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[Forum](#)
[Media Centre](#)
[Contact Us](#)

[Home](#)

MDGs in Asia Pacific

Six years have passed since the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, which gave rise to the Millennium Development Goals. Since then, the countries of Asia and the Pacific have been working hard to achieve these goals. Some have been very successful; others have made less progress.

Many Countries have prepared their own reports on progress towards the MDGs - and there have also been assessments at the global level. To supplement these, UN Economic and Social Commission Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP), UNDP and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have formed a partnership, capitalizing on their particular areas of expertise, to present a regional picture - analysing the trends in MDG achievement across Asia and the Pacific and exploring the policy implications at both the national and regional levels.

This tripartite initiative by a United Nations regional commission (UNESCAP), a United Nations agency (UNDP) and a regional development bank (ADB) is the first of its kind in the world. It ensures a common voice on the MDGs in the region, helps build a consolidated regional platform and presents a clear plan of action for their achievement.

Lately, the tripartite initiative between UNESCAP, UNDP and ADB led to the holding of the [South Asia MDG Forum](#) in Nepal. This Forum was the first of a series of Subregional Forums on MDGs. The outcomes of these Forums will contribute to build a Road Map towards the achievement of the MDGs specifically dedicated to the Asian and Pacific region.

Below is an overview of the progress made in the Asian and Pacific region - goal by goal, and then at the subregional level - towards the achievement of the MDGs as presented in the report [A Future Within Reach: Reshaping Institutions in a Region of Disparities to Meet the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific](#).

Progress by Goal

[Goal 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger](#)

[Goal 2 - Achieve universal primary education](#)

[Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women](#)

[Goal 4 - Reduce child mortality](#)

[Goal 5 - Improve maternal health](#)

[Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases](#)

[Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability](#)

Subregions and levels of development

[South and South-West Asia](#)

[North and Central Asia Pacific](#)

[South-East Asia](#)

[East and North-East Asia](#)

Overview of the Progress made in the Asian and Pacific region

Asia and the Pacific is one of the world's most dynamic regions, so it should come as no surprise that the report [A Future Within Reach](#) finds this region has made rapid progress towards many of the MDGs. But not all the developing countries in Asia and the Pacific are making sufficient progress; indeed none are currently on track to meet all the goals by 2015.

Goal 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

On the poverty target, the Asian and Pacific region has made dramatic progress. Between 1990 and 2001 in the 23 countries offering sufficient data (out of a total of 55) the proportion of people living on less than \$1 per day fell from 31 to 20 per cent. Asia and the Pacific's overall poverty reduction will inevitably be swayed by the achievements of China and India - and both are well on track, as are 17 other countries. The countries having the most difficulty appear to be Armenia, Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia.

The second target under this goal is to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. For 27 countries, the proportion of people consuming less than the minimum dietary energy requirement fell between the early 1990s and 2001, but only slightly - from 18.7 to 15.1 per cent. The worst situation is in Tajikistan with 61 per cent of the population hungry, followed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with 36 per cent. Another important indicator is child malnutrition which is disturbingly high in a number of countries: 48 per cent of children are undernourished in Nepal, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, for example, and 47 per cent in India.

General Information

About Us

MDGs in Asia Pacific

[About the MDGs](#)

[Fact Sheets](#)

[South Asia Forum](#)

[East & South-East Asia Forum](#)

[North and Central Asia MDG Forum](#)

[MDG Report 2007](#)

Tracking the MDGs

Advocating the MDGs

[Campaign Tools](#)

[MDG Campaigns](#)

[MDG Advocacy for Media Networks](#)

[MDG Movie: A Future Within Reach](#)

[International Youth Day](#)

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[Login](#)

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[A Future Within Reach 2008](#)



Goal 2 - Achieve universal primary education

Here progress has been good. Most countries in the region have primary enrolment ratios above 80 per cent, and many above 90 per cent. Of the 33 countries with sufficient data available to estimate a trend, 8 have already achieved the target, and 11 others are on track to do so. However, dropout rates can also be high. In Papua New Guinea, for example, around half of children drop out before grade five and in India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar more than one third do so.

Another measure of success is the primary completion rate, which for the region as a whole between 1998 and 2001 rose from 89 to 93 per cent - though this gives an over-optimistic picture since the number of graduates is swollen by over-age children.

Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women

Progress on eliminating gender disparity in education has been good, but progress in participation and empowerment needs to be accelerated. The target under this goal focuses on eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education. At the primary level, of the 38 countries or territories with data available, 26 have already achieved the target and 5 are on track to do so. Bangladesh and China have made particularly rapid progress. Of the 5 countries that are regressing, the most serious situations are in Afghanistan, where between 1990 and 1999 the ratio between girls' and boys' primary enrolment fell dramatically, from 0.55 to 0.08, though the situation has probably since improved, and in Pakistan, where the proportion has stalled at 0.74.

At the secondary level the situation also seems positive. Across the region, between 1990 and 2001 the ratio of girls to boys at the secondary level increased from 0.73 to 0.87. Of the 36 countries with relevant data, 25 have already achieved the target, and even countries such as Pakistan and Nepal with very low ratios have been making progress so fast that they are on track. For tertiary education there has also been considerable progress. Of the 27 countries with the necessary data, 15 have already achieved the target, while 5 others are on track; indeed in tertiary education a number of countries have more females than males.

Goal 4 - Reduce child mortality

Here the picture is mixed. The first target is to reduce the under-5 mortality rate by two thirds. For this indicator the 47 countries with data available divide into two halves. Half have already achieved their targets - and all have child mortality rates below 45 per 1,000 live births. The other half, however, are in a very different position: only 4 are on track to meet the target, 14 are off track, making progress too slowly, while 3 are regressing.

In 2003, the largest number of child deaths was in India, 2.3 million, followed by China, 650,000, and Pakistan, 481,000. Of these countries only China has been making sufficient progress; both India and Pakistan are moving too slowly. The most shocking rate, however, is in Afghanistan with 257 deaths per 1,000 live births: one child in four dies before reaching the age of 5. As child mortality rates come down, the majority of deaths take place in the earliest years, months, and even days, of life. Overall therefore, the pattern for infant mortality is similar to that of the under-5 mortality

Goal 5 - Improve maternal health

Here too progress has been far too slow. The target is to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters between 1990 and 2015, but the ratio in the average Asian developing country has only declined from 395 to 342. Even more alarming, of the 42 countries for which data are available, maternal mortality has gone up in 22. Around two thirds of Asian maternal deaths, 164,000, take place in India and Pakistan, both among the regressing countries. The highest maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births are, however, in Afghanistan (1,900), Nepal (740) and Timor-Leste (660). Each year, across the region around one quarter of a million women die as a result of a normal life cycle event: pregnancy and childbirth. Almost all these deaths could be avoided if mothers had routine obstetric care and access to emergency obstetric care.

Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

HIV/AIDS is also an area of great concern. The target is to have halted and begun to reverse the spread of the epidemic by 2015. Overall, however, the region is off track: between 2001 and 2003 the prevalence among those aged 15-49 in the average Asian country rose from 0.39 to 0.45 per cent. As of 2004, the Asia-Pacific region has over 9 million people living with HIV/AIDS and each year half a million people die. The highest prevalences among adults aged 15-49 are all in South-East Asia: Cambodia, 2.6 per cent; Thailand, 1.5 per cent; and Myanmar, 1.2 per cent - though the first two of these have already achieved their MDG targets, since they have reduced the prevalence. The highest numbers of infected people, however, are to be found in India and the Russian Federation, where the prevalence is rising. China has kept the prevalence fairly stable, so can be considered "on track".

There are also worries about malaria. Although there are insufficient data to calculate trends, in some countries the disease seems to be making a comeback. The highest prevalences are in the Pacific, notably Solomon Islands, where the disease affects 15 per cent of the population. The largest number of people sick are in Indonesia, with 1.9 million people infected. The largest number of deaths are in India -

**MDG Events Calendar**

- No upcoming events available



<< August 2010

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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more than 30,000 each year. The highest death rate, however, is in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Tuberculosis too remains a major concern, though in this case the region is making progress: between 1990 and 2003 the number of people infected declined from 12.8 to 10.3 million and the number of people dying each year fell from 1.1 to 1.0 million. The largest number of people infected in 2003 were in the most populous countries: China, 3.2 million; India, 3.1 million; and Indonesia, 1.5 million. All three are, however, making progress.

Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability

The first target is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes. Based on their progress in preparing national sustainable development strategies, of the 55 Asia-Pacific developing countries only 5 are early achievers and 10 are on track. This goal also aims to reverse the loss of environmental resources. Here the picture is also mixed: over the period 1990-2000, in the 48 countries reporting data the proportion of land forested increased in 13, remained unchanged in 17 and decreased in 18. The most rapid rates of deforestation have been in Micronesia, Myanmar, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Another environmental indicator is carbon dioxide emissions. Between 1990 and 2002, average per capita emissions increased across the region from 2.2 to 2.5 tons. Of the 50 countries for which data are available, 30 are regressing, while 20 have become early achievers as a result of deliberate policy, or like many of the Central Asian countries, because of a reduction in industrial output.

A further important target is to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. For urban water supplies, of the 40 countries offering data, 31 are early achievers or on track and even those that are regressing, nevertheless, had achieved quite high values. The situation in the rural areas is quite different, with coverage typically 10 to 20 percentage points lower. Nevertheless, here too there has been progress: of the 34 countries with data available, 11 are early achievers and 5 are on track, though 18 are off track, of which 11 are regressing. Access to improved sanitation is also far better in urban than rural areas - 73 against 31 per cent.

Subregions and levels of development

- **South and South-West Asia** - This is the poorest performing subregion: the only one in which a majority of its countries, 6 out of 10, are off track for more than one third of the indicators. The slow progress here is largely because this region includes 4 of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - 3 of which are also landlocked and 1 of which is a small island developing State.
- **North and Central Asia** - This region has a high proportion of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). Here the countries of greatest concern are Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Armenia. The first two have high and increasing rates of malnutrition. Education standards have also slipped and the virtual collapse of the social sector in some countries has resulted in a general deterioration of health indicators.
- **Pacific** - The majority of these countries are Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Fewer than half have data for the majority of indicators: none offer any information on poverty or hunger and few on education or gender. Papua New Guinea has more information, which indicates that on most indicators it is off track. Many Pacific countries have problems with water supplies and sanitation.
- **South-East Asia** - This includes some of the more prosperous countries in the region - along with some of the LDCs so it is no surprise that success in the MDGs largely reflects this division - with Timor-Leste as the least successful and Singapore the most. Like Myanmar, Timor-Leste also has high infant mortality rates, and along with the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality. This subregion also has severe environmental problems: forest coverage is disappearing and carbon dioxide emissions per head are rising rapidly.
- **East and North-East Asia** - China is on track for - or has already achieved - three quarters of the indicators. Mongolia, however, has struggled with most of the MDGs. For the Democratic People's Republic of Korea it is difficult to assess progress since data are missing on almost half the indicators.

[About the Millennium Development Goals](#)

[Overview](#)

[Road Map](#)

[MDG Fact Sheets](#)

[South Asia MDG Forum](#)

[East and South-East Asia MDG Forum](#)

[Central Asia to Develop Action Plan to Reach the Millennium Development Goals](#)

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