

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007

Press Release

For Latin America and Caribbean, a Contradictory Picture Development Gains Offset by Entrenched Poverty, UN Report Says

New York, 20 July – The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have made remarkable progress towards implementing most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At least five of the MDG targets appear to have already been met and in other areas progress has been rapid enough to put the region well on track to meet the 2015 deadline.

But countries of the region face some daunting challenges growing out of the region's failure to make substantial inroads against poverty, a United Nations progress report has found.

The survey, *the Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*, cited the region's tremendous successes in ensuring that all girls as well as all boys are able to complete a full course of primary schooling – and that gender parity be assured at the secondary level as well.

The report noted that the region's total net enrolment ratio in primary education had grown from 87 per cent in 1991 to 97 per cent in 2005, the highest percentage among all of the regions surveyed.

Women also made strides in securing paid jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 42 per cent of non-agricultural jobs held by women in 2005, a 5 percentage-point increase since 1990.

The report also found that women in the region had made substantial gains in political representation, with the share of women holding parliamentary seats having grown to 20 per cent in 2007, compared with 12 per cent in 1990.

In Costa Rica, women made up 39 per cent of parliament in 2006, and in the same year, women were elected heads of state or of government in Chile and Jamaica.

On health issues, the UN report found that all countries in the region had made significant progress in reducing child mortality, from 54 child deaths per 1,000 births in 1990 to 31 in 2005.

In addition, the report cited improvements in maternal care, with 89 per cent of women in giving birth region-wide attended to by skilled health care personnel. The one negative element, the report found, was the fact that maternal care remains at substandard levels in some impoverished countries, especially in Central America.

But for all the gains in Millennium Development Goal targets, the UN assessment found, a number of challenges remain because of the region's slow pace in eradicating extreme poverty and income inequality.

Indeed, the report concluded, poverty rates in Latin America and the Caribbean have decreased only marginally, from 10 per cent in 1990 to 9 per cent in 2004. At the same time, income inequality in the region remains the highest among all developing areas, with the poorest one-fifth of the population accounting for only about 3 per cent of national consumption.

Latin America and the Caribbean, which is among the most biologically diverse areas of the globe, also suffers from one of the fastest rates of deforestation, which not only threatens the irreplaceable resource of biodiversity, but enhances emissions of the greenhouse gases linked to climate change.

Region-wide, the proportion of land covered by forests declined from 50 per cent in 1990 to 46 per cent in 2005, the report said.

Guyana has maintained steady progress towards the Millennium Development Goals over the years, though the pace of progress may be insufficient to achieve some of the targets for 2015. Guyana has advanced in its efforts to reduce hunger, increase access to social services and benefits, improve enrolment in and completion of primary education, increase empowerment of women and achieve environmental sustainability.

The challenges facing Guyana in its quest to achieve the MDGs are, however, significant. The prospects of achieving all the Millennium Development targets will be vastly with the resumption of sustained economic growth and its effects on household income, revenue generation and public expenditure outlays. Improved data systems will improve the capacity to measure progress in future years as the 2007 PRS accelerates progress on a number of targets. The broader political and civil climate will also remain critical in creating a conducive environment to encourage greater capital investment in the country and slow down the outward migration of critical professional and technical skills.

The Millennium Development Goals Report, an annual assessment of regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 20 organizations both within and outside the UN System. The report, supervised and coordinated by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is produced at the request of the General Assembly.

For more information and media contacts, please see

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