

Progress made, but more needed

The analyses presented in this report highlight the successes from the MDGs that the region can build on, as well as the huge challenges to overcome for the region to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the MDGs era, the proportion of the population living on less than \$1.90 per day dropped by nearly 20 percentage points and, compared to the rest of the world, Asia-Pacific had the greatest reduction in maternal mortality. In 2014, more than 90% of the primary school age children were enrolled in school and as a result of efforts to promote gender equality, more seats of national parliaments were held by women in 2015. Access to safe drinking water was increased to cover 93.7% of people in the region, and access to electricity covered nearly 90% of the population. In addition, the region outpaced the world in economic productivity and growth in manufacturing as a proportion of value added was 20% more than the global average. The proportion of the region's urban population living in slums came down to about one quarter. And on the environmental front, 20% more territorial waters were under protection in 2015.

While the region has reason to celebrate its achievements by 2015, unfinished work is left across all goal areas. The region is home to 400 million people living under \$1.90 per day and 500 million are undernourished. 136 million children are out of school, which accounts for more than half of the world's out-of-school children population. 135 million under-5 children in the region have not had their births registered.

In some countries, over a quarter of women are subject to physical or sexual violence and the region has the highest suicide rate in the world. Despite the progress mentioned, 1.5 billion people in the region are yet to have access to improved sanitation facilities and over 400 million people have no access to electricity. In 2015, 560 million urban dwellers of the region lived in slums.

The unemployment rate among youth remains higher than overall rates for both men and women. Low income economies of the region spend very small share of their GDP on research and development. Disparity in labour share of GDP is increasing across countries and at the same time income inequality is increasing in the two most populous countries of the region.

The region's total material footprint more than doubled since 2000 and the region consumes twice as much materials as the world average to produce one unit of GDP. The world's top five countries in mismanaging plastics in the oceans are located in Asia and the Pacific where biodiversity is being lost and total forest areas are quickly declining. At the same time, the number of deaths per climate-related disaster in the region is 20 more deaths than the global average.

This baseline report shows that the region has a solid foundation to achieve the ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda, but, at the same time, the report highlights the urgent need for concerted efforts from all stakeholders to achieve shared prosperity and sustainable development.

Data and statistics, cornerstone for achieving the SDGs

The importance of high-quality data and statistics in informing SDG implementation cannot be understated. The investment in statistical development and collective efforts for modernization of statistical systems to address the needs for MDGs monitoring, significantly improved the availability and quality of development statistics in the region. In 2013, the LDCs in Asia-Pacific region received \$128 million from multilateral and bilateral donors for strengthening their national statistical capacity. Comparatively, the entire region received only \$60 million in 2006. Thanks to such improvements, this baseline report could use 50 indicators from the global SDG monitoring framework and supplementary sources (table 1) to provide a snapshot of the regional situation

across 16¹ goals in 2015. While during 2000 and 2005, regional estimates could only be produced for less than half of these 50 indicators.

The SDGs set a high level of ambition for progress on multidimensional and interlinked development issues. The proposed SDGs indicator framework goes beyond the official statistics that are currently produced in a typical national statistical system in the Asia-Pacific region. Business-as-usual will not be adequate to address data and statistics requirements for follow-up and review of the 2030 development agenda. In contrast, statistical systems have to transform themselves in order to use all possible sources of data (including big data, geographical information and administrative data) and expand their traditional stakeholders to embrace new data users and producers. In 2016, the leaders of national statistical systems and development partners in Asia and the Pacific endorsed a collective vision and framework for action to guide priority-setting in capacity development to produce and effectively use timely and reliable statistics required for successful implementation of the 2030 development agenda. The leaders and development partners shared a vision that:

...by 2030, national statistical systems are enabled and empowered to lead development of and to deliver innovative, trusted and timely products and services for urgently needed and evolving statistical requirements of Agenda 2030.

In order for statistical production to be relevant to policy programmes, it is necessary that policy targets are formulated such that they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and

time-bound (SMART). However, nearly 70% of the proposed 169 targets in the SDGs framework are not spelled out in quantitative terms and hence are not directly measurable. Regional aggregates are available for only less than 30% of the proposed 232 SDG indicators. The ambiguity in targets is a major obstacle for assessing progress towards achieving the SDGs. While the international community has to work on innovative measurement methods to fill this technical gap, SDGs implementation at the national level should be taken as an opportunity for establishing national SMART targets that guide the development of national indicator frameworks. A national comprehensive indicator framework that is objective, relevant to the policy priorities at all levels, and provides a full coverage of population groups and their issues can foster political support and help mobilize sufficient resources for statistical development.

In view of the critical role of an indicator framework in implementation of the SDGs at the national level, the high level decision makers and stakeholders at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017 recognized the importance of integrating statistical planning into national development planning and that ill-informed policies could be much more expensive than investment in data and statistics. More specifically, the Forum urged Governments to make statistics development a national development target with the highest importance embedded in national development plans.

¹ Goal 17 was excluded from regional snapshot

Table 1- List of indicators* used for regional snapshot

No	Goal	Indicator**	2015
1	1	General government health expenditure	13.4
2	1	Population living below the national poverty line	16.6
3	1	Population living in poverty at \$1.90 a day in 2011 PPP	7.8
4	1	Public expenditure on education	12.4
5	1	Share of extremely poor living on less than \$1.90 a day in total employment, total	8.9
6	2	Agriculture orientation index	0.4
7	2	Children under-five overweight	6.1
8	2	Children under-five stunting	24.1
9	2	Children under-five wasting	7.6
10	2	Prevalence of undernourishment	12.1
11	3	Adolescent fertility rate	30
12	3	Alcohol per capita consumption	4.8
13	3	Demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods	81.7
14	3	Health worker density and distribution (physicians)	12
15	3	Malaria incidence rate	59
16	3	Maternal mortality	188
17	3	Neonatal mortality rate	27
18	3	Tuberculosis incidence rate	155
19	3	Under-five mortality rate	41.8
20	4	Minimum organized teacher training, primary education, total	87
21	4	Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), total	82
22	4	Proportion of schools with access to electricity, primary level	56.5
23	5	Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in a union before age 18	34.8
24	5	Physical, sexual or psychological violence of ever-partnered women	25
25	5	Seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments	18.1
26	6	Access to improved sanitation	55.3
27	6	Access to improved water sources	86.5
28	6	Total freshwater withdrawal	24
29	7	Access to electricity (SE4All)	89.4
30	7	Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology	49.5

No	Goal	Indicator**	2015
31	7	Renewable energy production, total	11.4
32	7	Total primary energy supply (TPES)	141
33	8	Average annual GDP per capita (2005 US dollars) growth rate	5
34	8	Growth rate of GDP per employed person	6.3
35	8	Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank	66.3
36	8	Unemployment rate, total	4.8
37	9	Carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions	382
38	9	GDP by activity: Manufacturing	25.4
39	9	Gross domestic expenditure on research and development	2.2
40	9	Population covered by a mobile-cellular network	90.2
41	10	Labour share of GDP	53.9
42	11	Annual mean concentration of PM10 in cities	101
43	11	Urban slum population	26.5
44	12	Domestic material consumption intensity	2.7
45	12	Material Footprint total by type	2.4
46	14	Marine areas protected	29.3
47	15	Natural forest area	27.4
48	16	Domestic (less than 10% foreign ownership)	24
49	16	Intentional homicide	2.7
50	16	Unsentenced detainees (Pre-trial)	27.5

* The values in this table represent regional aggregates. For country level data refer to http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/

** The units and further information on the indicators can be accessed via http://data.unescap.org/escap_stat/