

The Millennium Development Goals and the Mediterranean Region

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MDGs: A general overview

Adopted by 191 countries at the Millennium Summit in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight time-bound, measurable goals aimed at improving living conditions world-wide. The MDGs aspire towards poverty eradication, universal primary education, gender equality, reduced child mortality, improved maternal health, the combat of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and global partnerships for development. The MDGs are designed to be achieved by 2015 and are measured for each country through 18 targets and 48 indicators.

The MDGs were developed and heralded in the United Nations' Millennium Declaration, which asserted that the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance are vital for MDG achievement. Marking the first five years following the Millennium Summit, the World Summit (14th-16th September 2005) witnessed the signatory countries' re-affirmation to MDG achievement.

The choice of the MDGs and their indicators reflects the priority given to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

by the international community. Their needs represented the most urgent global priorities, and were intensively present when identifying the MDGs. Many countries of an intermediate level of development, however, felt that the MDGs do not adequately reflect their national development context – both in the Arab region and in the European Mediterranean countries. As such, these countries have to deal with the MDGs in a different way. For intermediate level countries, the MDGs represent an efficient tool to identify priorities within the national development strategy, especially for eradicating pockets of extreme poverty, narrowing the regional or social disparities regarding educational and health indicators, addressing environmental problems, and for formulating more efficient pro-poor macro-economic policies.

MDGs are a strong political and advocacy tool. Donor countries use them as criteria to allocate their international aid to developing countries. The latter and the international community can also use them, to monitor the commitment of donors and the compatibility of international policies with MDGs. This relationship, however, must not be limited to aid: MDGs must be used as a tool to assess international policies and as a tool for multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

MDGs in the Mediterranean

Mediterranean countries' involvement in the MDGs is extensive and varied. National MDG reports (NMDGRs) have been published in 13 Mediterranean countries, four of them in 2005. In the

lead-up to the World Summit, sub-regional MDG reports were also published, with the second Arab Region MDG Report and the EU Report on the MDGs both coming out in 2005. The Millennium Campaign, a UN initiative to support citizens' efforts to hold their governments accountable for MDG achievement, is active in France, Italy, Lebanon and Spain. 2005 witnessed numerous coordinated demonstrations and rallies around the MDGs.

MDGs in the Mediterranean – Who Does What

Reflecting the many levels of development found in the Mediterranean region, the MDGs – their status, achievement and promotion – vary drastically from country to country.

France, Italy and Spain's work on the MDGs is mainly through their role in the Millennium Campaign, and as donors to UN projects and programmes working on achieving the MDGs – either through the EU or directly to specific projects. Of the remaining European states in the Mediterranean region, three are MDG donors (Cyprus, Greece and Malta), and six have produced National MDG reports or MDG status reports (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey). Information is not readily available on Monaco's actions with regard to the MDGs.

Of the eight Arab states bordering the Mediterranean, all work with UN agencies on the MDGs, and seven have published NMDGRs. Not an Arab state, Israel also has not produced a National MDG report.

MDGs in the Mediterranean – Why They Matter

Designed to be universally applicable, the MDGs can be specified and localized for each region, sub-region, country or governorate. Although most of the Mediterranean countries predict being able to achieve the majority of the MDGs by 2015, as specified in their NMDGRs, the intra-regional disparities run deep. According to the Human Development Report 2005, for example, adult literacy (for anyone 15 years or older) ranges from 99.7% for Slovenia, to 88.3% for Turkey, to 50.7% for Morocco.

MDG Achievement in the Mediterranean

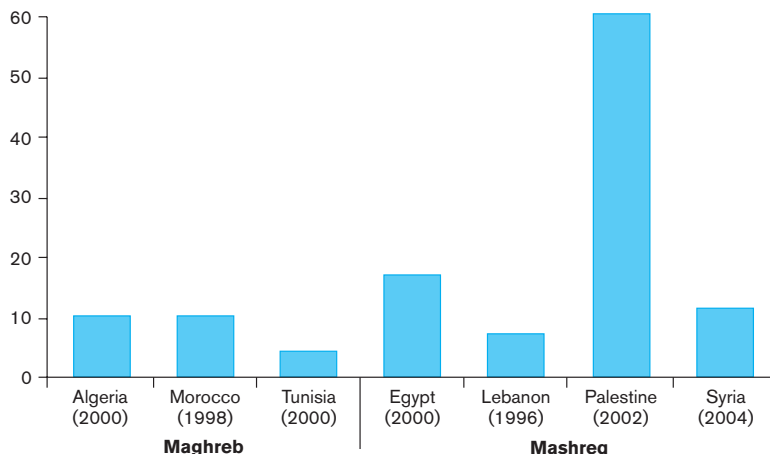
The vast disparities between the Mediterranean countries would make direct comparison between countries ineffective. The Arab region consists of the 22 members of the League of Arab States. The 2005 *Arab Region MDG Report* advocates dividing analysis by sub-region. In accordance with these sub-regional divisions, the following analysis will look at MDG achievement in the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya), and in four out of six Mashreq counties (Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria). The remaining Arab sub-regions are the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (six countries), and the LDCS (six countries).

All eight Arab Mediterranean countries are middle income/intermediate development level countries with discrepancies among them, with the exception of Palestine. Due to the ongoing occupation and conflict in Palestine, massive damage has caused the deterioration of all Palestinian development and MDGs indicators.

Analysis will then follow for those European Mediterranean countries which have produced NMDGRs or MDG data. Additional analysis will include the remaining Mediterranean EU countries.

In both the Arab – and the European-Mediterranean countries' NMDGRs, Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) is emphasized, with econom-

GRAPHIC 15 Percentage of population below national poverty line Arab Mediterranean



ic growth and job creation recommended. Additional challenges cited for all Mediterranean countries include intra-country regional disparities, gender inequality and youth unemployment. The needs for improved methods of data gathering, and for gender-disaggregated data, are also highlighted in all reports.

MDG-related events vary widely across the Mediterranean in 2005. In the Arab states and European Mediterranean countries with NMDGRs, the MDG events are primarily focused on MDG achievement, through projects, programmes and workshops. For the European Mediterranean donor countries, however, MDG involvement includes campaigns and awareness raising to urge further action by these governments in assisting MDG achievement.

Arab MDGs in the Mediterranean

The Arab NMDGRs include concerns of high fertility and illiteracy rates. Large and potentially widening poverty gaps are noted in most Arab NMDGRs, as is the lack of sufficient social and health services. Additionally, it is worth noting that most "Arab countries lack the adequate statistics and comparable data required to identify meaningful trends... (and) an adequate definition of poverty or the poor has not been reached or adopted in many Arab countries." (Abdel Samad, 2005).

International reports state that the poverty incidence in the Arab region (measured at less than \$1/day per capita PPP) varies between 2.5% and 3.5% of the total population. This is the lowest rate of all the regions of the world – and thus sends the misleading message that poverty eradication is not a priority for the region. National governments contribute to the situation when they opt for conservative poverty estimates in their own countries by using low poverty lines, assuming that it provides a better image of their countries and proves the efficiency of their social and economic policies. However, most experts, civil society organizations and concerned citizens are not convinced by these estimates. For these reasons the 2005 *Arab Region MDG Report* chose to disregard the 1\$ per day poverty line, and used instead estimated national poverty lines – although it then faced some methodological constraints which made comparisons among countries risky.

Maghreb MDGs Statistics

According to the national poverty lines cited in the Arab Region MDG Report 2005, poverty in the Maghreb increased from 7.3% to 9.1% between 1990 and 2000. Total poverty in Tunisia, however, decreased from 6.7 in 1990 to 4.2 in 2000. Food deprivation is stable at 5% in the Maghreb, (although high in Morocco at 7%) and

the primary education enrolment rate was 93.5% in 2002, an increase of 13% in 12 years. Gender disparities are decreasing in terms of literacy and education, but remain high for the workforce and decision-making. Under-five child mortality rates have dramatically reduced in the Maghreb countries, but very little achievement has been made in improving maternal health. Energy use per unit of GDP is relatively stable, carbon dioxide emissions are decreasing, and the proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation is increasing slightly.

Maghreb MDG Events

In Morocco in 2005, UN projects focused on engendering the MDGs by advocating equality in education, and on enhancing parliamentarians' capacity and substantive knowledge of MDGs. A third project, piloted by UNDP Morocco and the Algerian Muslim Scouts, targeted the promotion of the MDGs in rural areas through reinforcing the capacities of local NGOs, as well as assisting the formation of 40 NGOs. In June, the MDGs City-to-City Challenge Pilot Program – a mobilization of city-to-city relationships maximizing international municipal cooperation in addressing the MDGs – partnered Chicago with Casablanca.

At the second Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit in Morocco, 18th-23rd August, young leaders from more than 40 African countries identified sports as an entry point for MDG achievement, with UNDP Morocco's sports initiative to help at-risk youth in Casablanca proposed as a replicable example.

In Tunisia the Millennium Caravan, now in its second year, continued to raise awareness about the MDGs and how they can be achieved in Tunisia. Orchestrated through a project by UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, the Millennium Caravan has now toured the majority of Tunisia's governorates.

In November in Libya, MDG training sessions were held for local government officials to help capacity development for localizing the MDGs, orchestrated by UNDP.

Mashreq MDG Statistics

Egypt and Syria are witnessing a reduction in absolute poverty and Lebanon's poverty rate is stable. Poverty in Palestine, however, a crisis afflicted country, has spiralled since 2000, with no indication of declining. Food deprivation has increased for Palestine, up to 19%, and the prevalence of underweight children under five in Egypt increased to 8.6%. Primary education enrolment increased in the region to 93.2%, and the gender parity index for primary education is 0.92. Gender disparity in the workforce and in positions of decision-making is still high, although with 10% female representation in parliament, the Mashreq leads the Arab world. Child mortality has been reduced by two-thirds in the region, but only limited gains occurred for improving maternal health. Additionally, Female Genital Mutilation continues in Egypt, resulting from an absence of law enforcement. Energy use per unit of GDP is increasing, with cultivated land representing only 5% of total land area, making land degradation a major threat. The proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water is decreasing slightly in the region, but increasing for access to improved sanitation.

Mashreq MDG Events

In collaboration with the League of Arab States, UNDP organized a regional MDG Governmental-Civil Society workshop in Cairo in June 2005. The workshop sought to enhance CSO engagement in the MDG processes, aided by the development of CSO-governmental dialogue. UNDP also organized a conference in Cairo on Local Governance and Localizing the MDGs in the Arab Region in July, gathering UN agencies and governmental actors.

Egypt's second NMDGR was published in March. UNDP Egypt worked throughout 2005 in assisting the government to formulate a Poverty Reduction Action Plan, linking action points to the MDGs. Working towards the achievement of MDG 6, (combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases), the Global Youth Partners Initiative for Preventing

HIV/AIDS was active in Egypt and Lebanon in 2005, through Anti-AIDS clubs in Egypt and a country needs assessment and the development of community centres in Lebanon.

In Lebanon, a roll-out agenda for 2005 was developed based on the NMDGR. MDG awareness raising sessions were held with the Lebanese Parliament, and a MDG Fair was held targeting student and civil society organizations' involvement. Round table discussions on the MDGs, organized by UNDP Lebanon, were held with NGOs, representatives from the private sector, NGOs and UN agencies. In October an inter-UN agency and experts meeting was held on MDG indicators. In coordination with the Millennium Campaign, the international White Band Days [Three White Band Days were held in 2005 – internationally coordinated demonstrations and events where participants wore white bracelets saying No Excuses 2015 – as part of a global effort to achieve the MDGs] and the Global Call for Action against Poverty, NGOs organized gatherings in Beirut urging greater attention for the achievement of the MDGs.

In Palestine, UN agencies worked with the Ministry of Planning to establish PalInfo, a national system for monitoring the MDGs and other development targets. A workshop on localizing the MDGs in August gathered local NGOs, UN agencies and government actors, and discussed global best practices and Palestine's mid-term development plan.

Syria's second NMDGR was published in September. The State Planning Commission's new website was launched with support by UNDP to better coordinate aid management of projects localizing the MDGs. Linking local action to the national achievement of MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability), in August more than 10,000 volunteers helped clean up Syria's coastline.

Europe MDG Statistics

The European NMDGRs, in addition to their strong focus on poverty elimination, include discussions of social exclusion, the need to develop new technologies

for economic growth, policy reform to deepen decentralization and policies to increase trade liberalization. Poverty increased through the 1990s for all of the countries under consideration and is now unevenly decreasing, resulting from the war in the former Yugoslavia and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Turkey witnessed spiralling inflation in 2001. Absolute poverty is now on the decline in the region. However, in Albania, 25% of the population lives beneath the national poverty line (US\$2 per day); 5% lives in extreme poverty, (less than US\$1 per day) and cannot afford to buy basic food. In Turkey, 1.35% of the population suffers from food poverty. Croatia suffers from unemployment, with 6.2% of the workforce unemployed long term in 2001. Serbia, with high unemployment at 30%, targets lowering long-term youth unemployment. Slovenia, an EU member, does not suffer from absolute poverty. Slovenian households with the greatest risk of poverty are those where the main source of income are pensions, or which consist of single people over 65.

Europe MDG Events

Albania's second NMDGR was published in September, and regional development strategies to achieve the MDGs were developed for five regions in Albania. UNDP published *Advancing Development through Sub-national MDG Reports: a case study of Albania*, as well as a report on *The Role of Civil Society and Volunteerism in Promoting the Pro-Poor & Pro-Women Agenda*, with case studies linking the MDGs and volunteerism. A cooperative project between UN agencies and a local NGO launched a project to tailor MDG target 9 (integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies) to local government policies. Albania's 50 MDG Youth Ambassadors travelled throughout the region of Vlora creating awareness about the MDGs with high school students. Throughout June and July, the Croatian Youth Network conducted MDG training for youth organizations, training participants in the MDG process and developing new ways to involve the youth in MDG achievement.

Serbia completed its first MDG review in June. Working towards MDG 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability), the Danube River Enterprise Pollution Reduction project was launched in May by UN agencies. Turkey's second NMDGR was published in June.

Mediterranean EU Counties' MDG Events

The Live 8 concert was held in Paris, in coordination with the first global White Band Day and in counterpoint to the G8 meeting in Scotland in July. The Live 8 concert was organized with the support of the Millennium Campaign. The second White Band Day was held in August, with eight international club nights highlighting the MDGs and global poverty, one of which was in Paris. In September the Paris City Hall exterior was decorated with banners saying "Action Mondiale 2015 Plus D'Excuses – Global Action 2015: No excuse!" with the MDGs listed.

Italy's Coalition Against Poverty was launched in March, joining NGOs, unions and student groups calling on their government to maintain its promises of helping to realize the MDGs. In June, Lenny Cravitz performed in Florence at a concert organized by the Italian Millennium Campaign, the city of Florence and MTV Italy as part of their No Excuse 2015 campaign. Launched in 2003, the No Excuses 2015 campaign was founded by the Millennium Campaign, and is active across European Mediterranean countries. The 'No Excuse 2015' TV advert was launched in Perugia in August. In September the Milan Film Festival, in collaboration with the Millennium Campaign, highlighted world poverty and the MDGs. Later that month 200,000 people marched from Perugia to Assisi in a demonstration organized by the No Excuses 2015 campaign, and the campaign was also highlighted in Bologna during MTV Day 2005.

In Spain, the Millennium Development Goal Gates (an exhibit of 16 totem poles in the form of eight arches to symbolize the dialogue between children from wealthy and poor countries)

arrived in Albacete in May for the Solidarity Fair. The gates were then moved to Madrid, where they were exhibited during Madrid's anti-poverty weekend, held a week before the G-8 meeting in Scotland in June. The weekend's highlight was a demonstration with 8 huge white bands, representing the MDGs. In July, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was symbolically wrapped in a white band, as part of the Millennium Campaign's White Band Day. In September supporters of the Zero Poverty Campaign in Madrid gathered with alarm clocks outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to wake up their government to poverty, carrying a giant alarm clock marked with MDG 8. In October, the Spanish Alliance against Poverty launched its "Hot Autumn" campaign, targeting MDG awareness through demonstrations, exhibits and concerts held through December. In Bilbao in December 2,000 youths demonstrated for an end to poverty, marching with the MDG Gates and in solidarity with the third International White Band Day.

Key Issues and Challenges for MDG Achievement

The following text was abridged from the 2005 *Arab Region MDG Report*. However, it was felt that most of the concerns raised are also applicable to those European Mediterranean countries which have published NMDGRs. The Arab region has demonstrated progress in many MDG-related fields. However, progress varies across the sub-regions, at the country level, and from goal to goal. The middle income countries of the Mashreq and Maghreb have made good progress on some goals, such as education, but have been less successful on others, such as eradicating poverty. In those countries, poverty, unemployment and migration are key issues of concern. However, in Palestine, which is an exception to the overall trends in the Mashreq, the achievement of the MDGs is tied to conflict and occupation. Efforts and resources should be focused on peacebuilding, building effective public institutions, strengthening civil society and economic development.

THE FIRST EUROMED HEALTH FORUM
“FOR A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ISSUES RELATING TO HEALTH IN THE EURO MEDITERRANEAN REGION.”

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration, the Generalitat, Government of Catalonia, and more specifically its Department of Health, encouraged the idea of holding an International Forum of the Euro Mediterranean region so as to establish a basis for political cooperation concerning issues related to the field of health. The Forum, which was held in Barcelona on November 14th and 15th 2005, brought together representatives of 26 countries from Europe and the southern shores of the Mediterranean, individuals working in the field of Health from 23 countries, and representatives of institutions of the European Union and of multilateral organisations. The aim of the meeting was to gain a deeper knowledge of the “Health” question in the Euro Mediterranean region. The intention was to achieve this by means of debates and presentations, so as to encourage international cooperation and the mutual interchange of experiences and techniques, while at the same time asking the public authorities to ensure that their health policies take into account the need for an approach involving greater cooperation and mutual aid. With this aim, various discussion seminars were organized, on the following subjects: the structure of the health system in each country, the use of information and communication technology to improve health treatment (*e-health*), and the free circulation of patients and of those working in the health field. These seminars

proved to be a very useful vehicle for the exchange of ideas, for assessing the current health situation, and especially for drawing up proposals to be presented to the authorities. Here are some of the most interesting suggestions that emerged from the meetings and were presented in the Forum’s Conclusions.

Health system structures: analysis of processes for reforming health system structures.

- A combination of strategies and initiatives was outlined to help improving the administration of health services, such as, for example, an analysis of the services provided by the public sector in different countries, the creation and exchange of techniques for adjusting different systems, or the need to work together on important issues such as AIDS, bird flu or different aspects of the treatment of tobacco addiction;
- A new formula was proposed for collaboration between the public sector, private sector and international institutions for investment in the health field;
- The need to encourage decentralised management structures was underlined.

E-Health: analysis of the application of ICT technology.

- The need to use this technology was underlined, since it could potentially give greater flexibility both for patients and for health work-

ers, as well as facilitating access to the health system structures;

- For this reason those participating backed a motion calling on the authorities to ensure that the application of ICT becomes a priority in the Health sector;
- They also underlined its fundamental importance for research, development and innovation.

Free circulation of patients and health workers: analysis of the quality and reliability of the attention given to patients, and the role of health workers in the context of free circulation of individuals.

- In this respect those participating commented on the importance of events like the Forum to exchange information and experiences;
- Those participating supported the establishment of common standards for the Health systems throughout the region;
- Another subject of discussion was the importance of assisting foreign patients according to their specific situation (as tourists, permanent residents, etc).

Finally, the Catalan and Spanish Governments announced their intention to promote the Mediterranean diet at UNESCO as a World Heritage feature.

For further information:
www.euromedsalud.net

Establishing Peace and Security

The cost of war and conflict, in terms of lost lives, displacement, and setbacks to development, continues to be high. This is particularly evident in Palestine, where there is ongoing occupation, and in countries marred by internal conflict and strife for over a decade, namely Algeria and Lebanon.

A comprehensive and just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is needed. The international community should continue all efforts to bring peace and security to the region, while spreading a culture of peace-building and nation-building based on respect for human rights, including the right to development, as well as democracy and good governance. Peace and stability in the region is the most urgent priority for both

Arab and European Mediterranean countries.

The Way Forward

The achievement of MDGs is largely dependent on the adoption and implementation of integrated and comprehensive development policies and strategies concerning poverty reduction, unemployment, gender equality, the environment, rural and urban development, health systems, education, science, technology and innovation. That will require sustained action at the local, national and regional levels, and reform aimed at partnership, good governance, democracy and respect for human rights.

The way forward to keeping the prom-

ise entails action on four main fronts; the first being *regional integration* aimed at pooling and harnessing the region’s human, financial, and natural resources and capacities with a view to achieving regional partnership in development and solidarity in the international political arena and global economy.

Second, *reform and democratization* on the levels of the state, society and political culture as a basic pillar of development.

Third, *pro-poor social and economic policies* based on partnership between the public sector and civil society, while promoting a larger role for the private sector in terms of social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

Fourth, *strengthening the role of civil*

society in the development process and lastly, promoting the establishment of effective public institutions capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

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Links of Interest

Millennium Campaign
www.coordinationsud.org/2005/
Millennium Project
www.unmillenniumproject.org/index.htm
MDGs in Europe and CIS Region
www.undp.org/mdg/undps_role_regional_cis.shtml
MDGs in the Arab region
www.undp.org/mdg/undps_role_regional_arab.shtml
National MDG reports – search by country name
www.undg.org/index.cfm