INTRODUCTION

GEOMETRY EQUALITY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

of the 1990s and other global agreements.

The difference between 2002 and 2000, when we last published Progress of the World’s Women, is that we now have the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

These were agreed to in September 2000 when world leaders met at the Millennium Summit at the United Nations. The Millennium Declaration establishes the values that should guide global development — freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility — and promises to free “the entire human race from want.” In the Declaration leaders pledged to “promote gender equality and the

progress of the world’s women

Progress—the word conjures images of purposeful movement towards a better world; it seems to signify traveling a path to higher ground. Yet there is never a guarantee of progress in any endeavour, nor is its path direct when it does occur. This is as true of progress for women as anything else. The differences in the experiences, expectations and priorities of different groups of women mean that there is always scope for debate about what constitutes progress for them. Moreover, progress in one area does not guarantee progress in all areas: women may enjoy certain rights yet still suffer extreme discrimination. This report, the second edition of Progress of the World’s Women, explores the challenges of tracking and determining such progress. Its goal is to support efforts to improve the monitoring of and advocacy for implementing the commitments made to women in the world conferences

A Rwandan mother with her child. Despite dire conditions in sub-Saharan Africa, women are rising to the challenges that confront them.
empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease, and to achieve sustainable development that is truly sustainable.” The Declaration also states, in paragraph 6, that “Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from fear of violence, oppression or injustice…” and that “the equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.” The eight Millennium Development Goals (see Box 4, p. 8) as a means of tracking progress.

This edition of Progress presents data and analysis related to Goal 3 of the MDGs: “promote gender equality and empower women.” It is significant that the Millennium Declaration identified gender equality and empowerment as a goal in its own right and an essential component in achieving all of the other goals. That world leaders agree that women’s equality and rights are central to achieving economic and social priorities is important. It is equally important that that trend is recognized as a goal for the entire world — they are neither only for those countries that have achieved a certain level of development nor for those that have yet to do so. In this report, we review the basis upon which the commitment to women’s equality was made and the opportunities and challenges involved in ensuring that written promises are turned into concrete opportunities for women. The main section of the report presents an international cross-country assessment of women’s situation at the beginning of the new millennium, using the MDG indicators for Goal 3. This information updates the review undertaken in Progress 2000. As before, statistics are at the heart of this work, yet because of the fragmented nature of the evidence collected, the statistics are still key to the analysis.

Study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, of whole countries.

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan March 8, 2003

women’s lives. Many aspects of women’s progress — or lack of it — are left out when the focus is on hard facts: the emotional pull of the unpaid care work that women provide in their homes and communities; the suffering and the exhaustion stemming from the struggle for equality and respect; the terrible toll of the ongoing violence that women experience, in public and in private, in war and during peace. With this context in mind, this report recognizes the strength and importance of all women’s contributions to their country’s progress. It treats them as information to be used in an ongoing discussion, rather than as facts that close off debate.

The report will demonstrate that, when compared to the experiences of the world, women in sub-Saharan Africa face the greatest challenges. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest level of maternal deaths and the highest prevalence levels of HIV/AIDS. The majority of HIV positive adults are women. Almost half the people living on less than US$1 a day, the highest rate of poverty in the world. It is also the region with the lowest per capita national product. Average regional income has fallen in the period 1990 to 2000. All of this is reflected in the statistics on MDG indicators (see Appendix). The skewed distribution and young women’s literacy are low compared to other regions, and compared to boys and men’s rates within the region. Women’s share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is equally low compared to other regions and compared to men. Nevertheless, women in the region are rising to the enormous challenges that confront them. In many countries, they are beginning to play a larger role in decision-making, as members of parliaments and as activists involved in gender budget initiatives.

Given the heated debate about what constitutes progress for women, the second section of the report offers a review of different initiatives being undertaken in countries and regions worldwide to assess progress towards gender equality. It provides examples of a range of innovative attempts to liberate data, build gender-sensitive supplementary indicators and make this information available to advocates who can use that powerful evidence to inform action. This initial review shows that, while the world has agreed on a visionary Millennium Development Goal for gender equality and women’s empowerment, there are many intersecting pathways that countries and communities from have to travel to move from rhetoric to reality.

Finally, it is important to note what this report will not do. While gender equality is central to all of the Millennium Development Goals, this report will not track progress on the gender dimensions of the targets. Box 3, p. 8, outlines the reasons for this. Furthermore, it is a critical task that lies ahead. Gender equality advocates have already taken on the challenge of bringing attention to this and UNIFEM will be supporting and joining these efforts. Likewise, achieving the MDGs is not simply a matter of tracking progress. Rather, it is dependent on developing innovative and sustainable approaches to the issues that the eight goals address. This report does not explore the ‘how’ of achieving gender equality, but women’s empowerment. However, it acknowledges that this is the fundamental question that must be answered for the goals to be achieved.

A GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S HUMAN RIGHTS

It is not by chance that the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs identify gender equality and women’s empowerment as central, cross-cutting goals. In absolute terms, the struggle for equality and respect; the terrible toll of the ongoing violence that women experience, in public and in private, in war and during peace. With this context in mind, this report recognizes the strength and importance of all women’s contributions to their country’s progress. It treats them as information to be used in an ongoing discussion, rather than as facts that close off debate.

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It is not by chance that the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs identify gender equality and women’s empowerment as central, cross-cutting goals. The work of gender equality advocates over many decades created a groundswell of programmes and plans of action at global, regional and national levels that committed countries to achieving gender equality. The commitments made in the UN world conferences of the 1990s — as well as subsequent UN meetings in early 2000 — are central to the vision embodied in the Millennium Declaration and in Goal 3 of the MDGs. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, December 2000, was a landmark event in the ongoing violence that women experience, in public and in private, in war and during peace. With this context in mind, this report recognizes the strength and importance of all women’s contributions to their country’s progress. It treats them as information to be used in an ongoing discussion, rather than as facts that close off debate.

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### INTRODUCTION

By the year 2000, governments committed themselves to meet basic needs:

- Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 85% of primary-school-age children
- Gender equality for girls in primary education
- Life expectancy not less than 60 years in any country
- Mortality rates of infants and children under 5 reduced by one-third of the 1990 level, or 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is less
- Maternal mortality reduced by one-half of the 1990 level
- Severe and moderate malnutrition among children under 5 reduced by half of the 1990 level
- Primary health care for all, reducing malaria mortality and morbidity by at least 20% from 1995 levels in at least 75% of affected countries
- Eradication or control of major diseases constituting global health problems
- Greater availability of affordable and adequate shelter for all

By the year 2005, governments promised to:

- Close the gender gap in primary and secondary education
- Remove all programme-related barriers to family planning
- Countries with intermediate mortality rates aim for infant rate below 50 deaths per 1,000 and under-5 rate below 60 deaths per 1,000 live births
- Countries with highest maternal mortality rates aim for a rate below 125 per 100,000 live births, and an under-5 mortality rate below 45 per 1,000
- Countries with highest mortality rates aim for a rate below 75 per 100,000 live births; those with intermediate rates aim for a rate below 60
- Countries with highest mortality rates to achieve life expectancy greater than 70; all other countries, a life expectancy greater than 75
- Support and strengthen national, regional and international adult literacy programmes with international cooperation in order to achieve a 50 percent improvement in the levels of adult literacy especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults
- Reaffirm the internationally agreed development goal of achieving universal primary education, in particular that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

**BOX 2: INTERNATIONALLY AGREED-UPON TARGETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Cairo (IFPD)</th>
<th>Copenhagen (WSSD)</th>
<th>Beijing (FPCW)</th>
<th>Beijing +5</th>
<th>Johannesburg (WSSD+5)</th>
<th>UN GA-Resolution on HIV/AIDS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governments reiterated the target for women in decision-making positions endorsed by ECONOMIC. 50% of decision-making positions to be held by women</td>
<td>POA8.21 POA36d PFA106i</td>
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<td>Eradicate absolute poverty by a date to be specified by each country</td>
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<td>Implement measures to increase capacities of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from HIV infection, principally through the provision of health care and health services, including sexual and reproductive health, and through prevention education that promotes gender equality</td>
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<td>A/RES/S-26/2 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>By the year 2000, governments committed themselves to meet basic needs:</td>
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<td>A/RES/S-26/2 61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 85% of primary-school-age children</td>
<td>POA11.6</td>
<td>POA36g PFA80b</td>
<td>POA8b</td>
<td>POA8.16</td>
<td>POA36f PFA106w</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality for girls in primary education</td>
<td>POA11.6</td>
<td>POA36g PFA80b</td>
<td>POA8b</td>
<td>POA8.16</td>
<td>POA36f PFA106w</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy not less than 60 years in any country</td>
<td>POA36b</td>
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<td>POA8.16</td>
<td>POA36c PFA106g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality reduced by one-half of the 1990 level</td>
<td>POA8.21</td>
<td>POA36d PFA106i</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary health care for all, reducing malaria mortality and morbidity by at least 20% from 1995 levels in at least 75% of affected countries</td>
<td>POA36g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eradication or control of major diseases constituting global health problems</td>
<td>POA36j</td>
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<td>Greater availability of affordable and adequate shelter for all</td>
<td>POA36j</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close the gender gap in primary and secondary education</td>
<td>POA11.6</td>
<td>POA36a PFA80b</td>
<td>POA8b</td>
<td>POA11.6</td>
<td>POA36a PFA80b</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remove all programme-related barriers to family planning</td>
<td>POA7.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Countries with intermediate mortality rates aim for infant rate below 50 deaths per 1,000 and under-5 rate below 60 deaths per 1,000 live births</td>
<td>POA8.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Countries with highest maternal mortality rates aim for a rate below 125 per 100,000 live births, those with intermediate rates aim for a rate below 100</td>
<td>POA8.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Countries with highest mortality rates to achieve life expectancy greater than 65; all other countries, a life expectancy greater than 70</td>
<td>POA8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Countries with highest mortality rates to achieve life expectancy greater than 70; all other countries, a life expectancy greater than 75</td>
<td>POA8.5</td>
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<td>Support and strengthen national, regional and international adult literacy programmes with international cooperation in order to achieve a 50 percent improvement in the levels of adult literacy especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaffirm the internationally agreed development goal of achieving universal primary education, in particular that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
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</table>
For UNIFEM, Goal 3 — gender equality and women’s empowerment — is the goal through which women’s perspectives must be incorporated into all of the other goals, including that of halving the number of people living on less than a $1 a day. If this goal is to be reached it is critical that the feminization of poverty, increasingly recognized by governments as well as international documents, receive systematic attention — especially in this era of globalization.

—Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Director, UNIFEM, 2002

## BOX 3: MAKING GENDER EQUALITY CENTRAL TO ALL THE MDGs

Just as the Beijing Platform for Action and other globally-agreed upon commitments have their greatest impact when taken up as tools for advocacy, so too efforts to implement and track progress on the MDGs will have the most impact when they are translated into locally relevant strategies and monitoring efforts.

This is where the real challenges and opportunities lie. It is essential that advocates for gender equality and women’s rights participate fully in shaping and influencing the strategies for achieving the MDGs at local and national levels.

What are the opportunities for ensuring that the MDGs reinforce commitments already made to women? Some ideas:

1. Ensure that national MDG reports take national commitments to women into account. More than 40 countries have already produced Millennium Development Goal Reports (MDGRs) and it is expected that most countries will do this on an annual basis. Thus far, the record of incorporating gender equality and women’s rights into the MDGs has not been encouraging, and women’s voices are notably lacking from most efforts. Women’s rights advocates must participate in the efforts to identify country-specific targets and indicators that will track progress in ways that both women and men can account. Some positive examples do exist. In the Viet Nam MDGR, the country used its National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women as the basis for identifying targets and indicators towards achievement of Goal 3 and thus included reduction in the rate of violence against women as a target.

2. Improve the data collection and analysis upon which MDG tracking is based. It is widely acknowledged that there are significant challenges related to the statistics and indicators that are available for tracking progress. In the poorest countries — but also in many others — the systems and skills needed to generate and analyse sex-disaggregated data are in short supply. In many countries, even where the data exists, it is not used. While national and local level monitoring are the only guarantee that a true picture of women’s achievements will emerge, there is still insufficient data to generate information that can be easily compared and contrasted. As research on the MDGs gets underway, the shortcomings of the data are even more apparent. It is absolutely essential that countries — especially poor countries — receive support to improve their ability to collect, produce and use gender-disaggregated data. Many efforts have been launched in this regard (see pp. 55-66), but a worldwide effort and local level advocacy is imperative if the analysis upon which MDG reports are based is to truly reflect progress towards gender equality.

3. Document and publicize success. While tracking progress has great value, it is even more important to track, implement and learn from all the innovative strategies developed by people and organizations the world over that actually bring countries closer to the goal of gender equality. Achieving the MDGs will require that these practices and innovations become common practice. Gender equality advocates have a key role to play in bringing these innovations into the mainstream and pressuring governments to ensure that knowledge about what works — and what does not — informs national and local level strategies to achieve the MDGs.

| CONTINUATION FROM PAGE 3 | men’s already made at the world conferences, the only IDT related to gender equality was one that called on governments to demonstrate “progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005.”

The eight Millennium Development Goals build on and expand the IDTs. The dates by which specified levels of progress for each of the goals are to be achieved are included in the accompanying 18 targets and 48 indicators (see Box 4, p.8-9). Unlike the IDTs, the MDGs represent a consensus among all the countries of the world, rather than just the OECD nations. Additionally, Goal 8 — “develop a global partnership for development” — is viewed as a promise by donor governments to take on substantive and specific responsibility for helping other countries achieve the goals.

As countries organize to track progress towards achieving the MDGs, there is an opportunity to re-energize gender equality initiatives by insisting on the centrality of Goal 3 and the Millennium Declaration. As a forthcoming World Bank report notes, “Because the MDGs are mutually reinforcing, progress towards one goal affects progress towards others. Success in many of the goals will have positive impacts on gender equality, just as progress toward gender equality will help other goals” (Carlsson and Valdivieso 2003). In this regard, it is absolutely essential to ensure that tracking progress towards all of the eight goals relies on sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. Many agencies and advocates for gender equality — including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and numerous academic and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — are producing reports that will contribute to understanding the gender dimensions of many of the goals and targets.

Growing interest in the MDGs also presents an opportunity to stimulate national and local dialogues about the way in which a country or community wants to achieve the goals. For instance, in the background paper produced by the Millennium Project Task Force for Goal 3, entitled “Promises to Keep,” the authors review different interpretations of gender equality:

The UN’s Human Development Report (1995) refers to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity, and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process).” (Grown et al. 2003:3)

Alongside the importance of debating Goal 3 and incorporating it into public programmes is the recognition that fulfilling it strictly within the confines of the MDGs presents certain problems. This complex goal has been encapsulated into a single target calling for the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education. preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. Education is important, but as the Beijing Platform for Action recognized, there are many other kinds of gender disparity that are equally important and must be addressed — disparity in the economy, in political life, in family life and in the law, among others.

Fortunately, the indicators for Goal 3 are somewhat broader than the target:

- the ratio of boys to girls in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- the ratio of literate women to men aged 15–24
- the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- the proportion of seats held by women in parliament

Thus achievement of the target for Goal 3 should be treated as a signpost in reaching the goal, not as a substitute for it, and the indicators can be used to fill in additional details. As discussed throughout this report, the empowerment of women does not just depend on the elimination of numerical gender disparities. It is possible to equalize the enrolment of boys and girls at a low level for both, a situation that empowers neither. Equality in deprivation does not represent a genuine fulfillment of Goal 3.
BOX 4: MDG GOALS, TARGETS AND INDICATORS

**Goal 1.** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

**Target 1.** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

**Indicators**
1. Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day (World Bank*)
2. Poverty gap ratio (incidence x depth of poverty) (World Bank)
3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption (World Bank)

**Target 2.** Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

**Indicators**
4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age (UNICEF, WHO)
5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption (FAO)

**Goal 2.** Achieve universal primary education

**Target 3.** Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

**Indicators** (UNESCO)
6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education, girls, boys, total
7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who are aged 5 (girls, boys, total)
8. Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds, women, men, total

**Goal 3.** Promote gender equality and empower women

**Target 4.** Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015

**Indicators** (UNESCO)
9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education (UNESCO)
10. Ratio of literate women to men of 15- to 24-year-olds (UNICEF, WHO)
11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (IL0)
12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (IPU)

**Goal 4.** Reduce child mortality

**Target 5.** Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

**Indicators**
13. Under-five mortality rate (UNICEF, WHO)
15. Proportion of 1-year-old children immunized against measles (UNICEF, WHO)

**Target 6.** Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

**Indicators**
16. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural (UNICEF, WHO)
17. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure (owned or rented) (HABITAT)
18. Proportion of slum dwellers (UNICEF, WHO)

**Goal 5.** Improve maternal health

**Target 7.** Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

**Indicators**
19. Maternal mortality ratio (UNICEF, WHO)
20. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (UNICEF, WHO)

**Goal 6.** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

**Target 8.** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

**Indicators**
21. mortality ratio (UNICEF, WHO)
22. Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment (UNICEF, WHO)
23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis (WHO)
24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS, WHO)

**Goal 7.** Ensure environmental sustainability

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

**Indicators**
25. Proportion of land area covered by forest (FAO)
26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area (UNEP, IUCN)
27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per $1 GDP (PPP) (IEA, UNSD, World Bank)
28. Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita) (UNFCCC, UNSD) and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons) (UNEP-Ozone Secretariat)
29. Proportion of population using solid fuels (UNICEF, WHO)
30. Proportion of people with access to clean drinking water (WHO)

**Goal 8.** Develop a global partnership for development

**Target 10.** By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

**Indicators**
31. Proportion of urban population with access to improved sanitation (UNICEF, WHO)
32. Proportion of households with access to adequate and safe drinking water (WHO)

**Goal 9.** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

**Target 11.** By 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

**Indicators**
33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD DAC donors’ gross national income (OECD)
34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocated ODA of OECD DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) (OECD)
35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD DAC donors that is tied (OECD)
36. ODA received in landlocked countries as proportion of their GNIs (OECD)
37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs (OECD)

**Market Access**
38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duties (UNCTAD) (not yet available)
39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries (UNCTAD) (not yet available)
40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP (OECD)
41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity (OECD, WTO) (not yet available)

**Debt Sustainability**
42. Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) (IMF, World Bank) (see indicator 45 below)
43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative (IMF, World Bank)
44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services (IMF, World Bank)

**Target 16.** In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

**Indicator**
45. Unemployment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds, each sex and total (ILO)

**Target 17.** In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

**Indicator**
46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis (WHO)

**Target 18.** In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

**Indicators**
47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population (ITU)
48. Personal computers in use per 100 population (ITU) and Internet users per 100 population (ITU)

* Agencies and organizations listed in parentheses provided the data to the MDG database.