PART III:

Millennium Development Goal 7 review

Chapter 5. Progress on Millennium Development Goal 7: ensuring environmental sustainability

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Progress on Millennium Development Goal 7: ensuring environmental sustainability

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in September 2000 by the largest-ever gathering of world leaders and represent a bold global commitment to a vision of a better world. Recent assessments have shown that the Asia and the Pacific region has had a mixed record of progress in pursuing this commitment. Millennium Development Goal 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) has been identified as one of the goals in which there has been least progress. Virtually no country in the region appears to be on track to satisfying all of the three targets and eight indicators.

Despite the unsatisfactory performance of the region on MDG7, progress on this goal remains critical to the long-term, sustained achievement of the other MDGs. The MDGs highlight the inextricable links between human well-being, the rights of individuals to benefit from development and the imperative to protect the environment as a basis for human development. The long term, sustained and equitable achievement of MDG1, relating to poverty and hunger reduction is particularly at risk. The integrity of the natural resource base is a dominant factor in the fight against poverty, a fact recently asserted in prominent works such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). The links are evident in the environment-health-poverty nexus; degraded environments disproportionately threaten the livelihoods of the poor. However, they also reduce the flow of environmental goods and services on which all economies and societies depend.

Equitable and sustained poverty reduction is therefore contingent upon the pursuit of environmental sustainability in the context of promoting further economic growth and development. Five years of implementation of the MDGs show that greater focus on improving the management of ecosystems so that their capacities to sustainably provide multiple services, is needed. At the same time, very few countries have taken the critical step to define specific MDG-aligned goals and targets.

The green growth policy focus represents a clear response to the challenge of sustaining economic growth and reducing poverty while minimizing the growth of environmental pressure. This challenge is more relevant to the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific than perhaps anywhere else in the rest of the world.

5.1 The Millennium Development Goals: a global commitment to poverty reduction

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted in September 2000 by the largest-ever gathering of world leaders, committed leaders worldwide to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This global agenda of eight development goals is directed at cutting world poverty in half by 2015, improving health, and promoting peace, human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability. International development policies and national development agendas are expected to revolve around this all-inclusive framework, described as the "the most broadly supported, comprehensive, and specific poverty reduction targets the world has ever established."[1]

The MDGs represent a bold vision of addressing extreme poverty and all its dimensions. The approach breaks away from past conventions of formulating broad and unrealistic anti-poverty strategies. The MDGs, further elaborated by the establishment of, in most cases, quantifiable, time-bound targets and measurable indicators, translate lofty vision into an action-oriented agenda with a deadline of 2015. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the MDG framework is to highlight the inextricable links between human well-being, the right of individuals to benefit from development and the imperative to protect the environment as a basis for human development.[2] The onus is placed on governments, in partnership with all stakeholders, to articulate specific strategies and priorities that will lead to the attainment of the goals. Developed countries are tasked with expanding their current levels of financial and technical support to developing countries, granting access to their markets and sharing the benefits of new and sustainable technologies.

2005 marked a year of reflection and re-commitment to the goals. A World Summit assessed the progress of the global compact[3] and Asian and Pacific countries convened at a Ministerial Level Meeting on the MDGs and endorsed the *Jakarta Declaration of Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*. This declaration reaffirms regional commitment to the MDGs and urges collective action to achieve the goals over the next 10 years.[4] Also in 2005, ESCAP, UNDP and the ADB published a report which tracked progress towards each of the eight MDGs across Asia and the Pacific.[5] It examined how countries were performing in meeting the goals, identified the kind of pro-poor policies needed to further advance the goals and reviewed prospects for creating global partnerships. The overall performance of the region in pursuing the eight MDGs was found to vary across subregions and the various goals.[6] Although the regional aggregate indicates that the Asian and Pacific region has made rapid progress in meeting some of the MDGs, the same conclusion would not apply to all of the developing countries. Present patterns suggest that none of the countries will meet all of the goals by 2015.[7]

The ESCAP/UNDP/ADB assessment showed that MDG7 relating to ensuring environmental sustainability, was one of the goals on which there had been least progress. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and other prominent works have asserted that the state of natural ecosystems is a "dominant factor" in determining success in fighting poverty (see table 5.1).[8,9] As table 5.1 shows, the achievement of MDG7 is critical to the sustainable achievement of the other goals. This chapter re-emphasizes the interconnectivity of the goals and targets of the MDGs to articulate the importance of synergizing efforts to further advance the MDG agenda.

5.2 Progress on implementing Millennium Development Goal 7

MDG7 (ensuring environmental sustainability) is comprised of three targets and eight indicators. Achieving MDG7 in Asia and the Pacific presents special challenges. While economic growth is necessary to reduce poverty, it is taking place in a region with a relatively limited environmental carrying capacity. The resultant environmental pressures mean that while the region has made significant progress towards achieving MDG1, at least in the short term, progress on achieving MDG7 has been mixed. This situation places long-term socio-economic progress in jeopardy.

Table 5.1 Why is Millennium Development Goal 7 crucial to the other goals?

Millennium Development Goals	Dependence on environmental sustainability
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	The majority of the region's population still lives in rural areas and is directly dependent on ecosystem goods and services as the primary basis of their livelihoods and food security. Ensuring environmental sustainability reduces economic vulnerability and reduces the impacts of natural disaster and so contributes to poverty reduction.
2. Achieve universal primary education	Children of poor rural families who live in degraded environments spend increasing amounts of time gathering firewood and collecting water as these commodities become more and more scarce or polluted. This takes them away from studying or attending school, but also increases pressure on environmental resources such as forests. Providing alternative fuels, protecting water quality and promoting sustainable water use therefore also contributes to the achievement of MDG2.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	Poor rural women and girls often spend a much higher proportion of their time gathering food and fuel and collecting water than male family members. Added to the socio-cultural tendency in some societies to educate males in preference to females, this situation reduces opportunities for education and income-generating activities and acts as a barrier to the achievement of MDG3.
4. Reduce child mortality	Unsafe water and inadequate sanitation are the primary sources of waterborne diseases (such as diarrhoea and typhoid fever) which are the leading killers of children under five. Indoor air pollution caused by the burning of solid fuels is also increasing the incidence of bronchial diseases and death among children. Meaningful progress on achieving MDG4 requires greater progress on protecting environmental resources.
5. Improve maternal health	Indoor air pollution and the burden of gathering solid fuel and water exact a heavy toll on pregnant women, particularly in early pregnancy, increasing the risk of miscarriage and complications during childbirth. Inadequate sanitation and the lack of water services increase risks to the health of pregnant women.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	One in five major diseases (including malaria and parasitic infections) in developing countries is associated with environmental risk factors. Tuberculosis is exacerbated by indoor air pollution or deteriorating ambient air quality, especially in urban areas. From a preventive viewpoint, new and promising medicines derived from fast-disappearing biodiversity resources have the potential to fight debilitating diseases.
7. Develop a global partnership for development	Global environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the depletion of forest resources are related to unsustainable consumption and production patterns These issues can be addressed through a genuine and equal partnership between developed and developing countries.

Source: Adapted from UNDP (2003). *Human Development Report, 2003. Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty* (New York, Oxford University Press).

Table 5.2 Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability – Targets and indicators

Targets	Indicators
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	25. Proportion of land area covered by forest 26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area 27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per $1 GDP (PPP) 28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons) 29. Proportion of population using solid fuels
Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural 31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural
Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure

On the positive side, most countries have slowed or reversed the loss of forest cover and expanded the coverage of protected areas. Also, the consumption of ozone-depleting substances has declined significantly and most countries have made great strides towards increasing access to improved sanitation. But there are many target areas in which progress is more limited.

- The proportion of people using solid fuels is still high, with resultant high mortality rates among women and children related to indoor air pollution
- Carbon dioxide emissions per capita are increasing with increased energy use
- Natural forests (as opposed to plantation forests) are in significant decline across the region
- Some 1.9 billion people still do not have access to improved sanitation, and more than 600 million do not have access to improved drinking water. Access to both is much better in urban than rural areas, but these gaps are narrowing
- Significant proportions of regional urban populations still live in slums. There is limited progress in improving these conditions, especially in the worst-affected countries.

Virtually no developing country in the region appears to be on track to satisfying all of its three targets and eight indicators. The following presents the progress in meeting the targets and indicators of MDG7.

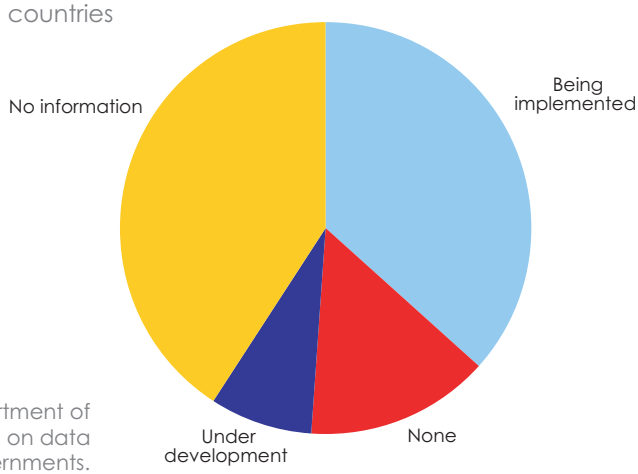
Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources

Target 9 seeks to commit institutions at all levels of governance to translate the concept of environmental sustainability into operational terms. A widely accepted (but not formally adopted) indicator of this commitment is the development of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) as a way of mainstreaming environmental sustainability into national development agendas. This principle has been promoted since the 1992 Rio Summit.

Trends – Of the reporting countries, 18 regional countries are in the process of implementing NSDS as of August 2004. NSDS are under development in a further four countries. Seven countries have no NSDS, and 23 countries have not submitted information (see figure 5.1). In 2003, only five regional countries were reported to be in the process of implementation. [10]

Challenges – The Millennium Project Task Force on Environmental Sustainability[11] points out that senior policymakers in developing countries (including those responsible for planning and finance) understand the importance of environmental sustainability. While a lack of political will is often cited for the slow progress in the preparing and implementing NSDS, policymakers affirm that delays are mainly attributable to the difficulty of operationalizing sustainable development principles in the economic development agenda.

Figure 5.1 Status of NSDS implementation in Asia-Pacific countries



Source: Data provided by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, August 2006. Based on data provided by governments.

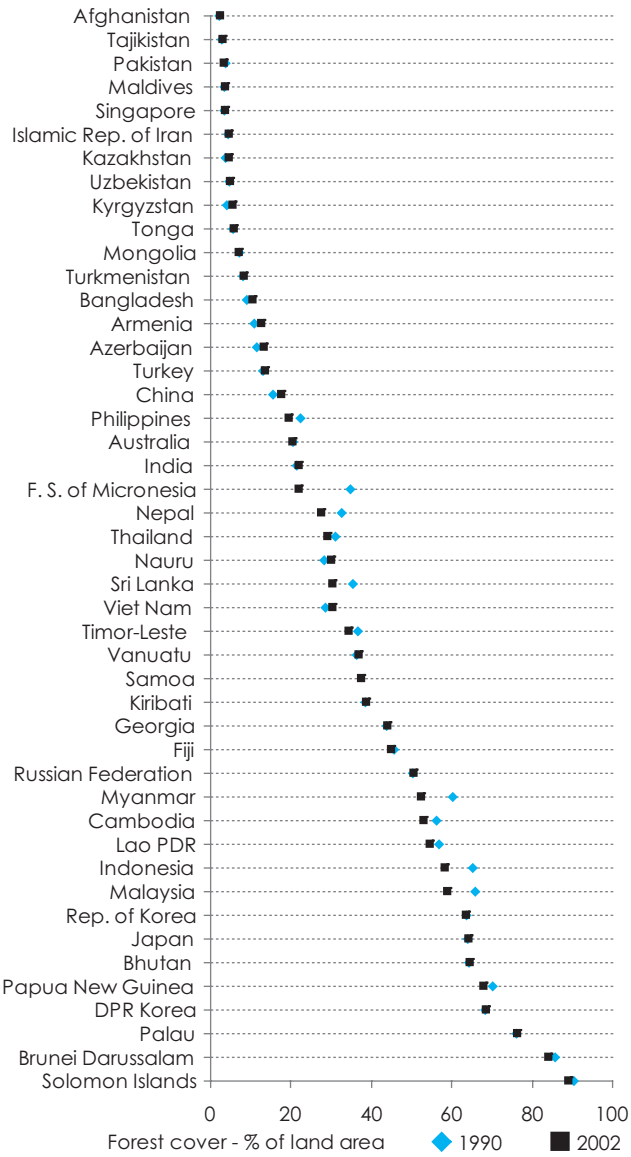
Indicator 25: Proportion of land area covered by forest

The forests of Asia and the Pacific are an immense renewable resource and have for decades made a vital contribution to the environment, societies and economies of the region. The indicator does not distinguish between natural forests and plantation forests.

Trends – FAO data indicates that in 2000, the total forest area of the region was 1,587 million hectares, covering approximately 30 per cent of the total land area and constituting 41 per cent of the global forest estate.[12] In general, Asian and Pacific forests, and particularly natural tropical forest ecosystems, are dwindling fast. In the period 1990 to 2000, the total forest area of the region declined by 10.47 million hectares.[13] Nine countries reported annual forest loss rates greater than one per cent for the same period (see figure 5.2). South-East Asia was the subregion with the highest rate of forest area loss, with clearance for agricultural purposes and major forest fires the most significant causes of declines in forest cover. In North-East Asia, particularly China, and in the Central Asia and Caucasus, forest areas increased during the same period, largely as a result of major afforestation efforts. As countries face the reality of meeting the growing demand for wood products, plantation forests in the region are significantly increasing. Plantation forests constitute almost 10 per cent of the total regional forest area, twice the global figure and equivalent to some five times the area of New Zealand. The ESCAP region encompasses more than 72 per cent of global planted forests, with plantations from China, India, Japan, Indonesia and Thailand ranking among the world's largest.

Challenges – The rapid decline of natural forest cover in the region has not been sufficiently addressed. Illegal trade in timber is fuelled by the rapidly growing demand for paper, timber and other wood products in burgeoning regional economies. Natural forests provide significant ecological goods and services which are not represented in mainstream economic and cannot be replaced by plantation forests. At the same time, conservation approaches which exclude rural communities have been a source of conflict. Community-based initiatives have proven effective. Bhutan has adopted a policy of maintaining at least 60 per cent forest coverage.

Figure 5.2 Forest area as a percentage of total land area



Source: FAOSTAT database <http://faostat.fao.org>. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

Indicator 26: Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area

Protected areas are generally defined as areas set aside by legislation explicitly for the protection and maintenance of biological diversity. The data used refers to IUCN categories of protected areas I through VI (see glossary, annex III).

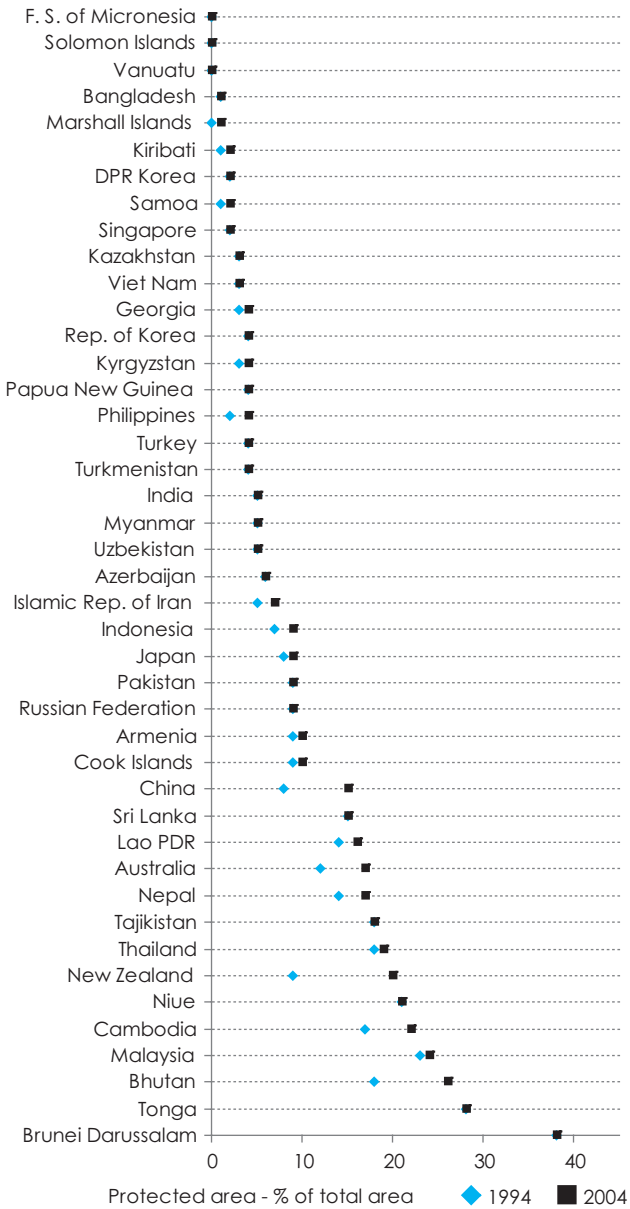
Trends – Increasing proportions of land are being protected to maintain biological diversity in the region, with the Convention on Biodiversity providing a steady influence on the significant expansion of coverage areas, as well as on the increase in the number of protected areas (see figure 5.3). During the period 1994 to 2004, the coverage of protected areas increased by 27 per cent, equivalent to some 1.37 million square kilometers.[14] The Pacific and North-East Asia lead the region in the expansion of coverage areas, with New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Kiribati registering more than 90 per cent increases in protected areas. China and Mongolia's protected areas have increased by more than 60 per cent since 1994.

A better understanding of the dynamics of biodiversity management is emerging, with innovative approaches to management (such as the involvement of indigenous peoples, mobilizing communities and forming links with eco-tourism initiatives) being developed and implemented on the ground.

Challenges – Despite the positive trends, the challenges of protecting biodiversity resources in the region remain overwhelming. Most countries in the region still fall short of the World Conservation Union's suggested target of establishing 10 per cent of their total area as protected zones (see figure 5.3).[15] In addition, questions regarding the effectiveness of protected area management, illegal exploitation of biodiversity and the delineation of protected areas that represent critical habitat, rather than unwanted land, undermine the ability of this measure to reflect the real state of biodiversity resources.

The IUCN Red List of threatened species indicates that the Asian and the Pacific region has a total of 6,821 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, invertebrates and plants that are under various levels of threat.[16] South-East Asia accounts for about 45 per cent of the number of species that are considered under threat in the region.[17]

Figure 5.3 Protected area as a percentage of total area



Source: UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (www.unep-wcmc.org). Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

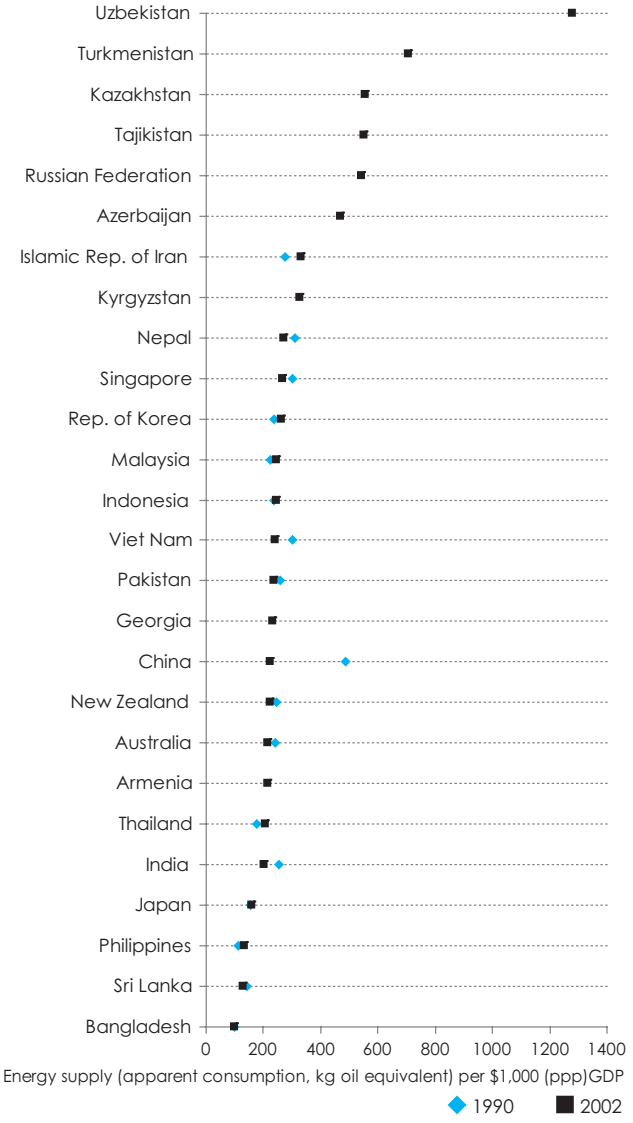
Indicator 27: Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per US$1,000 GDP

This indicator aggregates energy use across all economic sectors. Changes in the indicator over time are influenced by changes in the structure of the economy, sectoral energy intensities, sectoral energy efficiency and differences in the fuel mix, as well consumption patterns and changes in climate.[18] Described as "relatively crude", the indicator should be broken down by sector in order to become more policy-relevant.[19]

Trends – The Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 shows that while energy intensities have decreased significantly in East Asia (particularly China), they are increasing in South-East Asia.[20] China's energy intensity declined by 55 per cent between 1990 and 2002 while the country maintained its economic momentum. China's impressive achievements can be attributed to the structural shift of its industrial direction from energy- intensive industries to the services sector and less energy-intensive industries. Other countries have also reduced their energy intensities (see figure 5.4).[21] However the economies of number of countries, such as Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand have become more dependent on energy. The economies in transition have remained relatively highly energy-intensive as a result of harsh winter climates and relatively energy-intensive and inefficient industrial sectors.

Challenges – As energy prices rise, it is increasingly in the interest of countries to minimize energy inputs to the economy. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved; energy efficiency remains the most cost-effective response. However, industrial sector planning to encourage the growth of less energy-intensive; high value-added economic activity, as well as economic and infrastructure development planning that focuses on minimizing energy use, are important, but under-utilized approaches.

Figure 5.4 Energy Intensity



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators (annual), updated annually by the World Bank in its publication in print and CD-ROM "World Development Indicators". Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

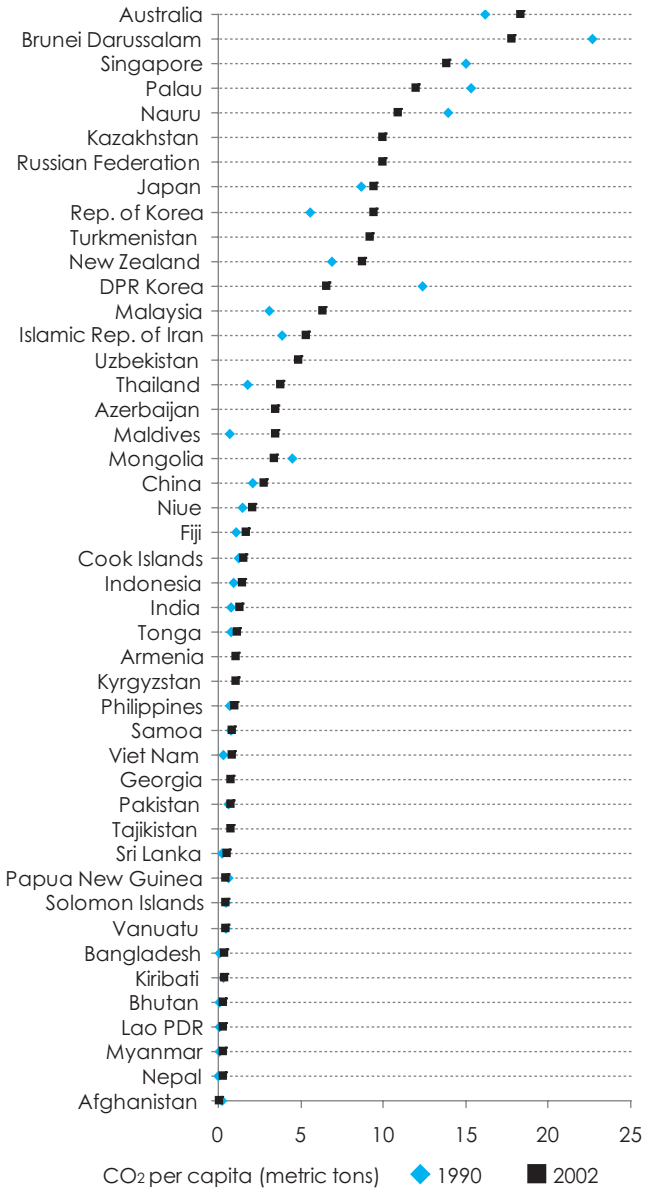
Indicator 28: CO_2 emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)

CO_2 constitutes the largest share of greenhouse gases, emissions of which are drivers of climate change. Monitoring of this MDG indicator refers to data from two sources: national reports to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center (CDIAC) of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the United States. UNFCCC national reports cover all sources of anthropogenic emissions and absorption of CO_2 by sinks such as forests, but data availability is limited to reporting Annex I (OECD members and economies in transition) parties. CDIAC calculates country emissions of CO_2 based on fuel combustion, cement production and gas flaring, and data is available for both developed and developing countries.

Trends – Per capita CO_2 emissions in the region have increased from 1990 levels in most countries (Figure 5.5), reflecting rapid economic growth and improved access to energy. Most countries in which a decrease was recorded also experienced slowed economic growth in that period.

Challenges – While developing country per capita CO_2 emissions remain far lower than developed countries, large populations mean that the increasing contribution of developing Asian economies to global CO_2 emissions cannot be ignored. Five of the top 20 emitters of CO_2 are in this region (Russian Federation, Japan, Australia, China and India). In the year 2000, the above-mentioned countries accounted for 30 per cent of global CO_2 emissions.[22] At the same time, there are more than 800 million people without access to electricity, and many dependent on biomass fuels that endanger their health. This implies a huge future demand for energy. Future emission profiles will determine the ultimate extent of global climate change, and will be influenced by factors such as availability of resources, access to technology, patterns of urbanization and energy and transport infrastructure development. The debate on the future of the Kyoto Protocol after 2012 and developing country participation continues.

Figure 5.5 CO_2 emissions per capita



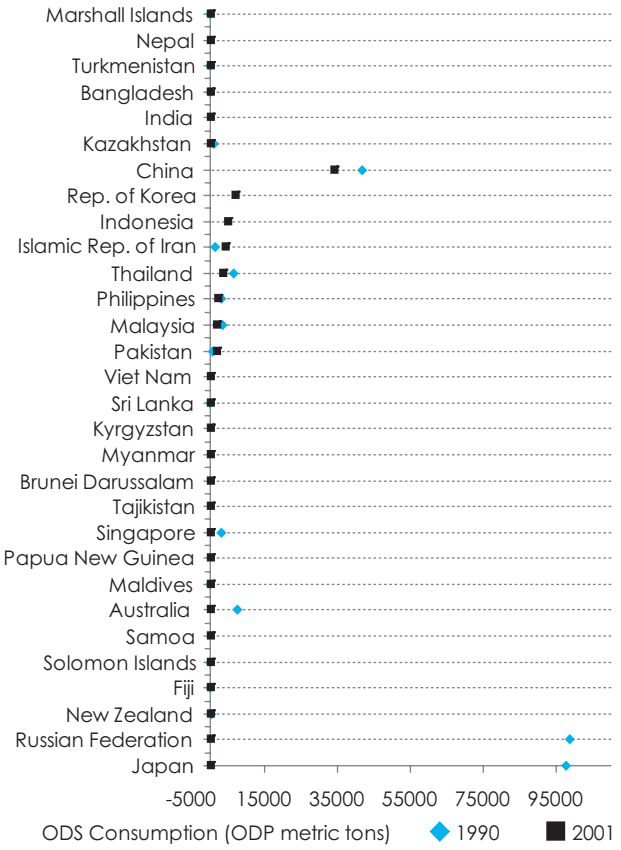
Source: Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center (CDIAC), <http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/home.html>. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 1 May 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

Ozone-depleting substances (ODS) reduce the absorption of damaging UVB radiation by stratospheric ozone. These substances are mainly stable chlorine- and bromine-containing compounds used in various industrial processes. Some ODS are also implicated in climate change.

Trends – Between 1989 and 2004 the estimated regional consumption of CFCs (the first category of ODS targeted by the 1987 *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*) declined by almost 90 per cent, supported by the Montreal Protocol and implementing partners. China is still the largest producer and user of CFCs in the region (Figure 5.6).

Challenges – Reductions in consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs are mirrored by an increase in HCFC substitutes which are much less ozone-depleting, but have higher global warming potential.[23]

Figure 5.6 Consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs



Source: UNEP Production and Consumption of Ozone Depleting Substances 1986-1998 and database (Nairobi). Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 1 May 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

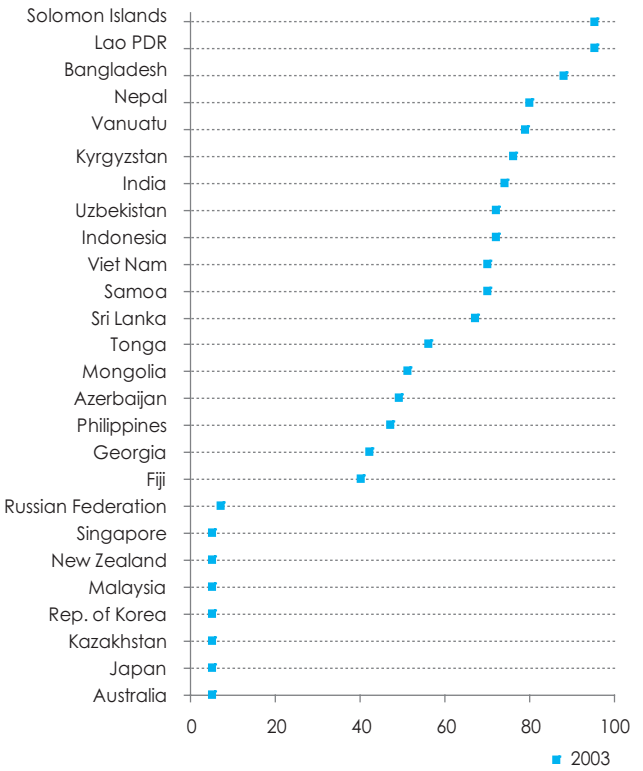
Indicator 29: Proportion of population using solid fuels

This indicator reflects both poverty levels and access to clean energy. Women and children constitute the highest proportion of the 1.6 million annual deaths related to solid-fuel use worldwide,[24] the majority of which are in Asia. The use of these "renewable" fuels can also exert pressure on forests.

Trends – Data is not available for several countries (see figure 5.7). The proportion of housholds using solid fuels declined during the 1990s; this trend may be reversing as fossil fuel prices rise. About 90 per cent of rural households rely heavily on biomass and coal as solid fuels.[25] Overall, there has been little change in solid fuel use across the region from 1990 levels, except in a few countries like China.[26]

Challenges – Wide access to affordable alternative fuels and more efficient stoves must be provided through gender-mainstreamed energy policy.

Figure 5.7 Proportion of population using solid fuels



Population using solid fuels as a % of total population (2003)
Note: 2000 values: Armenia = 26, Cambodia = 95, Turkmenistan = 5

Source: World Health Organization, World Health Report. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 1 May 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

Target 10 Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation

Indicator 30: Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural

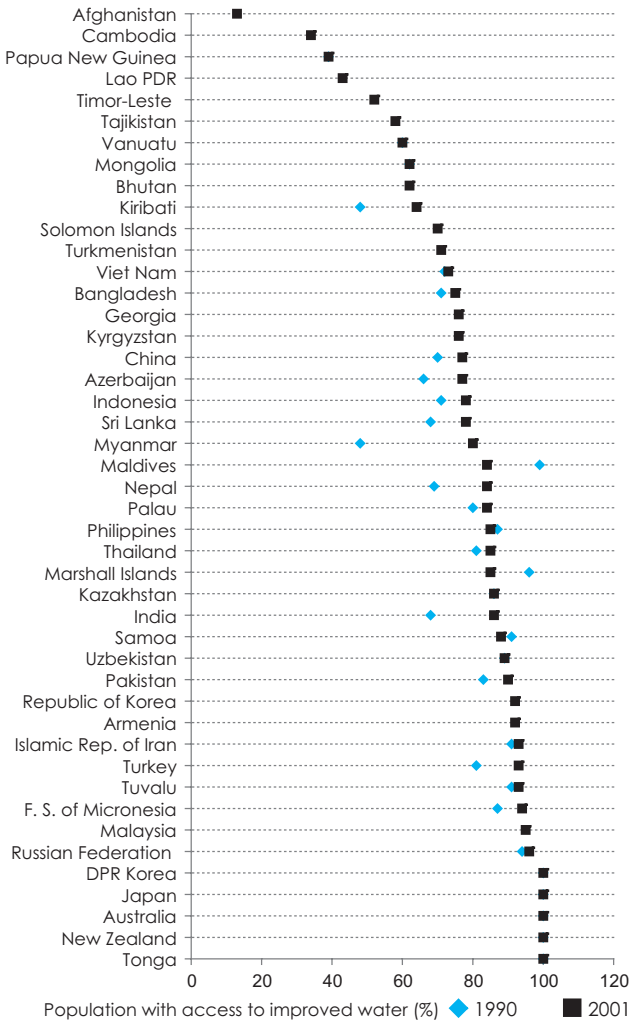
The immutable right of an individual to have access to safe water has been asserted by the United Nations. In spite of this, clean water remains out of reach for many, particularly the poor. The World Bank states that about 1.7 million people (of which 90 per cent are children) die annually because of unsafe water, making it the third biggest cause (after malnutrition and HIV/AIDS) of human mortality.[27] The urgency of addressing access to water has made it one of the critical indicators of MDG achievement.

The agreed-upon definition of access to improved water covers water that is piped, made available through public taps, borehole or pumps, protected well, protectd spring or rainwater. The term does not cover vendor-provided water, bottled water, tanker trucks or unprotected wells and springs.[28]

Trends – There has been considerable progress in increasing the proportion of populations with access to safe drinking water in Asia and the Pacific, but more than 600 million do not have access to this vital resource. The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2005* reported that almost all of the subregions of Asia and the Pacific recorded increases in access to safe drinking water. Most of this increase can be accounted for by improved service and infrastructure in urban areas. Action to improve access to safe water in the future will require targeting rural areas. India's performance is notable, considering that it is home to over a billion people. However, some countries have fallen behind in expanding coverage of this basic service (see figure 5.8).

Challenges – Financing of water infrastructure remains a basic hurdle to expansion of access. Declining water quality and competition from the industrial and agricultural sector reduces the amount of water of adequate quality available to meet all needs.

Figure 5.8 Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source



Source: World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment, 2000 Report, Geneva and New York. Updated data available at www.childinfo.org. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

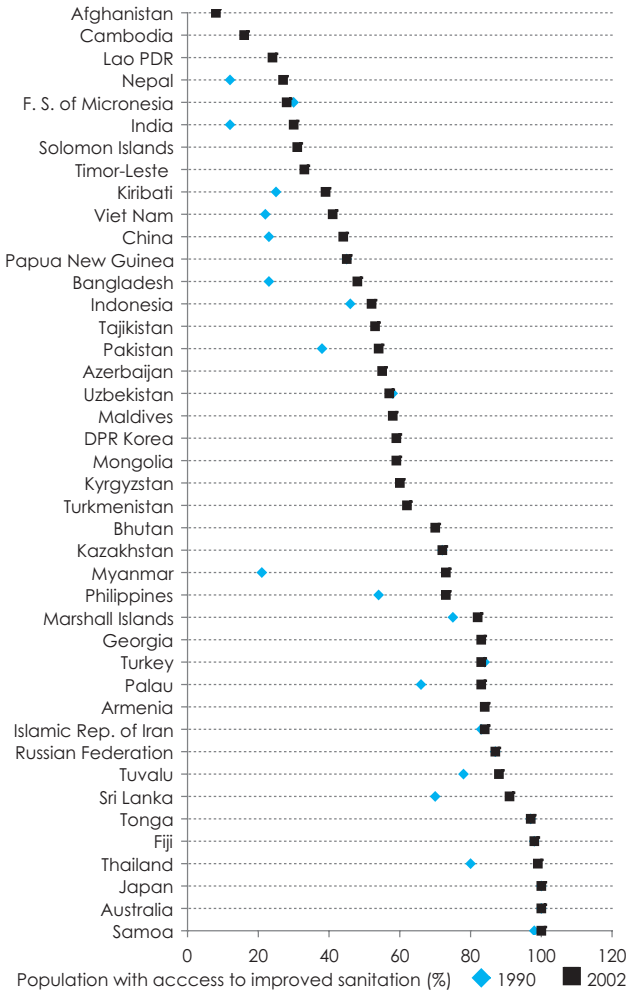
Indicator 31: Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural

The provision of improved sanitation facilities is critical to protecting water resources and therefore for providing access to safe water. "Improved sanitation" relates to facilities that hygenically isolate human excreta, usually sewered or using a septic tank. Private pour-flush latrines and pit latrines are also included.[29]

Trends –The proportion of the population with access to improved sanitation in the region has increased from 37 per cent in 1990 to 51 per cent in 2002, but still some 1.9 billion do not have access to improved sanitation. About one in four urban inhabitants and almost 70 per cent of rural inhabitants did not have access to improved sanitation in 2002.[30] (see figure 5.9).

Challenges – Lack of investment in providing sanitation infrastructure on which there is currently no or little scope for cost recovery is a primary obstacle to the expansion of services in these primarily rural areas.

Figure 5.9 Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation



Source: World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment, 2000 Report, Geneva and New York. Updated data available at www.childinfo.org. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum[31] dwellers

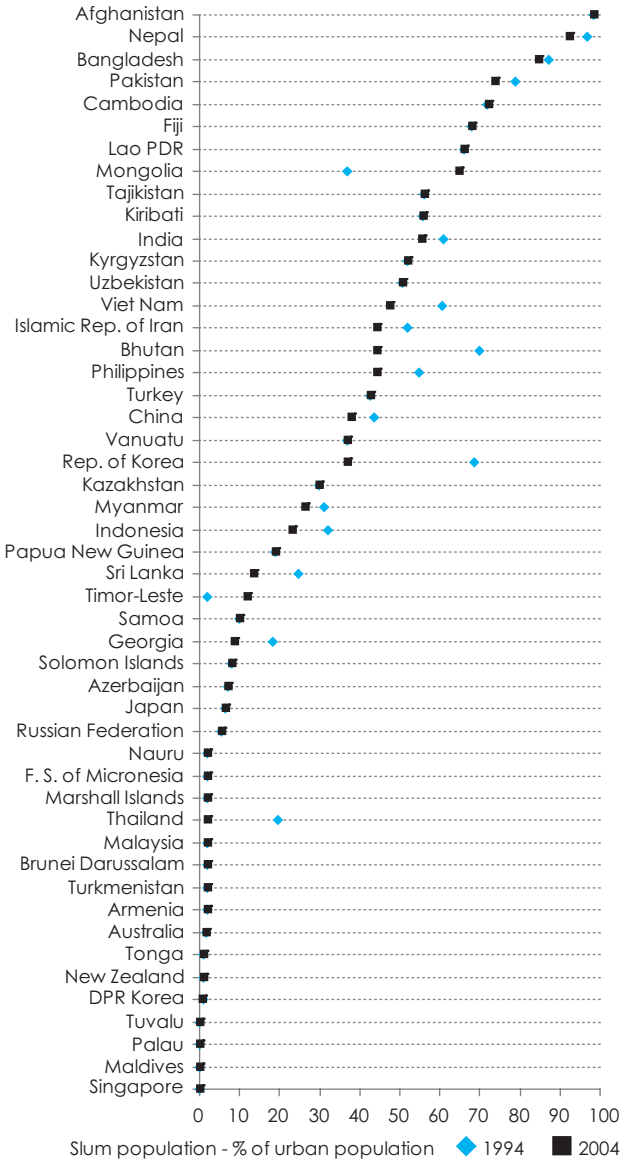
Indicator 32: Proportion of households with access to secure tenure

The speed of population growth in urban areas is largely attributed to the steady influx of the rural population, which has outpaced the development of environmental infrastructure and stretched the capacities of urban governance in many large cities in developing countries. Ultimately, the poor shoulder the burdens of these shortcomings, which take a toll on their health and well-being, as well as the urban environment. The population of inhabitants of urban slums as a proportion of total urban population is used as a proxy for this indicator

Trends – The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT) estimates that one in two urban slum dwellers in the world are from Asia.[32] It is also estimated that more than 37 per cent of the 1.4 billion urban residents lived in slums in 2001. South Asia dominates with respect to the absolute number of slums, hosting about 50 per cent of the total slum population in the region for 2001.[33] India and Pakistan alone have 194 million urban slum dwellers constituting the majority of the regional slum population. Efforts to reduce these numbers are being pursued aggressively and are showing some signs of progress, except in the worst-affected countries (see figure 5.10).

Challenges – The lack of legal recognition for slum areas and the people who live there, limits investment in the provision of water, sanitation and other services in these areas. The main challenges lie in granting security of tenure to the residents; securing investment in urban environmental infrastructure, i.e. water, sanitation and solid waste management; and providing livelihood and employment opportunities for the slum dwellers.

Figure 5.10 Slum population as percentage of urban population



Source: United Nations HABITAT, Millennium Development Goals <http://www.unhabitat.org/mdg> and UN-HABITAT, Guide to Monitoring Target 11: Improving the Lives of 100 Million Slum Dwellers, 2003 <http://www.unhabitat.org/programmes/guo/documents/mdgtarget11.pdf>. Downloaded from the United Nations Millennium Indicator Database on 20 April 2005 from <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp>.

5.3 Taking stock of lessons learned from five years of implementation of Millennium Development Goal 7: emerging perspectives

Five years of implementing the MDGs have produced a wealth of experience to help steer the global compact into its next phase of implementation. The consolidated lessons have revealed that the approach of synergizing efforts for reducing poverty, and translating shared commitment into specific, target-oriented deliverables, is a viable way to build consensus on issues of global importance. Two lessons in particular provide the impetus for moving the MDG framework forward. Firstly, efforts have shown that reducing poverty and some of its dimensions can be achieved if governments are fully committed and exercise their political will and a real desire to pursue poverty reduction programmes. A number of countries in the region, including the more populous ones, have been able to achieve some of the targets within a short period of time. Secondly, most of the goals require huge investments that no single country or donor can provide alone. At all levels, from policymaking to the operational implementation of interventions, partnership arrangements involving governments (from national to local levels), the private sector (be it local or foreign investors), financing institutions (multilateral or bilateral), NGOs (international or local) and civil society in general are the only way to move forward. Interventions that respond squarely to the critically identified priorities of developing countries and that are genuinely supported by willing partners have not only emphasized a complementarity of purpose but, more importantly, have built confidence that partnerships can work.

MDG7 is quite different from the other MDGs as its goals are broad and some of its targets are open-ended. Some critics disagree that the targets and indicators of MDG7 provide a good measure of environmental sustainability. The MDG framers partially agree with the observation and have reiterated that further elaboration of the indicators rests wholly with the respective governments, depending on their perception of the priority issues that need to be addressed. While other MDGs, such as Goals 1, 4 and 5, have concrete targets and are backed up by a robust compilation of best practices and experiences, the same cannot be said of the environmental indicators.[34] Adding to these challenges is the variability of the parameters to be measured and the countries to which they must be applied. Perhaps the most difficult challenge for tracking the progress of MDG7 is in accounting for the common trade-offs that take place between environmental protection and other development objectives. Short-term poverty reduction based on rapid, resource-intensive economic growth necessarily implies slowed or reversed progress on achieving MDG7. Conversely, interventions that are directed towards strict conservation or restrictions on use of resources can deprive the rural poor of access to these resources and increase economic vulnerability.

The lessons relating to the implementation of the MDGs at the global level were consolidated by the United Nations Millennium Project. Key obstacles to attaining environmental sustainability were found to include the absence of clear operational objectives, poor integration of environmental strategies into sectoral policies, inadequate direct investment in environmental management, underinvestment in science and technology and research and development, limited public awareness and inadequate institutional capacity and poor governance. One theme is stressed which fundamentally underpins efforts to meet the targets of MDG7 – the need to view the Goal in an integrated manner and to focus on the means of improving the management of ecosystems so that their capacities to provide multiple types of services sustainably can be enhanced.[35] In addition, widespread market failures and distortions, market-distorting subsidies and the methodological difficulties and political acceptability of reflecting the depletion of both renewable and non-renewable resources in national accounting systems were found to have stymied progress.

The MDG framers acknowledge the broadness of the measures under Goal 7 and encourage governments to take steps to develop targets and indicators that reflect their specific concerns and priorities. However, very few countries have defined MDG-aligned targets and indicators specifically aimed at the sustainability challenges they face. The

slow response of countries may be attributed to capacity and financial constraints, such as a lack of scientific data, a lack of institutional capability to define specific indicators, the unsystematic collection of environmental information and insufficient resources for gathering information. Cambodia has taken the critical step to define specific MDG-aligned targets, including for MDG7 (see box 5.1). Donor countries should support this approach and extend assistance to countries that are willing to undertake such a process. There are some countries in which better target-setting, policy support, monitoring and indicators will not be sufficient; economic, social and political reforms are needed. Least developed, land-locked and small island developing states face such challenges, and need more assistance from countries that are on track.

There is now an overriding interest in ensuring that the integrated approach to meeting MDG7 targets is followed through by the developing countries. Central to the process is the determination of what exactly is needed in terms of resources and policies to enable countries to meet the MDGs by 2015. MDG-focussed development planning sets country-specific MDG targets and projects the investments, as well as the policy changes, needed for their achievement by 2015 (Scenario 2 in figure 5.11). This approach departs from non-targeted

Box 5.1 Millennium Development Goal 7 in Cambodia

Cambodia's MDG7 was tailor-made to reflect its priorities in pursuing environmental sustainability through the following targets:

OVERALL TARGET 13: INTEGRATE THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INTO COUNTRY POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES AND REVERSE THE LOSS OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

- Target 7.1: Maintaining forest cover at the 2000 level of 60 per cent of total land area through 2015
- Target 7.2: Maintaining the surface of 23 protected areas at the 1993 level of 3.3 million ha through 2015
- Target 7.3: Maintaining the surface of 6 new forest protected areas at the 1996 value of 1.35 million ha through 2015
- Target 7.4: Increasing the number of rangers in protected areas from 600 in 2001 to 1,200 by 2015
- Target 7.5: Maintaining the number of rangers in forest protected areas at the level of 500 through 2015
- Target 7.6: Increasing the proportion of fishing lots released to local communities from 56 per cent in 1998 to 60 per cent in 2015
- Target 7.7: Increasing the number of community-based fisheries from 264 in 2000 to 589 in 2015
- Target 7.8: Increasing the surface of fish sanctuaries from 264,500 ha in 2000 to 580,800 ha in 2015
- Target 7.9: Reducing the fuel wood dependency from 92 per cent of households in 1993 to 52 per cent in 2015

OVERALL TARGET 14: HALVE BY 2015 THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

- Target 7.10: Increasing the proportion of the rural population with access to a safe water source from 24 per cent in 1998 to 50 per cent in 2015
- Target 7.11: Increasing the proportion of the urban population with access to a safe water source from 60 per cent in 1998 to 80 per cent in 2015

OVERALL TARGET 15: HALVE BY 2015 THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION

- Target 7.12: Increasing the proportion of the rural population with access to improved sanitation from 8.6 per cent in 1999 to 30 per cent in 2015
- Target 7.13: Increasing the proportion of the urban population with access to improved sanitation from 49 per cent in 1998 to 74 per cent in 2015

OVERALL TARGET 16: INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL AREAS WITH ACCESS TO LAND SECURITY BY 2015

- Target 7.14: Increase the percentage of land parcels having titles in both urban and rural areas from 15 per cent in 2000 to 65 per cent in 2015

For more details of the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals see <http://www.un.org.kh/undp/publications/cmdg/cmdg_2005_en.pdf>, accessed on 17 October 2005.

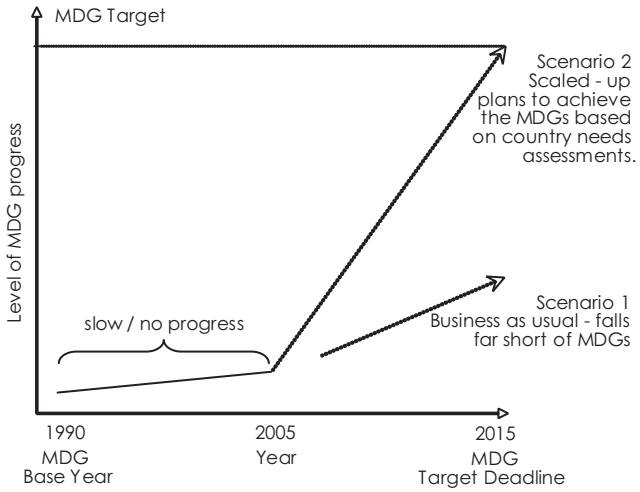
planning practices, both in methdology, and impact (Scenario 1 in figure 5.11).

5.4 Green growth: the critical path to attaining Millennium Development Goal 7 in Asia and the Pacific

While the global lessons from implementing the MDGs are valid in the ESCAP region, this region faces special challenges. It is likely to continue to be a global centre of economic growth in years to come. While many countries in the region will certainly welcome this positive economic outlook, they need to acknowledge that developmental challenges and environmental pressures will also intensify. As shown in the preceding discussions, the relatively limited carrying capacity of the region is under high levels of pressure and the needs of countries are still great. Even with the impressive progress made in attaining MDG1, these achievements may not be sustained if economic growth continues to take place at the expense of MDG7. The need to sustain growth and reduce poverty while minimizing the growth of environmental pressure is more relevant in this region than perhaps anywhere else on the globe.

"Green growth," discussed in chapter 4, was endorsed by Asian and Pacific governments as a new regional policy focus[36] and presents a clear response to this challenge. The green growth policy focus reinforces the objectives of the MDGs by addressing poverty in a way that ensures environmental sustainability. It promotes the adoption of growth paths that will allow societies to live collectively within the global environmental carrying capacity (see chapters 3 and 4). Green growth advocates for the alignment of sectoral policies and investment strategies and will require the exercise of a strong political will and a clear understanding of the complex links between economic growth and environmental sustainability. While many recommendations on the improved integration of sectoral and investment policies have been made, and success stories exist throughout the region, what is clearly missing is an institutionalized response to achieving environmental sustainability: systematic policy support to translate, replicate and scale up these success stories. As a policy focus that seeks to institutionalize environmental sustainability, green growth can play a pivotal role in the sustainable and equitable achievement of both MDG1 and MDG7, and by extension, the other MDGs, in Asia and the Pacific.

Figure 5.11 Scaled-up plans to achieve the Millennium Developmet Goals based on country needs assessments



Source: Adapted from Guido Schmidt-Traub and Albert Cho, "Operationalizing Environmental Sustainability at the National level What do we learn from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment?" accessed on 17 October 2005 from <http://www.unep.org/dec/docs/OESNL.doc>.

End Notes

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[6] ESCAP, ADB and UNDP (2005), ibid.

[7] United Nations Millennium Project (2005a), op. cit.

[8] The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is an international initiative supported by the United Nations, designed to meet the need of decision-makers and the public for scientific information about the consequences of ecosystem change on human well-being and options for responding to the change. The first assessment was conducted from 2001 to 2005 and it is anticipated that it will be repeated every 5 to 10 years. For more information see <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>, accessed on 19 March 2006.

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