

Where we stand with only a decade to go

Economic development lifted millions of people out of poverty in the last decade. While the population of developing countries rose from about 4 billion people to 5 billion, average per capita incomes rose by more than 21 percent (table 2.1). With 130 million fewer people in extreme poverty in 2001 than a decade before, the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day declined by 7 percentage points, from 28 to 21 percent (World Bank 2004c; Chen and Ravallion 2004). The rate of undernourishment declined by 3 percentage points, and the under-five mortality rate dropped from 103 deaths per 1,000 births to 88. Life expectancy rose from 63 years to nearly 65 years (FAO 2003a; World Bank 2004c). An additional 8 percent of the developing world's population gained access to improved drinking water supply, and 15 percent more to basic sanitation services (WHO and UNICEF 2004). Of course the story has not been all good. Perhaps most notably, the spread of AIDS has been catastrophic, with more than 20 million lives lost since the first case was detected in 1981 (UNAIDS 2004).

Evaluating poverty and progress around the world

General developing world trends obscure vast differences across and within regions and countries. Some regions have made little progress or even experienced reversals in several areas (table 2.2). Many countries have seen economic growth while others have experienced stagnation. And many of the poorest countries have seen gradual economic growth, but at rates grossly inadequate to yield a dramatic reduction in poverty. From 1990 to 2002, for example, the heavily indebted poor countries saw their incomes rise only from \$298 per capita to \$337 in 1995 dollars (World Bank 2004c).

Much of the progress toward poverty reduction in the last decade has been driven by advances in East Asia and South Asia, home to China and India, the

Table 2.1
Measures of
average progress
in the developing
world, 1990–2002
(population-weighted)

a. The poverty headcount ratio is the proportion of the national population with incomes below \$1.08 a day. 2002 data unavailable; 2001 data used as a proxy.

b. Does not include CIS countries in 1990.

Source: GDP, under-five mortality, and life expectancy data from World Bank 2004c. Headcount poverty data from Chen and Ravallion 2004. Undernourishment data from FAO 2003a. HIV prevalence data from UNAIDS and WHO 2004. Water and sanitation data from WHO and UNICEF 2004.

Indicator	1990	2002
GDP per capita (1995 US\$)	1,071	1,299
Headcount poverty (percent) ^a	28	21
Undernourishment prevalence (percent) ^b	20	17
Under-five mortality (per 1,000 live births)	103	88
Life expectancy at birth (years)	63	65
HIV prevalence (percent)	0.5	1.6
Access to improved drinking water supply (percent)	71	79
Access to improved sanitation facilities (percent)	34	49

world's most populous countries. With more than 2.3 billion people in these two countries alone, their major advances in poverty reduction drive developing world averages (table 2.3). The poverty rate in China dropped from 33 percent to 17 percent between 1990 and 2001, and in India, from 42 percent to 35 percent (Chen and Ravallion 2004) and even more by some estimates (Bhalla 2002; Deaton 2003). China's low population growth rate and rapid reduction in poverty rates have decreased its poverty headcount by nearly 165 million people since 1990.¹ By contrast, India's declining poverty rates have been offset by population growth, so the number of absolute poor there remains unchanged at approximately 360 million people (Chen and Ravallion 2004).

Other parts of Asia have also seen strong progress, with economic growth helping to reduce the rest of the region's extreme poverty by nearly 70 million people since 1990. Yet the sheer numbers of poor people in Asia remain vast, with more than 270 million in East Asia and 430 million in South Asia, all vulnerable to droughts, natural disasters, and other shocks (Chen and Ravallion 2004). East Asia and South Asia together are still home to the greatest number of absolute poor people in the world.

In sharp contrast to Asia's progress, most of Sub-Saharan Africa faces significant challenges in meeting the Millennium Development Goals on almost every dimension of poverty, with many countries falling behind. Between 1990 and 2001 the number of people living on less than \$1 a day rose from 227 million to 313 million, and the poverty rate rose from 45 percent of the population to 46 percent (Chen and Ravallion 2004). In the 33 countries of

Table 2.2
Major trends in the Goals, by region

	Africa		Asia				Oceania	Latin America & Caribbean	Commonwealth of Independent States	
	Northern	Sub-Saharan	Eastern	South-eastern	Southern	Western			Europe	Asia
Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger										
Reduce extreme poverty by half	on track	high, no change	met	on track	on track	increasing	no data	low, minimal improvement	increasing	increasing
Reduce hunger by half	high, no change	very high, little change	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	increasing	moderate, no change	on track	low, no change	increasing
Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education										
Universal primary schooling ^a	on track	progress but lagging	on track	lagging	progress but lagging	high but no change	progress but lagging	on track	declining	on track
Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women										
Girls' equal enrollment in primary school	on track	progress but lagging	met	on track	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	on track	on track	met	on track
Girls' equal enrollment in secondary school	met	progress but lagging	no data	met	progress but lagging	little change	progress but lagging	on track	met	met
Literacy parity between young women and men	lagging	lagging	met	met	lagging	lagging	lagging	met	met	met
Women's equal representation in national parliaments	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	declining	progress but lagging	very low, some progress	very low, no change	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	recent progress	declining
Goal 4 Reduce child mortality										
Reduce mortality of under-five-year-olds by two-thirds	on track	very high, no change	progress but lagging	on track	progress but lagging	moderate, no change	moderate, no change	on track	low, no change	increasing
Measles immunization	met	low, no change	no data	on track	progress but lagging	on track	declining	met	met	met
Goal 5 Improve maternal health										
Reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters	moderate	very high	low	high	very high	moderate	high	moderate	low	low
Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases										
Halt and reverse spread of HIV/AIDS	no data	stable	increasing	stable	increasing	no data	increasing	stable	increasing	increasing
Halt and reverse spread of malaria	low	high	moderate	moderate	moderate	low	low	moderate	low	low
Halt and reverse spread of TB	low, declining	high, increasing	moderate, declining	high, declining	high, declining	low, declining	high, increasing	low, declining	moderate, increasing	moderate, increasing
Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability										
Reverse loss of forests	less than 1% forest	declining	met	declining	small decline	less than 1% forest	declining	declining except Caribbean	met	met
Halve proportion without improved drinking water in urban areas	met	no change	declining access	high access, no change	met	met	high access, no change	met	met	met
Halve proportion without improved drinking water in rural areas	high access, little change	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	on track	progress but lagging	low access, no change	progress but lagging	high access, limited change	high access, limited change
Halve proportion without sanitation in urban areas	on track	low access, no change	progress but lagging	on track	on track	met	high access, no change	high access, no change	high access, no change	high access, no change
Halve proportion without sanitation in rural areas	progress but lagging	no change	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	progress but lagging	no change	no change	progress but lagging	little change	little change
Improve the lives of slum dwellers	on track	rising numbers	progress but lagging	on track	some progress	rising numbers	no data	progress but lagging	low but no change	low but no change
Goal 8 A global partnership for development										
Youth unemployment	high, no change	high, no change	low, increasing	rapidly increasing	low, increasing	high, increasing	low, increasing	increasing	low, rapidly increasing	low, rapidly increasing

met or on track
 progress, but too slow
 no or negative change
 no data

a. Results based on measurements of enrollment rate. Results may change if based on measurements of primary completion rates. For example, estimates of completion rates in Latin America show that 8–10 percent of the school-age population will not complete primary school, which implies that the region is off track for reaching the goal of universal primary education.

Source: UN Statistics Division, UNDESA 2004.

Table 2.3
Population living below the poverty line, by developing region

a. Poverty lines set in 1993 US\$ adjusted for purchasing power parity.

b. Calculated as rural poverty rate \times (100 – urbanization rate) / national poverty rate. Note that published poverty rates often underreport urban poverty.

c. Where 2001 data are not available, uses most recent year available.

Source: Columns 1–4 and 7–10: Chen and Ravallion 2004. Columns 5–6: Calculated from World Bank 2004c.

\$1.08 a day poverty line^a

Region	Millions of people		Share of total population (%)		Share of poor people living in rural areas ^b (%)	Rural population as share of total (%)
	1990	2001	1990	2001	2001 ^c	2001
East Asia	472	271	30	15	80	63
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	2	17	1	4	53	37
Latin America and Caribbean	49	50	11	10	42	24
Middle East and North Africa	6	7	2	2	63	42
South Asia	462	431	41	31	77	72
Sub-Saharan Africa	227	313	45	46	73	67

\$2.15 a day poverty line^a

Region	Millions of people		Share of total population (%)	
	1990	2001	1990	2001
East Asia	1,116	865	70	47
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	23	93	5	20
Latin America and Caribbean	125	128	28	25
Middle East and North Africa	51	70	21	23
South Asia	958	1,064	86	77
Sub-Saharan Africa	382	516	75	77

tropical Sub-Saharan Africa, the average GDP per person is only \$270 a year, a mere 71 cents a day (World Bank 2004c).²

The Middle East and North Africa saw a consistently low poverty rate, at roughly 2 percent, while the number of poor rose slightly, from 6 million to 7 million. Latin America and the Caribbean saw fairly stagnant poverty rates while Eastern Europe and Central Asia saw a stark increase in poverty over the period. Note that measurements that use a \$1 a day standard understate the real extent of poverty in regions where the cost of living is higher. For example, a \$2 a day standard is more appropriate in Latin America and the Caribbean or the transition countries of Europe.

All of these regional trends mask country-level variation. Some African countries such as Mozambique have recorded substantial growth over the last decade. Asia has poor performers as well as strong ones. Variation within countries can also be very high. For example, China and India have displayed strong aggregate growth, but they have wide subnational variations in development. Similarly, Brazil and Mexico have experienced wide regional variations in poverty reduction.

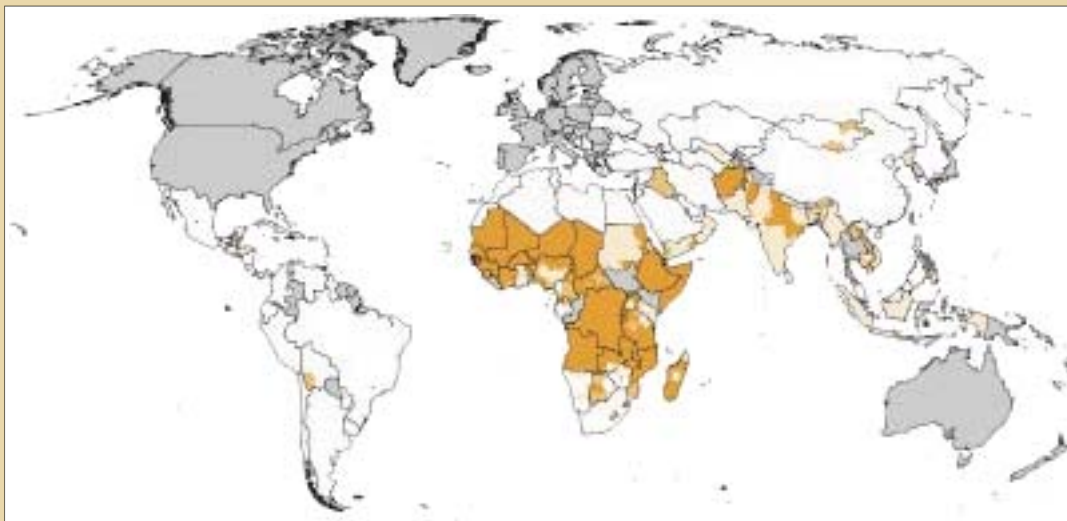
Subnational variations in poverty are important because they may reflect geographical, social, or other determinants of exclusion that require special strategies or investments. The UN Millennium Project has attempted to identify this variation by developing a global map of absolute poverty. But rather

than using income or consumption to measure poverty, two indicators that are notoriously difficult to compare across countries, we used data on infant mortality and malnutrition, two core measures of human poverty commonly collected at a subnational level around the world (map 2.1).³ The map shows that most extreme poverty is in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Central America, and the Andean region of South America.

Two other important dimensions for understanding poverty across regions are the rate of urbanization and the proportion of extreme poor living in rural areas. Although the \$1 a day standard underestimates the extent of urban poverty (Satterthwaite 2004), in the poorest regions—particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa—available data show that the vast majority of the population and the majority of extremely poor people live in rural areas. While urban populations are growing quickly in all regions and the number of urban poor is rising rapidly, roughly three-quarters of the poorest people in Africa and Asia still live in rural areas. This contrasts significantly with Latin America and the Caribbean, where three-quarters of the population, and at least 60 percent of the extreme poor, are estimated to live in urban areas. Not only does the

Map 2.1
Absolute poverty:
infant mortality and
malnutrition, 2000
Infant mortality rate
(IMR) per 1,000 live
births and percentage of
children underweight

Source: CIESIN 2005a, b.



IMR more than 80; more than 20% underweight
 IMR more than 80; less than 20% underweight
 IMR less than 80; more than 20% underweight
 IMR less than 80; less than 20% underweight
 No data

prevalence of extreme poverty differ by region, but its concentration in rural and urban areas differs markedly as well.

How regions are progressing toward the MDGs

Though there is considerable country-level variation in progress toward the Millennium Development Goals, regional trends often reflect important conditions and challenges common to many countries. This section describes progress and remaining challenges related to the pursuit of the Goals in each of the major developing regions (tables 2.3 and 2.4).⁴

North Africa

Moving in the right direction on every indicator, North Africa needs to accelerate progress to achieve the Goals. It has seen modest economic growth since 1990 and is on track to reach the target of halving the poverty headcount rate. Levels of undernourishment have been virtually stagnant at 5 percent since 1990. Gender inequality remains a challenge, reflected in the low share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sectors and the low numbers of women representatives in parliaments. The prevalence of HIV, TB, and malaria is low, but greater progress needs to be made on maternal mortality and rural access to safe water and sanitation. Chronic water shortages and unsustainable use of natural resources fuel growing environmental problems, particularly desertification and soil salinization. The region has also been slow to adapt to scientific and technological developments and making investments in information and communication technologies.

	Eastern Asia		Southeastern Asia		Southern Asia		Western Asia	
	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02
	GDP per capita (constant 1995 US\$) ^a	351	943	1,012	1,421	379	547	2,868
Undernourishment prevalence (%) ^b	16	11	17	13	25	22	7	10
Net enrollment in primary education (%) ^c	98	92	92	91	73	80	81	83
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education ^d	—	—	0.97	0.98	0.74	0.77	0.76	0.79
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000) ^a	48	38	78	48	126	93	68	61
Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births) ^e	—	55	—	210	—	520	—	190
Share of land area covered by forest (%) ^f	15	17	54	49	14	13	3	3
Access to improved water supply (%) ^a	72	78	73	79	71	84	83	88
Access to improved sanitation (%) ^a	24	45	48	61	20	37	79	79
Share of urban population living in slums (%) ^a	41	36	37	28	64	59	34	35
Telephone lines and cellular subscribers (per 100 population)	2	38	1	16	1	5	10	42

— Not available.

a. Compares indicator levels between 1990 and 2002.

b. Compares indicator levels between 1990–92 and 1999–2001.

c. Compares indicator levels between 1990–91 and 2001–02.

d. Compares indicator levels between 1998–99 and 2001–02.

e. Indicator level as of 2000.

f. Compares indicator levels between 1990 and 2000.

g. Represents Latin America only.

Source: Based on data from UNDESA 2004 presented in UN 2004b; GDP data from World Bank 2004c.

Table 2.4
Tracking developing
world progress by
region since 1990
(continued)

	Northern Africa		Sub-Saharan Africa		Latin America and Caribbean		Oceania	
	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02
GDP per capita (constant 1995 US\$) ^a	1,263	1,484	595	581	3,290	3,735	1,017	1,112
Undernourishment prevalence (%) ^b	5	4	35	33	13	10	25	27
Net enrollment in primary education (%) ^c	82	92	54	62	86	96	74	79
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education ^d	0.94	0.96	0.81	0.79	1.09	1.07	0.89	0.93
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000) ^a	87	41	186	174	54	34	86	78
Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births) ^e	—	130	—	920	—	190	—	240
Share of land area covered by forest (%) ^f	1	1	29	27	50 ^g	48 ^g	68	66
Access to improved water supply (%) ^a	88	90	49	58	83	89	51	52
Access to improved sanitation (%) ^a	65	73	32	36	69	75	58	55
Share of urban population living in slums (%) ^a	38	28	72	72	35	32	25	24
Telephone lines and cellular subscribers (per 100 population)	3	17	1	5	6	36	3	9

	CIS (Europe)		CIS (Asia)		CIS (Total)	
	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02	1990	2001/02
GDP per capita (constant 1995 US\$) ^a	3,553	2,617	1,223	938	—	—
Undernourishment prevalence (%) ^b	4	4	18	27	—	—
Net enrollment in primary education (%) ^c	91	87	85	94	—	—
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education ^d	—	1.01	—	0.97	—	—
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000) ^a	—	—	—	—	41	44
Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births) ^e	—	—	—	—	—	—
Share of land area covered by forest (%) ^f	49	49	5	6	—	—
Access to improved water supply (%) ^a	—	—	—	—	92	93
Access to improved sanitation (%) ^a	—	—	—	—	84	83
Share of urban population living in slums (%) ^a	6	6	6	6	—	—
Telephone lines and cellular subscribers (per 100 population)	—	—	—	—	13	29

Sub-Saharan Africa

The region is off track to meet every Millennium Development Goal. It has the highest rate of undernourishment, with one-third of the population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption. Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest primary enrollment rates of all regions. Despite recent progress, gender disparity at the primary level is 0.86, the lowest of all regions (UN Millennium Project 2005j). The HIV/AIDS crisis is devastating much of the continent, destroying lives and livelihoods. Women are disproportionately affected, with 13 infected women for every 10 infected men (UNAIDS 2004). The region also has the highest TB incidence in the world and the highest maternal and

child mortality ratios (maternal mortality ratios are 46 times higher than in the developed world).

Progress in access to safe drinking water, though more promising, is still too slow to achieve the MDG targets. More than 160 million people live in slum-like conditions where they lack security of tenure, and safe housing. Most of the region lacks access to information and communication technology, with just 5.3 telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants. Rates of deforestation are among the highest in the world, illustrating the continent's environmental crisis. Without sustained support, Sub-Saharan Africa is unlikely to meet any of the Goals. (We focus on Africa's special needs in chapter 10.)

East Asia

The region has seen rapid falls in income poverty and in hunger, and improvements have also been recorded in gender equality, education, and child survival. It has invested heavily in infrastructure, with 37.8 phone lines per 100 people, comparing favorably with other developing regions. But it continues to suffer from pockets of extreme poverty, fairly high TB rates, and persistently low access to safe drinking water and sanitation. HIV prevalence rates are low but increasing for high-risk groups. UNAIDS estimates that without an effective response, as many as 10 million people in China may become infected by 2010 (UNAIDS 2004). Nearly 200 million people in East Asia live in slums, lacking access to secure housing and essential services. China's gender inequality remains high, with far fewer girls enrolled in school than boys. A major challenge is environmental degradation, including pollution from rapid industrialization and agricultural intensification.

Southeast Asia

The region is on track to meet the Goals for income poverty, hunger, child mortality, and gender equality. But progress toward other Goals has been mixed, with Thailand and Viet Nam making rapid progress in many areas while, for example, Cambodia and Lao PDR struggle to advance. School enrollment rates have stagnated and need to increase more quickly to achieve the universal primary education target. Other obstacles to achieving the Goals include rising numbers of people infected with HIV and TB, high maternal mortality, rapid deforestation and destruction of coastal and marine environments, and low rural access to water supply and sanitation.

South Asia

The region has made some major strides in overall poverty reduction thanks largely to rapid economic growth in India. Although aggregate income poverty is falling rapidly, South Asia is still home to more poor people than any other region and remains off track for meeting many of the Goals. Primary enrollment and gender equality indicators are lagging. Child health is improving but not

quickly enough to meet the targets, while maternal mortality rates remain high, and, without urgent action, HIV is poised to spread. Severe undernourishment afflicts large parts of the population. More than 250 million people live in slum-like conditions, with insecure tenure, inadequate housing, and poor access to essential services. Most of South Asia lacks access to modern technologies and services, with approximately 5 telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants. Parts of the region suffer from serious problems of water quality and scarcity, and access to sanitation is low throughout the region. On the positive side, access to safe water has increased rapidly in both urban and rural areas.

West Asia

This region, which includes many countries typically classified as part of the Middle East, is off track for a majority of the Goals. Both income poverty and hunger are increasing, and progress toward gender equality has been slow. Primary enrollments increased only from 81 percent in 1990 to 83 percent in 2001, and under-five mortality fell only slightly from 68 per 1,000 live births to 61 in the same period. Maternal mortality remains high, and infectious diseases such as TB are still a threat. While urban areas are on track to meet the water and sanitation Goal, rural areas are lagging behind. Youth unemployment is a significant concern in the region.

Oceania

With about 8 million people, Oceania comprises mostly small island developing states. The region is off track for nearly every Goal, and falling back in some areas. The share of undernourished people increased from 25 percent to 27 percent between 1990–92 and 1999–2001. Net primary enrollment rates remain below 80 percent. Measles immunization coverage dropped from 70 percent to 57 percent between 1990 and 2003. HIV and TB infection rates are rising, and maternal mortality remains high. Even where there is progress, it is too slow to achieve the Goals. Degradation of coastal and marine environments threatens island ecosystems and economies. Most of Oceania also lacks access to modern information and communication technologies, with fewer than 10 telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants. Only Sub-Saharan Africa is off track on more indicators than Oceania.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The region has experienced little economic growth since 1990, yielding stagnant poverty headcounts and persistently high inequality. However, countries there are doing relatively well on the Goals for hunger, education, gender equality, and child health. The Goal for water access has been met in urban areas, but rural areas have seen little improvement. Access to sanitation lags in both rural and urban areas. Accelerating deforestation remains a major issue throughout the region. Maternal mortality is relatively high at 190 per

100,000 live births, approximately 10 times the average in rich countries. More than 125 million people live in slum-like conditions. The greatest challenges lie in the Central American and Andean countries, where the concentration of poverty is highest. The Caribbean countries, as small island developing states, face special challenges and concerns (chapter 11).

CIS countries in Europe

In the 1990s, and especially in the first half, the CIS countries had their economies collapse, with significant increases in poverty and hunger. Most are now making progress, but a few have not yet achieved pre-reform levels of per capita income. Youth unemployment remains very high. Net primary enrollment rates have increased from postindependence lows, but they still remain below those in 1990. Some of these countries may be off track for meeting the health Goals, due to alarming increases in the number of people infected with TB and HIV and to high maternal mortality. Serious environmental challenges include access to clean water and sanitation and the high levels of industrial pollution.

CIS countries in Central Asia

Central Asian countries experienced an increase in poverty levels after the collapse of the Soviet economy, and their geographic isolation compounds the challenges of post-Soviet economic development. Since 1990 the poverty headcount rates have risen significantly in several countries, as have undernourishment and child mortality rates. While overall primary enrollment rates remain fairly high, gender inequality in education remains significant in some countries. Health indicators are deteriorating across the region, and the prevalence of HIV and TB is increasing. Most countries have already met or are on track to achieve the target for urban drinking water, but there has been little progress in rural access. Desertification and water scarcity pose serious threats to agriculture and environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, access to sanitation and other forms of infrastructure is stagnant or in decline.

* * *

Each region's prospects for progress toward the Goals are affected by its demographic conditions. Sub-Saharan Africa is confronted by continuing high population growth and a large adolescent population. Western Asia has the second fastest growing population. Less severe demographic constraints affect South Asia and Southeast Asia, but the unmet need for family planning and other sexual and reproductive health services remains high. Prospects in Latin America and the Caribbean are affected by the dramatic inequality of access to family planning and safe motherhood services between wealthier and poorer social groups. Several European Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries face population declines because of low fertility and migration. Countries nearing the end of their demographic transitions will need to pay special attention to the emerging needs of aging populations and migrants.

Each region will require tailored strategies and interventions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Chapter 11 describes investment priorities for each of these regions and for groups of countries that share special concerns, such as landlocked developing countries, Least Developed Countries, small island developing states, and countries vulnerable to natural hazards.

Summary of progress toward each Goal

In addition to high variation across regions, progress has been uneven across the Millennium Development Goals.

Poverty and hunger

Between 1990 and 2001 the percentage of the population living on less than \$1 a day fell significantly in East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and North Africa. The percentage remained stagnant in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, and it increased in West Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States. In 2001 poverty rates were highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, at 46 percent of the population, and in South Asia, at 31 percent.

Hunger, still high in several regions of the world, is rising in a few. A third of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa and 27 percent of the population in Oceania and CIS countries in Asia are undernourished. Undernourishment is rising in West Asia and CIS Asia. And though malnutrition rates are falling on average in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, they are rising in some African countries.

Primary education

Global and regional primary school completion rates have improved since 1990, but many regions are far off track for meeting the Goal. Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia have all seen increases in primary completion rates between 1990 and 2002, though overall levels are not very high. Those rates in East Asia and the CIS countries of Europe and Asia remained more or less constant over the same period, albeit at high levels. The greatest challenges are in Sub-Saharan Africa, where average primary completion rates hovered at around 50 percent between 1990 and 2002 (UN Millennium Project 2005k).

Gender equality

Progress on gender equality targets is limited and uneven. The world is still far away from achieving gender parity and will miss the education parity target for 2005—with the ratio of girls to boys in secondary education just 0.77 in South Asia and 0.79 in West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa in 2001. North Africa and East Asia have seen strong progress on gender parity in gross enrollments. The ratio of literate women to men is still low around the world, and trends suggest that South Asia, Oceania, and West Asia are especially off track. Meanwhile, the share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector increased

in 93 of 131 countries measured. The share of women in national parliaments increased significantly in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1990 and 2004. It has also risen in other regions of the world, though at a slower rate. But overall levels remain very low in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa (UN Millennium Project 2005j).

Child mortality

Child mortality rates fell in every region except the CIS countries—even in places that did not achieve much economic growth or reduction in poverty. But child mortality remains extremely high at 174 per 1,000 live births in Sub-Saharan Africa and 93 in South Asia. In every developing region, child mortality is still many times higher than in the developed world. At current rates, many regions are unlikely to meet the target (map 2.2). Only North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean appear to be on track.

Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality remains shockingly high in every developing region of the world, reflecting the low priority for women's needs and inadequate access to emergency obstetric care (map 2.3). Maternal mortality ratios in East Asia,

Map 2.2
Child mortality
rate, 2002

Under-five mortality rate
(per 1,000 live births)

Source: World Bank 2004c.



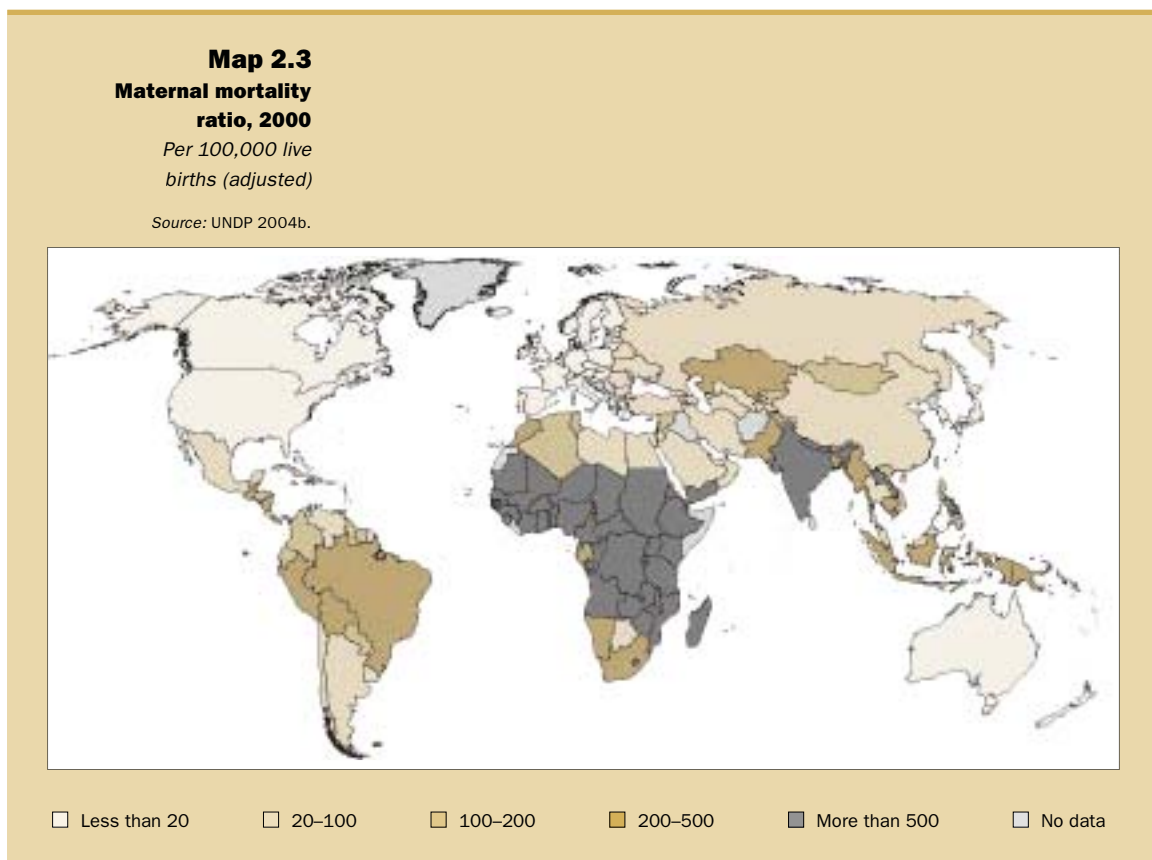
□ Less than 30 □ 30–60 □ 60–90 □ 90–120 □ More than 120 □ No data

which has made significant progress on many of the Goals, are still approximately twice the ratios in the developed world. While data on maternal mortality are unreliable and do not permit time-series analysis, the best available evidence suggests that Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Oceania are unlikely to meet the targets on current trends.

HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, and other infectious disease

HIV, now affecting about 40 million people, is pandemic in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and poses a serious threat in other developing regions. The Caribbean has the second highest HIV prevalence rate, and India has the second highest number of HIV-infected people in the world after South Africa. Many countries are struggling to contain new infections and to treat people already infected. Infections are increasing in East Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the CIS countries of Asia and Europe.

The incidence of TB remains extremely high around the world, increasing as an opportunistic infection associated with HIV/AIDS. It is increasing most precipitously in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, and the CIS countries of Asia and Europe. Meanwhile malaria, an ecologically based parasite, kills well over a million people a year, the vast majority of them children. It remains a significant



threat to human health and productivity in many tropical regions, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for 90 percent of all malaria deaths.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental degradation is eroding the natural resource base that many economies depend on. Few reliable indicators exist to measure environmental sustainability, and data coverage tends to be poor. As a result, environmental degradation does not show up in many official statistics. But the data on forest cover show that deforestation is increasing rapidly and threatening biodiversity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and Latin America. Other natural resources have come under strain, with damage to marine and coastal ecosystems worsening rapidly in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Per capita water availability is reaching critical thresholds in many parts of the world. Desertification and soil deterioration have become critical issues, especially in Asia and Africa.

Water supply and sanitation

Urban access to drinking water is relatively high in most regions, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa. But rural access to improved water supply remains limited in most regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa, the CIS countries, and Oceania especially off track. Access to sanitation improved in many regions but remained stagnant in West Asia and the CIS countries, and fell in Oceania. Coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia remains extremely low, at 36 and 37 percent, respectively, contributing to widespread and preventable diarrheal disease. The problem is particularly severe in rural areas, where coverage rates are much lower than in urban areas.

Improving the lives of slum dwellers

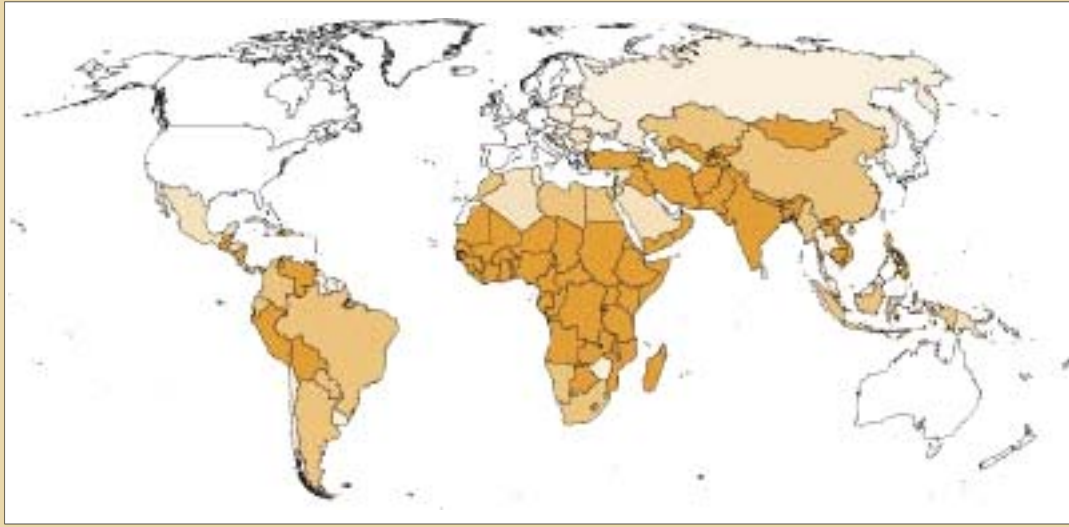
The number of people living in slums and slum-like conditions in the world's cities is growing. Rapid rural-to-urban migration has produced massive slums in many developing country cities, where inhabitants lack secure tenure to their land and may not have access to basic water and sanitation services. Between 1990 and 2001 the slum population grew in every region except North Africa and the CIS countries of Europe. An estimated 900 million people live in slum-like conditions, more than 250 million of them in South Asia, where roughly 60 percent of the urban population lacks secure tenure. In Sub-Saharan Africa more than 70 percent of the urban population is estimated to live in slums (map 2.4). The problem is also severe in Latin America, where roughly a third of the urban population lives in slums.

Access to information and communication technologies

Information and communications technologies are critical inputs for economic development. Since 1990 access has been increasing in every region,

Map 2.4
Share of urban
population living
in slums
Percent

Source: UN-HABITAT 2003.



Less than 10% 10–20% 20–40% More than 40% High-income countries

but it remains low in most. For example, the number of telephone lines and cellular subscriptions increased everywhere, most dramatically in East Asia, where it grew from 2.4 to 38 per 100 people, and Southeast Asia where it grew from 1.4 to 16 per 100 people. Access also increased significantly in Oceania, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa over the period, but each of these regions still has low connectivity, at fewer than 10 subscriptions per 100 people.