

Millennium Development Goals

What are they?

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight international goals which, if achieved, would transform the lives of millions of people in developing countries. They were agreed at the United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in 2000 by global leaders. They set targets for progress on key issues, including freedom from hunger, equality for women and girls, health and shelter. They are supposed to be achieved by 2015.

The Goals

★ Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Targets: Halve the proportion of people who live on less than \$1 a day and halve the proportion who suffer from hunger
FACT: 1 in 4 children in the developing world are underweight.

★ Goal 2: Primary education for all



Target: All children should be able to complete their primary schooling.
FACT: 69 million children do not go to school – almost half of these in sub-Saharan Africa.

★ Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target: Eliminate gender disparity between boys and girls at primary and secondary education levels.
FACT: Girls are much less likely to go to school than boys and more likely to have to drop out.

★ Goal 4: Reduce the child mortality rate

Target: Cut by two-thirds the number of children dying before their fifth birthday.
FACT: In poor countries 1 in 10 children die before they are five. In wealthier countries it is 1 in 143.

★ Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Target: Reduce by three-quarters the numbers of mothers dying while having a baby.
FACT: A woman dies every minute in pregnancy and childbirth – 99 per cent of these deaths are in developing countries.

★ Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target: To halt, and then reduce, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
FACT: Malaria kills a child every 45 seconds.



★ Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target: Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
FACT: 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, including toilets.

★ Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target: Address the special needs of the world's least developed countries.

Fact: International aid to the world's poorest countries falls short of agreed targets by billions of pounds.

Why are the MDGs so important?

Critics say that some of the goals don't go far enough or don't sufficiently recognise the differences between countries. Nevertheless, they have provided the world with a tool to improve efforts to change millions of lives. It is important that governments, in both poor and rich countries, agree on what aid should be for, as well as how much aid rich countries should give.

Checking the progress

Statistics are continuously collected and the UN publishes annual reports on progress towards the goals and what needs to happen when countries are falling short. Individual regions and independent non-governmental organisations also prepare their own reports. This helps ensure that governments and progress are independently checked.

TRY THIS

Choose one MDG. Look at the Trócaire website and find out about a project that is helping progress towards that goal.



Group activity – your group has been asked to advise an aid agency on how it should divide £50,000/€50,000 between eight small-scale projects that will each help to achieve an MDG. Discuss and come up with ideas for what these could be. Think about how they would help achieve each MDG and discuss whether some projects deserve more funding than others. Present your plan to the rest of the class.

Will the 2015 target be reached?

At current rates, several MDGs are likely to be missed in many countries. However, there have been major advances:

- The goal of cutting in half the proportion of people in the developing world living in extreme poverty, now calculated as \$1.25 a day or less, remains within reach.
- The world may even exceed the MDG drinking water target. By 2015, an estimated 86 per cent of the population in developing regions will have gained access to improved sources of drinking water.
- The number of people with access to treatment for AIDS has increased from 100,000 in 2000 to over 4 million and there has been a big reduction in deaths from malaria in many countries because of better access to medicines and anti-malaria bed nets.
- Many countries are close to ensuring all their children are able to access and complete their primary schooling. Lots of countries have abolished primary school fees.

On the other hand:

- Fewer people are living in poverty, but this is largely because of strong economic growth in Asia, particularly in China. Due to war, drought and the world economic crisis, millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia have become even poorer.
- Women and girls are still discriminated against even in countries where poverty has been reduced.
- Child mortality is falling but not quickly enough to reach the target by 2015.
- If current trends continue, the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation will grow.

Barriers to the goals

Conflict blocks achievement of the MDGs in countries like Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Prolonged drought, poor government and corruption are also major forces keeping people in poverty. Climate change is making itself felt, especially in areas prone to flooding and drought. The World Bank estimates that 40 million more people went hungry in 2009 and 64 million more people are living in extreme poverty in 2010 due to combined world food, fuel and financial crises.

The role of aid

Most development funding comes from developing countries themselves through their own taxes, but foreign aid is still crucial, especially in the poorest countries. In 1970, the UN set a target that rich countries should devote 0.7 per cent of their national income to aid for development. Few countries have met this target.

What is Trócaire doing?

Trócaire projects around the world address a range of MDGs. Examples of progress Trócaire have made towards these goals between 2007 and 2009 include:

Goal 1 - providing food and other basic items to over 150,000 Burmese refugees living in camps on the Thai-Burma border.

Goal 3 - In Pakistan we helped 1,000 women register as voters and trained 37 potential women candidates in local government systems.

Goal 6 - In Sudan campaigning work by one of our partners led to the development of a national bill on the rights of people living with HIV.

The future

Ahead of 2015, special efforts are being made where goals are unlikely to be met and to make some issues such as women's rights – key to development – more of a priority.

The fight against global poverty will have to continue beyond 2015. A new global agreement, taking into account lessons learned from the original MDG process, will be needed.

“Falling short would multiply the dangers of our world... But achieving the goals will put us on a fast track to a world that is more stable, more just, and more secure.”

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, 2010

TRY THIS

Imagine you are a girl living in sub-Saharan Africa. You would like to be a doctor when you grow up. What barriers might stand in your way?



School children, Burma

TRY THIS

Design symbols for each of the Millennium Development Goals. Get inspiration from the symbols used by the United Nations (see the website).

“We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.”

UN Millennium Declaration, 2000



Useful websites

mdgs.un.org

UN Statistics Division Millennium Development Goals

un.org/millenniumgoals

UN Millennium Development Goals

endpoverty2015.org

UN Millennium Campaign