UNITED NATIONS

E

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Statistical Committee
Ninth session
Beirut, 13-15 October 2010

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

REPORT ON MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT
GOAL AND GENDER INDICATORS

Summary

This report has been prepared as part of commitments made by ESCWA relating to continuous monitoring and reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Gender Indicators. The report builds on the assessment of the MDG monitoring study that was presented to the eighth Statistical Committee held in Beirut in 2008. It illustrates the development and improvements made in addition to the outstanding challenges with regard to national monitoring of development indicators, including MDGs, and gender-sensitive indicators.

The Committee is invited to comment on the progress made by the secretariat. The Committee is also invited to consider the recommendations and strategic actions needed to enhance the capacity of national statistical system in the region in order to improve monitoring and reporting for evidence-based policymaking.

10-0333

CONTENTS

Introduction

1.   In recent years, concerns have been raised by the statistical community regarding the production of MDG indicators and the ability of countries to undertake their own national monitoring for policymaking purposes. Discrepancies between national and international data sources, and the role played by the quality and availability of data in such discrepancies also constitute major issues on the regional and international statistical agenda.

2.   At its eighth session (Beirut, 14-16 October 2008), the Statistical Committee of ESCWA adopted the proposed strategic actions and recommendations in its report on "Millennium Development Goals: Monitoring Framework and Proposals for Improvement".[1] The report highlighted issues on data availability and on those discrepancies between national and international estimates that required the urgent attention of the Committee in order to improve monitoring and reporting on the progress made towards achieving MDGs and to disseminate accurate and relevant metadata.

3.   These actions and recommendations at the national and regional levels aimed at enhancing the capacity of national statistical systems in the region in order to improve monitoring and reporting on MDGs; disseminate accurate and transparent metadata; and guide the future direction of work of the ESCWA secretariat, particularly in terms of recommending areas and modalities for technical cooperation and statistical capacity-building.

4.   At the national level, more specifically, countries were requested to review current methodologies for imputations and improve consultation mechanisms with national statistical offices; and organize workshops and/or produce handbooks and guidelines to improve the production and transparency of indicators and methodologies. Moreover, countries were requested to improve consultation at the subnational level among the different producers, with a view to bringing particularly the least-tracked indicators into line with international standards; carry out the required surveys and censuses; and improve administrative registers for the periodic production of data on MDG indicators, other development data and country specific indicators. In addition, countries were urged to develop and maintain a central repository and metadata at the national and subnational levels; and promote user-accessibility aimed at improving transparency, quality and dissemination practices in line with international standards. Where applicable, the dissemination of disaggregated data by age, educational attainment, geographical area, ethnic group, urban/rural and sex was emphasized to highlight patterns within countries, thereby facilitating comparisons across subpopulations for effective planning and budgeting by policymakers. Countries were also encouraged to publish a new round of MDG reports.

5.   At the regional level, the secretariat was requested to implement a number of initiatives in 2010-2011, chiefly to review and identify regional priorities, and propose ways of improving the production and analysis of MDGs, including development indicators. The secretariat was requested to develop and maintain a regional central database derived from national databases and publications to monitor availability, track progress and plan capacity-building activities in focused statistical areas; review and discuss mechanisms available to agencies for gathering data from countries, their methods of compilation of international data series and the imputation techniques used to calculate regional and global estimates for MDG indicators; identify ways of improving the compilation of regional data series by improving reporting mechanisms from national statistical systems to international agencies. The secretariat was also requested to compile and review national metadata published in national central databases and make recommendations on ways of improving these as well as consultation mechanisms, both within countries and with international agencies.

---

[1] E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4.

I. STRATEGIES TO IMPACT DATA QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY

6.   At the heart of the work carried out by ESCWA in the statistical field are its efforts to enhance the capacity of member countries in terms of producing and disseminating high quality, comparable socio-economic indicators; and act as a central repository of sound, transparent data, capturing key development issues in the region.

7.   Within that context, the Division is following the recommendations of the eight Statistical Committee, including those set out in ESCWA resolution 287 (XXV) on strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking;[2] and those set out in ESCWA resolution 286 (XXV) on gender statistics for equality and empowerment, specifically in view of the need to improve the situation of women and men in the region by addressing the lack of timely, reliable, comparable and sex-disaggregated data to inform policy and programme decisions. In response to these issues, the Statistics Division has developed a set of building blocks and complementary activities related to the MDG framework in addressing the above issues. These building blocks are set forth below.

(a)   *Building block 1: Improving the quality and availability of national data for MDG monitoring:*

8.   The Statistics Division has been conducting comprehensive, in-depth reviews of MDG data series since 1990 aimed at resolving inconsistencies between national and international data sets and at addressing data gaps at the national level. The reviews begin with extensive desk research to compile national data, make comparisons and track inconsistencies. On completion of this stage, the Division provides technical advice and support to disseminate final data sets and make them centrally accessible through a unified system. In 2009, data quality checks were initiated for 10 ESCWA members, namely, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar and Yemen, which led to a significant improvement in the quality and availability of data. The process is ongoing and countries are at different stages of developing their time series for MDGs.

9.   To give an example results from one pilot country show an improvement of 30 per cent on data availability. Disaggregated data (urban/rural, female/male) almost quadrupled. An increase of 121 per cent was achieved in terms of providing the sources for each data point. In addition, computation of indicators and units of measure used were also reviewed in line with international standards and subsequently corrected.

(b)   *Building block 2: Capacity-building efforts to strengthen national data production for MDG monitoring and sex-disaggregated data:*

10.   A central element of the work of the Statistics Division is defining strategies and coordinating activities in order to improve the capacity of member countries in terms of producing indicators and conducting national monitoring. Such activities incorporate improving access to metadata and practical guidelines for the production of MDG indicators.[3] In order to provide easy access to information on standards and methods, an MDG virtual library has been developed, which is freely available on subscription and whose growing membership is global.[4] The library aims to facilitate the dissemination of relevant, up-to-date priority information and data via an online catalogue. In addition, the Division has developed, with the assistance of member countries, an e-glossary of statistical terms, including gender indicators, which is

---

[2] This resolution specifically requests the secretariat to assist member countries in building their capacity aimed at unifying statistical concepts and definitions.

[3] See, in particular, United Nations Development Group, "Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals" (2003), which is available at: http://devdata.worldbank.org/gmis/mdg/UNDG%20document_final.pdf; and International Labour Organization (ILO), "Guide to the new Millennium Development Goals employment indicators, including the full set of decent work indicators" (2009), which is available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_110511.pdf.

[4] This library is available at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/themes/index.asp.

available on its main home page. In 2011, work is set to focus on translating the new handbook on MDG indicators and producing a handbook on gender indicators.

(c)   *Building block 3: Training on MDG indicators to reconcile discrepancies between national and international data:*

11.   As a member of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators, which was established by the Secretary-General, ESCWA coordinates with other United Nations entities on the organization of regional training activities. In 2009, this included a workshop on MDG monitoring for Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Beirut, 7-12 December 2009), jointly organized with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The workshop brought together national statisticians and representatives of line ministries from 13 countries, and experts from several international agencies and the DevInfo group. In a practical training session, participants reviewed data gaps and differences between national and international data sets, identified the underlying causes and recommended actions to remedy the situation. A second workshop on MDG monitoring is being planned in collaboration with UNSD and specialized agencies during the biennium 2010-2011.

12.   The second Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries (Beirut, 12-14 October 2009) was organized to discuss the metadata for the "GIsIn" framework, a measuring tool that contains a list of priority areas and corresponding gender-sensitive indicators for the region. The Meeting was organized in collaboration with 12 United Nations agencies and was attended by participants from 14 Arab national statistical offices, six women's national machineries, and representatives from the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research and the League of Arab States.

(d)   *Building block 4: Enhancing coordination and data dissemination to improve data coverage for MDG monitoring:*

13.   The establishment of national MDG databases as official repositories for all MDG data encourages coordination between national data producers, thereby facilitating data dissemination and harmonization of definitions and methodologies at the subnational level. During 2009, the Statistics Division intensified its capacity-building efforts towards the development of national databases in Arab countries by arranging a training workshop on DevInfo (Beirut, 13-17 July 2009), during which 39 participants were trained on how to build a database on development indicators, including MDGs.

14.   In view of the importance of disseminating theoretical, practical and technical training on DevInfo as widely as possible, ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, organized the Regional Training of Trainers Workshop on DevInfo v.6.0 (Beirut, 20-24 July 2009) for 17 participants. The Workshop established an Arab DevInfo Training Team (ADITT) with the technical knowledge and practical ability to conduct training courses on DevInfo in their home countries, with a view to qualifying as master trainers. In order to provide further support and available exclusively to the members of this Training Team, ESCWA developed the ADITT website, which constitutes a platform for discussion of DevInfo activities and the sharing of plans, resources and experiences.[5]

15.   As a result, during the period 2008-2010, 19 new national applications were launched by the following Arab countries and territories: Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Oman, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, thereby bringing the total number of national adaptations to 33 DevInfo customized national applications since 2002.[6] It is worth noting that

---

[5] The database can be accessed by ADITT members at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/forums/devinfo/.

[6] A power-point presentation showing all Arab DevInfo is available at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/sd_editor/ Download.asp?table_name=scuTHEMES_Documents&field_name=ID&FileID=1368.

Yemen disseminated its GenderInfo database in 2010. Annex I provides a summary table of those adaptations by year at the national and regional levels.

16.   The dissemination of comparable data at the regional level encourages the development and refinement of indicators, including improvement in their accessibility to stakeholders. As part of its efforts to support such work, ESCWA launched its first gender statistical database in 2009, namely, Arab GenInfo_09.[7] Arab GenInfo_09 fulfils the commitment of the Commission to develop a detailed gender database that can act as a cross-sectoral gender mainstreaming observatory. The database includes sex-disaggregated data and indicators with spatial distribution, and is compiled from socio-economic data recorded by various United Nations agencies. Arab GenInfo_09 provides a starting point for Arab countries in compiling national data, disseminating gender statistics and including a gender perspective in formulating, implementing and monitoring policy. In 2011, GenInfo will be launched with additional sex-disaggregated data, including such gender sensitive indicators as violence against women and time-use. Moreover, in 2009-2010, the Division disseminated a database on youth, Y-Info, and Arab MDGInfo bringing the total regional adaptations of different organizations to nine databases (see annex I).

(e)   *Building block 5: Capacity-building efforts to strengthen MDG reporting in Arab countries:*

17.   At the request of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the Executive Office of the GCC and the League of Arab States, ESCWA organized the Workshop on MDG Reporting (Muscat, 17-20 May 2009). A total of 60 participants from different ministries in the GCC in addition to representatives from Yemen were trained on methodology for drafting MDG reports in accordance to set guidelines. Proposals to improve on latest MDG reports were also presented by each country, including the localization and customization of the MDG framework, in addition to best practice in reporting and analysis.

18.   A total of 34 national MDG reports were produced in at least one language by all 14 ESCWA member countries, Saudi Arabia recorded six MDGR, the highest among all member countries. Some countries produced those reports in Arabic, English and French; and annex II presents a detailed list of Arab MDG reports that have been produced since 2002.[8]

19.   At the regional level and within the framework of its regular programme, the Division published in 2009 the report, entitled "Charting the progress of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab region: A statistical portrait, which provides in-depth analysis of the gains and setbacks on the path towards achieving MDGs.[9] The report sets out a comparison of subnational, national, subregional and regional trends, thereby providing policymakers and planners with insight, and serving as a source of information to stimulate regional cooperation opportunities that support member countries in their efforts to achieve MDGs.

20.   In a departure from its traditional publishing formats, ESCWA launched its first statistical electronic publication in 2009. The e-publication is a monitoring tool for charting the progress of Arab countries towards achieving MDGs by 2015. Providing users with up-to-date, comparative data in a "green" environment, details of the progress made on each indicator by member country can be easily accessed and downloaded in the form of Microsoft Excel charts and tables. The entire publication or excerpts from it can also be printed in portable document format (PDF).

---

[7] GenInfo_09, which was launched at the second Inter-agency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Countries (Beirut, 12-14 October 2009), is available at: http://genderinfo.escwa.un.org/.

[8] However, the list is not extensive given that many countries are expected to publish their latest reports in 2010.

[9] The report is accessible at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/div_editor/Download.asp?table_name=divisions_other&field_name=ID&FileID=1287.

## II. PROGRESS AND REGRESSIONS IN DATA AVAILABILITY

A. BACKGROUND

21.   In 2008, the secretariat performed an assessment for a total of 35 health-related indicators for the then 13 ESCWA member countries for which UNSD country-sourced data for each MDG indicator were available. Using at least 2 data points with a minimum of a five-year gap since 1990, this assessment yielded data disaggregated by sex and geographical area that could be categorized into five clusters (<23 per cent, 31-46 per cent, 54-69 per cent, 77-92 per cent and 100 per cent). Table 1 shows the progress and regressions in monitoring MDGs at the indicator level over the period 2008-2010.

22.   The overall result of the assessment in 2008 revealed that the average availability of the MDG indicators in the countries of the region is about 53 per cent, thereby indicating the need to improve the capacity of member countries to compile and disseminate data for MDG monitoring and reporting. The indicators were grouped into five clusters, ranging from those with the lowest level of data availability to those with highest by country coverage.

23.   In 2010, the Statistics Division conducted a second assessment for availability of country-sourced data for the MDG indicators according to the revised MDG framework.[10] The progress and regress, which are presented below, are based on the results of a comparative detailed table (see annex III).

B. PROGRESS MADE IN DATA COVERAGE BY INDICATOR

24.   The assessment results show an overall improvement of the average availability of the MDG indicators in the countries of the region of about 17 per cent since 2008 (i.e. average of 70% in 2010), thereby indicating significant progress at the national level in data compilation and dissemination to monitor MDGs as illustrated in figure I.

FIGURE I. THERMOMETER OF PROGRESS MADE IN MONITORING MDGS SINCE 2008
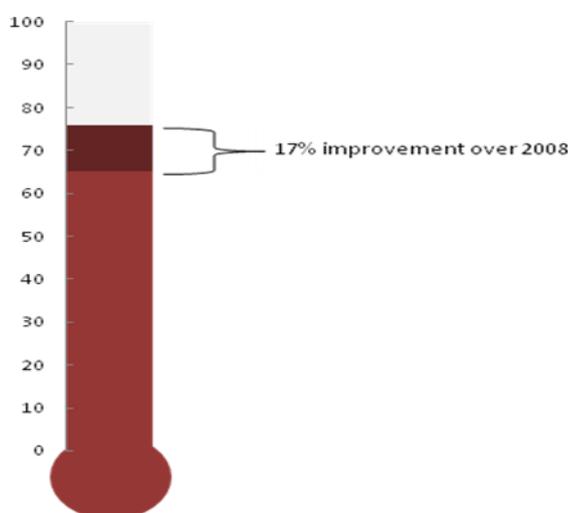
25.   All ESCWA member countries have made significant leaps in reporting on their MDGs. Figure II illustrates the availability of MDG data for monitoring in 2008 and 2010.

---

[10] The revised MDG framework, published in 15 January 2008, consists of a set of 8 Goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators.

FIGURE II. DATA AVAILABILITY FOR MONITORING MDGs, 2008 AND 2010
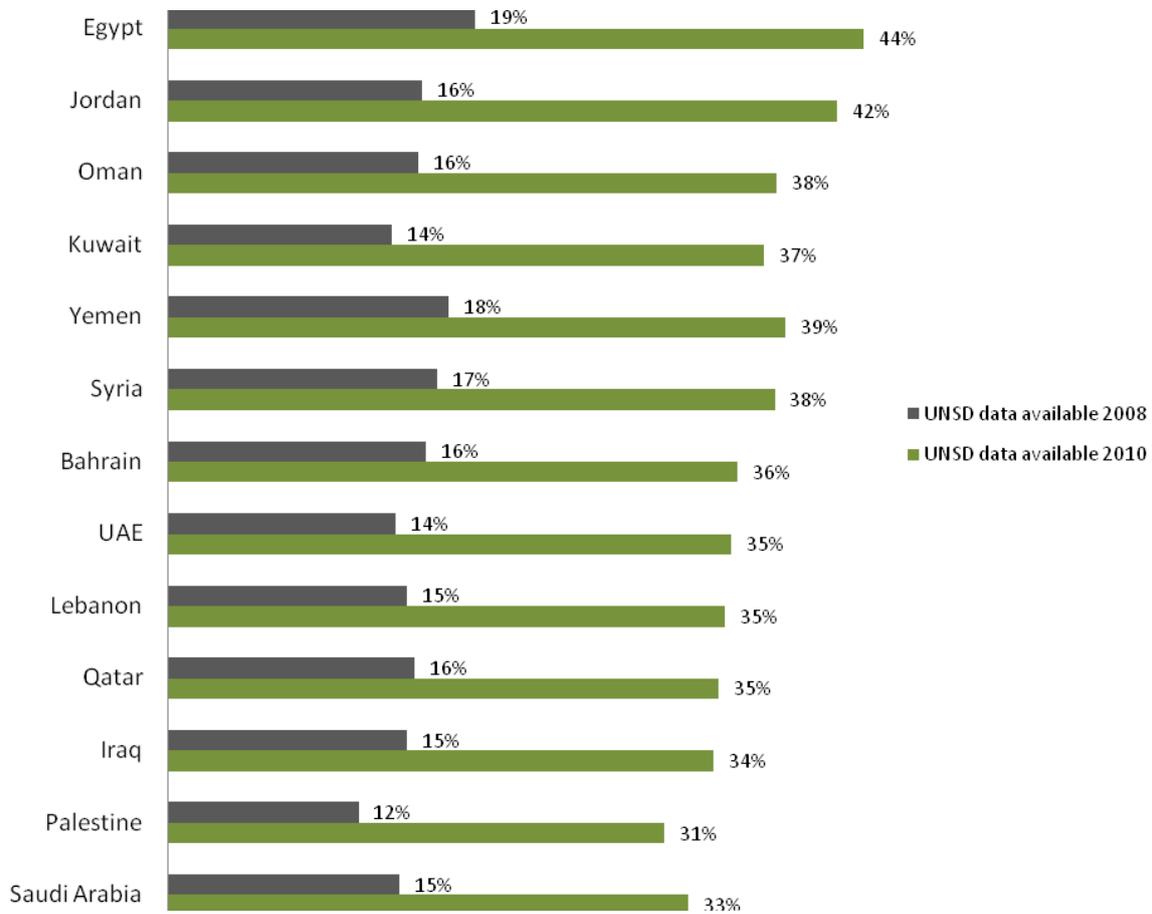
26. This achievement is more evident at the individual cluster and indicator level. For instance, in 2008, cluster (a) included crucial indicators related to monitoring environmental sustainability in the region, such as the greenhouse effect, water scarcity and the consequences of urbanization for which fewer than 23 per cent of member countries had at least two data points since 1990. In 2010, data in all three indicators improved significantly and recorded a move to a higher level of clusters.

27. Two indicators, namely, "Consumption of ozone-depleting substances in ODP metric tons" and "Proportion of total water resources", which were reported on by one and three countries, respectively, is currently being reported on by all member countries. In 2008, only one country reported on "Proportion of urban population living in slums", compared to 50 per cent of the countries in 2010.

TABLE 1. PROGRESS/REGRESS OF ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES IN MONITORING MDGs
AT THE INDICATOR LEVEL, 2008 AND 2010

[0-5] ●   [6-9] ●   [10-13] ●

	number of eligible countries	
	2008	2010
Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger		
Population below $1 (PPP) per day, percentage	5	3 ●
Poverty gap ratio at $1 a day (PPP), percentage	6	3 ●
Poorest quintile's share in national income or consumption, percentage	4	3 ●
Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight, percentage	12	9 ●
Population undernourished, percentage	8	9 ●
Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education		
Total net enrolment ratio in primary education, both sexes	9	13 ●
Percentage of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary, both sexes	7	10 ●
Literacy rates of 15-24 years old, both sexes, percentage	7	9 ●
Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empowerment of women		
Gender Parity Index in primary level enrolment	10	13 ●
Gender Parity Index in secondary level enrolment	7	13 ●
Gender Parity Index in tertiary level enrolment	7	12 ●
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	7	10 ●
Seats held by women in national parliament, percentage	5	12 ●
Goal 4. Reduce child mortality		
Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	13	13 ●
Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) per 1,000 live births	13	13 ●
Children 1 year old immunized against measles, percentage	13	13 ●
Goal 5. Improve maternal health		
Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births	13	0 ●
Births attended by skilled health personnel, percentage	10	7 ●
Current contraceptive use among married women 15-49 years old, any method, percentage	10	10 ●
Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases		
Malaria death rate per 100,000 population, all ages	8	0 ●
Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population (mid-point)	13	13 ●
Tuberculosis death rate per year per 100,000 population (mid-point)	12	13 ●
Tuberculosis detection rate under DOTS, percentage (mid-point)	7	13 ●
Tuberculosis treatment success rate under DOTS, percentage	9	13 ●
Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability		
Proportion of land area covered by forest, percentage	7	12 ●
Carbon dioxide emissions (CO2), metric tons of CO2 per capita (CDIAC)	4	13 ●
Consumption of all Ozone-Depleting Substances in ODP metric tons	1	12 ●
Proportion of total water resources used, percentage	3	13 ●
Proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources, total	10	12 ●
Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities, total	11	11 ●
Slum population as percentage of urban, percentage	1	6 ●
Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development		
Population with access to essential drugs, percentage	5	0 ●
Telephone lines per 100 population	13	13 ●
Mobile cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 population	13	13 ●

Source: UNSD database.

Note: The eligibility criterion requires at least 2 data points and with at least a five-year gap.

C. REGRESS IN DATA COVERAGE BY INDICATOR

28.   Conversely, few indicators have retreated in terms of availability, moving from higher clusters to the lowest of the five clusters (<23 per cent). These indicators are mainly poverty-related, such as "Proportion of population below $1 (ppp) per day", "Poverty gap ratio" and "Share of the poorest quintile in national consumption".

29.   In addition, other indicators, mainly under the responsibility of the World Health Organization (WHO), have shown a decline in available data, including "Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis", "Death rates associated with malaria" and "Maternal mortality ratio", settling at a low of <23 per cent. Similarly, a decline from a level of 77-92 per cent to 54-69 per cent was observed in the data availability of two indicators, namely, "Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age" and "Proportion of birth skilled health personnel".

30.   It is worth noting that no progress was reported in "Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption" and "Literacy rate of 15-24 years old women and men", both of which have stagnated at 54-69 per cent since 2008.

31.   Strategies aimed at improving availability need to be addressed at both the national and regional levels and with specialized agencies.

III. DISCREPANCIES IN DATA BETWEEN AVAILABLE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES

A. BACKGROUND

32.   Previous sessions of the Statistical Commission have raised major issues concerning the key shortcomings in MDG monitoring, including the following: (a) more data are available at the national level than those reported in the MDG database of UNSD; (b) some substantial differences exist between data produced and disseminated by countries and those reported by international agencies; (c) the poor content of metadata for some MDG indicators; and (d) the use of imputations by international agencies to fill in data gaps. Discussions have highlighted the need to establish a process to improve the transfer of data from countries to international agencies and among international agencies, as recommended by the Friends of the Chair.[11]

33.   With a view to improving the data and metadata in the international database, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDGs made several recommendations, including the following: (a) to add a detailed explanation of the difference between global and national monitoring and related implications on methods and data presentation; (b) to add metadata on population estimates used to calculate indicators; (c) to incorporate in the UNSD website a mechanism for users to provide feedback, thereby better understanding user needs, and for them to request additional information; and (d) to include three new categories of metadata in order to provide users with more detailed information on agencies responsible for the compilation of data and on sources used.

34.   The IAEG further recommended the following actions to improve the reporting mechanisms from national statistical systems to international agencies: (a) to involve the regional commissions more extensively in data checking (discrepancies between national and international data series) and in channelling and following up on specific queries on data and metadata between national statistical systems and international agencies; (b) to identify an MDG focal point inside the national statistical system for the coordination of official statistics on MDGs; (c) to improve data sharing at the international level and better identify the leading agency and its specific data requirements for each substantive topic; and (d) to establish

---

[11] See "Report of the thirty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission" (E/CN.3/2007/13).

a national statistical system website and database, thereby providing a single set of data (after reconciliation of all possible data sources in the country, including administrative records) and a calendar for dissemination of official statistics. Taking this step would facilitate the use of official statistics in the international community and reduce the burden on countries and international agencies.

B. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

35. In an effort to analyse discrepancies in data and metadata, and gaps between national and international sources, the secretariat selected the health-related MDG indicators as a sample in 2008 and conducted an assessment on data availability.[12] In 2010, the assessment was repeated in order to provide a benchmark of the progress made.

36. Out of the 25 health-related MDG indicators that were assessed in 2008 for the extent of discrepancies between the availability in terms of data points and content reported by both national and UNSD sources, only 16 indicators were reassessed in 2010.[13]

C. DISCREPANCIES IN DATA AVAILABILITY AND REPORTING

37. Major differences exist in the data availability reported by national and international sources. The greater the difference in data availability reported, the higher the possibility of major shortcomings in the reporting mechanism between them.

38. The present assessment shows some improvement in capturing and reporting on national available data by UNSD database for almost all the countries since 2008. Figure III, which compares the relevant data between 2008 and 2010, shows a decrease in the number of national data not reported in the UNSD database. However, the Syrian Arab Republic unreported national data in the UNSD database reached the highest level, at 73 per cent, thereby representing an increase of 30 percentage points. Moreover, while Kuwait improved its record of national data reported in the UNSD database over the two-year period, unreported national data remains significantly high, at 63 per cent, compared to other countries. Yemen has the least unreported national data, at 26 per cent, followed by Egypt, at 34 per cent, the United Arab Emirates, at 37 per cent, and Oman, at 38 per cent.

39. All countries need to take concrete measures to review their methods of data dissemination and of reporting to international agencies.

---

[12] Three main considerations underlay the selection, namely: (a) the Economic and Social Council substantive segment will focus on the MDG health sector in 2009; (b) health-related MDG indicators constitute nearly half the total number of MDG indicators; and (c) country coverage in data availability is adequate for conducting a viable analysis.

[13] Only 16 out of the original 25 indicators were reassessed owing to a revision of the MDG framework which resulted in omission of some of the indicators or data.

FIGURE III. NATIONAL DATA AVAILABLE AND UNREPORTED IN THE UNSD DATABASE
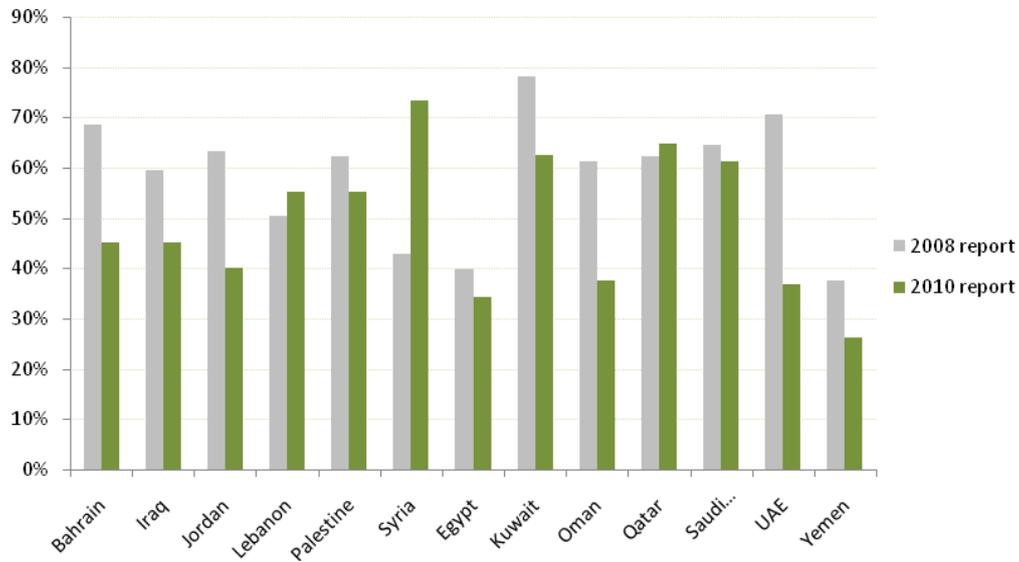
40. The assessment of 2010 shows mixed results on the reverse situation, as illustrated in figure IV, wherein the UNSD database contains "national" data that have not been reported by the country itself. A handful of countries and territories, namely, Jordan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia, have made some improvements on reporting mechanisms to and from specialized agencies.

FIGURE IV. UNSD DATA AVAILABLE AND UNREPORTED IN NATIONAL DATABASES
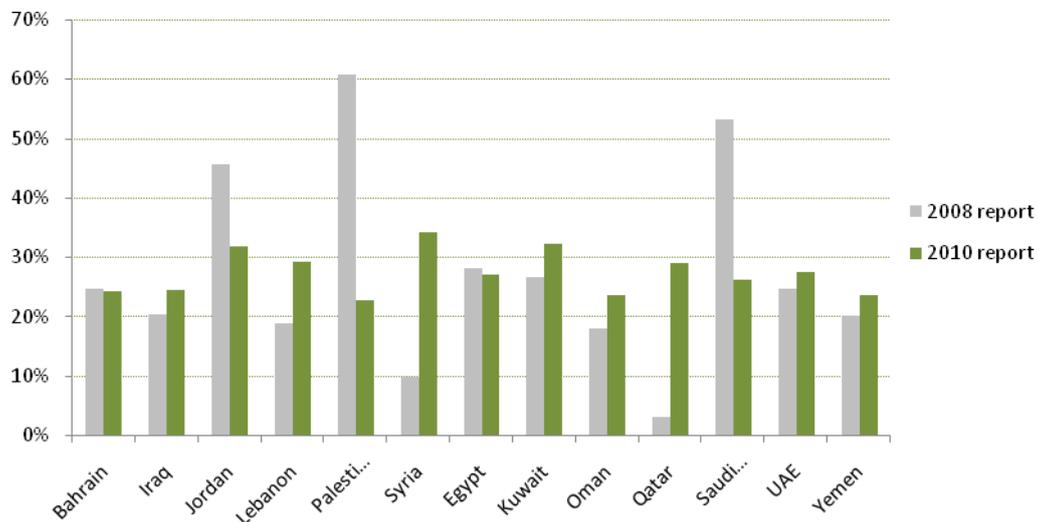
41. All countries need to coordinate data dissemination to and from specialized agencies, and to request concerned agencies to provide them with feedback on data adjustments made and final computations of indicators.

D. DISCREPANCIES IN DATA VALUES

42. Discrepancies in data values between national and United Nations sources emanate from one or more components related to the metadata of each indicator, including definition, methods of calculation, targeted population and subpopulations, sources of data and estimation methods.

43. The increase in the dissemination of data from both sources, national and international, has revealed more discrepancy levels in data values over the two-year period.

44. In 2010, there were 15 per cent of cases, compared to 18 per cent of cases in 2008, where the values for the same indicator in the same year for a given country between those recorded nationally and those in the UNSD database matched exactly. A further 27 per cent of data points in 2010, compared to 39 per cent in 2008, were consistent in value (+ or – 10 per cent) in both sources. By contrast, there were major discrepancies (over 10 per cent) in 59 per cent of data points in 2010, compared to 44 per cent in 2008. Figure V illustrates the level of consistency in value between national and UNSD data for each country in 2010.

FIGURE V. DISCREPANCY LEVELS FOR AVAILABLE DATA POINTS
FROM NATIONAL AND UNSD SOURCES, 2010
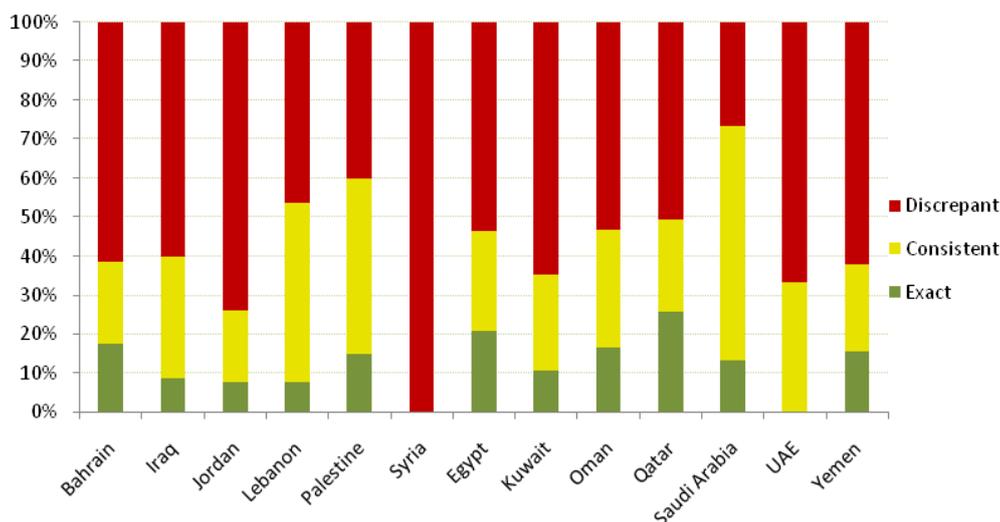
45. The results show an increased discrepancy in data values between national and United Nations sources, specifically of over the 10-per-cent margin, which could be attributed to the larger release of data from both sources.

46. Further capacity-building efforts are needed to reconcile national and international data for MDG indicators. The secretariat must continue its work in performing data-quality checks, organizing workshops on MDG monitoring and providing access to methodological handbooks, including the translation of the handbook on MDG indicators and other related documents. The replication of these efforts at the national and subnational levels is also urgently required.

E. LEVEL OF DISCREPANCY BY INDICATOR

47. An in-depth analysis of discrepancies in values was undertaken in 2008. The national value for each indicator in a given year was assessed against the UNSD value for the same year to derive discrepancy ranges. Indicators with a discrepancy value equal to or less than 15 per cent (or with no data value in either

source) were not included in the analysis. As a result, 13 out of the 25 indicators were categorized by discrepancy level.

48. At the time, four discrepancy levels were assigned, namely: low, with discrepancy ranging from 16-30 per cent; medium, from 31-50 per cent; high, from 51-70 per cent; and major, for discrepancy levels of over 70 per cent.

49. A similar exercise was repeated in 2010 and the comparative results of both assessments show significant improvement in terms of the increase in availability of indicators by 40 per cent, in addition to decrease in the number of discrepant values for each indicator in the higher echelons of discrepancy levels (high and major levels). The discrepancy levels for each of the 13 indicators and the number of member countries falling within each level are shown in table 2.

TABLE 2. LEVEL OF DISCREPANCY BETWEEN NATIONAL AND UNSD DATA
BY INDICATOR AND NUMBER OF COUNTRIES

Indicators	2008					2010				
	Low 16-30%	Medium 31-50%	High 51-70%	Major >70%	TOTAL	Low 16-30%	Medium 31-50%	High 51-70%	Major >70%	TOTAL
Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight (%)	3	1	1	1	6	1			2	3
Population undernourished (%)	2	0	1	0	3	2			1	3
Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	9	3	0	0	12	3	2			5
Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) per 1,000 live births	10	3	0	0	13	4	3			7
Children 1 year old immunized against measles (%)	5	2	0	0	7		3			3
Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births	0	1	1	3	5	1			2	3
Condom use at last high-risk sex, 15-24 years old, women (%)	0	0	0	0	0		2	2	1	5
Condom use to overall contraceptive use among currently married women 15-49 years old (%)	0	1	0	1	2	1	1			2
Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population	3	5	6	8	22	2	1		6	9
Tuberculosis death rate per year per 100,000 population	3	6	6	8	23				1	1
Tuberculosis detection rate under DOTS (%)	6	3	1	1	11	4	1		1	6
Tuberculosis treatment success rate under DOTS (%)	2	4	2	2	10	1				1
Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities, total	2	2	0	0	4			1		1
TOTAL					118					49

50. Member countries still face a challenge of compiling accurate data for tuberculosis-related indicators. Given the increase of countries reporting on tuberculosis, there is a parallel increase in discrepancy values between national and international sources, as evidenced by a level of discrepancy higher than 51 per cent. This calls for a serious review of methodologies related to the computation of tuberculosis indicators.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

51. The results in this report reveal significant advances made by member countries in reporting on their MDGs. Some indicators, however, show a drop in the data available on the UNSD database in 2010,

compared to 2008, chiefly poverty-related indicators and others that fall under the responsibility of WHO. There are a number of recommendations, which are set forth below.

52.   This assessment shows some improvement in capturing and reporting on national available data by the UNSD database for almost all the countries since 2008. A decrease has been noted in the number of national data not reported in UNSD database. However, in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic, the unreported national data in the UNSD database has reached the highest level, followed by Kuwait. Consequently, strategies aimed at improving availability need to be addressed at both the national and regional levels, and with specialized agencies.

53.   Given that the increase in data dissemination from both sources, national and international, has revealed further discrepancies in data values, all countries need to take concrete measures to review their methods of data dissemination and reporting to international agencies.

54.   Countries need to enhance and coordinate data dissemination to and from specialized agencies and request concerned agencies to provide them with feedback on data adjustments made and final computations of indicators. In addition, intensified capacity building-efforts need to reconcile national and international data for MDG indicators by reviewing methodologies and training on computations. The proposed actions for improving data availability and content are as follows:

    (a)   At the national level:

       (i) Data availability can be improved in the following ways:

         1.   Reviewing current methodologies for imputations and consultation mechanisms with national statistical offices;

         2.   Organizing workshops and/or producing handbooks and guidelines to improve the production and transparency of indicators and methodologies, and providing direction on recommended consultation mechanisms, with a view to bringing the least-tracked indicators, in particular, into line with international standards;

         3.   Carrying out the required surveys and censuses, and improving administrative registers for the periodic production of data on MDG indicators, other development data and country-specific indicators;

         4.   Developing and maintaining a central repository at the national and subnational levels that is disaggregated by sex, where applicable, and user-accessible;

      (ii) Dissemination can be improved in the following ways:

         1.   Publishing metadata with relevant indicators in order to improve transparency, quality and dissemination practices in line with international standards;

         2.   Providing disaggregated data, where applicable, by age, educational attainment, geographical area, ethnic group, urban/rural and gender in order to highlight patterns within countries, thereby facilitating comparisons across subpopulations for effective planning and budgeting by policymakers;

         3.   Publishing a new round of MDG reports, taking note of the new MDG revised framework and incorporating comprehensive coverage in terms of disaggregated data with relevant metadata and trend analysis to track progress towards the achievement of MDGs;

   (b) At the regional level, the secretariat will continue to implement the following initiatives in 2011-2013:

   (i) Review and identify regional priorities and propose ways of improving the production and analysis of MDGs, including development indicators;

   (ii) Propose future courses of action, particularly in terms of recommending areas and modalities for technical cooperation and statistical capacity-building;

   (iii) Develop and maintain a regional central database derived from national databases and publications aimed at monitoring availability, tracking progress and planning capacity-building activities in focused statistical areas;

   (iv) Review and discuss mechanisms available to agencies for gathering data from countries, their methods of compilation of international data series and the imputation techniques used to calculate regional and global estimates for MDG indicators;

   (v) Identify ways of improving compilation of regional data series by improving reporting mechanisms from national statistical systems to international agencies;

   (vi) Compile and review national metadata published in national central databases and make recommendations on ways of improving them;

   (vii) Review current methodologies for imputations and consultation mechanisms with member countries and recommend methods to improve methodologies, transparency and consultation mechanisms, both within countries and with international agencies.

Annex I

SUMMARY TABLE OF DEVINFO ADAPTATIONS
AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

Country/Organization	Database	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Algeria	MICS ALGERIE					1				
	ELDJAZAIRInfo		1	1						
Comoros	DevInfo Comoros								1	
Djibouti	DjiboutiInfo									1
Egypt	EgyptInfo							1		
Mauritania	MauritInfo			1	1					
Morocco	MarocInfo							1		
Somalia	SomInfo							1		
Sudan	SudanInfo -SHHS								1	
	SUDANiNFO – MICS & FMS								1	
	Southern Sudan Info							1		
Tunisia	DevInfo Tunisia	1			1					
	ChildInfo Tunisia								1	
Iraq	IraqInfo							1		
	IAU Info								1	
Lebanon	LebInfo						1			
Palestine	DHSInfo					1				
	PapFamInfo						1			
	PalInfo					1		1		
	CensusInfo								1	
Oman	OmanInfo		1							
United Arab Emirates	DubaiInfo								1	
Yemen	Yemen Population Census					1				
	MDG Yemen						1			1
	Key Indicators of DPPR							1		1
	GenderInfo Yemen									1
	MICS									1
Total National	33	1	2	2	4	2	3	7	7	5
UNICEF	MenaInfo	1							1	
UNICEF	KPI Info								1	
UNICEF	ArabInfo		1							
ESCWA	HealthInfo						1			
ESCWA	Arab GenInfo								1	
ESCWA	Y-Info							1		1
ESCWA	Arab MDGInfo									1
Total regional	9	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	2
Total national and regional	42	2	3	2	4	2	4	8	10	7

Annex II

NATIONAL MDG REPORTS

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bahrain									
EN		↓				↓			
FR									
AR						↓			
Egypt									
EN	↓		↓				↓	↓	
FR									
AR			↓					↓	
Iraq									
EN				↓					
FR									
AR									↓
Jordan									
EN			↓						↓
FR									
AR			↓						↓
Kuwait									
EN		↓		↓					
FR									
AR		↓							
Lebanon									
EN		↓					↓		
FR									
AR		↓							
Oman									
EN			↓						↓
FR									
AR			↓						↓
Palestine									
EN	↓			↓	↓		↓	↓	↓
FR									
AR				↓	↓		↓	↓	↓
Qatar									
EN				↓			↓		
FR									
AR				↓			↓		
Saudi Arabia									
EN				↓					
FR									
AR	↓			↓					
Sudan									
EN			↓	↓					
FR									
AR									
Syrian Arab Republic									
EN		↓							
FR									
AR		↓		↓					
United Arab Emirates									
EN			↓			↓			
FR									
AR			↓						
Yemen									
EN		↓		↓					
FR									
AR									

Annex III

COMPARING INDICATORS BY CLUSTER, 2008 AND 2010

In 2008, cluster (a) included indicators for which less than 23 per cent of member countries registered at least two data points since 1990. The results of the assessment in 2010 are shown in parallel, which indicate improvements in data availability for the three indicators.

	2008		2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
7.3 Consumption of all Ozone-Depleting Substances in ODP metric	1	8	12	92
7.5 Proportion of total water resources used, percentage	3	23	13	100
7.10 Slum population as percentage of urban, percentage	1	8	6	46

In 2008, cluster (b) included indicators for which between 31 and 46 per cent of member countries registered at least two data points since 1990. The group included indicators related to poverty and the greenhouse effect, which are considered to be challenging indicators for countries collecting data for monitoring and reporting. The assessment in 2010 shows that poverty-related indicators were reported on by fewer or equal to 23 per cent of member countries. Reporting on seats held by women in national parliaments and carbon dioxide emissions indicators have both improved during the past two years.

	2008		2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1.1 Population below $1 (PPP) per day, percentage	5	38	3	23
1.2 Poverty gap ratio at $1 a day (PPP), percentage	6	46	3	23
1.3 Poorest quintile's share in national income or consumption, percentage	4	31	3	23
3.3 Seats held by women in national parliament, percentage	5	38	12	92
7.2 Carbon dioxide emissions (CO2), metric tons of CO2 per capita (CDIAC)	4	31	13	100
8.13 Population with access to essential drugs, percentage	5	38	0	0

In 2008, cluster (c) included indicators for which 54 to 69 per cent of ESCWA member countries registered at least two data points since 1990. The group included such crucial indicators for the region as malnutrition, education, gender parity, tuberculosis, malaria and forest areas, which require regular monitoring. It is worth noting that the assessment in 2010 shows improved monitoring in almost all these indicators, with the exception of malaria death rates.

	2008		2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1.9 Population undernourished, percentage	8	62	9	69
2.1 Total net enrolment ratio in primary education, both sexes	9	69	13	100
2.2 Percentage of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary, both sexes	7	54	10	77
2.3 Literacy rates of 15-24 years old, both sexes, percentage	7	54	9	69
3.1 (c) Gender Parity Index in secondary level enrolment	7	54	13	100
3.1 (b) Gender Parity Index in tertiary level enrolment	7	54	12	92
3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	7	54	10	77
6.6 (a) Malaria death rate per 100,000 population, all ages	8	62	0	0
6.10 (a) Tuberculosis detection rate under DOTS, percentage (mid-point)	7	54	13	100
6.10 (b) Tuberculosis treatment success rate under DOTS, percentage	9	69	13	100
7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest, percentage	7	54	12	92

Cluster (d) included indicators for which 77 to 92 per cent (almost all ESCWA member countries) registered at least two data points since 1990. Almost all the indicators in this group crucial for policymaking have remained at the same level, with the exception of malnutrition and reproductive health services which deteriorated over the two-year period.

	2008		2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1.8 Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight, percentage	12	92 🟢	9	69 🟡
3.1 (a) Gender Parity Index in primary level enrolment	10	77 🟢	13	100 🟢
5.2 Births attended by skilled health personnel, percentage	10	77 🟢	7	54 🟡
5.3 Current contraceptive use among married women 15-49 years old, any method,	10	77 🟢	10	77 🟢
6.9 (b) Tuberculosis death rate per year per 100,000 population (mid-point)	12	92 🟢	13	100 ⚫
7.9 Proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources, total	10	77 🟢	12	92 🟢
7.9 Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities, total	11	85 🟢	11	85 🟢

Cluster (e) includes the eight out of 35 indicators that registered complete coverage by all ESCWA member countries in 2008. However, in 2010 maternal mortality data was not reported on as in previous years.

	2008		2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
4.1 Children under five mortality rate per 1,000 live births	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
4.2 Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) per 1,000 live births	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
4.3 Children 1 year old immunized against measles, percentage	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
5.1 Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births	13	100 ⚫	0	0 🔴
6.9 (a) Tuberculosis prevalence rate per 100,000 population (mid-point)	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
8.15 Mobile cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 population	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫
8.16 Internet users per 100 population	13	100 ⚫	13	100 ⚫