Human Development Report Office

UNDP

Sub-Saharan Africa – the human costs of the 2015 'business-as-usual' scenario

With 10 years to go to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target date of 2015, current trends will leave most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa far short of most targets. The gap between trend and target can be expressed in statistics. But behind the statistics are human costs.

This note provides a preliminary assessment of the potential scale of these costs. It draws on a global trend projection analysis developed by UNDP's Human Development Report Office (HDRO). The analysis uses country-by-country data for the period 1990-2003 to build global and regional aggregates that capture changes in the distribution of poverty, child mortality, children out of school and other indicators.

The full global trend projection will be published in the 2005 *Human Development Report* in advance of a UN summit to review progress and prospects for achieving the MDGs.

We stress that the data set out in this provisional note reflect current trends, not destiny. Trends can be changed through national policies and effective international cooperation. The Gleneagles G8 Summit in July 2005 provides a critical opportunity to prevent the potential human development costs identified in this report from becoming actual costs.

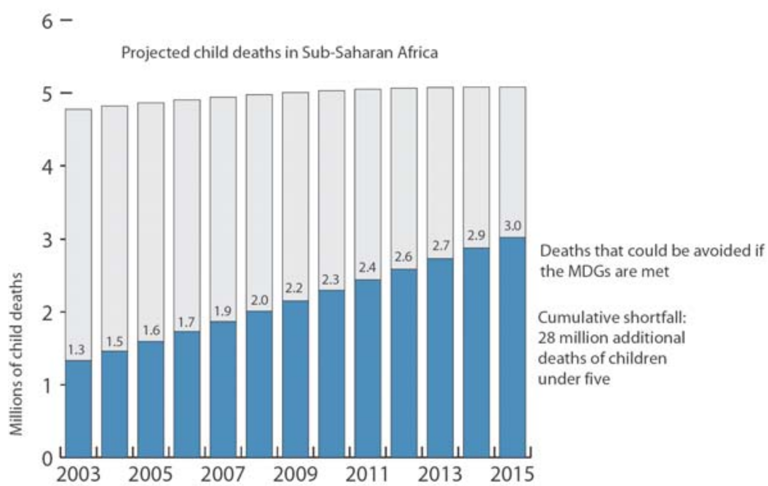
Child mortality

Child mortality trends raise particularly grave concerns. Currently, 4.8 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa die before the age of 5 every year – that is 9 deaths every minute. With one fifth of the world's births, Sub-Saharan Africa currently accounts for 45% of child deaths.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where the number of child deaths is rising. If current trends continue, there will be 5.1 million deaths in 2015, with Africa's share rising to 57% of the total. Of 45 countries in the region, 10 countries – including Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe – have gone backward since 1990. Another 19 countries are progressing so slowly that the MDG target on child mortality will be missed by more than 35 years. These 2 groups of countries account for 2 in 3 child deaths in the region. This group includes the 4 countries that account for the largest number of child deaths: Nigeria (954,000 deaths), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (545,000), Ethiopia (506,000) and Tanzania (237,000).

The human costs of continuing the current trajectory can be assessed by quantifying the gap between trends and the MDG target of a two thirds reduction in child and infant death rates. Our projections assume a simple linear continuation of the trend, which we compare with the annualised target rate required for achieving the Goal (**Figures 1 and 2**). The difference between the 2 represents the additional deaths that would have been avoided if Sub-Saharan Africa were 'on track' to achieve the MDG target.

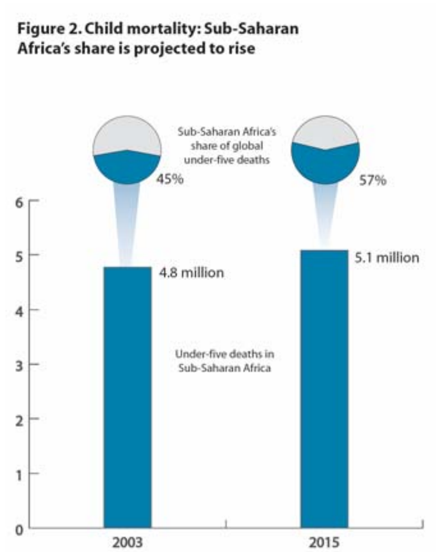
Figure 1. The human costs of missing the target: projected additional child deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa



The 'business-as- usual' trend projection points to a large – and growing – human cost gap. That gap is equivalent to:

- 3 million additional deaths over and above the MDG target in 2015.
- Cumulative additional deaths for the period 2005 to 2015 of 28 million.

If current trends continue, Sub-Saharan Africa will achieve the MDG for child mortality in around 2115 – one century after the target date.



Primary Education

Sub-Saharan Africa currently accounts for 43 million of the 115 million children out of school, or just over one third of the total. That share is rising over time. While the region is making progress towards the MDG, that progress is too slow to achieve the target of universal primary education by 2015.

Around 20 countries with a total out-of-school population of 17 million have either gone backwards since 1990, or are off track by more than a generation. More recently, countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda have registered progress in increasing enrolments, but completion rates lag far behind.

By 2015, approximately 19 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa will still be out of school if current trends continue. Africa's share of the global out of school population will have increased to 40%.

Progress towards gender equity in primary education has been mixed. Of the 14 countries in the world where girls account for less than 80% of primary school attendance, 11 are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Around 10 countries accounting for over 4 million out-of-school girls are either going backward or are on track for achieving the MDG more than a generation after the target date

Income poverty

The MDGs target a decline by one half in the incidence of extreme poverty, as measured by the World Bank’s $1 a day benchmark. While the world may achieve this target in global aggregate terms – a reflection of strong growth and poverty reduction in India and China – most countries in Africa will miss the Goal.

Just under half of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population – some 313 million people – survive on less than $1 day. Poverty incidence today is roughly the same as in 1990, reflecting a protracted period of economic stagnation. Stronger recent economic growth in some countries – including Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia – raises the potential for accelerated progress. However, prospects for a sustained acceleration in growth and poverty reduction are limited by infrastructural constraints, chronic deficits in health and education, and some of the world’s most unequal patterns of global income distribution.

Assuming positive growth trends to 2015, Sub-Saharan will still miss the MDGs by a wide margin. There would be 219 million fewer people in the region in poverty in 2015 if the Goal of halving extreme poverty was met by all countries. On the current trend projection, there will be 353 million people in poverty in 2015, with Sub-Saharan Africa’s share of global poverty climbing from 29% to 53% of the total (figure 3).

Figure 3. Sub-Saharan Africa’s share of global poverty: the projected rise to 2015