in Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen.
- Findings of the global My World survey in which, as of today, over 32,000 participants from Arab States have marked their priorities.
Five Main Messages from the UNDG Regional Post-2015 Consultation, Amman (10-11 April 2013)

- **Build on the success of the MDGs** by retaining simple and relevant goals around basic development issues such as poverty, education, health, environment.

- But allow for much **more tailoring of indicators and targets** at regional or national levels. For example on poverty, the $1.25 cut-off is simply not relevant in most Arab countries.

- Allow also for reflection of the importance of **quality, not only quantity**. For example in education. We’ve expanded access but quality has not improved apace.

- Better integrate the **broad agenda of the Millennium Declaration** – covering such issues as governance, accountability, peace and security, rights, international partnership, sustainability in all its dimensions, and **inequality**.

- And last but not least, when it comes to implementation, allow for a much **greater role for civil society** in defining development targets, working towards their achievement, monitoring progress and advocating for effective policies.