



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established in 1948 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. (In Spanish, the acronym for ECLAC is CEPAL.) ECLAC's mission is to advance the economic and social development of the Latin American and Caribbean states, and to encourage economic relationships between the ECLAC member states.

ECLAC is composed of 33 Latin American and Caribbean states. It also includes several North American and European states, such as Mexico and the United Kingdom, which have important historical and cultural ties to the region. ECLAC has a total of 43 member states, and 8 associate members. Associate members are non-independent Caribbean territories, like Puerto Rico and the British Virgin Islands. The member states and associate members of ECLAC convene every two years.

TOPIC: IMPLEMENTING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

INTRODUCTION

In September of 2000, the General Assembly opened its fifty-fifth annual session, which was titled "The Millennium Assembly of the United Nations" or the "Millennium Summit." It was seen as an opportunity to set an agenda for the coming fifteen years.¹ At the end of the three-day summit, member states issued the *Millennium Declaration*, which announced the shared values of the UN and outlined a set of objectives for global **development** involving education, trade, **human rights**, equality and health.

The goals set forth by the *Millennium Declaration*, known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are clearly defined and universally agreed upon by the heads of each member state. The MDGs focus attention the world's most pressing concerns. Each goal includes target deadlines; most are set for 2015. Both **developing** and **developed** nations committed themselves to action. To achieve the goals, poor nations pledged to improve their governments and wealthy nations promised to deliver more aid to nations in need. Every UN member state made a commitment to promote the MDGs in whatever way possible.



In pursuing the MDGs, individual governments must make strong efforts to promote equality, education, economic growth and development. But to accomplish these world-wide goals, UN specialized agencies, the members of the business community and **nongovernmental organizations** must also contribute to the effort. As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, “The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society.”²

At the center of the *Millennium Declaration* are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

All nations have agreed to meet these goals by 2015.

The MDGs set not only a deadline for accomplishment, but also **targets** and **indicators** within each goal.³ Each target describes one aspect of the goal, and each indicator describes a way to determine if the target is being met. For example, under Goal 1, “Eradicate **extreme poverty** and hunger,” are two targets and five indicators. The first target is to cut in half the number of people who earn less than a dollar a day. The indicators to determine if the target is being met include the poverty ratio and a statistical analysis.

Every individual goal and target has a timeline, meaning that certain parts of each goal should be achieved before 2015. Goal 3, for example, includes a target which calls for equal primary education for boys and girls, and specifies that this target ideally should have been met by 2005. When gender equality in education is established, it will be easier to achieve gender equality in other areas by 2015.

CRITICAL THINKING

What are the benefits of establishing targets and indicators for each of the MDGs?

BACKGROUND

Implementing the Millennium Development Goals

Critics have called the Millennium Development Goals unrealistic. They said it is impossible to provide a basic education to every boy and girl in the world, to completely eradicate extreme poverty and to ensure **environmental sustainability** in only fifteen years. In addition, the



Millennium Declaration was somewhat vague, offering little guidance on how best to achieve the MDGs.

To assist in their implementation, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued a report entitled the “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations *Millennium Declaration*.” The report, released one year after the Millennium Summit, examines each of the MDGs and offers potential approaches for member states to consider. It includes examples of successful strategies and considers areas of cooperation with regional organizations, UN specialized agencies such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, nongovernmental organizations and local officials.⁴

In 2002, the Secretary-General and the UN Development Program commissioned an independent advisory board to further create and promote strategies for achieving the MDGs. This board, the UN Millennium Project, explained that each country should create a fifteen-year strategy, taking its own economic, political and cultural circumstances into consideration.⁵

They recommend taking concrete steps that are already known to be effective. Creating a position for a science advisor in the government helps countries improve technology in healthcare, education and agriculture. Eliminating school fees and uniform costs ensures poverty is not an obstacle to attending school. Creating education programs about violence against women, reproductive health and disease saves countless lives. As long as developed countries provide the economic and developmental aid they have committed to, and as long as developing countries work hard to implement these steps, the UN Millennium Project and experts in many fields are confident the MDGs can be achieved.

COUNTRY PROCESSES

“Every country’s MDG-based poverty reduction strategy needs to outline the specific and practical steps required to reach the Goals. Fortunately, these steps are known. For example, we know how to prevent mothers from dying in pregnancy and childbirth. We know how to encourage girls to enroll in and complete a full cycle of basic education. We know how to triple African maize yields. We know how to provide rural clinics and hospitals with uninterrupted electricity. And we know how to increase tree coverage in deforested areas. The same is true for the other Goals as well. The task forces of the UN Millennium Project describe these proven investments and policies in considerable detail in their reports, essential accompaniments to this report.

“At first glance the list of what is needed may seem long. Fighting hunger, for example, requires training farmers, providing fertilizer, improving roads and transport services, managing water resources more effectively, providing good nutrition, and many other things. There are comparable lists for health, education, water, sanitation, environmental management, and other areas of concern. Implementing the full set of interventions and policies will take time and work across many sectors. Fortunately, we have ten years to reach the Goals. This is enough time for most countries, if not all. But we need to get started in 2005.

“It is possible for developing countries to start implementing some elements of this package immediately and to see breathtaking results within three or fewer years.”

Source: Country Processes, The Millennium Project, 2005, www.unmillenniumproject.org.



CRITICAL THINKING

If countries know what needs to be done, then what are some factors that might be standing in the way of progress?

PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTION

In 2004 a progress report was released.⁶ It showed the progress each region had made in achieving the MDGs. Some regions were on track to achieving MDG targets in 2015. Latin America and the Caribbean were on track to reducing by half the number of people who do not receive adequate food or nutrients.

Some countries already had achieved their targets. Southern Asia had already met the target of reducing by half the number of people without access to drinking water. However, in other places, the progress lagged behind. Northern Africa had reduced the rate of maternal deaths, but only moderately. Greater efforts would be required to meet the goal of reducing three quarters of all maternal death by 2015.

In other regions, countries were not only off-track, but problems the MDGs set out to solve were getting even worse. Instead of decreasing the spread of AIDS, rates of infection and AIDS-related mortality increased in Eastern and Southern Africa. The mortality rate of children under five years old increased in Eastern Europe.

The UN Millennium Project lists four reasons why some countries have made remarkable progress and some countries have not. These are **governance failure, poverty traps, failing to create partnerships and specific neglect.**⁷

Governance Failure

The World Bank defines governance as “the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs.”⁸ Governance is when a government creates effective policies and leads its country successfully. Governance failure is the government’s inability to provide or enforce these policies.

Governance failure has occurred in both developing and developed countries. While developed countries have pledged economic and technical aid, many are behind schedule in providing this aid. Without this assistance, developing countries cannot invest in health programs, education programs or campaigns to get rid of poverty.

Developing countries are also responsible for MDG failures. Many developing countries are too distracted by conflict to focus on achieving the MDGs. Sometimes, these countries have governments that are corrupt and that do not properly invest the aid they receive. When governments are corrupt, developed countries become unwilling to provide aid because they know it will not reach the needy and help relieve some of the growing problems in the country.



In order to ensure that aid reaches the right people and the right programs, governments must be held responsible by their people—they must be held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, they must make important information available to their people and the international community such as who has power, where public funds go, what actions are being taken and who benefits from those actions. This **transparency** and **accountability** are two qualities developing governments need in order to show the world they are committed to the MDGs.

Poverty Traps

Poverty traps happen when a government and its people are simply too poor to produce any changes. Because the Millennium Development Goals are interdependent, achieving one helps achieve the others. However, the same holds true in reverse. If one goal is not achieved, it becomes impossible to achieve the others. When a country is too poor to provide proper education to its people, those people will not be able to work in the schools, hospitals, police force or government. Without functional hospitals, people are vulnerable to disease. The government cannot provide for farmers or industries, and the economy fails. Even a government that practices transparency and accountability can suffer from a poverty trap.

CRITICAL THINKING

Which goals depend on one or more other goals? How do these goals relate to one another?

Failure to Create Partnerships

Governments, even well-functioning governments, must work closely with the international community. In many ways, this is the most complicated part of accomplishing the MDGs. In fact, the goal that is furthest from being accomplished is Goal 8: developing a global partnership for development. According to the 2004 MDG Progress Report, this was the only goal where no region of the world had significantly progressed. In fact, Target 16, creating international partnerships to increase youth employment, has thus far failed in most parts of the world.⁹

Partnerships cannot simply be created between developing and developed countries. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide valuable services to developing communities. Bread for the World, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam and Social Watch are only a few of the many hundreds of nongovernmental organizations working hard to improve living conditions for millions of people. In developed countries, NGOs like the ONE Campaign work hard to increase the amount of financial and technical aid governments provide to developing nations.

Governments must also create partnerships with businesses. Targets under Goal 8 include the creation of long-lasting partnerships with drug companies and technology companies. Partnership with these businesses can greatly improve medical care, access to technology and the economies of poor countries. These partnerships should also allow poor countries to generate enough income that eventually enables them to be independent from international aid.



Specific Neglect

Sometimes policy makers are just not aware of very specific issues that need to be addressed. Cultural, political or geographic barriers can prevent governments from improving conditions for a group of people. For example, populations in remote areas may not benefit from campaigns that exist elsewhere in the country. Moreover, other governments are unwilling to address the needs of women, or do not focus on environmental protection.

Will the MDGs be achieved?

Many international observers believed that progress made during these first five years would show whether the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by 2015. Five years after the Millennium Summit, at the sixtieth annual session of the General Assembly, world leaders met again to discuss the progress they had made. This session, known as the 2005 World Summit, was considered a disappointment by many international observers. Not enough of the targets for 2005 had been met, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and areas in Asia and Latin America. Unless the world community increases the pace of their progress, the MDGs will not be accomplished by 2015.

Despite the disappointment of many international observers, the 2005 World Summit turned out to be an important event. Member states took the meeting as an opportunity to re-commit themselves to the MDGs and to focus on what still needs to be done. All of the 175 world leaders at the event agreed to provide an additional \$50 billion to fight poverty. They also agreed to take immediate action on some of the goals such as distributing malaria medicines and improving education and healthcare.¹⁰

A great deal of progress has already been made. As each goal nears accomplishment, millions of lives are saved and millions of lives are made safer and healthier. But, much more remains to be done. If the MDGs are to be met by 2015, governments of developing and developed countries alike must maintain focus and fulfill their promises.

CRITICAL THINKING

What unique challenges does the continent of Africa face in achieving the MDGs?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FORMULATING A RESOLUTION

Disease, poverty and malnutrition have a devastating impact on development. Fortunately, the accomplishment of one development goal assists the accomplishment of the others. In order to make progress on the MDGs, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) should consider what has been done so far and what efforts have been successful. In order to achieve this, the “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration”¹¹ and the MDG Progress Report¹² will be helpful.

The UN Millennium Project also offers useful advice:¹³



- Work in small steps, each one three-to-five years long. Use these steps to create a ten-year plan.
- For countries with well-functioning governments, work toward large-scale campaigns—these countries should make quick progress. For countries with poorly-working governments, focus on transparency and accountability.
- Conflict prevents even modest progress toward the MDGs. Aid for nations in conflict should aim to end violence and promote strong, democratic governments.
- Distribute aid fairly. Aid must be based on the needs of countries, not based on how much attention they receive in the media or on their relationships with other countries.
- Address states with special needs. These include landlocked countries, small island states, mountain countries and states vulnerable to natural disasters.

Delegates should think about the importance of building partnerships with NGOs, the business sector and other countries. Cooperation between countries is especially important. Delegates may encourage developed countries to contribute aid, and encourage developing countries to be transparent and accountable.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What progress has your country made in achieving the MDGs? Is your country on track? What progress remains to be made by your country?
2. If yours is a developed country, has it delivered the aid it has pledged? Should it pledge even more? Is aid being distributed fairly?
3. Is your government accountable and transparent? Are there specific issues your government is neglecting?
4. Has your country made effective partnerships with other nations? With NGOs? With businesses?

SOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Millennium Campaign www.millenniumcampaign.org

UN Millennium Project www.unmillenniumproject.org

Millennium Development Goals Indicator Database, UN Statistics Division

http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi.asp>

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, World Bank <http://poverty2.forumone.com/prsp/>

MDGs: Progress Report www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdg2004chart.pdf

UNECA: *MDGs in Africa* www.uneca.org/mdgs



TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Millennium Declaration: the document set forth following the Millennium Summit in 2000, which outlined the MDGs. The Millennium Declaration was agreed to by all country's heads of state.

Development: the complex process of making services, technology, education and healthcare available to a population. This usually involves building government infrastructure, the availability of medical care and education, the empowerment of women, the preservation of basic human rights and the creation of a strong economy.

Developing nations: nations that do not have a high level of development, nations that are in the process of developing.

Developed nations: nations that have a high degree of development.

Nongovernmental organizations: advocacy groups that deal with issues ranging from the environment to women's rights. They are usually non-profit organizations. NGOs play a very important role in the UN system, especially in achieving the MDGs.

Targets: specific steps or measures that need to be taken to achieve each MDG.

Indicators: concrete or numerical values that can help determine when each goal's targets have been reached.

Extreme poverty: the most extreme form of poverty, characterized by a lack of access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter and health care. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US \$1 per day.

Environmental sustainability: when a country develops and meets its citizen's needs without threatening the environment, using up natural resources or preventing future generations from fulfilling their own needs.

Governance failure: the World Bank defines governance as "the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs." Governance failure happens when the government does not effectively address societal problems, either because it chooses not to, or because it is unable.

Poverty traps: a condition when a country is simply too poor to implement specific policies or programs that might help to achieve the MDGs.

Specific neglect: when policymakers in a country ignore or are simply unaware of an important issue that could potentially help to achieve the MDGs.

Transparency: when practices and policies are made clear and information is available to the public.

Accountability: when a person, firm or government can be held responsible for their actions or inactions.

Human Rights: rights belonging to human beings regardless of factors such as sex, nationality, or ethnicity.



REFERENCES

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- ² “NGO Participation in the UN System,” Conference of NGOs, www.ngocongo.org/ngopart/index.htm
- ³ Millennium Development Goal Indicators Database, http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp
- ⁴ A/56/326 “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration,” Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations, 6 September 2001, www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/56/a56326.pdf
- ⁵ Country Processes, UN Millennium Project, www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/country_proc3.htm
- ⁶ DPI/2363-A, “The Millennium Development Goals: Progress Report,” UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Department of Public Information, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/mdg2004chart.pdf
- ⁷ “Four Reasons for Shortfalls in Achieving the Goals” UN Millennium Project, www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/why8.htm
- ⁸ “Governance,” www.wikipedia.org.
- ⁹ DPI/2363-A, “The Millennium Development Goals: Progress Report”
- ¹⁰ 2005 World Summit: An Overview, www.un.org/ga/documents/overview2005summit.pdf
- ¹¹ “Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration”
- ¹² DPI/2363-A, “The Millennium Development Goals: Progress Report”
- ¹³ “Recommendations for the international system to support country-level processes,” UN Millennium Project, www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/int_actions2.htm.

