

Chapter 5

ACHIEVING THE MDGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

All 191 United Nations (UN) member states have pledged to meet the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the year 2015. The UN has identified 18 targets and 48 indicators that serve to guide countries in their mission.

Several institutions—both international and local—monitor progress toward the MDGs in the Philippines. In January 2003, the Government in cooperation with the UN Country Team published a progress report on the accomplishments of the Philippines in meeting the MDGs (Government of the Philippines, 2003). NSCB maintains an extensive section dedicated to the MDGs on its very comprehensive website (www.nscb.gov.ph/stats/mdg).⁵⁸

In the monitoring reports prepared in the Philippines, some nonstandard indicators have been used for assessing performance. The reports prepared by UN agencies use indicators that can compare performance across countries, such as population below an international poverty line of \$1 per day. In the Philippines, there was an attempt to make use of commonly available indicators

⁵⁸ In this MDG section of the website, NSCB reports time series and sources of various indicators. One table shows population below the national poverty line, 1991–2000. There is a major flaw in the table in that the figures for 1991 and 1994 are 1992 Methodology and those for 1997 and 2000 are 2003 Methodology. This is precisely the sort of error one wishes to avoid when there is a major change in the poverty measurement method.

(something that is encouraged in the UN guidelines on MDGs). In measuring extreme poverty, instead of the \$1 per day benchmark, the Government decided to use the national subsistence incidence based on the national food threshold. These differences must be noted if Philippine progress is to be compared to other countries using different indicators. One further note on consistency: the Government's January 2003 MDG Progress Report does not quite match the UN norms on targets. In the Philippine report, MDG 1, Target 3, is "halve the population with no access to safe drinking water." In international reports, this is MDG 7, Target 10.

This Chapter is organized by MDG, with a brief discussion of the indicators and a summary table at the end. These summary tables pull together data from various available sources, and represent the most up-to-date assessment of the MDGs at this time. There are of course some data consistency questions that arise when different sources are consulted. Some of these data disparities are examined here.

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

The proportion of the population living below the international poverty line of \$1 per day at 1993 PPP in the Philippines was 11.5% in 2002, a good deal lower than the 19.1% in 1990 (ESCAP, 2004). The target is 9.6% by 2015. Given past trends, ESCAP estimates the poverty incidence is likely to reach 7.5% by that time (UN 2003). Most other Southeast Asian countries have already met this goal but the Philippines, along with Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, is generally on target (UN 2003).

Progress in reducing hunger has been modest. The Philippine Government MDG report uses subsistence incidence as the indicator for the target of reducing poverty, but in theory one might use it as a proxy indicator for hunger, since subsistence incidence is based on a food poverty line. If families fall below this food poverty line, which is constructed to meet minimum dietary requirements, then one must assume that they do not have enough income to meet their food needs, and are thus undernourished. There was an overall reduction in the subsistence incidence of families from 20.4% in 1991 to 16.7% in 2000. However, the magnitude of food poor families increased from 2.4 million in 1985 to 2.5 million in 2000 [M92]. There are also great regional and provincial differences, as explored in Chapter 4.

The proportion of children under five years old who are moderately and severely underweight has been reduced by less than 4% between 1990 and 2001 and remains very high at about 30.6%. The target of 17.25% does not seem likely to be met. Similarly, there has been only a 3% drop in the

proportion of Filipinos who are undernourished, according to UN estimates for 1991 and 1998.

MDG 1
Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
1 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day (%)		
Population living below \$1 a day (%)	1990	19.1
source: 1	2002	11.5
Poverty gap ratio (%)	1991	2.8
source: 2	2000	2.7
Share of poorest quintile in national consumption (%)	1991	5.9
source: 2	2000	5.4
2 Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (%)		
Children underweight for age (% under age 5)	1990	34.5
source: 3	2001	30.6
Undernourished people (as % of total population)	1991	26.0
source: 4	1998	23.0
Families living below the food threshold (%)	1991	20.4
source: 5	2000	16.7

Sources: 1. ESCAP (2004), 2. World Bank poverty monitoring website, 3. NSCB MDG website, 4. UN (2003), 5. FIES [M92].

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

The education indicators for the Philippines, as reported by NSCB, do not look promising. All three indicators show slight decreases from 1990–2001. The net enrolment ratio in primary education dropped from a near universal 99.1% in 1990 to 97% in 2001. The literacy rate of 15–24-year-olds dropped from 96.6% in 1990 to 95.1% in 2001. Nevertheless, these levels are reasonably high overall. More worrying is the cohort survival rate, namely the proportion of students who start grade 1 that complete grade 5. This indicator, low to begin with, dropped from 68.2% to 67.1%. In Malaysia, for example, the cohort survival rate was nearly over 97% in 1993 (UN, 2003). Various factors can account for poor performance on this indicator, including low

quality of schooling, discouragement over poor performance, and the direct and indirect costs of schooling.

MDG 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
3 Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling		
Net enrolment ratio in primary education	1990	99.1
source: 3	2001	97.0
Proportion of students who start grade 1 that reach grade 5 (cohort survival rate)	1990	68.2
source: 3	2001	67.1
Literacy rate of 15 to 24-year-olds	1990	96.6
source: 3	2000	95.1

Source: 3. NSCB MDG website.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women⁵⁹

The indicators for gender equality and empowerment of women are universally high in the Philippines. The status of women is promising. Particularly in the sphere of education the MDG targets have long been met: the participation rate of girls tends to exceed that of boys, as do cohort survival rates. Other indicators on gender equality, the share of women in nonagricultural wage employment and the number of parliament seats occupied by women, both improved. The country has had two female presidents since 1986, but there is still some ground to be gained by women in the political sphere: In 2003, 3 out of 24 senators and 33 out of 205 legislators in the House of Representatives were women. Though female employees dominated the bureaucracy at 53% of the total work force, significantly more men are appointed to higher levels. Furthermore, only 2 out of 15 Supreme Court justices are women (Government of the Philippines, 2003).

⁵⁹ For an in-depth survey of gender issues in the Philippines, see ADB. 2004. Country Gender Assessment, Philippines, Manila: ADB.

MDG 3
Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
4 Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015		
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education	1993	1.0
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	2000	1.0
source: 3		
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education	1993	1.1
source: 3	2001	1.1
Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education	1993	1.3
source: 3	2000	1.2
Ratio of literate females to males among 15–24-year-olds	1990	1.0
source: 4	2002	1.0
Share of women in nonagricultural wage employment (%)	1990	40.2
source: 3	2001	41.0
Share of seats held by women in national parliament (Senate and House of Representatives) (%)	1992	11.6
source: 3	2001	18.2

Source: 3. NSCB MDG website, 4. UN (2003).

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

Infant and child mortality in the Philippines have both been gradually reduced since 1990. The target to reduce the under-5 mortality rate by two thirds implies a continued reduction to 22 per 1,000 live births by 2015 (UN 2003). The Government's 2003 report shows a reduction in IMR from 57 per 1,000 births in 1990 to 35 in 1998. The 2003 NDHS revealed a further fall in IMR to 29 in 2003. These improvements were a result of a variety of programs, services, and initiatives for children including expanded immunization, improved breastfeeding, and vitamin supplementation. The data on measles immunization, from the NSCB's MDG website, also shows improvements.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ A conflicting and negative trend is reported in the UNDP's global Human Development Report 2003. In that report, the proportion of 1-year-olds fully immunized against measles has dropped from 85% in 1990 to 75% in 2001. It is difficult to know which trend to report. The NSCB data is from the Department of Health–National Epidemiology Center/Field Health Service Information System. The UNDP source is unclear.

Despite these generally positive trends, there are still many challenges. The Philippines was declared polio-free in 2000, but there was a resurgence in 2001. Other preventable infectious diseases persist at high rates, and large variations in child health status exist across income classes and regions.

MDG 4
Reduce Child Mortality

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
5 Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 1995, the under-five mortality rate		
Under-five mortality rate	1990	66
source: 4 and 8	2003	40
Infant Mortality Rate	1990	57
source: 6 and 8	2003	29
Proportion of one-year-old children immunized against measles	1990	77.9
source: 3	2001	81.7

Sources: 3. NSCB MDG website, 4. UN (2003), 6. Government of the Philippines (2003), 8. NSO NDHS 2003.

MDG 5: Improved maternal health

As with any indicator, there are conflicting statistics in maternal health in the Philippines. The first conflicting reports concern the maternal mortality ratio (MMR). The NSCB reports a reduction in the MMR from 209 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 172 in 1998. Based on this data, the target by 2015 would be 52. However, both the *Human Development Report 2003* and the *World Development Report 2004* report a higher MMR: 240 per 100,000 live births in 1995 (no trend data provided). The second area of conflicting data is in the area of births attended by health professionals. The 2003 NDHS finds that the proportion increased to 60% in 2003 (NSO, 2004), up from 53% in 1993. The NSCB website reports Department of Health data. Here there is also an increase in this indicator, from 58.8% in 1990 to 69% in 2001. The trend is clearly toward improvement, which is positive, but the precise level is under question. The Government's MDG progress report states that 1 in 100 women die as a result of "maternal causes," and that maternal deaths accounted for about 14% of all deaths among women of reproductive age (15–49) (Government of the Philippines, 2003). This number is unacceptably high.

MDG 5
Improve Maternal Health

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
6 Reduce by three quarters between 1990 and 2015 the maternal mortality ratio		
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	1990	209
source: 3	1998	172
Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	1990	58.8
source: 3	2001	69.0

Sources: 3. NSCB MDG website and 8. NSO NDHS 2003

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

The confirmed cases of HIV/AIDS in the Philippines remain relatively low and their rate of increase has been slow as compared to many other countries. Between 1984 and 1992, the annual number of confirmed cases reported was below 100. From 1993 to 1999, the number of new cases per year exceeded 100 but was still below 200. Nevertheless, the Government cannot be complacent on the HIV/AIDS issue. An estimated 9,400 people were living with AIDS in 2001. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports that the Philippines has an HIV/AIDS epidemic that has a huge explosion potential, and that risky behavior is a major concern. A large sex industry exists in the country, casual sex is prevalent among youth, and regular and correct use of condoms is low. The country's 7 million migrant workers belong to a particularly vulnerable group (UNAIDS, 2004).

Republic Act 8504 promotes AIDS education, mandates a multisectoral response that involves marginalized groups, promotes confidentiality, prohibits discrimination, and proscribes mandatory testing. The Philippine National AIDS Council (PNAC) is a multisectoral body comprising representatives from government departments, various sectors and professional groups, and NGOs. It is responsible for formulating and monitoring the national response to HIV/AIDS, but the AIDS-specific government allocation of about \$176,000 per year has left many of the activities in the National Strategic Plan unfunded (UNAIDS, 2004).

Tuberculosis (TB) is a major health problem in the Philippines. It was the fifth leading cause of death in 1995 (Government of the Philippines, 2003). Here too the statistics conflict somewhat. NSCB reports the tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population as having dropped from 246 per

100,000 population in 1990 to 158 in 2001 (NSCB MDG website). The UN reports the prevalence rate in 2000 at 316 per 100,000, exactly double the NSCB rate. The difference is quite remarkable. With a population of 76.5 million in 2000, this would mean either 120,800 or 241,000 new cases of TB per year, depending on which source is consulted. Similarly, the death rate reported by NSCB (38 per 100,000) is much lower than that reported by the UN (67 per 100,000 in 2000). Either way, the problem is substantial. The 1997 Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey showed that positive action behavior among those with TB is low—only 21% of TB symptomatics and 28% of TB patients consulted a health provider (Government of the Philippines, 2003). Malaria is not nearly as great a problem, and is no longer a leading cause of death in the Philippines.

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

The state of the environment in the Philippines is alarming and calls for concerted efforts to arrest continued degradation. Forest cover has been reduced to less than 18% of total land area in 2000 from 20.5% in 1990 (Government of the Philippines, 2003).⁶¹ Less than 7% of the country's original forest cover remains. Forests are lost as a result of such problems as fires, logging, pests, diseases, mining activities, and encroachment of settlements in critical watersheds. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita have worsened to 1 metric ton in 1999 from 0.7 metric tons in 1991. The ratio of protected area to total area is very low at 0.06. Consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons was reduced somewhat between 1990 and 2001.

The Philippines is experiencing an alarming rate of biodiversity loss. As discussed in Chapter 4, the country is one of only 17 in the world classified as mega-diversified with a high concentration of endemic plants and wildlife. Conservation International now ranks the Philippines as one of the five hottest hotspots, or one of the most threatened places on earth.

The ADB *Philippines Country Environmental Assessment* states that water quality is worsening: only 36% of the country's river systems are suitable sources of public water supply, and up to 58% of groundwater is contaminated with coliform, requiring treatment. The country has not been able maintain the gains

⁶¹ The NSCB website data on forest cover in the Philippines is puzzling. According to a time series spanning each year from 1990–2002, forest cover has remained virtually unchanged at just under 53%. A footnote states that the series is revised as of September 2003 and that the source is the National Mapping Information and Resource Authority. Nowhere else can one find data to substantiate forest cover of more than half of the country that has not been depleted in 12 years.

MDG 6

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
7 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS		
HIV Prevalence among 15–24-year-old women (high estimate)	1999	0.06
source: 4	2001	0.02
HIV Prevalence among 15–24-year old men (high estimate)	1999	0.05
source: 4	2001	0.02
Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate	1993	1.0
source: 3	2002	1.6
Estimated number of people living with AIDS	2001	9,400
source: 4		
Number of children orphaned by AIDS	1997	480
source:4	2001	4100
8 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases		
Malaria prevalence rate (per 100,000 population)	2000	15
Malaria death rate (per 100,000 population)	2000	2
source: 4		
Tuberculosis prevalence rate (per 100,000 population)	2000	316
Tuberculosis death rate (per 100,000 population)	2000	67
source: 4		

Sources: 3. NSCB MDG website, 4. UN (2003).

made in providing safe drinking water to its population. For instance, the proportion of people with sustainable access to an improved water source in both rural and urban areas declined during 1990–2000. Access to rural sanitation declined from 76.3% in 1998 to 74.2% in 2000.⁶² One positive development is that the urban population with access to improved sanitation reached 92% of the total population in 2000, up from 85% in 1990.

⁶² Philippine Country Brief on the MDGs prepared by the World Bank for the Regional Conference on Translating the MDGs through Water Supply and Sanitation Action, 21–23 Feb 2003, Thailand.

MDG 7

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
9 Integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources		
Land area covered by forest (%)	1990	20.53
source: 6	2000	17.97
Ratio of protected area to total surface area	1990	4.9
source: 3	2001	8.7
GDP per unit of energy use (PPP US\$ per kg. of oil equivalent)	2000	0.14
source: 7		
Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (metric tons)	1991	0.7
source: 7	1999	0.99
Consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (metric tons)	2001	2,049
source: 7		
10 Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation		
Population with sustainable access to an improved water source		
Rural	1990	82.0
source: 4	2000	79.0
Urban	1990	93.0
source: 4	2000	91.0
11 Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers		
Urban population with access to improved sanitation (%)	1990	85.0
source: 4	2000	92.0
Proportion of households with secure tenure (%)	1990	91.0
source: 3	2000	81.2

Sources: 3. NSCB website, 4. UN (2003), 7. ADB *Basic Data* May 2004.

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

MDG number 8, develop a global partnership for development, is the most broad in scope of all the MDGs. It contains seven targets (targets 12–18) and nearly 20 indicators grouped into sub-headings covering official development assistance, debt sustainability, market access, and other. Some of the indicators pertain specifically to the least developed countries, to Africa, to landlocked countries, and to small island states and are therefore not applicable to the Philippines specifically.

On targets 15–18 the Philippines demonstrates a mixed record. While the debt service ratio as a percentage of exports has dropped from 27.2% in 1990 to 16% in 2003, youth unemployment is a major and growing problem, particularly for young women. In 2002 almost one quarter of the female labor force aged 15–24 was unemployed. This was an 8% increase over 1990. Importantly, the target for decent and productive work for youth does not include an indicator on *underemployment*, no doubt also a major issue.

On the communications front, the number of telephone landlines increased between 1990 and 2002 but the overall coverage remained low at just under 9 telephone lines per 100 people. Cell phone ownership, on the other hand, has skyrocketed in the Philippines from less than 3 units per 100 people in 1997 to nearly 20 in 2002. More recent data are not yet available, but figures are sure to have grown even more rapidly. Text messaging is an extremely popular means of communication in the Philippines.⁶³ More than 4% of Filipinos were Internet users in 2002. This is slightly more than Indonesia and Micronesia, but far below Malaysia (32%), Singapore (50%) and the Republic of Korea (55%).

⁶³ In 2004 it became possible for overseas Filipinos to remit money home quickly and efficiently using cell phones.

MDG 8

Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Target and Indicator	Philippine Update	
15 Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries		
Debt service ratio as a percentage of exports of goods and services	1990	27.2
sources: 3 (1990) and 7 (2003)	2003	16
16 Develop strategies for decent and productive work for youth		
Youth Unemployment (% of labor force age 15–24)		
Female	1990	16.2
source: 3	2002	24.3
Male	1990	7.7
source: 3	2002	19.7
17 Provide access to affordable essential drugs		
Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis	1999	50 - 79
source: 8		
18 Make available the benefits of new technologies, especially for information and communications		
Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population		
Landlines	1990	1.5
source: 3	2002	8.7
Cell phones	1997	2.8
source: 3	2002	19.3
Personal computers per 100 people	2002	2.77
source: 7		
Internet users per 100 people	2002	4.4
source: 7		

Sources: 3. NSCB website, 7. ADB *Basic Statistics* 2004, 8. UNDP HDR 2003

Opportunities and Challenges

The Philippine Progress Report on the MDGs assesses the probability of meeting eight of the targets, based on past trends. Six out of eight targets are given a high probability of achievement. One is ranked medium (MMR), and one low (hunger). The assessment is reproduced in Table 27.

Table 27
Probability of Meeting the MDGs in the Philippines

MDG Target	Probability		
	High	Medium	Low
Extreme Poverty: Halve the proportion of people below the national food threshold	X		
Hunger: Halve the proportion of underweight five-year-olds			X
Basic Amenities: Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water	X		
Universal Primary Education: Achieve universal primary education	X		
Gender Equality: Achieve equal access to boys and girls to primary schooling	X		
Child Mortality: Reduce under-five mortality by two thirds	X		
Maternal Health: Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters		X	
HIV/AIDS: Halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	X		

Source: Government of the Philippines (2003).

The high probability of achievement might have been misdiagnosed for three of the targets: extreme poverty, basic amenities, and HIV/AIDS. To reach the Philippines' own target on extreme poverty, the national subsistence incidence of families must be reduced to 10.2% [M92]. The national subsistence incidence was reduced by only 3.7% from 1991 to 2000, or by an average of -0.95% with every round of the FIES. Assuming this same rate of change in future, the subsistence incidence in 2015 FIES would be 11.95%, and the target would not be met. The subsistence incidence would not reach 10.05% until 2021. Importantly, the Government will have to continue to apply the 1992 poverty measurement methodology to new rounds of the FIES if this goal is to be measured accurately. However, it does appear highly likely that

the proportion of people living on less than \$1 per day will be halved between 1990 and 2015.

The UN reports that the proportion of people in the Philippines with sustainable access to an improved water source dropped between 1990 and 2000, in both urban and rural areas. This is cause for concern and does not support a high probability of achieving the MDG without concerted efforts to reverse the trend. The ADB Country Environmental Assessment finds that water quality is generally worsening in the Philippines (ADB, 2004f) .

Achievement of the HIV/AIDS goal is also ranked as high. There are three factors that speak against this assessment. First, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate increased between 1999 and 2001. Second, UNAIDS warns that the epidemic in the Philippines has a huge potential to explode. Third, resource constraints mean many HIV/AIDS programs cannot be implemented.

Going forward, the Philippines should consider adopting and reporting the standard international MDG indicators. In other words, future reports should use the international measure of extreme poverty, and should classify access to safe water as MDG 7.