

SECTION I:

Introduction

In September 2010, at the UN Millennium Development Goals High-Level Summit in New York, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to the MDGs,¹ acknowledged the progress made so far, and noted that the global achievement of the MDGs by 2015 is still possible through strengthened international partnerships, closer collaboration between national authorities and development partners, and clear-sighted political will at the national level.

This annual report is based, as in previous editions, on the database compiled by the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD).² This is the official data repository for assessing progress toward the MDGs. The UNSD harmonizes data using the same definitions and standards across national datasets, allowing for comparability across countries. An obvious drawback of this process is that it considerably lengthens the time lag between national data availability and international updates. For example, the most recent data used in this report are from the year 2009. As in previous reports, specialized UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have served as important data sources for the report.

1 A listing of the official MDGs, their targets, and indicators is presented in Annex 1 of this report.

2 All UNSD data used in this report are available at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Default.aspx>.

In addition, this report utilizes 10 African national MDG³ reports and supplements the analysis based on UNSD data and other credible international sources and observations, which document MDG-relevant policy initiatives and lessons learned.

The overall assessment of Africa's progress toward the MDGs reveals that, while progress has generally been positive, performance has been mixed across indicators and countries, and based on current trends, the overall pace of progress is insufficient to achieve the MDGs by the target date of 2015.

Indeed, the recent progress toward achievement of the MDGs occurred against the backdrop of global food, fuel, and financial crises. Depending on national capacities to design and implement effective counter-cyclical measures, the crises invariably had adverse effects on a wide range of MDG indicators. Despite positive albeit modest indications of global recovery, the crises are far from over and have lagged negative effects on MDG indicators. Furthermore, the recovery in the developed world remains fragile with many European economies, most recently in Greece, experiencing fiscal consolidation. Such setbacks will invariably dampen Africa's growth prospects by constraining access to ODA. Food hikes have to some extent continued since 2008, with price levels above pre-crisis figures to the detriment of

3 Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda.

lower-income groups who have become more vulnerable in the face of rapidly declining real incomes. Climate change poses yet another formidable challenge to Africa's agricultural production, food security and livelihoods, as demonstrated by the recent floods in Southern and West Africa, and the drought in Eastern Africa.

Africa will need more predictable and timely resources to respond to the emerging development challenges. However, the prospects for increased official development assistance (ODA) are not very encouraging, especially when one takes into account the growing fiscal imbalances in developed countries. Indeed, development partners' ODA commitments still fall far short of the 0.7 percent of GDP target, and there is little indication that the situation will change significantly over the short to medium term.

Notwithstanding the crises, African countries have in recent years generally been on a steady path toward achievement of universal primary education and the empowerment of women. This has been especially evident in the ratio of girls to boys in primary education. Significant progress has also been made in the fight against HIV and AIDS, using methods such as awareness campaigns focusing on behavioral change and the promotion and use of antiretroviral therapy (ART), which have curbed the numbers of new infections and AIDS-related deaths. However, several targets related to HIV and AIDS have still not been met, while some countries have witnessed a retrogression. Progress on health indicators has generally been weak. While a few countries have made commendable advances, overall the continent lags behind other global regions in terms of maternal and child health. Similarly, efforts to eradicate malaria and

tuberculosis have been met with limited success, partly due to weak primary healthcare infrastructure, inadequate levels of medical personnel, and a lack of access to affordable drugs.

Aggregate trends in Africa's progress toward the MDGs mask high levels of spatial and group disparities in performance. In particular, progress on all indicators is skewed in favor of higher-income groups and urban populations. The inequities in access to public services (such as education, health, water and sanitation) result in the further marginalization of excluded groups. This state of affairs was acknowledged in the 2010 High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) Outcome Document, which proposed tackling inequalities as an important way to scale-up progress for all segments of the population. The document proposes specific interventions, such as social protection programs to create a level playing field for all, to ensure the availability, continuity, and access to public services, and to accelerate progress toward the MDGs.

Recognizing the importance of addressing vulnerability and inequality, Section III of this report adopts a thematic focus on social protection programs in Africa. Social protection programs in a selected number of African countries are analyzed in terms of their effectiveness and overall contribution toward the MDGs. This provides further lessons and opportunities for peer learning and knowledge sharing on such programs, as they relate to the MDGs.

Productive employment remains a key to exit poverty and address inequality. Creating economic growth is a crucial way to increase employment opportunities in Africa and boost incomes. The

employment-to-population figures remain somewhat static on the continent. Besides enlarging the vulnerable informal sector, unemployment can lead to political instability, as witnessed in the recent events in Tunisia and Egypt. African countries need to translate relatively strong economic growth into meaningful employment creation to reduce absolute poverty and create social inclusiveness. Unlocking entrepreneurship across regions and sectors and instituting well-designed and supportive policies and actions is the roadmap to strong, shared, and sustainable growth. Africa can achieve such growth through structural transformation guided by a developmental state, underpinned by a vibrant private sector, productive entrepreneurship, and a diversified economy. Industrial policy can play an important role in nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit and removing obstacles to growth in high-potential sectors and industries, thereby generating employment across the continent. Success in this area depends on a number of structural factors, including addressing the infrastructure gap (e.g., improving access to a reliable electricity supply, reliable road networks and ICT connectivity, and better access to water and sanitation). It is also contingent on promoting a strong linkage between the agriculture and industrial sectors.

The evidence gathered in this report suggests that scaling-up efforts to accelerate progress toward achieving the MDGs on the continent is indeed possible. A crucial factor is that the much-needed political will to support the MDGs did not wane during or after the financial crisis – African countries and development partners remain fully committed to the Goals. However, one point of concern is the extent to which governments can maintain fiscal stability as they implement stimulus-related packages to cushion households from the impact of the crises. Of equal concern is the implication of the crises for concessional resource flows and global trade. In particular, fiscal consolidation in developed countries will likely have adverse consequences for both commodity exports and aid flows to developing countries.

This report is organized as follows. After this first introductory section, Section II assesses progress on each of the eight Goals. Section III takes as its thematic focus social protection programs as they relate to the MDGs in a selected number of African countries. Section IV concludes with recommendations on the way forward.