

## Chapter I

# The MDGs: legacies and lessons of the global development agenda

### Summary

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the culmination of over a decade of political mobilizations and renewed thinking about the concept of development, away from the narrow orthodoxy centred on economic growth. Concerted efforts at the international, national and subnational levels to achieve them brought about significant development progress.
- The MDGs had significant influence, evolving into (i) a framework for development cooperation and a point of reference for the programmatic activities of multilateral institutions and regional development banks; (ii) a widely shared, multi-stakeholder effort; (iii) a powerful tool for advocacy and political mobilization around issues that are essential to people; and (iv) a point of reference to guide national policies towards priority development issues.
- The MDG monitoring framework helped to improve statistical capacity and data availability, prompted public support and funding for development, and informed development policy decision-making.
- While the MDG targets were formulated as global targets to be achieved through the combined effect of progress in all countries, many countries adapted their goals, benchmarks, indicators, and targets on the basis of specific national conditions.
- Going forward, countries will build on the foundation laid by the MDGs in the process of adapting the new set of internationally agreed development goals—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Learning from the implementation of policies to reach the MDGs will help to improve the integration of the SDGs into national development planning and financing frameworks.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of programmes will be critical to ensuring policy coherence and effectiveness in the delivery of basic services. This effort needs to be rooted in good governance, community involvement and decentralization, periodic assessments, and adequate use of statistical capacity and available data.

### Introduction

The launching of the Millennium Development Goals at the dawn of this century ushered in one of the most important initiatives undertaken by the United Nations. It strengthened the connection between the fundamental values and principles of the United Nations and actual development efforts by Member States. It also enhanced the leading role of the United Nations in global development thinking and practice.

**Important lessons can be drawn from the period after adoption of the MDGs that will support implementation of the SDGs...**

With the MDG deadline having arrived in 2015, the world is now ready to embrace the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, along with the SDGs, was launched at the seventieth session of the General Assembly in September 2015.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore incumbent upon the United Nations to draw policy lessons learned during the period when the MDGs were implemented (2000-2015) in order to support the implementation of the SDGs. This *Survey* aims at contributing to this endeavour.

Numerous reports document and provide in-depth analyses of the MDGs. For example, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (United Nations, 2015a) and the *MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015* (United Nations, 2015b) are examples of the most recent reports that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations system have issued on an annual basis to monitor progress, identify implementation gaps and make recommendations for achieving the MDGs. The *Global Monitoring Report*, a joint publication of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, has provided yearly in-depth analysis of particular MDG-related areas. Further, a large number of reports have focused on progress in achieving the MDGs in individual regions, countries and thematic areas. MDG reports have been produced periodically in countries from around 2004, since the initial stock of indicators used to monitor progress was taken. As of 2013, over 400 of these country reports had been prepared (United Nations Development Group, 2013) and more are expected to be produced as the period covered by the MDGs draws to a close. There are many other reports as well, written by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society organizations, academics, and many others.

**...especially with regard to key policies and strategies that contributed to making progress towards the MDGs**

This *World Economic and Social Survey* does not aim at conducting an exhaustive assessment of the MDGs experience; nor does it aim at discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs (e.g., issues of omissions, benchmarks and indicators, targets, universality or lack thereof, and so forth). This *Survey* is not intended to take stock of what countries have achieved either. Instead, the *Survey* reviews key policies and strategies adopted during the course of implementation of the MDGs, which may have contributed to making progress towards the goals, irrespective of whether these policies were explicitly designed to reach specific goals and targets. The review of national policies is intended to draw lessons that can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The focus of the *Survey* is on implementation issues at the national level, although the critical role of global efforts in facilitating implementation is well acknowledged. For this purpose, the *Survey* engages primarily in a meta-analysis—that is, an analysis of other analyses and assessments already available. The intention is to understand the way specific policies and programmes helped to advance the MDGs and to provide analysis of overlaps and instances that demonstrate the benefit of policy coherence and improved policy coordination.

Lessons drawn from the MDGs will assist Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The *Survey* is not aimed at prescribing a full range of policies and strategies in this regard. Those policies can be developed only by Member States themselves in the light of their own specific conditions.

## The origin of the MDGs

The adoption of the MDGs by the consensus reached by 193 heads of State and Government at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 follows over a decade

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

of worldwide political mobilization and a rich intellectual debate seeking to broaden the concept of development. It came in sharp contrast to the economic orthodoxy imposed by the Washington Consensus in the 1980s and 1990s. A decade of international conferences in the 1990s renewed the commitment of the United Nations to international development.

## The United Nations commitment to international development

Development is one of the three pillars of work in the United Nations, along with peace and security and human rights. The very structure of the United Nations, specifically the importance of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), underlines the importance of the development pillar. Soon after its foundation, the United Nations gave dedicated attention to global development through the publication of three major reports: *National and International Measures for Full Employment* (United Nations, Department of Economic Affairs, 1949); *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries: Report by a Group of Experts Appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations* (United Nations, 1951a); and *Measures for International Economic Stability* (United Nations, 1951b). These reports reflected the recognition that developing countries needed to raise savings, investment and the rate of economic growth (Jolly, 2005).

By the 1960s, United Nations development thinking had already started to extend beyond the narrow confines of economic growth. Pursuant to the designation by the General Assembly of the 1960s as the First United Nations Development Decade,<sup>2</sup> the United Nations published, in 1962, a report of the Secretary-General entitled *The United Nations development decade: proposals for action* (United Nations, 1962). This report suggested directions for development efforts. In its foreword, then Secretary-General U Thant declared that “[d]evelopment is not just economic growth, it is growth plus change”. The report also recognized the advice of ECOSOC, which exhorted to avoid putting “overriding and disproportionate emphasis” on “the more material aspects of growth” (United Nations, 1962, p. v). ECOSOC cautioned that “[h]uman rights may be submerged and human beings seen only as instruments of production, rather than as free entities for whose welfare and cultural advance the increased production is intended”, and thus that “[t]he end may be forgotten in the preoccupation with the means” (United Nations, 1962, pp. 11; Jolly, 2005, p. 53). The first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Geneva in 1964, played an important role in advancing the development thinking of the United Nations.

In the 1970s, the International Labour Organization (ILO) pioneered the concept of meeting “basic needs” as the fundamental goal of development, to be achieved through a focus on employment. These ideas were put forward formally in the resolutions adopted by the World Employment Conference in 1976. They were also adopted by the World Bank and led to the formulation of the “redistribution with growth” model.

The 1970s also saw the first spate of international conferences focused on particular development issues, including the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), the World Food Conference (Rome, 1974), the World Population Conference (Bucharest, 1974), the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, 1976) and United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (Vienna, 1979). The World Conference of the International Women’s

**International development thinking in the United Nations has evolved over time from a focus on economic growth to the basic needs approach...**

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly Resolution 1710 (XVI) of 19 December 1961.

Year (Mexico City, 1975) led to the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Later on 18 December 1979, the General Assembly adopted resolution 34/180 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>3</sup>

However, the basic-needs approach to development receded as the most prominent approach shortly thereafter. Following the debt crises and recessions in the early 1980s, the World Bank and the IMF adopted a programme of “structural adjustment”, focused on curbing inflation, reducing deficits and restoring macroeconomic balance. The countries of Latin America and Africa in particular were subjects of structural adjustment programmes. While successful to some extent in containing inflation and cutting deficits, these programmes also resulted in a “lost decade of development” for developing countries in the two developing regions.

Alarmed by the adverse consequences of structural adjustment policies, various United Nations organizations put forward ideas to protect employment and social spending from austerity policies. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), for example, published a volume on the impact of structural adjustment programmes and argued for “adjustment with a human face” (Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart, 1987). Along similar lines, the Council of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) adopted, on 10 April 1989, the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP). The General Assembly took note of the AAF-SAP with interest in its resolution 44/24 of 17 November 1989.

Meanwhile, supported by the theoretical work of Amartya Sen (1982, 1985, 1989, 1999), there was a further shift during the 1970s and the 1980s in the thinking about development and its purpose. Sen showed that what is important for human well-being is not monetary income per se, but rather the various *functions* that a person may wish to perform and engage in. This in turn depends on a person’s *capability*, which hinges not on monetary income alone, but on a wider array of social arrangements and factors. This framework led to two important changes in development thinking. First, it encouraged a move away from the narrow focus on income—which can be only an indirect enabler—to more direct measures of human welfare. Second, it also encouraged a multidimensional view of human welfare rather than a unidimensional focus on income. These ideas coalesced in the concept of human development, disseminated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Human Development Reports launched in 1990. The reports included the Human Development Index (HDI) covering life expectancy, education and income as well as country rankings according to this index. Although this represented an important step forward towards multidimensionality and direct measures of human welfare, the Index remained a partial measure. There was therefore an urge to move still further along in this direction.

A series of United Nations conferences held in the 1990s brought key social development concerns and the demands of numerous social movements to the fore. International conferences included the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990); the World Summit for Children (New York, 1990); the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992), which adopted Agenda 21 (United Nations, 1993)<sup>4</sup> and the Rio Declaration on Environment

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 1, annex II: Agenda 21.

...and later incorporated  
the ideas of capabilities  
and multidimensional  
human welfare

and Development (ibid.);<sup>5</sup> the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

## Formulation of the international development goals

Within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>6</sup> engaged in a reflection exercise about the direction of official development assistance (ODA) in the mid-1990s, in the context of the United Nations renewed commitment to international development. At that time, ODA was largely focussed on supporting countries in transition. In May 1996, the DAC published the document entitled “Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the contribution of development co-operation” (OECD, 1996), which assembled a short list of the goals and targets adopted in the United Nations international conferences, particularly in the areas of poverty, education, health, gender, environment and governance. The document contained six quantitative goals: (i) poverty reduction by half by 2015; (ii) universal primary education; (iii) gender equality; (iv) infant mortality reduction by two thirds and maternal mortality reduction by three fourths; (v) access to primary health care and reproductive health services; and (vi) reversing the loss of environmental resources. These came to be known as the international development goals (IDGs) (Manning, 2009).

The IDGs gained support in the development community as well as among leading international organizations. The OECD, the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF initiated a process of cooperation at the secretariat level with a view to agreeing on indicators for monitoring progress towards the IDGs. In 1998, the Group of Eight (G8), at its twenty-fourth Summit in Birmingham, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, supported the IDGs despite certain reservations on the part of some of its members.

The cooperation among the OECD, the United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank and the IMF led to a set of 7 IDGs with 21 indicators. The goals had already been included in box 6.2 of the UNDP *Human Development Report 1997* (United Nations Development Programme, 1997a), as well as in the World Bank’s *World Development Indicators* (from 1998 onward). The World Bank and the IMF came to see the relevance of the IDGs for resolving the debt problems of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), as reflected in the World Bank-IMF paper entitled “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative: strengthening the link between debt relief and poverty reduction” (International Monetary Fund and International Development Association, 1999).

In 1999, United Nations organizations adopted a revised set of guidelines for the production of common country assessments and for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which included among their 40 indicators most of the 21 indicators that had emerged from the DAC-led process. The outcome of this cooperation was made public in the June 2000 report entitled “A better world for all: progress towards the international development goals” (International Monetary Fund, Organization for

**The OECD Development Assistance Committee’s six international development goals provided a basis for the MDGs...**

**...which expanded to 7 goals with 21 indicators with collaboration from the United Nations, the World Bank and the IMF**

**In June 2000, the United Nations organizations launched a special report that contained 40 development indicators**

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>6</sup> The DAC became part of the OECD by ministerial resolution on 23 July 1961. It is a unique international forum for many of the largest funders of aid, including the 29 Committee members. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) participate as observers.

Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations and World Bank Group, 2000). This report was launched by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly held in Geneva from 26 June to 1 July 2000, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world”.

## The United Nations Millennium Declaration and the formulation of the MDGs

Preparations for the Millennium Summit, to be held in September 2000, were marked by the significant propulsion of unprecedented political mobilizations in the 1990s and by the end of the cold war. The international development community was ready to embrace a longer view and ponder long-term development goals. These were the times for refocusing attention and shifting the enormous quantities of resources that had been channelled towards armaments in the direction of activities for peaceful development.

On 27 March 2000, the report of the Secretary-General entitled “We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century” (United Nations, General Assembly, 2000), provided the foundations for the Millennium Declaration to be adopted at the Summit. The report was expansive in laying out the new challenges of the new century, focusing on globalization and governance, freedom from want, freedom from fear, sustaining our future and renewing the United Nations. Section VII of the report presented, for consideration by the Summit, a compilation of values and priorities (including initiatives of the Secretary-General) with regard to poverty reduction, peace and security, the environment and strengthening of the United Nations.

The Millennium Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000. It followed the expansiveness of the “We the peoples” report and included sections on values and principles; peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; protecting our common environment; human rights; democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; meeting the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the United Nations. The section on development and poverty eradication contained the following list of time-bound targets:

- To halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world’s people whose income is less than a dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water;
- To ensure that, by the same date, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education;
- By the same date, to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters and mortality of children under the age of five by two thirds of their current rates;
- To have by then halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity;
- To provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS;
- By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the “Cities without Slums” initiative.

**The Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 and contained the basis for the MDGs**

The final formulation of the MDGs was the result of further refinement in the technical formulation of these time-bound targets and the selection of indicators that would facilitate equally unprecedented efforts for monitoring progress. Additional targets and indicators were added following the outcome of the World Summit held on 14-16 September 2005 for issues related to reproductive health, access to HIV/AIDS treatment and loss of biodiversity. Also, some targets were revised (e.g., the employment target) or simply reallocated (e.g., the safe drinking water target). When the revisions were completed, the MDG framework (effective from January 2008) contained 8 goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators (see annex).

The MDGs were intended as global targets in the sense that they would be achieved through the combined effect of progress in all countries. The formulation of the goals focused on developing countries. MDGs 1-6 (poverty and hunger; universal primary education; gender equality and empowerment of women; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) and targets B and C of MDG 7 (sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and improvement in the lives of slum dwellers) encompassed the human development challenges that mostly developing countries were facing at the time. For MDG 8, developed countries pledged a global partnership to support efforts in developing countries. Targets A and B of MDG 7 were the exception; they were essentially environmental targets set for all countries.

**The MDGs were refined into their final formulation following the World Summit of September 2005...**

**...aiming at global targets, although the formulation focused on developing countries for most goals**

## Legacies of fifteen years of efforts to achieve the MDGs

Concerted efforts at the international, national and subnational levels brought about significant progress towards achieving the MDGs between 2000 and 2015.<sup>7</sup> Globally, the goals on poverty reduction and improved drinking water were reached five years ahead of schedule. Major progress has also been made with respect to primary education and in the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Other MDG targets were not met. Shortfalls remain in achieving the targets for reducing hunger and child and maternal mortality, and improving gender equality and environmental sustainability. Large gaps also remain in the delivery on the global partnership commitments, particularly with regard to ODA. In addition, progress has been uneven across countries, among different population groups, and particularly among regions within countries. Completing the targets set by the MDGs will be among the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Efforts at all levels have resulted in significant progress towards MDG achievement...**

Notwithstanding the remaining challenges, the world has climbed higher on the development ladder over the past fifteen years. At the same time, the global development agenda crystallized in the MDGs has been important for development thinking and practice, especially in relation to the following seven areas:

First, the formulation of the MDGs shifted the emphasis from economic growth to a broader development agenda prioritizing issues related to poverty reduction, education, health and gender, among others. Greater coherence between economic and social policies became essential to ensuring inclusive and equitable economic growth. By 2010, the

**...and, at the same time, the MDGs have a number of other broader legacies**

<sup>7</sup> See *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* for the official data regarding the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (United Nations, 2015a).

international community considered sustained, inclusive and equitable growth a key driver for achieving the MDGs.<sup>8</sup>

Second, the MDGs became a framework for development cooperation and a point of reference for the programmatic activities of multilateral institutions (including the World Bank and the IMF) and regional development banks.

Third, the MDGs energized the intergovernmental process for development. The creation of a global partnership for development in MDG 8 was intended to create an enabling international environment of cooperation towards the achievement of MDG targets. The Global Partnership resulted in concrete efforts to improve the global trading and financial system, debt sustainability in countries that needed debt relief, access to affordable essential drugs, and improved access to new technologies. It also addressed the special needs of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small-island developing States. Progress in all these areas is reported in the *MDG Gap Task Force Report 2015* (United Nations, 2015b).

Fourth, the MDGs became a point of reference to guide national policies towards priority development issues.

Fifth, at the country level, the MDGs energized not only national Governments and organizations associated with them, but many non-State and non-governmental actors as well. Many non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, foundations and other philanthropic entities, and even individuals, played important roles in the adoption of the MDGs at the country level, and in further contributing to progress towards achieving these goals. Many business organizations, including multinational corporations and other private companies, also joined the MDG efforts in various ways. The MDGs thus became a widely shared, multi-stakeholder effort.

Sixth, the MDGs became a powerful tool for advocacy and political mobilization around issues that are essential to people.

Seventh, the MDG monitoring framework helped to improve statistical capacity and data availability, prompted public support and funding for development, and informed development policy decision-making.

Some of the legacies of the MDGs that are most pertinent for implementation of development goals at the country level are discussed in more length in the remainder of this section.

### National adoption as the basis for implementation<sup>9</sup>

After adoption of the MDGs by the General Assembly, it took some time for the goals to gain momentum at the country level. Between the endorsement of the Millennium Declaration and around the mid-2000s, the international development system and national Governments considered ways to start actively supporting and participating in the adoption and adaptation of the MDGs in national policy frameworks. Advocacy and awareness were

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, General Assembly resolution 65/10 of 23 November 2010 (United Nations, General Assembly (2010)).

<sup>9</sup> This and the next subsections draw extensively from a review of MDG progress reports for 40 focus countries. The sample of countries was defined on the basis of a country ranking per MDG indicator (see Sánchez, Julca and Winkel (2015a, annex)). All United Nations developing-country groups are represented. Only those reports that provided concrete examples presented in this chapter are explicitly referenced in the text. All reports consulted are listed in the bibliography.

well underway to rally political and public support for the goals, but they were mostly concentrated at the international level. Translating global targets into actual programmes at the country level took much longer.

Early steps to address the MDGs in the context of national development plans and strategies were also being taken at the same time in a number of countries (e.g., Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Senegal and United Republic of Tanzania) (Alarcón, 2003). However, the adoption of the MDGs at the country level increasingly gained traction only in the mid-2000s through a mobilization effort from United Nations agencies working with national Governments and other stakeholders, organized around the preparation of the first national MDG progress reports.

Prompted by political leadership, wide consultation efforts succeeded in engaging a variety of stakeholders in order to build national consensus and forge partnerships and political commitment towards the MDGs, leading to a process of internalizing, localizing or contextualizing the MDGs.

Contextualizing the MDGs was necessary for balancing global ambitions with context-specific realism and to facilitate alignment of MDGs with national development frameworks. Some countries added their own ninth MDG or reformulated the targets, indicators and benchmark years to reflect national realities. For example, Afghanistan adopted the goal of enhancing security; Albania and Mongolia both adopted goals on human rights and democratic governance; Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic adopted goals to remove unexploded explosive weapons, especially land mines. Afghanistan was facing challenges in reducing the maternal mortality ratio, so the Government added targets for reducing high fertility rates and for increasing the proportion of women receiving antenatal care. Pakistan, as part of the effort to improve gender equality, particularly in education, adopted a target for youth literacy and gender parity. A number of countries also added national targets to MDG 3—on combating domestic violence, for example (Albania, Armenia, Tajikistan, and Colombia). Other countries (Botswana, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) expanded their targets for education to include levels beyond primary education (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a). Afghanistan signed the Millennium Declaration in 2004, not 2000, because of the country's long-standing conflict that predated the MDGs, thus extending the period to implement the goals. Given the breadth of the MDG targets as well as the efforts required to meet them, some countries decided to focus efforts on particular goals.<sup>10</sup>

In a number of countries, reforms to legislation were a fundamental vehicle for reaching specific MDG targets. In Afghanistan, for example, the adoption of the MDGs was accompanied by the removal of discriminatory laws against women. Bangladesh's Government also enacted two laws in the early 2000s to address the complex problem of violence against women. Pakistan has introduced a series of new laws pertaining to health care, employment, and harassment and domestic violence. In Morocco, the Family Code was changed to raise the age of marriage and issues of property sharing and inheritance were also addressed. These initial changes to legislation were critical to improving the development outlook of key population groups. For example, changes in the legal age of marriage in Ethiopia contributed to significant increases in economic participation by women and girls 15-24 years old (Hallward-Driemeier and Gajigo, 2013). Existing laws were revised too. The Government of Sri Lanka had addressed women's participation in the

**National adoption of the MDGs was an important factor in implementation and was supported through United Nations mobilization efforts**

**Localizing, contextualizing and legislation were all important factors in aligning the MDGs with national and local development frameworks**

<sup>10</sup> For country examples, see Sánchez, Julca and Winkel (2015a).

labour market by passing maternity protection laws beginning in 1992. These laws were revised and expanded in 2002 and later in 2011 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013a). There have also been constitutional amendments in a number of countries, as early as 2001, in order to increase women's participation in parliament or the number of seats reserved for women in proportion to parliamentary representation. MDG progress reports and UNDP (2010b) show that Bangladesh, Burundi, Ghana, Rwanda and Kyrgyzstan, among others, have amended their constitutions in that regard.

### A point of reference for policy formulation

While the MDGs and their related targets were not intended to become planning targets at the national and local levels, they were reflected in most poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) as a precondition for securing loans from the World Bank and the IMF.

**MDGs began to feature in PRSPs and other national development plans; for many countries this did not occur immediately after adoption**

A review of 22 PRSPs—15 of which were prepared between 2005 and 2007 and 1 (Rwanda) in 2008—indicates that almost all of them expressed a commitment to the MDGs (Fukuda-Parr, 2010). By 2008, however, only 2 countries (Cambodia and Malawi) had taken concrete steps towards adapting the MDGs and integrating them as planning targets. More decisive steps were taken towards local adaptation of the MDGs after 2008. In 2010, Heads of State and Government adopted a General Assembly resolution to reaffirm their increased efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs (Sánchez, Julca and Winkel, 2015a).

The MDGs were also reflected in other programming instruments. Afghanistan adopted its Vision 2020 for meeting most MDGs after broad consultations and international endorsement. In Botswana, the seven pillars of their Vision 2016 plan as well as the 2010-2016 National Development Plan matched the MDGs (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a). Similarly, the 7<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan, covering 2010 through 2015, became the focal document detailing how the Lao People's Democratic Republic aimed to achieve the MDGs (World Bank, 2010a).

Some national development strategies set more ambitious goals than the MDGs. India's 11<sup>th</sup> National Plan (2008-2012), for example, contained 27 monitorable targets, many of which are consistent with, or even more ambitious than the MDGs. This is also the case in Bhutan and Thailand (United Nations Development Programme, 2010a).

Development plans of many countries included targets that do not directly match those of the MDGs but whose achievement helped to drive MDG progress. Bhutan's Ninth Five Year Plan (2003-2008), for example, emphasized the need to improve the overall nutritional status of the population. The sectoral policy of this plan specifically identified a target for reducing protein-energy malnutrition in children under five and eliminating micronutrient deficiencies by 2007. These aspirations have contributed to making progress in reducing under-five mortality.

**Some countries added MDG targets to existing development plans or found other means of integrating the MDGs into domestic operations...**

Adding MDG targets to existing programmes guided national policies towards priority development goals. Zambia and Zimbabwe adopted MDG 6 targets related to HIV/AIDS into existing programmes. Both countries had programmes in place to combat the epidemic since 1986. The partnerships promoted through the development implementation process after 2000 helped to catalyse progress through existing frameworks by channelling resources into already operational but underfunded programmes. Ethiopia's integration of MDGs into its agricultural development-led industrialization strategy is another important example of incorporating targets into existing plans. This country's efforts to modernize

the agricultural system had important effects on poverty alleviation, employment and food security (Ethiopia, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2005).

A recent review of national development strategies in fifty countries by Seyedsayamdost (2014) corroborates these observations. One of the key findings is that thirty two of the development plans under review have either adopted the MDGs as planning and monitoring tools or “localized” them by changing the target date towards specific goals and targets and integrated them in subnational planning. PRSP countries were found more likely to have aligned their national plans with the MDGs. Nevertheless, a discouraging finding of the study is the weak connection between planning and implementation, as MDG alignment of national strategies has not necessarily translated into greater pro-poor or MDG-oriented policies. In fact, the study found that countries that have not integrated MDGs into their national plans were just as likely to allocate government funds to the social sectors as the MDG aligners.

The apparent disconnection between development goals (including the MDGs) and government spending is a clear illustration of an outstanding challenge to match development aspirations and the budgetary framework.

### The MDG monitoring framework

One of the most important contributions of the MDGs was in the area of statistics. MDG monitoring improved the availability of internationally comparable data and indicators, improved cooperation and coordination within Governments, helped to improve statistical standardization and information systems, and demonstrated the importance of reporting on progress.

The United Nations and the international community also took major steps to facilitate the implementation of the MDGs through a strong, transparent framework to monitor progress. The MDG monitoring framework helped to improve statistical capacity and data availability, generated information that prompted public support and funding for development, and guided development policy decision-making.

The United Nations Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators (IAEG-MDG), established in 2002 and consisting of international agencies, regional organizations and national statistical offices, has been responsible for the global and regional monitoring of progress towards achieving the MDGs. As mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), the IAEG-MDG helped to improve data and methodologies for the monitoring of the MDGs and define priorities and strategies to support countries in data collection, analysis and reporting on MDGs. The IAEG-MDG has worked efficiently since its creation to ensure that MDG monitoring is firmly grounded in statistically sound principles and that the latest and most reliable data from official statistical sources are available (United Nations, 2014).

The international statistical community has also supported national authorities in their undertaking of household surveys which have proliferated on a more regular basis since the MDGs were adopted.<sup>11</sup> These surveys have enabled developing countries to produce statistically sound and internationally comparable estimates on most MDG indicators.

**...although planning and implementation were not always well coordinated**

**The MDGs made important contributions to improving statistical monitoring, cooperation, dissemination and comparability**

<sup>11</sup> Examples of these surveys include Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), International Comparisons Programmes, and Living Standard Measurement Surveys (LSMS).

**There have also been important efforts for improving statistical capacities across many countries**

They have been one of the primary sources of data for monitoring MDG progress (Chen and others, 2013).

There have been important initiatives to support countries in assessing their statistical capacities towards the formulation of national strategies for the development of statistics. One of the most prominent of these initiatives is the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics conducted by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21). A significant number of developing countries have undergone these assessments and the vast majority of them are currently implementing or designing a strategy (PARIS21, 2014).

In addition, the regional commissions played an active role in strengthening the statistical capacity of Member States for MDG monitoring. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) adopted the MDG Statistical Programme, geared towards statistical development, statistical conciliation, strengthening monitoring capacities, and regional monitoring of MDG indicators. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) held numerous workshops, including in Baku, Bishkek and Tirana, to help member organizations generate and prepare human development indices. In May 2011, the African Centre for Statistics of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) published the “Handbook on data sources and estimation of development indicators in African countries: Millennium Development Goals” (United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). On 6 September 2010, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) issued a report on Millennium Development Goals and gender indicators (United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2010), highlighting the gender dimension of MDG-related progress.

As a result, data availability for the majority of the internationally monitored MDG indicators has improved. An analysis of a subset of 22 MDG indicators showed that the number of developing countries that had two or more data points for at least 16 of those indicators rose from 4 countries in 2003 to 129 countries in 2013. For instance, about half of the countries in developing regions had at least one data point available to measure skilled attendance at birth accurately in 1990-1994, whereas 90 per cent of those countries had this type of data available by 2005-2009 (United Nations, 2014a, p. 7).

Availability of nationally generated data also improved. In Zimbabwe, for example, while initial data to assess the prevalence of HIV/AIDS for the first MDG progress report came from UNAIDS, data on HIV/AIDS are now collected by the Zimbabwe Democratic Health Survey (ZDHS), the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MoHCW) and the National AIDS Council. Similarly, collaborations between ministries have shown to be effective in Zambia’s measurements of HIV/AIDS related issues with data quality rated as strong. The Central Statistical Office and the Central Board of Health undertook the data collection in collaboration with the administration of ZDHS. In Cambodia, the implementation of MDG monitoring has facilitated the development of common statistical standards on core indicators across the national statistical system. A repository for development indicators and the development of a metadata handbook have been established to further promote agreed standards and to create greater transparency for users of the data. In Bangladesh, a central data repository for the monitoring of MDGs has been created based on a Database Management System. In 2003, the Albanian Parliament passed a resolution encouraging all stakeholders to measure and monitor progress through national monitoring and evaluation systems. Albania was among the first countries to develop subnational MDG

targets and indicators with the aim of using this information for planning and developing regional strategies.

Because statistical capacity and data availability have improved considerably, MDG progress reporting has become a well-established practice at the country, regional and international levels, as noted above. There have also been National Voluntary Presentations of various countries to ECOSOC on their progress towards internationally agreed goals, including the MDGs. Numerous reports related to individual MDGs and targets, such as the Global AIDS Response Progress Reports (GARPR) have been produced at the country level by national organizations in collaboration with UNAIDS to detail countries' progress in combating HIV/AIDS.<sup>12</sup>

Countries have also made efforts to introduce systems of reporting to national authorities. In Kenya, the Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, has been involved in publishing needs assessments and costing reports as well as MDG status reports. A parliamentary caucus has also been organized to monitor progress at the constituency level. In Nigeria, a secretariat that reports to the President was established to monitor and report on the management of funds allocated to MDG-related programmes, while a standing committee on the MDGs was created in the Lower House (of Parliament) to produce oversight reports (Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Millennium Campaign, 2010). In the Philippines, government agencies involved in MDG-related projects have been required to submit annual reports on allocations and spending and the accomplishments made for the implementation of programmes and projects for the MDGs. The National Economic and Development Authority consolidates the reports to produce information about the Government's financial investment in the MDGs (Morales-Capones, 2013). An important factor to note is that the Philippines already had a well-functioning statistical system in place, which was able to "institutionalize MDGs as a framework for statistical coordination and generation across stakeholders for compiling data on different levels" (Reyes and Abejo, 2006, cited in Chen and others, 2013, p. 12).

Next to helping develop statistical capacity and data availability, MDG monitoring has also generated public support and funding for development and informed development policy decision-making. For example, funding for HIV/AIDS programmes had more than tripled in 2014 compared to a decade ago, and about ten million people living with HIV/AIDS accessed antiretroviral treatment in 2012. This mobilization of funds is partly explained by the monitoring of HIV and AIDS at the country level. In fact, the number of Member States submitting country progress reports for the GARPR increased from 102 in 2004 to 186 in 2012 (United Nations, 2014a, p. 6).

The availability of reliable and timely data has permitted better targeting of policies. Access to more disaggregated data has made it easier to identify problems in local areas and specific population groups, thus making policy interventions more effective. An interesting example was the expansion of the National Integrated Database for Civil Registration in Mongolia, which made important steps in improving the Government's ability to collect

**A number of countries have also taken steps to implement reporting systems for national authorities**

**Better statistical capacity also aided in raising public support, increasing funding and better targeting of policies**

<sup>12</sup> At the international level, there are also regional and global MDG reports produced by UNDP and other collaborating organizations, including the United Nations regional commissions, the regional development banks, and regional governing bodies. The World Bank also produces annual MDG global monitoring reports to track progress on implementing policies and related development outcomes.

population data.<sup>13</sup> This initiative not only developed electronic connections between the capital and regional and district offices, it also built the capacities of local government officials in using the system. Furthermore, the new system improved the distribution of a cash transfer programme (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Another example is the comprehensive, MDG-based poverty-monitoring system established by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, whose indicators and trends prompted the Government to increase funding to agriculture aimed at addressing rural poverty and food security; fully meeting the budgetary requirements for primary education and basic health; and abolishing primary school fees and other related costs. Disaggregated data have helped to track progress more accurately in local areas and across marginalized and disadvantaged groups in order to map out inequalities. For example, analysis of household surveys in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown that only 32 per cent of the lowest income quintile of the Roma population had access to an improved drinking water source, compared to 82 per cent of the lowest income quintile of the general population (United Nations, 2014a, p. 6).

## Lessons learned and the Survey

The experience of the past fifteen years is rich in lessons that are relevant for the transition to and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the SDGs in particular. Although the SDGs are global in nature and universally applicable, they will take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respect for national policies and priorities. Each country will continue to be primarily responsible for its own sustainable development. Hence, the role of national policies, domestic resources and development strategies will be at the forefront of the development agenda. The discussion above and a more detailed analysis of policies and governance issues presented in the remainder of this *Survey* intend to draw general lessons and policy recommendations.

### Early adoption and fast-tracked implementation

While the implementation of the MDGs took time to gain traction, SDG implementation is likely to proceed at a faster pace precisely because of the MDG experience: building on the foundation laid by MDG efforts, countries and relevant stakeholders are well positioned to adapt global goals and targets to specific country contexts, and to do so in a timely manner.

Countries are now better positioned to create the first SDG baseline by evaluating starting conditions in the different areas covered by the new goals.<sup>14</sup> An SDG baseline report will facilitate integration of the SDGs into national and local planning and will be a first step in the preparation of regular progress reports with the participation of multiple stakeholders—a desirable good practice established by the experience of MDG monitoring.

**Measurement of initial conditions will facilitate more rapid integration of the SDGs into national planning frameworks and more rapid SDG implementation**

<sup>13</sup> This initiative was undertaken in the context of the UNDP Democratic Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF), which has funded a number of projects related to governance in a variety of countries.

<sup>14</sup> As proposed in United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), “Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress”, Note by the Secretary-General, Forty-sixth Session of the Statistical Commission, held in New York from 3-6 March 2015, E/CN.3/2015/2. Available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-2-BroaderMeasures.pdf>.

Because the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is broader than the MDG agenda, it will be important to take stock of starting conditions and capacity constraints in order to create priorities during the process of implementation. Building from effective MDG partnerships, early identification of resource needs—including needs to support national capacity-building in specific areas—will be critical to identifying those policy options on which countries should focus their efforts in order to achieve the SDGs.

SDG implementation need not start from scratch. It will be important to ensure continuity between existing development programmes and the new programmes that will be designed to pursue the achievement of the SDGs. Some countries already have development plans that extend beyond 2015 as noted above. Countries will need policy space to continue existing programmes deemed successful while integrating new programmes into their national development strategies. International support to countries' efforts should be consistent with countries' planning frameworks to ensure policy coherence.

### Integrated adaptation

The SDGs are broader in nature than the MDGs: they will integrate all the key dimensions of sustainable development. The new targets represent aspirational global targets that will have to be adapted to countries' realities. Adaptation of the SDGs will have to be deeper and more creative than that of the MDGs. Countries will have to set their own national targets, guided by the global level of ambition while taking national circumstances into account to establish realistic parameters.

Prioritizing certain goals, as seen in some countries during MDG implementation, may be one way of ensuring more effective implementation of related programmes. However, while the MDGs were defined across sectoral lines (on specific achievements in education, health and so on), the SDGs will require more integration. One of the main features of the SDGs is the explicit recognition of the interlinkages of economic, social and environmental policies in achieving sustainable development. Incorporating these goals into integrated development planning and financing frameworks will be most challenging.

Coordination efforts within government will be particularly necessary for translating national development strategies and plans into public expenditure programmes within a coherent multi-year macroeconomic and fiscal framework. In addition, aspects of budget management, notably budget execution capacity, will have to be addressed during the stage of adaptation of the new goals in order to ensure timely channelling of resources to social and environmental sectors.

**The SDGs must be appropriately and creatively adapted to conform to countries' local conditions**

### Bridging gaps to make the most of data legacy

Going forward, implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will critically depend on the capacity of countries to collect the appropriate statistics to set benchmarks and monitor progress towards the SDGs. Collaboration with the international statistical community will continue to play a fundamental role in building new and assessing existing statistical capacity.

The challenges ahead are further heightened by the growing demand for better, faster, more accessible, and more disaggregated data for bringing poverty and inequalities down and achieving sustainable development. In response to this demand, the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda has called

for a “data revolution”. Country ownership and government commitment to increasing resources for the statistical system and building statistical capacity, with the support of the international community, will be a requisite of a data revolution.

**A “data revolution” building upon the statistical architecture inherited from the MDGs which addresses existing data gaps is necessary going forward...**

Reinforcement of the existing data infrastructure to bridge important data gaps will be a necessity to pursue development goals. A worrisome example of data gaps is the fact that a large number of developing countries still lack complete civil registration systems. These systems can be the basis for reporting births and deaths. It is estimated that nearly 230 million children worldwide under age five have never been registered—approximately one of every three children in that age group (United Nations, 2014a, p. 7). Children unregistered at birth or lacking identifying documents are often excluded from access to education, health care and social security, which represents a serious bottleneck for development. For example, some countries still have limitations in assessing trends in malaria occurrence over time mainly because their national health information systems generate incomplete or inconsistent data. Malaria cases also remain underdetected where the disease burden is highest because of a lack of effective surveillance systems. The development of environmental accounting is also a work in progress that needs support.

Going forward, it will also be necessary to enhance analytical capacities for using existing data for analysis and planning purposes. Data are more widely available nowadays; yet, this does not imply a full utilization of the existing information. The wealth of information from population censuses and household surveys has not been fully exploited. Limited efforts have been made to fully analyse and effectively use these data sources, especially the use of disaggregated information by wealth quintile, sex, specific population groups and place of residence. Analysis of data at this level of disaggregation will be essential to addressing persistent inequality issues, given the inclusive nature of the new agenda.

**...and countries will benefit most if they improve the use of existing data and strengthen national statistical capacities**

It will be particularly important to build national capacities for the appropriate use of statistics. In most MDG progress reports, assessing whether a country was going to meet a goal was based on linear projections of current trends. While this may work for some indicators, there are significant non-linear trends in many cases, depending on local circumstances, including the types of policies enacted, the timing of the policies and the time lags with regard to policy effectiveness. For example, as will be further discussed in this *Survey*, investments in education may demonstrate relatively immediate effects in enrolment, but take much more time to show progress in completion or in improving the skill level of the labour force. Linear projections of past performance may then either overstate or understate potential achievements with consequent effects on the effectiveness of related policies. Further efforts to expand countries’ capacities for data and scenario analysis—so that they can make more detailed and evidence-based projections—will have positive feedback effects on policy coherence.

Improving coordination and collaboration between national and international statistical agencies will also be important for making sure that national data and international data comply with similar standards, definitions and computation methods. This will provide the basis for ensuring compatibility of national sources in the production of global indicators.

### Policy integration, coherence and effectiveness

The remaining chapters of this *Survey* focus on policies that contributed to making progress towards the achievement of the MDGs, as well as aspects of national governance and

institutions that have been critical for implementing these policies at the country level. The review of policies is mostly for the period since the MDGs were adopted by countries, but in many instances the policies resulted from long-term processes that predate the MDGs. In many instances, these policies confirmed countries' long-term commitment to poverty reduction and human development. The *Survey* recognizes the difficulty of knowing exactly whether the MDGs were the main motivators of many of these policies. Countries' development policies must have contributed to the achievement of the MDGs whether explicitly linked to these goals or not. The combined analyses in the remaining chapters of the *Survey* support six overarching lessons in regard to policies.

*First*, a coherent and comprehensive policy framework that integrates economic, social, and environmental interventions is critical to minimizing trade-offs. Social policies have allowed countries to build and promote human development and to improve women's participation in the labour force. These policies have generally supported economic growth and other development goals at the same time. Nonetheless, outcomes and spillover effects have generally resulted from pursuing policies as a set of discreet sectoral interventions, rather than as a coherent and comprehensive economic, social and environmental policy framework. Hence there have been important trade-offs between different types of policies and unintended effects. For example, there is evidence that microcredit programmes and agricultural credit programmes for women, which would presumably help reduce poverty and gender inequality, have actually reduced girls' school attendance as they were kept at home to help participate in the new economic activities supported by the programmes (Islam and Choe, 2013, cited in Unterhalter and others, 2014). Going forward it will be critical to identify positive synergies and trade-offs and pay more attention to policy consistency to facilitate simultaneously meeting multiple development objectives. The development of robust scenario analyses becomes instrumental to these purposes.

*Second*, although economic, social and environmental policies will be grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is universal in nature, the experience of the past fifteen years corroborates that no single policy approach is applicable in all circumstances. Going forward, policies will have to be appropriately situated within the broader development policy framework of each country and tailored to overcome specific constraints and enhance positive synergies in each country and community system. The constraints include suboptimal human capital and underdeveloped physical infrastructure in addition to other financial, socioeconomic and capacity constraints.

*Third*, in a similar vein, careful consideration of starting conditions and constraints will be important in determining what interventions and strategies can produce the best outcomes possible. In some contexts, the best known policies available are no longer effective because they have already run their course or because the causes leading to such obstacles changed such that the policies no longer apply. Health care is an area where the causes of disease and death become particularly visible as a consequence of successful policy outcomes. For example, the reduction of deaths in children under five years of age but older than one month has exposed the issue of neonatal mortality (deaths of newborns occurring in the first 28 days of life), which was invisible when the MDGs were adopted. When best practices are no longer producing sound improvements in outcomes, new practices and solutions become necessary. In some instances, it may just be a matter of ensuring that existing development-enabling laws are adequately reinforced and interventions made effective.

**A coherent and comprehensive policy framework is critical for minimizing trade-offs...**

**...but no single policy approach is applicable in all circumstances**

**Progress has made some populations more visible and efforts should continue to focus on the poorest and most vulnerable**

*Fourth*, the potential for policies, especially social policies, to be fully exploited and the degree to which they are effective will depend on whether they reach the poorest and most vulnerable populations. This includes those groups that have become more visible due to progress over the period since the MDGs were adopted such as newborns, indigenous people, people with disabilities or those living with HIV/AIDS, among others. Additional efforts to tailor existing policies or develop innovative ones will be necessary in order to ensure appropriate coverage of these groups. Integrating communities into policy planning, organizing and implementation can also improve effectiveness and outreach going forward. This will require adequate governance and institutions at the national and local levels.

**Increases in the quality and quantity of human resources, along with effective monitoring and evaluation, will be necessary to achieve the SDGs**

*Fifth*, improving the quantity and quality of human resources for the provision of social service delivery has proven critical for the achievement of development goals. There is a need for continued and expanded efforts to retain effective civil servants, including through competitive salaries and proper structuring of incentives and career development opportunities. However, this will not be enough. Stepping up investments in traditional (quality) education will be one of the most important interventions in attempts to bridge the relevant human resources gaps, especially in sectors such as health. Because this investment will take time to bear fruit, it will need to be complemented with more immediate training efforts—especially those that increase the supply of public civil servants—without compromising the quality of service. More broadly, there is scope for strengthening of both governance and institutions in the countries that most need it.

*Sixth*, it will be important that countries undertake effective monitoring and evaluation of programmes and their outcomes to ensure policy coherence, effectiveness, and adequate outreach of targeted populations. Community involvement and decentralization should feature prominently in monitoring and evaluation efforts, as was learned in the MDG experience. Monitoring effectiveness will require periodic assessments to ensure that programmes are producing the intended results; such monitoring should be facilitated by the statistical capacity and data availability inherited from the MDG monitoring framework and rooted in good governance and institutions.

## Organization of next chapters

**Economic conditions and policies were a significant factor in MDG achievement and will continue to be relevant for the SDGs**

Starting with chapter II, the *Survey* notes that economic policies have been adapted depending on the economic conditions prevailing before, during and after the global economic crisis that erupted in 2008 with varying degrees of success. During times of economic prosperity, as in the period before the crisis, it is important to expand investment, both economic and development-related, and build robust mechanisms—such as foreign-exchange reserves that are bundled in sovereign wealth funds—to smooth shocks and deal with downturns. Fiscal rules and medium-term expenditure frameworks that are implemented under the proper governance structures are important for reducing procyclicality of government spending. Properly executed expenditure frameworks contribute to improving policy coherence and limiting macroeconomic trade-offs; macroprudential tools limit exposure to external volatility. In addition, social safety nets and other programmes that operate countercyclically should be established during times of robust growth so that they can act as automatic stabilizers in times of crisis. The combination of these policies allowed many countries to enact countercyclical fiscal policies to weather the global financial crisis. Thus, while policy space was more constrained during the crisis, the effects on the population and for the achievement of the MDGs were not as drastic as they could have been. Adapting

policies to changing economic conditions will be a necessary condition for implementation of the new agenda.

Chapter II also warns that the initial economic conditions for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are less encouraging if compared with those of the period 2000-2015. Moreover, at the same time that policy space is more constrained, many developing countries did not make the most of the economic prosperity of the period 2000-2008; instead, many countries built important spending gaps for achieving the MDGs that are visible today. Against this backdrop, the chapter argues that addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs going forward and further implementing the more challenging development agenda after 2015 will necessitate more robust economic growth to boost private and public spending in key social sectors. Policy coherence will be needed to allocate the resources in the most efficient way possible under a more constrained economic environment. The chapter concludes with recommended economic policy pathways that are necessary going forward.

Chapters III and IV continue the overview of policies with a focus on social policies that proved critical in the efforts to overcome the human development challenges encompassed by the MDGs. This *Survey* recognizes that economic and social policies in most respects are indivisible aspects of broader development policy. In fact, numerous examples of both social policies that are essential to achieving economic growth and economic policies that bring about opportunities for social progress are provided.

Chapter III focuses on the social policy efforts that have proven effective in making headway towards reducing poverty and hunger (MDG 1); achieving universal primary education (MDG 2); and promoting gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3). The chapter's messages with regard to these three MDG areas are as follows:

*First*, non-contributory social protection programmes have contributed to reducing extreme poverty and making progress towards the achievement of other MDGs, and have helped to mitigate the impact of economic crises on the MDGs. The problem is that these programmes have typically been prioritized out of necessity and they have not systematically incorporated beneficiaries into the labour market or the economy at large. Social insurance and other (including new) contributory forms of social protection are expected to take hold in the transition towards universal social protection systems after 2015. The chapter argues that because the transition to universal social protection will take time to unfold, non-contributory social protection programmes will continue to play a critical role in the short to medium term. Hence, a number of implementation issues and shortcomings discussed in the chapter will have to be addressed.

*Second*, a number of the efforts geared towards achieving universal primary education will continue to bear fruit in some developing countries. Proven interventions reviewed in the chapter continue to hold potential for countries that are still striving to meet the goal. The discussion points to the need to improve and expand monitoring systems for both students and teachers to ensure that all students, particularly those that are not in school or those that have never attended, are covered. But, as a number of countries are close to reaching or have reached the goal of universal enrolment, other issues, such as primary school completion and quality of education, are becoming more important and will require more attention in the post-2015 period. Finally, the chapter presents some recommendations for better integration of education systems and the labour market, which will be important for achieving a number of development goals going forward.

**A variety of social policies have also proven effective in achieving the MDGs, many of which will continue to be important for the SDGs**

*Third*, while many regions have seen improvements in gender equality in a variety of areas, there are still a number of areas that are lagging behind. Further efforts will be needed to enforce existing laws, and reforms of existing discriminatory laws will be necessary, including some customary practices in some countries. Gaps remain in gender equality in education, but programmes geared towards girls, close proximity of schools and properly trained teachers have proven effective in raising gender parity. Elimination of laws restricting women's access to the labour market as well as employment and recruitment programmes for women have been a relevant step in some countries and have resulted in significant increases in labour force participation. Finally, the chapter also presents evidence that quotas for women and women's wings of political parties have helped to raise women's political representation, although it still remains well below that of men in a majority of countries. This is important for women's rights in general as greater levels of political participation by women leads to increased likelihood of addressing women's issues.

**Health systems are a particularly important factor in achieving health-related goals**

Chapter IV reviews policies that have contributed to the health-related goals (MDGs 4 through 6) and further elaborates on aspects of health systems that are critical to achieving health-related goals. Areas of focus for future policy efforts are threefold: (i) neonatal deaths—a problem that was overlooked when the MDGs were adopted and requires effective integrated solutions for both mothers and newborns, including family planning; (ii) infectious diseases, such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria which continue to cause most of the deaths in children under age five; (iii) nutrition, which continues to be an important concern with many under-five deaths still occurring in children already weakened by undernutrition, and pregnant women continuing to face serious constraints to improve their nutrient intake, especially in low-income countries. Recommendations for addressing issues of coherence and effectiveness of health policies to tackle these challenges going forward are identified. This includes the strengthening of health systems on which the implementation of policies relies. The chapter warns that, while supply-side needs of health systems will continue to be critical going forward, it will also be necessary to pay more attention to the quality of care and the positioning of health systems as core social institutions.

**Policies to achieve environmental targets should build on interconnections between environmental goals themselves and with human development goals**

Chapter V focuses on policies that supported progress with regard to the environmental targets (MDG 7), some of which were the only universal targets within the MDG agenda. The chapter reviews progress made in some environmental areas, but also notes that this has not been sustained, partly because monitoring and enforcement remain problematic and limited. In reviewing the different aspects of MDG 7 (namely, atmospheric issues, forests, terrestrial and marine areas, drinking water and sanitation, and slums), progress is noted but the emphasis of the chapter is on reviewing interventions that contributed to making that progress towards specific targets. A key message that emerges is that coherent policies should make use of the interconnections between various environmental goals themselves and between environmental and human development goals. This will require finding targets and indicators that capture these interlinkages in an integrated manner. Other more specific lessons pertaining to each of the key areas covered by MDG 7 are presented at the end of the chapter.

**Appropriate governance and institutions were a necessary factor in implementing policies that helped countries make progress towards achieving the MDGs**

The adaptation of the MDGs and the implementation of policies such as those reviewed in chapters II through V required adequate governance and institutions. Chapter VI notes the various factors of governance and institutions related to implementing policies necessary for achieving development goals. Leadership that is accountable and possesses a clear idea of development objectives is one factor. Policy coherence and coordination

are particularly important aspects of effective development policies when operating in a resource-constrained environment. Examples of increasing use of information and communications technologies (ICT) for adequate coordination and oversight are provided. Decentralization is shown to be an important way of properly providing basic services for differentiated segments of the population. Partnerships with non-governmental actors and the necessity of monitoring and evaluation for ensuring accountability and efficiency also feature among the key aspects of governance for development under review in this chapter. These aspects of governance, while not necessarily unique to the period of MDG implementation were all equally important to the subsequent achievement of MDG targets.