



FACT SHEET

GOAL 7 : Ensure environmental sustainability

QUICK FACTS

- » Some 1.6 billion people have gained access to safe drinking water since 1990. At this rate, the world is expected to meet the MDG target on drinking water. But about 1 billion people still do not have access to safe drinking water, and 2.5 billion lack access to basic sanitation services.
- » Currently, only 22 per cent of the world's fisheries are sustainable, compared to 40 per cent in 1975. Despite their importance to the sustainability of fish stocks and coastal livelihoods, only 0.7 per cent of the world's oceans – about 2 million square kilometres – were put under protection.
- » Some 2.4 billion people live without access to modern cooking and heating services, and 1.6 billion have no access to electricity.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Climate change is intensifying disasters, including extreme weather events, storm surges, floods and droughts. It is vital that development strategies incorporate measures to strengthen community resilience through economic development, income diversification, strengthened natural/infrastructural defenses and disaster preparedness. While no area can escape the adverse impact of climate change, the Arctic, small islands, mega-deltas in Asia and Africa, and the African region overall seem to be especially vulnerable because of their high exposure to the effects of climate change, their populations' limited capacity to adapt to the consequences or both.

Water use has grown at more than twice the rate of the population for the past century. Although there is not yet a global water shortage, about 2.8 billion people, representing more than 40 per cent of the world's population, live in river basins with some form of water scarcity. More than 1.2 billion of them live under conditions of physical water scarcity, which occurs when more than 75 per cent of the river flows are withdrawn. Because they are usually responsible for collecting and managing the household supply of water, women are particularly affected in many regions by lack of safe water and sanitation services.

Current trends suggest that on average the world may meet the target of halving the proportion of population without access to safe drinking water, but not the target regarding access to improved sanitation facilities. The proportion of people using improved sources of drinking water is only 58 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, but much higher in Eastern Asia (88 per cent), Western Asia (90 per cent) and Northern Africa (92 per cent). Wide disparities exist in access to improved sanitation facilities, with sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia both lagging far behind.

It is estimated that the cost of closing the gap between current trends and target trends for achieving the Goal 7 targets on water and sanitation, based on low-cost, sustainable technologies, is at least \$10 billion per year.

Because of a rise in forest planting, landscape restoration and the natural expansion of forests, deforestation of about 13 million hectares per year resulted in an estimated net decline of 7.3 million hectares of forest area per year over the period 2000-2005, compared to 8.9 million hectares annually in the previous decade. The rate of deforestation has been fastest in some of the world's most biologically diverse regions and old growth forest ecosystems, including South-East Asia, Oceania, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

More and more fish stocks are overexploited, threatening the most important source of animal protein for billions of people. Increased large-scale industrial fishing and poorly regulated access to fisheries have exacerbated the problem.

Lack of affordable access to clean modern energy services is widespread. In many developing countries, women are the primary users and providers of energy sources such as wood, dung and agricultural residues; women and children are also more affected by respiratory diseases related to the use of solid fuels.

Even if the target of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 were met, this number represents only 10 per cent of the estimated world slum population which, at current rates of expansion, is expected to triple, to 3 billion by 2050.

WHAT HAS WORKED

1. The 1987 Montreal Protocol has resulted in the phasing out of over 96 per cent of all ozone-depleting substances (ODSs). This quantitative success in the protection of the ozone layer has also achieved important climate benefits because many ozone depleting substances controlled under the Protocol are also potent greenhouse gases. It is estimated that, without the worldwide effort to protect the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect of global ODS emissions would have equalled that of carbon dioxide emissions, currently the greenhouse gas contributing most significantly to climate change. In 2007, governments acknowledged the dual benefit to both ozone protection and climate change by agreeing to advance by up to 10 years the final phase-out date for hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), currently the most widely used ozone-depleting substance.
2. Decades ago, **Pakistan's** Forest Department began planting rows of trees (called shelterbelts) along roadsides and canals in the Thal region to protect them against wind-borne sand. This initiative aimed to convert the vast sand-dune-covered Thal Desert into productive agricultural land, enhancing food production and improving living conditions through job creation. Farmers were encouraged to establish shelterbelts on their own lands with minimum inputs by the government. Large chunks of the desert have now been reclaimed, as evidenced by the large-scale planting of trees protecting considerable areas of cropped land under irrigation. Of the 2.5 million hectares of the Thal Desert, some 30 per cent of lands are now reclaimed and under cultivation. In **Niger** too, hundreds of thousands of rural inhabitants improved their livelihoods and reduced their vulnerability to droughts through large-scale reforestation propelled forward by reforms that included transferring ownership of trees from the State to the communities.
3. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) contribute to the conservation of ocean species and habitat, and aid in the development of sustainable fisheries. Studies undertaken by the Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund revealed that MPAs lead to improved fish catches and bigger fish, and new jobs in the area of tourism, while coral reefs attract a growing numbers of snorkelers and scuba divers. In **Fiji**, a locally managed MPA network has increased local income by 35 per cent over three years. Women are often the reef gleaners and benefit financially by collecting and selling the shellfish from just outside the marine protected area. In the Bunaken MPA in **Indonesia**, the tourist industry provided new jobs for local villagers. **Belize's** Barrier Reef in Central America is another area where the marine wildlife in MPAs has generated jobs and attracted more tourists.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- » Ensure effective conservation and management to reverse the loss of natural resources and significantly reduce biodiversity loss.
- » Scale-up programmes and initiatives to deliver pro-poor environmental outcomes.
- » Provide investments to bring electricity and cleaner cooking fuels to the large segments of the world population that are still deprived of such essential services.
- » Develop participatory, pro-poor natural resource and ecosystem management systems.
- » Introduce innovative financial mechanisms to significantly raise financing for the environment.
- » Introduce measures/mechanisms to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.
- » Conclude negotiations to ensure an effective and equitable outcome under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change by late 2009.
- » Enhance climate adaptation programmes and reduce the negative impact of climate change, particularly in small island developing states and least developed countries.
- » Promote climate-friendly and climate-change adaptation technologies.
- » Promote selective bio-fuel development based on global comparisons of energy ratios and impacts on land, water, deforestation and food prices of different options.
- » Increase spending on water and sanitation from about 0.5 per cent to at least 1.0 per cent of GDP to ensure greatly increased access.
- » Adopt a holistic, participatory ecosystem approach to fisheries management.
- » Scale-up slum upgrading and invest in decent, affordable housing for the poor, including women.
- » Create strong incentives and financial support for participatory, sustainable forest management and conservation practices.

Sources: *Committing to action: Achieving the MDGs*, Background note by the Secretary-General for the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, New York, 25 September 2008; *The Millennium Development Goals Reports* 2008 and 2006, United Nations; United Nations MDG Database <http://mdgs.un.org>; *The Value of Nature: Ecological, Economic, Cultural and Social Benefits of Protected Areas*, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity/UNEP; *UNEP Best Practices and Success Stories Global Network* website <http://www.unep.org/bsgn/>, UNEP.

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