

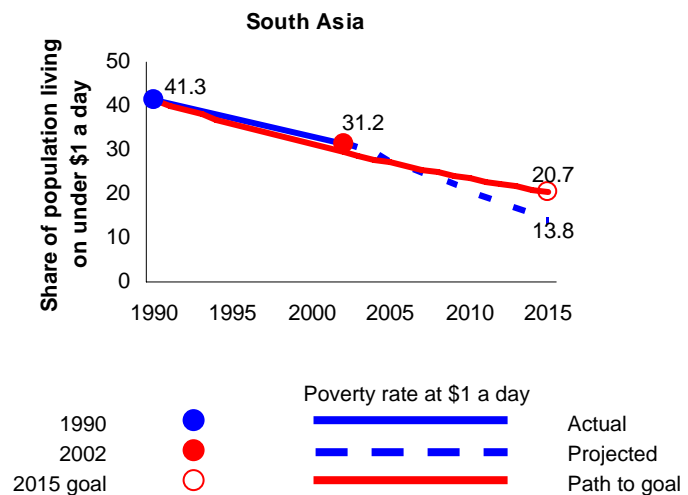
South Asia



Progress Toward The Millennium Development Goals

On track to reduce poverty

- South Asia has made strong progress towards reducing income poverty, placing it roughly on track to meet the target of halving the share of the population living on under \$1 a day by 2015.



- A key factor has been rapid economic growth, with South Asian low-income countries other than India, achieving 4.8 percent growth in 2005. India's and Pakistan's economic growth in 2005 is expected to reach eight percent.
- South Asian countries will need to monitor and improve the investment climate for private sector growth. Measures of the regional investment climate explain up to 80 percent of differences in productivity between multiple locations of firms in several countries in South Asia.
- Uncertainty of regulatory policies and their enforcement continues to rank as a top constraint reported by entrepreneurs in 75 countries in the World Bank's Investment Climate Surveys. In Bangladesh, 85 percent of firms report that tax inspectors expect 'gifts' during meetings, in contrast with 10 percent in Latvia or Slovenia.

Progress on all 'human development' goals too slow

- Most of the region will not meet the nutrition target, namely, to halve the proportion of children suffering from hunger, as measured by the number of children under five who are underweight. Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia which may achieve the goal, partly due to the successful scale-up of community-based nutrition programs.

- Across the developing world, countries with strong unified health sector plans such as Bangladesh have been more successful than others in using support from global health partnerships without distorting their own health sector priorities.
- The regional primary education completion rate for girls is still more than 15 percent lower than for boys; only 47 percent of girls go to primary school. In Bangladesh, where all girls are now enrolled in primary school, emphasis placed by the government and others on girls' education (including by financial incentives) has closed the education gender gap remarkably. The most recent data show that three girls attend primary and secondary school for every four boys.
- Despite significant improvements in regional maternal mortality (from 27 percent of births being attended by trained personnel in 1990 to 38 percent in 2003), South Asia is still far behind the target for this goal.

Improvements in infrastructure too slow

- In absolute terms, South Asia has made progress in improving infrastructure, but access to water, electricity and telephones is not expanding fast enough to keep pace with the two percent population growth rate.

Monitoring And Improving Governance

- **Factors that help sustain effective governance** include appropriate checks-and-balances institutions such as accountable local governments and a free press, the voices of citizens and firms, clear rules and expectations within the system, transparent information to monitor performance and enforcement mechanisms that reward success and address failure.
- Across the developing world, the most widespread losses and abuses in health and education systems clearly occur on the frontlines with providers being absent from duty or demanding payment for services that are legally free. Researchers in India have found that medical facility closures followed no pattern, with the result that a patient's likelihood of finding a provider was unpredictable.
- India provides two recent examples of **how information can be used to improve accountability** at the service provision frontline.
 - In Bangalore, India, a group of citizens, frustrated by years of inaction on public services in a dynamic city beset by population pressure, introduced a **user survey-based 'report card' on public services**. Three surveys conducted between 1994 and 2003 indicate an extraordinary turnaround in the perceptions of quality of service delivery. Adverse publicity apparently acted as a trigger for corrective action. Citizen activism and dialogue with agencies increased, and the government responded by providing the administrative framework to take action or reform the agencies. This approach, pioneered in Bangalore, has been implemented in countries including Brazil, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Turkey.
 - In Rajasthan, building on the state's 2001 Right to Information Act, the Movement for the Rights of Peasants and Workers organized public hearings in rural areas at which figures from the records of licensed distributors of food rations were compared with the ration books of recipients. **Social audits** were also carried out of hospitals during which data from medical records were compared with patients' actual experiences. Large discrepancies in both cases led

to further investigation and evidence of corruption, embezzlement and mismanagement.