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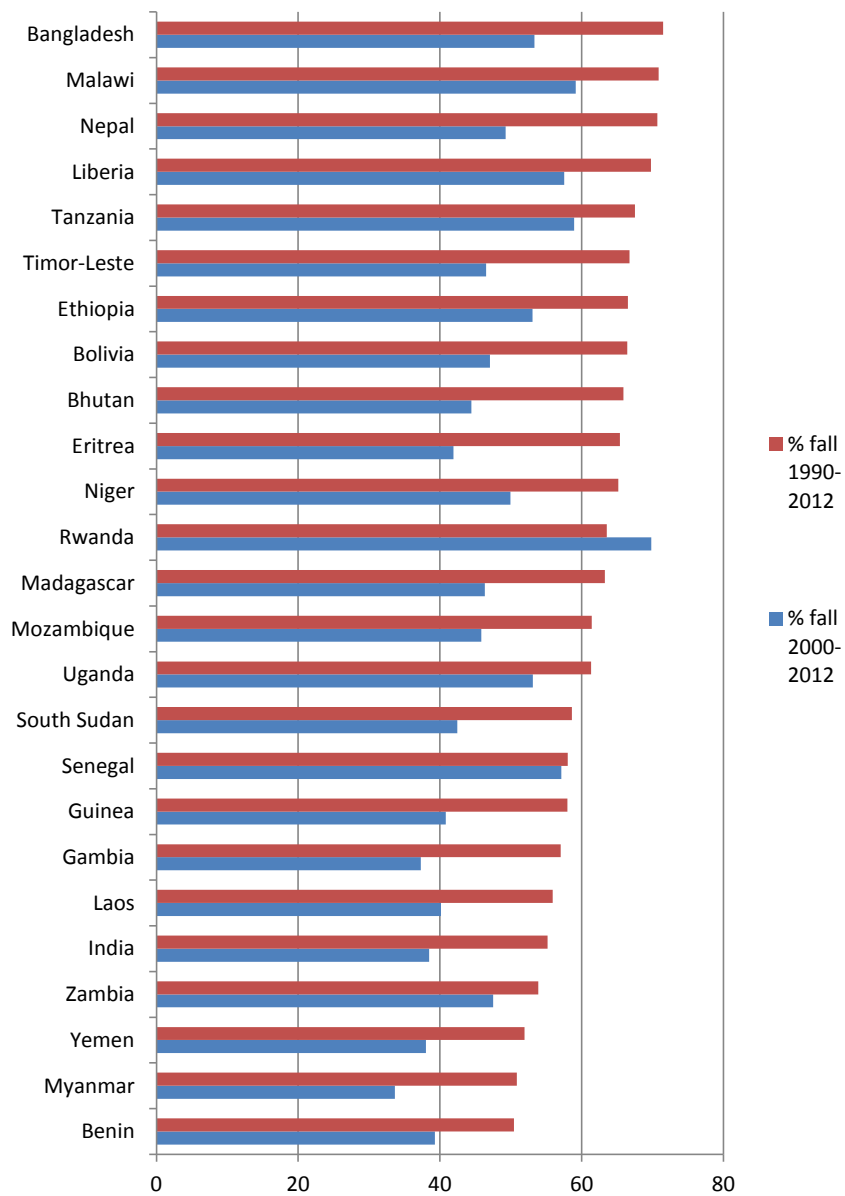
Child survival: Your government made a promise in 2000.

The next year an MDG target was proposed.
It has a generally easier baseline of 1990.

Below from 2014 UN estimates: progress to 2012.

Red: progress on MDG4 (1990 baseline)
Blue: progress on Millennium Declaration promise from "current rates".

Targets are 67% by 2015.
Countries selected by UNICEF as high mortality.



Like many people - including me in the past, and **Lancet staff** and other contributors - Norheim and colleagues make an error. Millennium Development Goals targeting reductions by 2015 were not "adopted in 2000" (1).

Similarly, Gates says "the persistence of maternal mortality motivated world leaders in 2000 to include it in the Millennium Development Goals" (2).

Official MDG list based on Secretary-General's proposals of 2001:

"Goals and Targets **(from the Millennium Declaration)** ...

- Reduce by two-thirds, between **1990** and 2015, the under-five mortality rate...
- Reduce by three quarters, between **1990** and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio ...". (3)

Millennium Declaration:

"We resolve...by the year 2015...to have reduced maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five child mortality by two thirds, of their **current rates.**" (4).

There are some implications for both international and national accountability.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Berkley

Notes

"During the...Millennium Summit in 2000, 147 heads of state gathered and adopted the Millennium Development Goals...with quantitative targets set for the year 2015." (5)

A co-author of a 2005 article published by The Lancet containing the error:

"During the...Millennium Summit in 2000, 147 heads of state gathered and adopted the Millennium Development Goals...relative to 1990" (6)

later published the correct position:

"Myth 4: The Millennium Declaration established 1990 baselines" (7).

The MDG framework was **proposed** by the Secretary-General on 6 September 2001 in a "Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration". (8)

On 6 November 2001 the heads of UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA announced to UN country representatives,

"The International Development Goals (IDGs) and the development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration have recently been merged under the designation of "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs). They have been agreed by the United Nations system, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and OECD/DAC." (9)

They attached a guidance note for country reporting. This stated that the text of the Declaration "would imply" a baseline of 2000 for both the mortality and other relevant pledges. (10).

It was only after civil servants changed the baseline that the General Assembly passed a resolution on the "road map" containing the change.

In December 2001 the General Assembly did not say it "adopted" the new targets but recommended "that the "road map" be considered as a useful guide in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration".

Even then it requested

"the Secretary-General to prepare an annual report and a comprehensive report every five years on progress...towards implementing the Millennium Declaration, drawing upon the "road map"...while the quinquennial comprehensive reports examine progress achieved towards implementing all the commitments made in the Declaration".

It looks like member states were asking the Secretary-General to report not just on the generally easier MDG4 and MDG5 but on their pledges of 2000.

This interpretation is boosted by the fact that they at the same time invited "specific measures to give widespread publicity to the Millennium Declaration".

http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/56_95/a_res56_95e.pdf

National leaders did not make any explicit statement at the UN on MDGs until September 2005 (11). The USA's position earlier in 2005 emphasised that the MDG framework was "solely a Secretariat product" and not formally endorsed by the UN membership (12).

The leaders reaffirmed the Declaration in 2005 (13) and 2013 (14).

References

(1) Volume 385, No. 9983, p2148–2149, 30 May 2015

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2815%2961017-0/abstract>

(2) DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60940-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60940-0)

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2815%2960940-0/fulltext?rss=yes>

(3) <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=indicators/officialist.htm>

(4) <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

(5) <http://www.thelancet.com/series/millennium-development-goals>

(6) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(05\)17791-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(05)17791-5)

(7) <http://johnmcarthur.com/2015/01/origins-of-mdgs/>

(8) http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/SGReports/56_326/a_56_326e.pdf

(9) http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/1607-MDGs_-_letter_-_MDGs_-_letter.pdf

(10) http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/2356-English.doc

(11) <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=/Products/GAResolutions.htm>

(12) pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PAAAB560.pdf

(13) http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/GAResolutions/60_1/a_res_60_1e.pdf

(14) <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf>