



Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Hard-won progress toward the MDGs in southern Africa is at risk not only from the global economic crisis but also from climate change, via the climate-sensitive development drivers water, energy, food and health. The region needs to ‘climate-proof’ its development goals.

MDG benchmarks

The eight MDGs, as formulated in the Millennium Declaration (2000) for the period 2000-2015, were agreed by 192 United Nations member states. The MDGs (Table 1) encapsulate time-bound and quantified benchmarks for reducing extreme poverty, and attaining a sustainable human development growth path, particularly in the poorest countries. Progress towards their achievement is regularly monitored and reported. To date, despite some progress, countries in sub-Saharan Africa are falling short of the goals set. Significantly greater investments and systemic implementation of sustainable solutions, combined with strengthening of infrastructure and governance, are required.

Drivers of development

The main climate-sensitive drivers of development in southern Africa include water, energy and health services, and agriculture and food security (with ecosystem services as a crosscutting factor) – their status has a strong impact on progress toward the MDGs. They also link to drivers of development such as education and infrastructure. Extreme poverty and hunger are strongly associated with lack of access to these resources and services, and conversely, improved access to these resources and services is an essential input into human and economic development.

The relationships between water, food security, health and energy and the MDG targets are complex, and both direct and indirect. Agriculture is linked to many of the

Table 1: Progress of the MDGS in 2010 for sub-Saharan Africa

KEY	Missing or insufficient data	No progress or deterioration	Progress insufficient for target	Progress sufficient for target	Already met or very close to target
	Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger			Reduce extreme poverty by half Productive & decent employment Reduce hunger by half	
	Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education			Universal primary schooling	
	Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women			Equal girls' enrolment in primary schools Women's share of paid employment Women's representation in parliament	
	Goal 4: Reduce child mortality			Reduce mortality of under 5s by ¼	
	Goal 5: Improve maternal health			Reduce maternal mortality by ¾ Access to reproductive health	
	Goal 6: Combat major diseases			Halt & reverse HIV/AIDS Halt & reverse TB	
	Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability			Reverse loss of forests Halve proportion without improved drinking water Halve proportion without sanitation Improved livelihoods of slum-dwellers	
	Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development			Internet users	

Adapted from Statistics Division, Department of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations, 2010

goals in this region: the strong dependence on high-risk rainfed agriculture places significant stress on the achievement of many MDGs. Similarly, water resources are fundamental for the health and energy sectors and the related MDGs. Underlying indirect linkages are also important to consider. Under MDG7 (environmental sustainability) for example, key ecosystem services are integral for food security and human health, as they provide the raw energy source for millions of people in the form of biomass provisioning.

Climate change and the achievement of the MDGs

Climate change, via the abovementioned impacts, will lead to multi-faceted (mostly negative) impacts on the MDGs. Nevertheless, emerging opportunities (such as those provided by increasing rainfall in some parts) could provide renewed impetus towards achieving the MDGs, or at least accelerate progress for the longer term. Common vulnerabilities across political boundaries in southern Africa reflect shared biophysical and socioeconomic contexts. However, most countries do show marked gradients of vulnerability within their own boundaries. Both the common and internally differentiated vulnerabilities offer opportunities for responding to climate change whilst ensuring continued progress towards the MDGs at regional, national and sub-national levels.

How can we 'climate-proof' the MDGs?

Interventions to increase adaptive capacity at local level while providing a supportive political and financial framework should include:

- strategic investments in infrastructure, for improved water, energy, health and agricultural services, and transport and communication networks
- ensuring climate resilient investments with a transition from mainly donor to national and regional funding sources
- building and strengthening of market linkages and trade systems
- investments in health systems
- stimulating agricultural innovation for diversification and intensification of climate-resilient production systems
- ecosystem restoration and repair of critical natural capital
- improved integrated planning for both the short-term (MDGs) and longer-term (climate change) with an understanding of the time-bound risks and opportunities
- accessible and implementable policies, and enforcement of legislation
- improved data systems and monitoring and evaluation frameworks which recognise the MDG and climate change linkages
- improved infrastructure and systems for effective communication e.g. early warning of extreme weather
- stronger cooperation between academic, civil society and government sectors.

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CASE STUDY

Possible impact of climate change on the trajectory of achieving the MDGs in four southern African countries:

KEY	Possible positive impact		Potentially feasible		No / very small impact	Stronger negative impact
	Poverty	Hunger	Education / gender	Health	Environmental sustainability	Water supply and sanitation
Malawi						
Mozambique south						
Mozambique north						
Tanzania central						
Tanzania other						
Zambia south						
Zambia north						

The case study shows how common vulnerabilities provide opportunities for countries to work together closely on identifying solutions, rolling out MDG and climate change programmes, and attracting additional financial support for development objectives. This requires strengthened regional cooperative agreements and institutions.

Other reasons for differential vulnerabilities include

exposure to sea level rise and other coastal impacts (e.g. Mozambique), and high population densities and growth rates (e.g. Malawi). A key response by every country will be to sustainably capitalise on potential benefits in some parts of the country while providing safety nets in more vulnerable areas.

Drier areas are more vulnerable to climate-related setbacks, although the wetter parts bear some risk of flooding.