

# Statistics in development cooperation - Millennium Development Goals

Statistics Explained

This article is part of a [set of background articles](#) providing an 'outline of knowledge' of international statistical cooperation between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and developing countries, for non-statisticians needing to deal with statistics in development programmes and projects. The outline serves as an entry point and introduction to the much more detailed [Eurostat](#) publication 'Guide to statistics in European Commission development cooperation', downloadable in [PDF format](#) in English, French and Spanish (further down referred to as 'theGuide').

Many developing countries have weak statistical systems and mechanisms for measuring results. Good, reliable statistics are essential for measuring progress in reaching development goals and provide essential information about the effectiveness of policies and programmes. They help governments improve their policies and to be transparent and accountable about the delivery of development results. Reliable statistics are a key element towards better measurement, monitoring and management of the results of [development assistance](#).

The [Millennium Development Goals \(MDG\)](#) provide the agreed overall aims of development policy. They form a framework for development partners to work coherently towards common goals. The progress towards these goals is assessed through 21 quantifiable targets that are to be reached by 2015. The MDG brought measurement of outcomes and comparison of these across countries into the centre of development policy and practice. Making these measurements and drawing valid comparisons and conclusions are considerable challenges to statistics in developing countries. The [UN](#) is currently working with governments, civil society and other partners to build on the momentum generated by the MDGs and carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda. The Post-2015 Agenda will reflect new development challenges and is linked to the work to design [sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#), as agreed at the UN 'Rio+20' Conference.



## What are the specificities of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs?

The [Millennium Declaration](#) : 192 UN Member States and 23 international organisations committed themselves to work together to achieve 8 human development goals

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): provide the overall aims of development policy
- 21 quantifiable targets are to be reached by 2015: enable assessment of the progress towards the MDGs

The Millennium Declaration brings measurement of outcomes and comparison of these across countries into the centre of development policy and practice.

### Guide examples and practical information

- B.1.1 *Millennium Development Goals*

## How are the MDG indicators defined?

- [60 linked statistical indicators](#) were defined to regularly monitor the progress at national level and give information on the degree of countries' progress towards the targets
- These indicators were agreed by the [Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators](#) , which includes United Nations, [ILO](#) , [World Bank](#) , [IMF](#) , [OECD-DAC](#) , Eurostat
- Some indicators are not applicable to all countries (e.g. malaria); others are only meaningful for regional and global monitoring (e.g. fish stocks, species in extinction)
- The demands for measurement of the MDGs contributed to a large extent to the emergence of initiatives such as [Managing for Development Results](#) , the [Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness](#) and the [Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics](#)

Making the measurements to inform the MDG targets, drawing valid comparisons and conclusions are considerable challenges to statistics in developing countries.

### Guide examples and practical information

- B.4.1 *Millennium Development Goals and Post-MDG Targets and Indicators*
- Box 4.1 *Millennium Development Goals, targets and indicators*
- Box 4.2 *Building a statistical indicator of poverty*

## How does the European Commission take the MDG indicators into account in its development cooperation?

The [European Consensus on Development](#) states:

- "95. *MDG-related performance indicators will be strengthened to better link sector and budget support to MDG progress and to ensure adequate funding for health and education. [ ... ]*"
- "115. *The Community will consistently use an approach based on results and performance indicators. Increasingly, conditionality is evolving towards the concept of a 'contract' based on negotiated mutual commitments formulated in terms of results ."*

The European Commission " [Guidelines for the use of indicators in country strategy papers](#) ":

- defined basic principles for the definition and use of indicators;

- defined key poverty indicators, mostly drawn from the 60 MDG indicators;
- these indicators were selected on the basis of their inclusion in [poverty reduction strategy papers \(PRSPs\)](#) , their use by other donors and data availability.

#### Guide examples and practical information

- [B.3.4 Eurostat Indicators Database](#)
- [Box 3.7 Comparison of sets of key indicators](#)

#### Other articles

- [International statistical cooperation](#) (online publication)
- [Statistics in development cooperation](#) (online publication to which this article belongs)

#### Dedicated section

- [International statistical cooperation](#)

#### Publications

- [Guide to Statistics in European Commission Development Co-operation](#)

#### External links

- **Asian Development Bank** : [Administrative data sources for compiling Millennium Development Goals and related indicators](#)
- **EuropeAid** : [The role and use of performance measurement indicators](#)
- **International Labour Organization** : [Guide to the new Millennium Development Goals Employment indicators: including the full decent work indicator set](#)
- **United Nations** :
  - [Millennium Development Goals](#)
    - [Reports on MDG targets and the implementation of the Millennium Declaration](#)
    - [The Millennium Development Goals Report and the Progress Charts](#)
    - [United Nations Economic Commission for Africa – African Centre for Statistics: Handbook on data sources and estimation of development indicators in African countries – Millennium Development Goals](#)
    - [United Nations Statistics Division: Indicators for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals](#)
    - [United Nations Statistics Division: Millennium Development Goals data](#)
  - **World Bank** : [Measuring results: Improving National Statistics in IDA countries](#)

General and regional statistics