

MDGs in Progress

Anyone who believes that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved by 2015 should take a look at what has happened in Ethiopia. Or Tanzania. Or Bangladesh, Nepal, The Gambia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Honduras, Egypt, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa or Vietnam. Or countless other nations. The remarkable success of these countries in getting on track to meet certain Goals, often in the face of extreme poverty, war, natural disasters and other major challenges, proves that it is undeniably possible for the Millennium Development Goals to be met in every nation. Governments must simply make the achievement of the Goals a priority, invest the necessary resources and ensure accountability to their citizens. The below cases prove that the only question left is not whether the Goals can be achieved, but whether governments will choose to do the right thing.

Education

Three million more children are in school in *Ethiopia* today and in *Tanzania* education is nearly universal, as the result of both governments' increased expenditures on education and concerted efforts to increase school enrolment. In *Ethiopia*, the government constructed schools in rural areas, distributed textbooks in local languages, reformed curriculums, decentralized administration and increased the education budget from 3.6 percent of GDP to 6 percent. As a result, the country's school enrolment rate grew to 72.3 percent by 2007 – up from just 38.5 percent seven years before. *Tanzania* nearly doubled its school enrolment rate in just seven years, and 98 percent of children were enrolled in school by 2006. To achieve this, the government abolished enrolment fees, increased grants for education, improved infrastructure and the recruitment of teachers, created double shifts to accommodate the resulting influx of students and increased the education budget to 5 percent of GDP.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Despite poverty and climate challenges, *Bangladesh* managed to close its gender gap in school enrolment within ten years, by offering stipends and tuition exemption to rural girls who attend and perform well in school and do not marry early. The gap was also closed as the result of improved infrastructure, including sanitation facilities; the recruitment of female teachers; international aid; and a scheme providing grains to poor families who send their children to school. *Nepal* and *The Gambia* have also eliminated their gender gaps in education. Both countries offered school scholarships for poor girls and increased expenditures on education. The Gambia also worked to improve the quality of teacher training, improve curriculums, construct sanitary facilities and foster the participation of local communities in supporting the education of girls. In *Rwanda*, female Parliamentarians now comprise the majority of the Lower Chamber. The massive increase in women's participation stems from the commitment of the President to

quotas for women in the country's high-level government positions and implementing programs to support women's economic and political participation.

Child Mortality

Some of the world's very poorest countries have achieved significant decreases in child mortality. The ratio of deaths of children under five has dropped by at least 40 percent over the past twenty years in *Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger* – countries which all have an annual gross national income per capita under \$350. In *Eritrea*, for example, the decreases in under-five mortality were achieved by implementing an integrated approach to infant and child health focused on improving health systems as well as the practices of health care workers, families and communities. The country implemented programs to provide Vitamin A supplements and vaccinations and promoted hand-washing in schools. This supplemented overall efforts by the government to improve health facilities, training and equipment. The country's mortality rate among children under the age of five plummeted by more than half – from 147 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 70 in 2007. *Maternal Mortality* In *Honduras*, the maternal mortality rate dropped by 40 percent between 1990-1997, as the result of the prioritization of a national safe motherhood initiative by both the government and donors. The government focused on recruiting doctors and nurses; training half of its birth attendants in an approach to cut risk; and opening new hospitals, birthing centres and health centres, especially in areas with high maternal mortality. To facilitate access to hospitals in areas with high maternal mortality, roads were constructed and ambulances provided. In *Egypt*, maternal deaths decreased by 52 percent between 1992-1993 and 2000, as the result of the government and donors' efforts to increase access to skilled health workers and emergency obstetric care.

Combating Major Diseases

Uganda, one of the first countries in sub-Saharan Africa to be ravaged by HIV/AIDS, managed to cut the percentage of adults with the virus from 15 per cent in the early 1990's to 5.4 per cent in 2007. The country created a prevention campaign called "ABC" (abstain, be faithful, use condoms), launched an education program in schools and the media, marketed condoms and treatments for sexually transmitted diseases, implemented innovative testing for the virus and since 2004 has provided antiretroviral drugs free of charge to the population. Several countries have dramatically reduced the incidence of malaria by providing access to insecticide-treated bed nets, anti-malarial drugs, indoor spraying and treatment for pregnant women. *Eritrea, Rwanda and Zambia* have all reduced incidences and deaths from malaria by more than half.

Environmental Sustainability

Numerous countries have made significant strides in increasing citizens' access to water and sanitation. In both *India* and *Uganda*, for example, a focus on community participation in planning, implementing, contributing resources to and monitoring projects has resulted in increased access to water. In India, this new approach increased water access from 71 percent in 1990 to 89 percent in 2006. *South Africa*, meanwhile, has implemented a free water program to provide poor households with 6,000 litres of water each month, in a scheme which has reached 76 percent of the population. In *Ethiopia*, sanitation coverage has increased significantly as the result of a scheme to educate communities on the links between sanitation and health and through the implementation of new, affordable technologies. While the government previously provided subsidies for sanitation, families educated on its importance are now willing to pay for such services when they are affordable. *Vietnam* has implemented an ambitious forest program aimed at ensuring sustainable development and improving the livelihoods of citizens living in forested areas. The program includes logging restrictions, the protection of existing forests and the regeneration of forests. In just five years, the country increased forest cover by four percent -- from 36 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2005.

Source : http://www.endpoverty2015.org/en/2010_mdg_review_summit (27.4.2010)