



## PRESS SUMMARY

# Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa

## Recommendations of the MDG Africa Steering Group

At the mid-point in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, progress is slow. Some countries will achieve some of the goals. None will achieve them all despite encouraging increases in economic growth and strengthened policies. However, recent successes—including the expansion of HIV/AIDS treatment, increases in agricultural productivity, a sharp rise in school enrolment and improved access to water supply—show that progress is possible in Africa when sound national programmes are matched with adequate development assistance and full support from the international system.

Existing international commitments—if fully implemented—can increase spread these successes to other countries. They would be sufficient to achieve the MDGs. The aim of the United Nations MDG Africa Steering Group recommendations is show how existing commitments can be translated into tangible progress in every African country. They reflect a shared understanding on the practical steps, strategies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs in Africa by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank Group, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank Group, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Bank Group. The Steering Group calls for the following key actions by sector:

- **Agriculture and food security.** Africa is the only region in the world where per capita food production has fallen in the last 30 years. The Steering Group calls for support to African Governments to launch a Green Revolution that will double crop yields, first by providing smallholder farmers with temporary subsidies for fertilizer and better seeds. Malawi's agricultural support programme provides an impressive example of the rapid gains that can be made with improved inputs. Development assistance for African agriculture needs to rise from the current US\$1–2 billion provided annually to some US\$8 billion by 2010. Assistance for feeding and nutrition programmes should rise by an additional US\$4 billion by 2010.
- **Education.** The education sector has seen some of the most remarkable progress towards the MDGs, yet many countries remain off-track. The Steering Group calls on development partners to finance national education strategies endorsed by the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative. No African child should be denied access to primary education because of a lack of financial support. Beyond universal primary education, the recommendations also focus on the need to increase expenditure on early-childhood, secondary, tertiary and vocational education, as well as adult literacy programmes.
- **Health.** The Steering Group underscores the critical importance of financing national health systems to improve the quality of life of Africa's people. International support should help phase out user fees for primary health care to ensure that the poor can access health services. Investments in healthcare providers, including through community health workers, also needs to be increased. The Steering Group is particularly concerned by the slow progress on the MDG to reduce the high rate of maternal deaths in pregnancy and childbirth. The Steering Group calls on governments to increase investments in emergency obstetrical care.

**High-level meeting on Africa's development needs**  
**United Nations, New York, 22 September 2008**

United Nations Department of Public Information, [www.un.org/AR](http://www.un.org/AR)



- **Infrastructure and trade facilitation.** The Steering Group asks development partners to at least double infrastructure financing to some US\$23.7 billion annually by 2010, in order to close growth-inhibiting gaps in transport, power generation and transmission, communication, water and sanitation services. The large number of small and landlocked countries in Africa creates the need for substantially increased investments in regional transport, communication and power networks to support development through growth and trade.
- **National statistical systems, census, civil registration.** Progress towards the MDGs can only be measured and accelerated if we have better data. The Steering Group calls for concerted action to support a full census across Africa, better statistical systems, and more comprehensive civil registration. Improved systems of civil registration are critical in protecting the rights of women and children.
- **Climate proofing.** The Steering Group calls for 'climate proofing' efforts to achieve the MDGs so that countries can guard against increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and changing weather patterns. It calls for better seed varieties and irrigation, improved malaria control, and investment in clean power generation and transportation.

## Financing and aid predictability

- **The Steering Group has issued a comprehensive assessment of the external financing needed to reach the MDGs in Africa.** Existing European Union (EU) and G8 commitments, combined with current aid flows from other sources, are sufficient to finance the estimated US\$72 billion a year in external money required to implement the Steering Group's recommendations. This figure is in line with pledges made in 2005 at the EU and Gleneagles G8 Summits to more than double official development assistance (ODA) to Africa to about US\$54 billion a year by 2010. Measured in current US dollars, this commitment is equivalent to about US\$62 billion annually. Combined with existing support from donor countries outside of the OECD, private foundations and public-private partnerships, the Steering Group's recommendations could be fully financed.
- **Aid predictability.** Most African countries do not know how much aid they will receive in coming years and therefore they cannot expand key public services with needed personnel and infrastructure, both of which require confirmed multi-year financing. The Steering Group calls on donors to issue country-by-country schedules for increasing their aid to meet the commitments they made in 2005. This would have a dramatic effect on African countries' ability to pursue the long-term strategies needed to achieve the MDGs.
- **Scaling up aid.** Experience shows that even large increases in ODA can be absorbed if Governments have sound policies. The Steering Group is supporting ten countries to prepare 'scenarios' for how existing ODA pledges can be utilized in new and expanded projects and programmes on the ground. It will also help mobilize the resources needed to implement these country-owned plans.
- **Follow-through on financing needed.** Many African countries have upheld their side of the Monterrey Consensus on development financing by implementing economic and political reforms and focusing budgets on MDG-related social expenditures. But the increase in ODA promised to Africa by the G8 at Gleneagles, which amounted to an additional US\$25 billion (in 2004 dollars) per year by 2010, has not materialized, nor come close. As of 2007, OECD/DAC data show that annual net ODA to Africa, including one-off debt relief, emergency assistance and scholarships, have increased by only US\$7 billion since 2004. The Steering Group urgently calls on donors to accelerate ODA flows to Africa in line with existing commitments.

For further information, please visit: [www.mdgafrica.org](http://www.mdgafrica.org)

Issued by the UN Department of Public Information—DPI/2512 B, June 2008

**High-level meeting on Africa's development needs**  
**United Nations, New York, 22 September 2008**

United Nations Department of Public Information, [www.un.org/AR](http://www.un.org/AR)

