

Building the Statistical Capacity to Monitor the MDGs

by Brian Hammond¹

Throughout the global South, few countries have accurate statistics for planning, including who is living in absolute poverty in what places. Ascertaining their numbers, locations and specific needs will itself require considerable assistance, for which a new international consortium has been launched.

From IDGs to MDGs

Since setting out the International Development Goals (IDGs) in its 1996 publication, *Shaping the 21st Century* in 1996,² the OECD Development Assistance Committee has been seeking broad ownership, particularly in the UN, of a comprehensive development plan that would recognise a balance of responsibilities between developing and developed countries. This culminated in the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, which not only provided UN endorsement of the goal of halving the proportion of people living under \$1 a day by 2015, but added others that had emerged from the more recent world conferences of the 1990s.

The “Road Map” for reporting on the implementation of the Declaration³ was prepared by the Secretariats of the UN, IMF, OECD and World Bank and posited targets and indicators further refined by 90 experts from some 25 agencies in April 2002. The same group prepared the report on the 8 Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators on which the Secretary-General drew for his first progress report to the UN General Assembly in September 2002.⁴

Grouping the many targets of the Millennium Declaration under eight goals provides continuity with the seven IDGs. The relationship between the IDGs and MDGs is given in the table below.

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² See www.oecd.org/pdf/M00003000/M00003334.pdf.

³ Reference A/56/326 at www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/56/a56326.pdf

⁴ See <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/506/69/PDF/N0250669.pdf>

MDGs and IDGs ⁵	
Millennium Development Goals	International Development Goals
1. ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER	REDUCING EXTREME POVERTY The proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries should be reduced by at least one-half by 2015.
2. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION	UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION There should be universal primary education in all countries by 2015.
3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN	GENDER EQUALITY Progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women should be demonstrated by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.
4. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY	INFANT & CHILD MORTALITY The death rates for infants and children under the age of five years should be reduced in each developing country by two-thirds the 1990 level by 2015.
5. IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH	MATERNAL MORTALITY The rate of maternal mortality should be reduced by three-fourths between 1990 and 2015.
6. COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES	REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH Access should be available through the primary health-care system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages, no later than the year 2015.
7. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	ENVIRONMENT There should be a current national strategy for sustainable development, in the process of implementation, in every country by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015.
8. DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT	

Goals 2 to 5 and 7 are almost identical to the IDGs. Goal 1 includes the addition of hunger, which had been covered by an IDG indicator. Goal 6 replaces the IDG of universal access to reproductive health services, acknowledging that this goal was deliberately omitted from the Millennium Declaration. Nevertheless, the indicators used to measure it — the contraceptive prevalence rate and HIV prevalence — remain in the MDG indicator list. The Declaration's preamble notes that "The list of MDGs does not undercut in any way agreements on other goals and targets reached at the global conferences of the 1990s." Thus, like the IDGs, the MDGs provide a flexibility within which both developing countries and donors can set their own strategies, which could include a focus on reproductive health.

⁵ The seven IDGs are shown in full. The MDGs are presented as the 8 goals shown in the table, with 18 targets; see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mdglist.pdf> for the full list.

However, Goal 8 is new. It uses the language of the Millennium Declaration — consistent with references to adequate resources and policy coherence in *Shaping the 21st Century* — to balance the responsibilities of developing and developed countries when reporting on development progress. It has supporting indicators that include aid volume, market access, and debt relief, youth, unemployment, access to pharmaceuticals and technology. It also addresses the special needs of Africa, landlocked countries and the small island developing states.

Reporting

Concise, systematic reporting must support the Millennium Project campaign.⁶ The UN Secretary-General has the mandate to produce annual reports, starting in 2002.⁷ This work depends on continuing close collaboration between the agencies for a common global assessment of progress from the baseline year of 1990.

A major new feature of reporting on the Millennium Declaration is the production of national reports, drawing on national strategies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), UN Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and National Human Development Reports (NHDRs).⁸ These will help gain national support for the Goals and for reporting on progress towards their attainment. But such reporting will further highlight the crisis in the sustainable production of reliable, timely statistics in many developing countries. The OECD Partnership in Statistics for development in the 21st century, launched in 1999 in

INVESTING IN STATISTICAL SYSTEMS TO MONITOR THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Partnership in Statistics for development in the 21st Century

PARIS21 exists to boost statistical capabilities, especially in poor developing countries, through:

- promoting a culture for setting and monitoring policy based on evidence, and
- fostering well-managed national statistical systems that use resources effectively.

It is a unique forum providing for dialogue between users and producers of statistics. It works through:

PARTNERSHIP	bringing together donors and governments in support of country-owned development strategies
ADVOCACY	to demonstrate the power and use of statistics for policy decisions
RESOURCE	mobilisation to be able to collect the right information for policy-making
INFORMATION	exchange to share knowledge and foster co-ordination
STRATEGIES	to build sustainable statistical capacity, by better use of data as a tool for more effective development.

Its membership is worldwide. Participants come from governments, international organisations, professional bodies and academic institutions. They use their practical experience in collaborating to improve policy-making through reliable, pertinent statistics.

⁶ See the Millennium Project at www.unmillenniumproject.org.

⁷ The first reports will be thematic (2002: conflict and HIV/AIDS—UN Ref: A/57/270; 2003: Financing for Development and sustainable development; 2004: digital divide and transnational crime). He will report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration in a comprehensive way once every five years, with the first report due in 2005.

⁸ See www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html

response to an ECOSOC request and known by the acronym PARIS21, strives to foster dialogue among those who produce data on development and those who use them. This worldwide Consortium is guided by a steering committee comprising representatives of developing and transition companies, along with others from the United Nations, OECD, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. It supports country-based activities, regional workshops and subject teams in such as areas as employment, food security, trade, health and education.

MDGs in the Context of National Statistical Systems

The MDGs provide an accountability framework for reporting development progress at both the country and global levels. The consensus on poverty reduction strategies as the main tool for development in low-income countries has increased the demand for evidence-based policy-making and poverty monitoring. But such monitoring and reporting requires reliable, timely, relevant data. This in turn requires that sufficient resources be invested in the statistical and other systems that generate the data needed to design policies and allocate resources, monitor progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

Poverty reduction strategies have to avoid aggravating the problem by adding too many indicators or undermining statistical capacity by ad hoc approaches. Rather, they offer a political entry point and a hook for national strategies for statistics, appropriately resourced from both national and donor budgets.

The indicators for the MDGs represent just a fraction of the data needed. A wide range of other information is needed to monitor inputs and intermediate outputs and to disaggregate outcomes for different population groups and geographic areas *over time*. Data play an important role in providing feedback on the performance of governments and information to all development actors and sections of society so that those in power can be held accountable. Statistics therefore play a significant role in good governance. As the development community moves further towards sector-wide approaches and budgetary aid, the need for good quality information will increase.

Developing statistical capacity to monitor the MDGs requires action on four fronts:

- to produce national data;
- to enhance methods and standards;
- to ensure coordination on a global scale; and
- to develop global statistical public goods.

National Data

Producing national data requires active support of politicians and senior officials who are committed to evidence-based policy-making. And it requires a statistical infrastructure covering not only the national statistical office, but also statistical activities in line ministries and sub-national administrative centres. This depends mainly on national funding, but should be supplemented by strategic donor support, for activities that include:

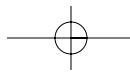
- Monitoring national poverty reduction strategies and strengthening other social statistics, with special emphasis on health (including HIV/AIDS), education, and gender;
- Strengthening economic data and implementing frameworks;
- Improving the coverage and quality of population censuses and household surveys;
- Upgrading agricultural and environmental statistics;
- Producing national statistical development strategies; and
- Implementing data dissemination and data quality frameworks.

Global Public Goods, Methods and Standards, and Coordination

In regional and global monitoring, there is a need for data that cannot be derived from national statistical systems. This includes global public goods such as purchasing power parity (PPP) data — to monitor the incidence of poverty below \$1 per day — that requires globally-funded data collection and analysis through a new round of the International Comparison Programme in non-OECD countries. Third, the UN and IMF need continuing/enhanced support for their sizeable programmes to develop methods and standards and to train countries in their application. Finally, coordination requires further central funding, including support for the PARIS21 Consortium.

The Need for Increased Investment in Statistics

PARIS21 has been successful in raising awareness of the need for better use of better statistics — to date, primarily through linking data to poverty reduction strategies. PARIS21 will continue to be important: to continue its advocacy; to help focus statistical programmes on country-owned development strategies; to facilitate greater donor coordination; and to foster partnership principles. However, despite wide recognition of the need to develop statistical systems, a steep increase in the overall level of investment is required if monitoring is to be based on reliable data that is largely locally produced.



No new funding mechanisms are envisaged. What will be important is ensuring that any increased investment in monitoring and evaluation be provided consistently and coherently so as to strengthen activities on all four fronts specified above, i.e., as an integral component of overall development programmes. At the national level in particular, assistance should emphasise development programmes that are supported by all the key stakeholders, building demand for data, and focusing on areas that have been neglected such as education, agriculture and population. Country-owned poverty reduction strategies offer ready-made links for such investments.

The most pressing need is high-level commitment to reiterate the importance not only of attaining the goals themselves, but of the monitoring process. Ultimately, progress will derive from a widespread culture of evidence-based policy-making — in short, rooting policy in rigorous examination of realities on the ground.

