

# MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: SOME SUCCESS IN INDIA BUT A LONG WAY TO GO

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*The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history. The landmark commitment entered into by world leaders in the year 2000—to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty”—was translated into an inspiring framework of eight goals and, the MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school than ever before and to protect our planet. The objective of paper is to examine at what extent the globe and India have reached the MDGs target.*

## PROLOGUE

The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history. The landmark commitment entered into by world leaders in the year 2000—to “spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty”—was translated into an inspiring framework of eight goals and, then, into wide-ranging practical steps that have enabled people across the world to improve their lives and their future prospects. The MDGs helped to lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, to make inroads against hunger, to enable more girls to attend school than ever before and to protect our planet. They generated new and innovative partnerships, galvanized public opinion and showed the immense value of setting ambitious goals. By putting people and their immediate needs at the forefront, the MDGs reshaped decision-making in developed and developing countries alike (Ban Ki-moon:2015). Yet for all the remarkable gains, inequalities persist and that progress has been uneven. The world’s poor remain overwhelmingly concentrated in some parts of the world. In 2011, nearly 60 per cent of the world’s one billion extremely poor people lived in just five countries. Too many women continue to die during pregnancy or from childbirth-related complications. Progress tends to bypass women and those who are lowest on the economic ladder or are disadvantaged because of their age, disability or ethnicity. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain pronounced. India has witnessed significant progress towards the MDGs, with some targets having been met ahead of the 2015 deadline, however progress has been inconsistent. For instance, while India, according to official national estimates, has achieved the target for reducing poverty by half, it is falling short of achieving the target for reducing hunger. If we compare the claim to achieve the MDGs with the findings of Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011(SECC) we find that claim is false and misleading. According to SECC 2011 about 38.3 per cent of rural households are landless. A colossal three-fourths of rural Indians earn less than ₹5,000 per month. This “three-fourths” benchmark gives a measure of how poor most in rural India are. 36 per cent of the 884 million people in rural India are illiterate.

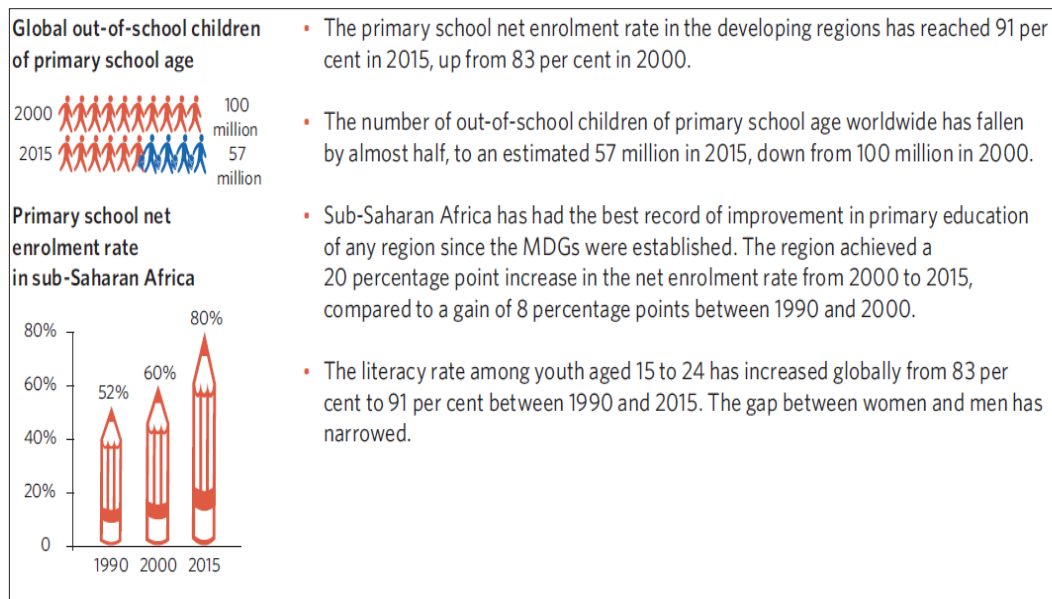
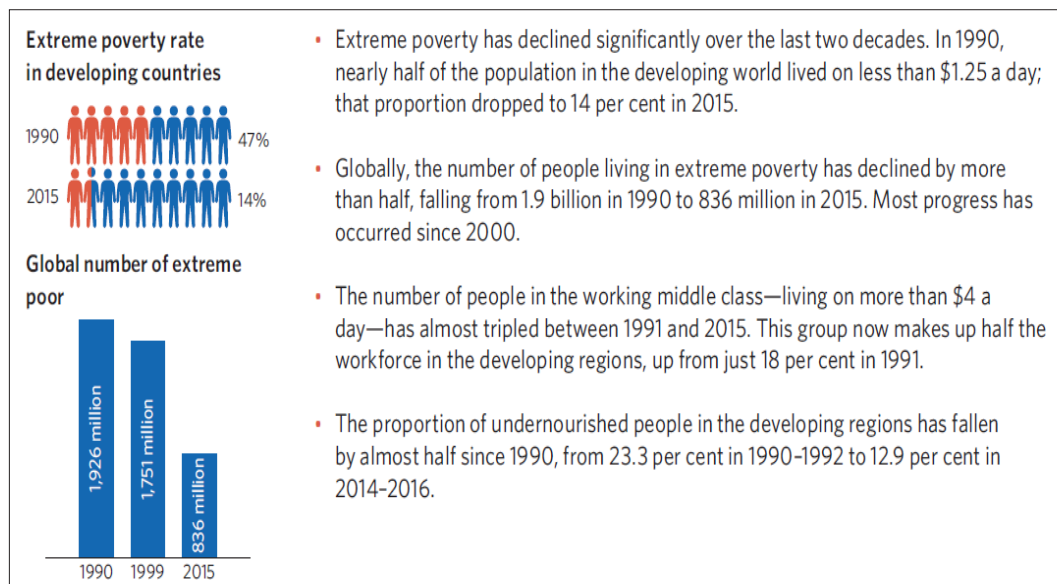
The objective of paper is to examine at what extent the globe and India have reached the MDGs target. Further, the object is to reflect on possibilities and options beyond 2015

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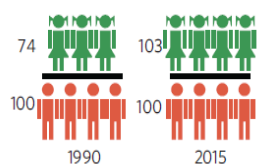
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## Global Perspective of MDGs

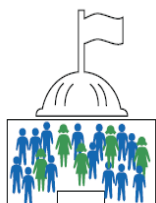
The achievement of MDGs globally can be analysed briefly from the given boxes below :



### Primary school enrolment ratio in Southern Asia



### 90% of countries have more women in parliament since 1995

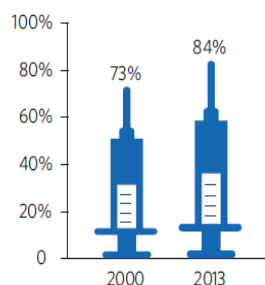


- Many more girls are now in school compared to 15 years ago. The developing regions as a whole have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- In Southern Asia, only 74 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 1990. Today, 103 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys.
- Women now make up 41 per cent of paid workers outside the agricultural sector, an increase from 35 per cent in 1990.
- Between 1991 and 2015, the proportion of women in vulnerable employment as a share of total female employment has declined 13 percentage points. In contrast, vulnerable employment among men fell by 9 percentage points.
- Women have gained ground in parliamentary representation in nearly 90 per cent of the 174 countries with data over the past 20 years. The average proportion of women in parliament has nearly doubled during the same period. Yet still only one in five members are women.

### Global number of deaths of children under five

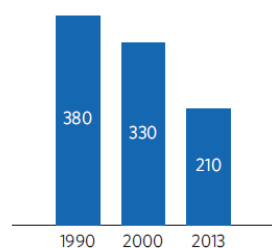


### Global measles vaccine coverage

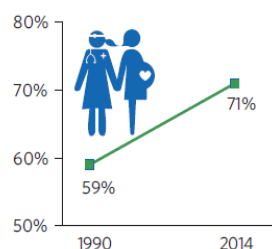


- The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half, dropping from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2015.
- Despite population growth in the developing regions, the number of deaths of children under five has declined from 12.7 million in 1990 to almost 6 million in 2015 globally.
- Since the early 1990s, the rate of reduction of under-five mortality has more than tripled globally.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, the annual rate of reduction of under-five mortality was over five times faster during 2005-2013 than it was during 1990-1995.
- Measles vaccination helped prevent nearly 15.6 million deaths between 2000 and 2013. The number of globally reported measles cases declined by 67 per cent for the same period.
- About 84 per cent of children worldwide received at least one dose of measles-containing vaccine in 2013, up from 73 per cent in 2000.

### Global maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)

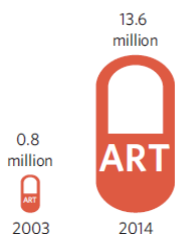


### Global births attended by skilled health personnel

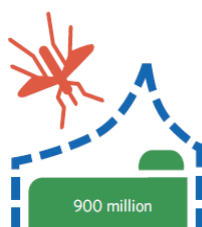


- Since 1990, the maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45 per cent worldwide and most of the reduction has occurred since 2000.
- In Southern Asia, the maternal mortality ratio declined by 64 per cent between 1990 and 2013, and in sub-Saharan Africa it fell by 49 per cent.
- More than 71 per cent of births were assisted by skilled health personnel globally in 2014, an increase from 59 per cent in 1990.
- In Northern Africa, the proportion of pregnant women who received four or more antenatal visits increased from 50 per cent to 89 per cent between 1990 and 2014.
- Contraceptive prevalence among women aged 15 to 49, married or in a union, increased from 55 per cent in 1990 worldwide to 64 per cent in 2015.

### Global antiretroviral therapy treatment

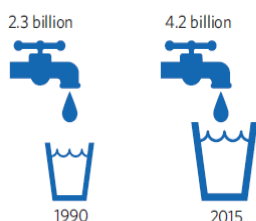


### Number of insecticide-treated mosquito nets delivered in sub-Saharan Africa, 2004-2014



- New HIV infections fell by approximately 40 per cent between 2000 and 2013, from an estimated 3.5 million cases to 2.1 million.
- By June 2014, 13.6 million people living with HIV were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) globally, an immense increase from just 800,000 in 2003. ART averted 7.6 million deaths from AIDS between 1995 and 2013.
- Over 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted between 2000 and 2015, primarily of children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa. The global malaria incidence rate has fallen by an estimated 37 per cent and the mortality rate by 58 per cent.
- More than 900 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets were delivered to malaria-endemic countries in sub-Saharan Africa between 2004 and 2014.
- Between 2000 and 2013, tuberculosis prevention, diagnosis and treatment interventions saved an estimated 37 million lives. The tuberculosis mortality rate fell by 45 per cent and the prevalence rate by 41 per cent between 1990 and 2013.

### 1.9 billion people have gained access to piped drinking water since 1990

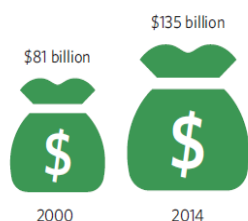


### 98% of ozone-depleting substances eliminated since 1990

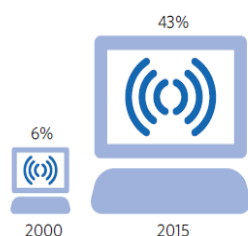


- Ozone-depleting substances have been virtually eliminated since 1990, and the ozone layer is expected to recover by the middle of this century.
- Terrestrial and marine protected areas in many regions have increased substantially since 1990. In Latin America and the Caribbean, coverage of terrestrial protected areas rose from 8.8 per cent to 23.4 per cent between 1990 and 2014.
- In 2015, 91 per cent of the global population is using an improved drinking water source, compared to 76 per cent in 1990.
- Of the 2.6 billion people who have gained access to improved drinking water since 1990, 1.9 billion gained access to piped drinking water on premises. Over half of the global population (58 per cent) now enjoys this higher level of service.
- Globally, 147 countries have met the drinking water target, 95 countries have met the sanitation target and 77 countries have met both.
- Worldwide, 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation. The proportion of people practicing open defecation has fallen almost by half since 1990.
- The proportion of urban population living in slums in the developing regions fell from approximately 39.4 per cent in 2000 to 29.7 per cent in 2014.

### Official development assistance



### Global Internet penetration



- Official development assistance from developed countries increased by 66 per cent in real terms between 2000 and 2014, reaching \$135.2 billion.
- In 2014, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom continued to exceed the United Nations official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income.
- In 2014, 79 per cent of imports from developing to developed countries were admitted duty free, up from 65 per cent in 2000.
- The proportion of external debt service to export revenue in developing countries fell from 12 per cent in 2000 to 3 per cent in 2013.
- As of 2015, 95 per cent of the world's population is covered by a mobile-cellular signal.
- The number of mobile-cellular subscriptions has grown almost tenfold in the last 15 years, from 738 million in 2000 to over 7 billion in 2015.
- Internet penetration has grown from just over 6 per cent of the world's population in 2000 to 43 per cent in 2015. As a result, 3.2 billion people are linked to a global network of content and applications.

From above discussion it is quite clear that significant achievements have been made on many of the MDG targets worldwide, but progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are being left behind, especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location.

- Gender inequality persists
- Big gaps exist between the poorest and richest households, and between rural and urban areas
- Climate change and environmental degradation undermine progress achieved, and poor people suffer the most
- Conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development
- Millions of poor people still live in poverty and hunger, without access to basic services

## INDIA AND THE MDGs

The year 2015 is a landmark year for global development - the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are reaching their December 2015 deadline, and the world is set to adopt a new set of transformative and universal sustainable development goals (SDGs). At this juncture, when the framework for the next phase of global development is being formulated, it becomes critical to assess the achievements of the MDGs in India.

India is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, and has consistently reaffirmed its commitment towards the eight development goals. The targets of the MDGs converge with India's own development goals to reduce poverty and other areas of deprivation.

India has witnessed significant progress towards the MDGs, with some targets having been met ahead of the 2015 deadline, however progress has been inconsistent. For instance, while India, according to official national estimates, has achieved the target for reducing poverty by half, it is falling short of achieving the target for reducing hunger. The country has achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment yet it is lagging behind on targets for primary school enrolment and completion. India has made progress in providing clean drinking water however; access to sanitation facilities remains inadequate. Achieving the MDGs is a core development challenge for India. India's new Government has reinforced this priority through the principle of *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas* and the Prime Minister, in his 2014 Independence Day speech, also urged Indians to work together towards overcoming poverty, gender inequality and the lack of sanitation, which are all crucial MDG tasks.

India has made notable progress towards reaching the MDGs but achievement across the Goals varies. India has already achieved the target for reducing poverty by half (Goal 1) by official estimates – and is close to doing so by international estimates. India has already achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment (Goal 3) and is likely to reach parity in secondary and tertiary education also by 2015. India is set to achieve reducing hunger by half (Goal 1); to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters (Goal 5); control of the spread of deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis (Goal 6); has increased forest cover and has halved the proportion of population without access to clean drinking water (Goal 7). But India is lagging behind on targets for achieving universal primary school enrolment and completion and achieving universal youth literacy by 2015 (Goal 2); empowering women through wage employment and political participation (Goal 3); reducing child and infant mortality



(Goal 4); and improving access to adequate sanitation to eliminate open defecation (Goal 7).

A brief of the performance of India in achieving the MDGs is presented below:

### **Goal 1 : Eradicate Extreme Poverty And Hunger**

- Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
- The all India Poverty Head Count Ratio (PHCR) estimate was 47.8% in 1990. In order to meet the target the PHCR level has to be 23.9% by 2015. In 2011-12, the PHCR at all India level is 21.9%, which shows that, India has already achieved the target well ahead of time.
- During 2004-05 to 2011-12, the Poverty Gap Ratio reduced both in rural and urban areas. While the rural PGR declined from 9.64 in 2004-05 to 5.05 in 2011-12 in the urban areas it declined from 6.08 to 2.70 during the same period. A nearly 50% decline in PGR both in rural and urban areas during 2004-05 to 2011-12 reflects that the conditions of poor have improved both in urban and rural areas.
- At all India level, the share of the poorest quintile in the total consumption is lower in the urban areas than in rural areas. During 1993-94 to 2011-12, in urban areas, the indicator (URP methodology) showed a decline from 8.0% in 1993-94 to 6.97% in 2009-10, and then showed a slight improvement 7.1% in 2011-12. In rural areas, the share of poorest quintile steadily declined from 9.6% in 1993-94 to 9.1% in 2011-12.
- Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
- It is estimated that in 1990, the proportion of underweight children below 3 years 52%. In order to meet the target, the proportion of under-weight children should decrease to 26% by 2015. The National Family Health Survey shows that, the proportion of under-weight children below 3 year declined from 43% in 1998-99 to 40% in 2005-06. At this rate of decline the proportion of underweight children below 3 years is expected to reduce to 33% by 2015, which indicates India is falling short of the target.

### **Goal 2 : To Achieve Universal Primary Education**

- TARGET 5: Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education.
- The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in primary education (age 6-10 years) was estimated at 84.5 per cent in 2005-06 (U-DISE) and the NER has increased to 88.08 per cent in 2013-14 (U-DISE), and is unlikely to meet the target of universal achievement.
- The results from DISE report 2011-12, shows a steady increasing trend over the years in the estimate of the indicator 'ratio of enrolment of Grade V to Grade I' from 78.08 in 2009-10 to 86.05 in 2011-12.
- The youth (15-24 years) literacy rate has increased from 61.9% to 86.14 per cent during the period 1991-2011 and the trend shows India is likely to reach 93.38% which is very near to the target of 100% youth literacy by 2015. At national level, the male and female youth literacy rate is likely to be at 94.81% and 92.47%.

### **Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

- Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015
- At present, in primary education the enrolment is favourable to females as Gender Parity Index (GPI) of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is 1.03 in 2013-14. In Secondary education also gender parity has achieved GPI of GER is 1 in 2013-14 and in tertiary level of education, the GPI of GER is 0.89 in 2012-13.
- As per Census 2011, the ratio of female youth literacy rate to male youth literacy rate is 0.91 at all India level and is likely to reach the level of 1 by 2015.
- The NSS 68th round (2011-12) results had estimated the percentage share of females in wage employment in the non- agricultural sector as 19.3% with corresponding figures for rural and urban areas as 19.9% and 18.7% respectively. There is an improvement in the status as NSS 66th round (2009-10) had reported that the share of women in wage employment is 18.6% at national level and the corresponding estimates for rural and urban India pegged at 19.6% and 17.6% respectively. It is projected that, at this rate of progress, the share of women in wage employment can at best reach a level of about 22.28% by 2015 which is far from the targeted 50%.
- As in January 2015, India, the world's largest democracy, has only 65 women representatives out of 542 members in Lok Sabha, while there are 31 female representatives in the 242 member Rajya Sabha and hence presently the proportion of seats in National Parliament held by women is only 12.24% against the target of 50%.

### **Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality**

- TARGET 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five Mortality Rate
- Under Five Mortality Ratio (U5MR) was estimated at 125 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990. In order to achieve the target, the U5MR is to be reduced to 42 deaths per 1000 live births by 2015. As per Sample Registration System 2013, the U5MR is at 49 deaths per 1000 live births and as per the historical trend, it is likely to reach 48 deaths per 1000 live births, missing the target narrowly. However, an overall reduction of nearly 60% happened during 1990 to 2013, registering a faster decline in the recent past, and if this rate of reduction is sustained, the achievement by 2015 is likely to be very close to the target by 2015.
- In India, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was estimated at 80 per 1,000 live births in 1990. As per SRS 2013, the IMR is at 40 and as per the historical trend; it is likely to reach 39 by 2015, against the target of 27 infant deaths per 1000 live births by 2015. However, with the sharp decline in the recent years, the gap between the likely achievement and the target is expected to be narrowed.
- The Coverage Evaluation Survey estimates the proportion of one year old children immunised against measles at 74% in 2009. Although, there is substantial improvement in the coverage which was 42% in 1992-93, yet at this rate of improvement, India is likely to achieve about 89% coverage by 2015 and thus India is likely to fall short of universal coverage.

### **Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health**

- Target 6: Reduce by three quarters between 1990 and 2015, the Maternal Mortality Ratio
- In 1990, the estimated MMR was 437 per 1,00,000 live births. In order to meet the MDG target,



the MMR should be reduced to 109 per 1,00,000 live births by 2015. As per the latest estimates, the MMR status at all India level is at 167 in 2011-13. As per the historical trend, MMR is likely to reach the level of 140 maternal deaths by 2015, however, assuming the recent sharper decline is sustained, India is likely to be slightly nearer to the MDG target.

- The Coverage Evaluation Survey conducted by Government of India and UNICEF in 2009 shows that 76.2% percentage of births were attended by skilled health personnel in 2009. Although, considerable progress has been achieved over the years in improving the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel, India is likely to reach the level of 77.29% vis-à-vis the targeted universal coverage. The latest results of Sample Registration System (SRS) 2013, reveal that, the percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel (Government hospitals, Private hospital, qualified professional) is 87.1% in 2013, which indicates a better status.

### **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases**

- TARGET 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- The prevalence of HIV among Pregnant women aged 15-24 years is showing a declining trend from 0.89 % in 2005 to 0.32% in 2012-13.
- According to NFHS –III in 2005-06, Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate (Condom use to overall contraceptive use among currently married women, 15-49 years,%) was only 5.2 % at all India level.
- According to Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BSS) conducted in 2001 & 2006, the national estimates for Condom use at last high-risk sex (%) (Proportion of population aged 15-24 years who used condom during last sex with non-regular partner) registered a 19% increase from 51.9% in 2001 to 61.7% in 2006. As per the ‘Condom Promotion Impact Survey 2010’, the national estimate for Condom use at last high-risk sex is 74%, thus recording an improvement of 20% during 2006 to 2010.
- According to Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BSS), the national estimate for proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct Knowledge of HIV/AIDS (%) in 2006 was 32.9% reporting betterment from 2001 (22.2%).
- TARGET 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of Malaria and other major diseases.
- The Annual Parasite Incidence (API) rate – Malaria has consistently come down from 2.12 per thousand in 2001 to 0.72 per thousand in 2013, but slightly increased to 0.88 in 2014 (P) but confirmed deaths due to malaria in 2013 was 440 and in 2014 (P), 578 malaria deaths have been registered.
- In India, Tuberculosis prevalence per lakh population has reduced from 465 in year 1990 to 211 in 2013. TB Incidence per lakh population has reduced from 216 in year 1990 to 171 in 2013. Tuberculosis mortality per lakh population has reduced from 38 in year 1990 to 19 in 2013.

### **Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

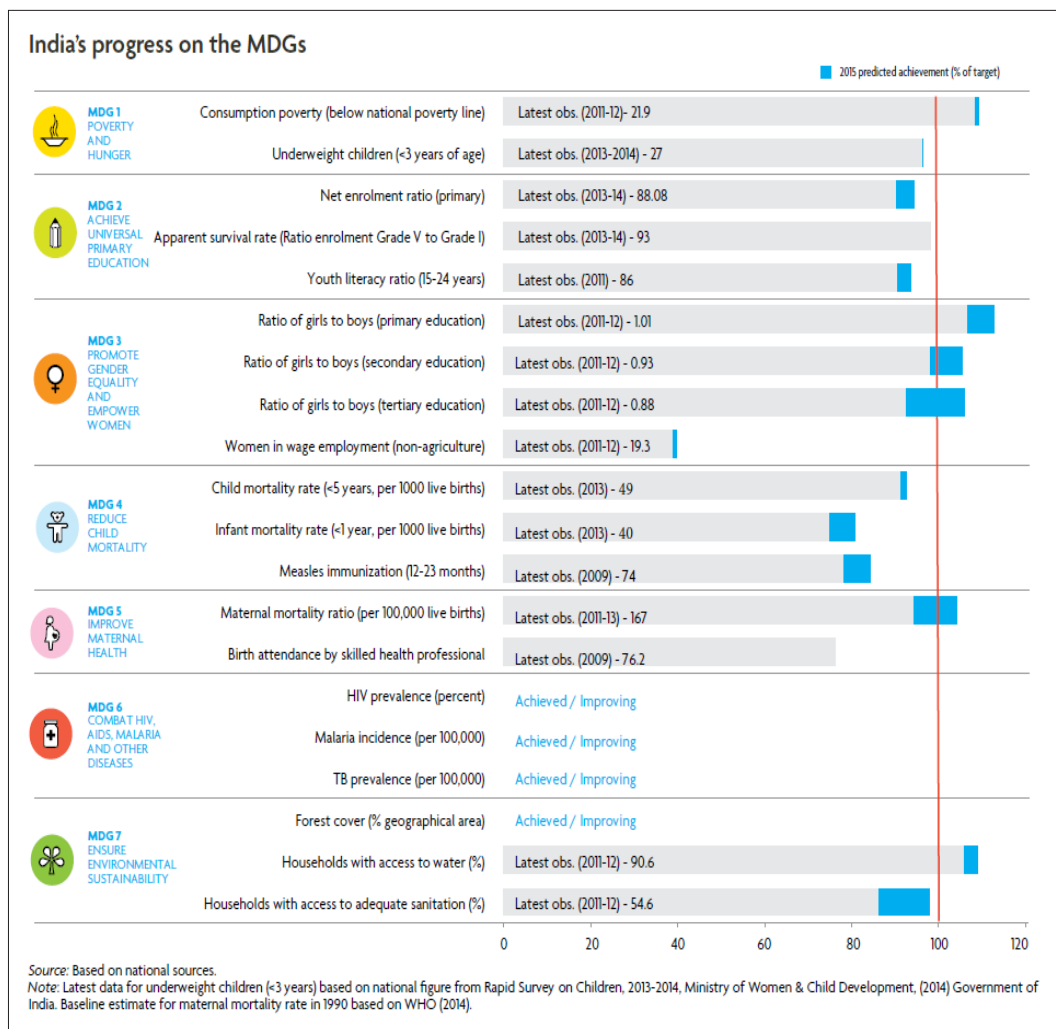
- TARGET 9: Integrate the principle of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

- As per assessment in 2013, the total forest cover of the country is 697898 sq.km which is 21.23% of the geographic area of the country. During 2011-2013, there is an increase of 5871 sq.km in forest cover.
- The network of Protected Areas comprising 89 National Parks and 489 Sanctuaries giving a combined coverage of 155475.63 km<sup>2</sup> in 2000, has grown steadily over the years. As of 2014, there are 692 Protected Areas (103 National Parks, 525 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 4 Community Reserves and 60 Conservation reserves, covering 158645.05 km<sup>2</sup> or 5.07% of the country's geographical area.
- Per-capita Energy Consumption (PEC) (the ratio of the estimate of total energy consumption during the year to the estimated mid-year population of that year) increased from 6205.25 KWh in 2011-12 to 6748.61 KWh in 2012-13, thus, the percentage annual increase of 8.76%.
- In 2013, the estimated CO<sub>2</sub> emission (Million Tonnes) for India is 1954.02. The Carbon dioxide emission showed a percentage increase of 235.57% in 2014 over 1990 for India.
- In 2010, consumption of CFC is estimated at 290.733 ODP tonnes (ODP –Ozone Depletion Potential), down from 5614 ODP tones in 2000. From the year 2000, the CFC consumption decreased steadily till 2008, but showed minor increase in 2010.
- As per Census 2011, 67.3% households are using solid fuels (fire wood / crop residue/cow dung cake/ coke, etc) for cooking against 74.3% in 2001. Census 2011, further reveals that, in Rural areas 86.5% households and in Urban areas 26.1% households are using solid fuels for cooking.
- TARGET 10: Halve, by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- During 2012, at all India level, 87.8% households had access to improved source of drinking water while 86.9% households in rural and 90.1% households in urban area had access to improved source of drinking water. The target of halving the proportion of households without access to safe drinking water sources from its 1990 level to be reached by 2015, has already been achieved in rural areas and is likely to be achieved in urban areas. At all India level also, the target for access to improved source of drinking water has already been achieved.
- The NSS 2012 revealed 43.4% of households at all India level had no latrine facilities. The NSS 2012 shows that 59.4% and 8.8% households in rural India and urban India respectively had no access to sanitation. Towards achieving the target of access to basic sanitation facility in households, in urban areas, the 2015 target is likely to be met as the percentage of households without sanitation facility is likely to be 10.74% in 2015 against the target of 14.18%, and the progress is quite lagging behind in rural areas as likely achievement in 2015 is 60.96% of households without sanitation facility vis-a- vis the target of 46.77%. At all India level, 2015 target is unlikely to be met the percentage of households without sanitation facility is likely to be 47.31% vis-a-vis the target of 38.09%.
- TARGET 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
- Census 2011 reported that 17.2% of urban households are located in slums. The percentage of slum households to urban households (slum reported towns) is 22.17%. Census recorded a 37.14% decadal growth in the number of slum households. Census further reveals that in 2011,

17.37% of the urban population lives in slums. The Percentage of population in slum households to urban households (slum reported towns) is 22.44%.

## Goal 8: Develop A Global Partnership For Development

- Target 18: In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication.
- The overall tele-density in the country has shown tremendous progress and is at 76% as on 31st July 2014.
- The internet subscribers per 100 population accessing internet through wireline and wireless connections has increased from 16.15 in June 2013 to 20.83 in June 2014.



## Focus More Attention on Five Key Drivers of the MDGs

While factors specific to each of the MDGs are important for achievement of the targets, there are several key 'drivers' that affect the performance of all the MDGs. Some of these crosscutting factors were not explicitly factored into the MDG goal and indicator structure but their roles are now being recognized as crucial to the success of the MDGs and so are being integrated within the proposed SDGs. In the rest of this section, five of these key drivers that influence performance and attainment of MDGs (and will also help drive the SDGs) are discussed. These are (1) broad-based and employment-creating economic growth; (2) adequate allocation of resources towards the social sectors and basic services; (3) strong design and effective implementation of MDG related programmes; (4) creating basic infrastructure for better access and delivery of MDG related services; and (5) women's empowerment.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT : ENSURING CONTINUITY POST 2015

Freedom from deprivations will require achieving the MDGs and more. Sixty-eight years after it gained independence, India is still engaged in a struggle for freedom from many deprivations: poverty, hunger, illiteracy, ill health, disease and many others which the MDGs sought to overcome but many remain unfulfilled. Besides completing the unfinished agenda of the MDGs,

India needs to consider other major development challenges for the post-2015 period that are being articulated through the ongoing global discussion on sustainable development. Based on extensive consultations, the Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations General Assembly has now proposed a transformative and universal development agenda covering in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) all the three dimensions of sustainable development namely economic, social and environmental pursued together taking into account their inter-relations and synergies. The OWG proposals also form part of the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet* (December 2014) and are expected to be finalized and adopted by the global leaders at the General Assembly in September 2015.

The SDG proposals will ensure momentum generated by MDGs is carried through to 2030 to end deprivations. SDGs include four sets of challenges for India namely (i) completing the unfinished MDG agenda with a higher level of ambition of ending – not just reducing all deprivations; (ii) strengthening critical development drivers such as economic growth, industrialization, employment creation and reduction of inequality within and between countries, basic infrastructure including energy, and governance and institutions, without which many social and environmental objectives would not be easy to reach; (iii) strengthening the sustainability dimension to address new and emerging challenges such as deteriorating environment, unsustainable consumption and production patterns that are rapidly depleting natural resources, the need to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change, and develop livable urban areas; and (iv) accessing the means of implementation including transfer of advanced sustainable technologies from developed countries and harnessing India's frugal engineering capabilities for pursuing low carbon development pathways.

Looking forward to an India, freed of deprivations, in step with Asia and a leader in sustainable development. A vigorous pursuit of a sustainable development agenda presents to India valuable

opportunities to not only end deprivations and provide a more dignified existence to its people but also adapt growth paths that are more sustainable and that will enable it to close the development gaps with its Asian peers. It comes as India's new Government proceeds with a decisive mandate for change. The MDGs have served India's decision makers and the general public to focus more clearly on such core development objectives. The recent initiatives announced by the Government of India are positive signs of India's active momentum and strategic priorities towards an inclusive and sustainable development agenda. The Government's principle of *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas* and prioritization of achieving development gains in poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, health, sanitation, as well as environmental sustainability through treating the challenge of climate change adaptation as an opportunity for reform reflects an alignment of Indian development strategy with that being articulated by Member States at the United Nations in the context of the SDGs. India's importance and weight in the global agenda makes such a convergence timely.

The goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved globally without India. Its increased convergence in development priorities provides a basis for an enhanced partnership between the United Nations and India as the country develops. The proposed SDGs have also set a higher standard, which all Indians can recognize as an opportunity to finally end the crippling deprivations much of the country's population has long-suffered from.

The experience of the MDGs has shown that fast progress towards development objectives requires stimulating key underlying drivers. Similarly, India's achievement of the SDGs will require a focus on the acceleration of inclusive economic growth; guaranteed access to comprehensive social services; vast investment in basic infrastructure and women's empowerment. On top of this, the formulation and implementation of effective and responsive development policies and programmes is essential to fulfil development for all. The recent initiatives of the Government are a welcome sign of the intention of India to adopt this strategy.

The MDG experience has also shown that only mixed progress results when fundamental gaps in inequality, exclusion and deprivation are not closed and when rhetoric is not matched by fundamental concrete actions and by complete commitment to implementation. For 2015 and beyond, the world will be watching how India will implement its new strategic direction and the concrete actions and achievements it can make to provide a sustainable future for all.

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