

Canadians live in a world of dynamic challenges and opportunities. Recent years have seen global trends move in both negative and positive directions. These trends are not all new, and the world is always changing. What *is* new is an unprecedented international consensus on the key problems and what must be done about them. The framework for this consensus is the MDGs, a set of time-bound goals and accompanying targets, to which developing and developed countries committed themselves in 2000. The MDGs aim to achieve tangible results by 2015 in eight basic elements of human development, and they serve as an essential yardstick against which to assess our progress and target our efforts.

## DEVELOPMENT STATUS: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGE

The story of the last few decades has been, in many ways, one of impressive progress in tackling poverty, inequality and injustice.

### MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND SELECTED TARGETS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2015

1. Halving extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieving universal primary education
3. Promoting gender equality
4. Reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds
5. Reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters
6. Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid

Democracy and human rights have made great strides, propelled by an increasingly global civil society. For example, since 1980, some 81 countries have made significant gains in democratization, including the replacement of 33 military regimes by civilian governments.

Major economic and social gains have also been made. During the 1990s, the number of people living in extreme poverty—US\$1/day or less—dropped by 50 percent in East Asia, and fell by seven percent in South Asia. In the last three decades, 57 countries, with three billion people, were able to cut the prevalence of hunger in half (or are on track to do so by 2015).

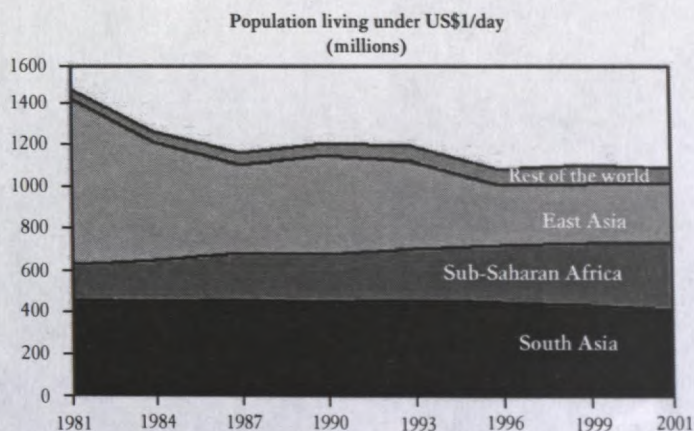
Literacy rates and access to basic education are on the rise, especially among girls and women.

Despite the progress, the challenges ahead are daunting. The following seven major, interwoven trends define the problems:

- **Uneven development.** While other parts of the world grew richer in the 1990s, the past two decades have seen the number of Africans living in extreme poverty almost double from 164 million to 314 million, most still in rural areas with minimal access to services.

There is little to suggest that this situation will improve quickly. In 2001-02, per capita GDP in sub-Saharan Africa increased a mere 0.9 percent and it is projected to grow over the next decade by only half of what is required for the region to meet the primary MDG of reducing poverty by half between 1990 and

### Regional Poverty Trends



Source: World Bank, 2004