

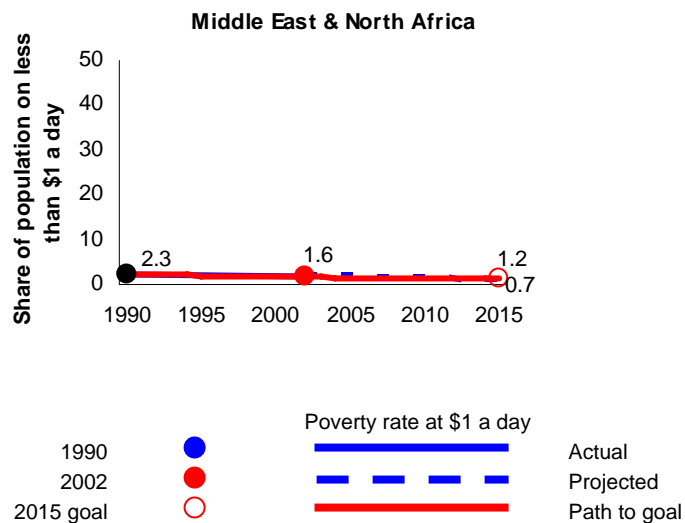
Middle East & North Africa



Progress Toward The Millennium Development Goals

Poverty Levels

- In the Middle East and North Africa, where 2002 poverty rates were lower than other developing regions, the rate of poverty reduction has been slower—less than one percentage point between 2002 and 2005. The few low-income countries in the region grew more slowly than low-income countries overall.



- Among developing regions, the Middle East has been a top performer in infrastructure progress, particularly in telecommunications and electricity, to which more than 15 percent of the population gained access over the last five years.
- According to the World Bank/IMF *Doing Business in 2006*, Middle Eastern and North African nations impose many regulatory obstacles on entrepreneurs and were the second slowest reformers last year, after Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Notwithstanding the overall slow progress in meeting the gender equality MDG, there are examples of innovative programs that are helping countries progress toward gender parity: A few years ago Morocco had the lowest rate of female representation in the Arab world: 0.6 percent. Today 35 female parliamentarians make up 11 percent of the parliament. Five years of research and advocacy by civil society resulted in an implicit 20 percent quota system, applied voluntarily by political parties at the last parliamentary elections.

- Some 117 (79 percent) of the 148 developing countries for which data are available are estimated to be off track to meet the child mortality MDG. In 15 countries—among them conflict-affected countries such as Iraq—the share of children who die before age five has increased. But a few countries are achieving exceptionally sharp increases in child survival. In 1990 the under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births in Egypt was 104. In 2004, that rate was 36. In Syria, the 1990 rate was 44; the 2004 rate was 16.
- The Middle East and North Africa will meet the maternal mortality goal.
- Much of the increment in ODA (from all donors) has been directed to geopolitically strategic countries, with front-line states such as Iraq and Afghanistan accounting for over half of the increase in net ODA from 2001 to 2004.
- Tariff liberalization by OECD and developing countries caused a two-percentage point reduction in the overall trade restrictiveness index (OTRI) for the world as a whole, to 14 percent on average. But the OTRI is still highest in the Middle East and North Africa, at 27 in 2005.