



PRESS RELEASE

Comprehensive new reports show progress on Millennium Development Goals

Overseas Development Institute Provides Country-by-Country Assessment of MDGs and Highlights International Development Advances; National and Global Pictures of Progress Emerge as World Enters Final Five-Year Push on Development Goals

LONDON (16 September 2010) - As world leaders prepare for next week's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit at the United Nations in New York, a new body of research examining development progress is published by Britain's leading think-tank on international development, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

World leaders established the MDGs in 2000 to guide efforts to significantly reduce poverty and its root causes by 2015. Deliberately ambitious, the MDGs have provided a global agenda that has galvanised international action towards agreed indices of change.

The first new ODI study, the *MDG Report Card*, provides a country-by-country analysis of progress toward meeting the MDGs.

A second new study, *Development Progress Stories*, showcases outstanding examples of national progress in eight major areas of development: economic conditions, health, water and sanitation, education, governance, environmental conditions, agriculture and rural development, and social protection. The first stories appear today on a new website, www.developmentprogress.org.

"Both these projects grew out of a growing awareness that there was too little attention paid to progress being made in development," says ODI Director, Dr. Alison Evans. "We believe that by providing robust and accessible information on progress at national level, this project will offer lessons for policymakers and support the evidence base for continued international engagement."

MDG Report Card: Measuring progress across countries:

The MDG Report Card presents an analysis of progress on the MDGs and a set of league tables of selected indicators. It shows where substantial advances have been made, as well as inequities and uneven progress for seven MDGs. The eighth MDG on global partnerships was not included in the analysis.

The report makes a crucial distinction between absolute versus relative progress. Both measures are needed to tell the full story of progress over the past ten years. Relative progress measures a country's progress relative to initial conditions. This highlights the degree to which they have closed the gap on MDG targets. Absolute progress measures change regardless of initial conditions. Low-income countries, especially those in Africa, tend to rank top on absolute progress, whereas middle-income countries tend to do better at closing the gap.



The report reveals a number of high achievers. Vietnam made unprecedented progress in improving the lives of the poor. It featured in the top ten of several indicators, including halving the proportion of underweight children, and reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day from nearly two-thirds to one-fifth in just 14 years. Ghana outperformed all other countries around the world by reducing hunger by nearly three-quarters, from 34 percent to 9 percent, between 1990 and 2004. It will achieve MDG 1 before 2015.

Many other African nations have made considerable progress. Ten African countries, including Ethiopia, Egypt, and post-conflict Angola, have already halved their absolute poverty levels. Angola and Niger have reduced their under-five mortality ratios by more than 100 per 1,000 deaths in less than two decades. The West African nation of Benin ranked in the top ten in education improvements with school enrolments increasing from 43 to 83 percent between 1992 and 2007.

“This report recognises -and backs up with data - the real progress that even many of the poorest countries are making,” says Mark Suzman, director of policy, advocacy, and special initiatives for the Global Development Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “It’s essential that the international community, supporting locally developed country plans, continue to join efforts to make progress against MDG targets for the next five years.”

This research was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the UN Millennium Campaign.

Development Progress Stories:

Development Progress Stories detail specific countries’ efforts, bringing to light key lessons to inform development work leading up to 2015. These case studies are part of a new ODI-led initiative analysing what has worked in development and why. The studies released today cover Ghana, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Ethiopia.

Together the case studies paint a global picture of progress. Today Ghana is among the top five performers in the world in agricultural growth, and poverty reduction in Vietnam means that it is poised to join the ranks of middle-income countries by 2011.

The Bangladesh study analyses improvements in health, most notably in reductions in infant and child mortality rates, increased immunisation coverage, and a rise in life expectancy. Costa Rica demonstrates pioneering efforts in environmental conservation, particularly in the preservation of forest ecosystems.

Ethiopia provides key lessons in improving access to education, having raised primary school enrolment to 15.5 million, an increase of over 500 percent. Since the end of a 12-year civil war, El Salvador has made remarkable progress toward achieving peace and security and improving the effectiveness of government.

To develop these case studies, ODI researchers assessed more than 250 examples of countries across the eight sectors. A wide range of development indicators were analysed and more than 100 experts, drawn from academia, donor agencies and civil society organisations in both the North and the South, were consulted. The stories were also vetted by the project’s external expert panel. The resulting 24 stories, each highlighting progress from a different country, will be published in the coming months. This research was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



Resources:

Development Progress Stories: Country case studies are available on request from Gareth Thomas at g.thomas@odi.org.uk.

MDG Report Card: Measuring progress across countries: In a related project, ODI released a country-by-country assessment on progress toward MCGs. This report is free to download from www.odi.org.uk/mdgreportcard

Media contact

Gareth Thomas

Overseas Development Institute

+44 (0)20 7922 0394 / g.thomas@odi.org.uk

Interviews with ODI authors can be arranged on request.

Notes to editors

1. ODI is Britain's leading independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues. Its mission is to inspire and inform policy and practice which lead to the reduction of poverty, the alleviation of suffering and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods in developing countries. Locking together high-quality applied research, practical policy advice and policy-focused dissemination and debate, ODI works with partners in the public and private sectors, in both developing and developed countries. Further details can be found on the ODI website (www.odi.org.uk).
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Overseas Development Institute

111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300 | Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399

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