

Introduction

In September 2000, Heads of State and Governments, including Malawi, adopted the Millennium Declaration at the Millennium Summit in New York. The Declaration synchronises a set of time-bound, inter-related and mutually reinforcing goals and targets into a global agenda of combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These have now been named the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are a culmination of commitments made at a series of global conferences held in the 1990's on human development and refined over the past fifty years. The declaration should achieve, by 2015, eight goals to be monitored by using 48 indicators. These goals are:

1. Reduce extreme poverty and hunger,
2. Achieve universal primary education,
3. Promote gender equality and empowerment of women,
4. Minimise child mortality,
5. Improve maternal health,
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,
7. Ensure environmental sustainability, and
8. Organise a global partnership for development.

As a follow up of the Millennium Declaration, individual countries were expected to produce reports indicating progress made on these goals. The country reports were intended to raise awareness and advocacy, as well as focus the country's development agenda on key human development issues. In Malawi, the analysis of the requirements for the achievement of the MDGs was derived from, and based on, sectoral medium term policy frameworks, strategic plans, investment plans and the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP). The strategies, activities and costing, articulated in the MPRSP, were extensively utilised.

Brief Overview

Malawi is located in the Southern African sub region, sharing common borders with Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique. It is a land-locked country and, as such, it has a special interest in the progress made towards achieving the goals mentioned above. Particular attention is given to the goal on organising a global partnership for development which recognises the challenges faced by land-locked countries and small island states. The Millennium Development Goals, as explained in the 2003 Global Human Development Report, support the collective and individual responsibility of all nations, rich and poor, towards their achievement.

Malawi is one of the least developed countries with a GDP per capita of US\$195.3. According to the 2003 Global Human Development Report, the Human Development Index for Malawi is 0.387, which means that close to two-thirds of the population of 10 million people, 51 percent of whom are women, live in poverty. The Integrated Household Survey (IHS) of 1998 estimated that 65.3 percent of the population, representing about 6.3 million people, live in poverty. Further, the IHS indicated that 28.7 percent of the population live in extreme poverty. Inequality, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, was 0.52 for urban areas and 0.37 for rural areas. The survey further showed that the richest 20 percent of the population, consumed 46.3 percent of the total goods and services available while the poorest 20 percent consumed only 6.3 percent.

The annual population growth rate declined from 3.2 per cent in 1987 to 1.9 per cent in 1998. A reduction in the population growth rate is considered desirable, if brought about by a decline in both fertility and mortality rates. However, the decline in the population growth rate as a result of an increase in mortality rate is a serious concern and should continue to be a programme priority.