



Progress of Millennium Development Goal 1(Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger) among SAARC member States: A Comparative analysis

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ABSTRACT: Poverty can be defined as a social phenomenon in which section of the society is unable to fulfill even its basic necessities of life. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent a consensus among nations on a core agenda for development. They constitute eight global objectives each with one or more quantitative targets, which the developing countries plan to achieve by 2015. Poverty eradication (MDG 1) has multiplier effects on other MDGs. The progress towards this goal is bound to have impact on other MDGs like child health, maternal mortality, major diseases and environmental protection. The MDGs have been instrumental in building a common agenda of broad priorities and have induced governments to take concrete actions & improve coordination in support of poverty reduction efforts. South Asia is among the poorest regions in the world. As a result, these countries have designed national development strategies, explicitly oriented at achieving the MDGs and have aligned these objectives with other national priorities. The SAARC member states, in order to rid South Asia from poverty and make faster progress towards MDGs framed their own goals, known as SAARC Development Goals to be achieved from 2007-2015. While the region has made progress towards the attainment of some goals, there are cross- country variable results. This paper tries to analyze the progress of MDG1 in SAARC member states.

Key words: Millennium Declaration, MDGs, SDGs, MDG1, Targets, Indicators, SAARC, South Asia, Poverty, Uneven progress.

I. INTRODUCTION

The adoption of the *Millennium Declaration* in 2000 by 189 Member states of the UN General Assembly was a defining movement for global cooperation in the 21st century. The adoption of this declaration led to subsequent elaboration of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015 [1]. These MDGs provided a roadmap whereby international community can shape its policies and programmes with a view to achieving human development around the world. All the states of South Asia are the signatories of Millennium Declaration. Attainment of MDGs is primarily a responsibility of individual member states. The countries of South Asia have pledged to prioritize MDGs in their developmental plans. All the states of South Asia have made considerable progress with regard to the attainment of most of the MDGs. However, country disparities exist and no country is likely to achieve all the MDGs by 2015 [1]. It should be noted here that while the deadline for achieving MDGs is 2015, in case of Afghanistan the deadline is 2020. Afghanistan officially adopted the MDGs during the post- Taliban era, almost five years after the Millennium Declaration. As a result, Afghanistan's time line to reach official targets was extended from 2015 to 2020. In addition, to reflect the critical role played by the security context in achieving socio-economic development, Security was added as the 9th goal for Afghanistan, while other targets had to be tailored to reflect the country's specific conditions [2]. The eight MDGs along with their targets are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Millennium Development Goals and Targets.

Goals	Targets
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<p>Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</p> <p>Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</p> <p>Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>
Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education	<p>Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p>
Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality	<p>Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>
Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality	<p>Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>
Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health	<p>Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive Health</p>
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other major diseases	<p>Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</p> <p>Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it</p> <p>Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</p>
Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability	<p>Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p> <p>Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</p> <p>Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</p> <p>Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</p>
Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development	<p>Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system</p> <p>Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries. this includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</p> <p>Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty second special session of the General Assembly)</p> <p>Target 8.D: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing Countries</p> <p>Target 8.E: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and Communication</p>

Source: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg>

II. FRAMING OF SAARC DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A REGION'S DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE MDGS

The South Asian region contains huge diversity and contrasting groups of countries. It includes the second most populous country in the world, India as well as Small Island developing state, the Maldives. Sri Lanka and Nepal are still recovering from decades of ongoing conflict, with low levels of conflict remains ongoing in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Bhutan has transformed itself from a Monarchy into a constitutional regime and Bangladesh, despite current high levels of poverty has been singled out as having the potential to become one of the world's largest economies [3].

The south Asian Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC), was established in 1985 with a mandate to foster cooperation among South Asian States for eradicating poverty from the region [4]. SAARC was established by seven - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan became the eighth member in 2007 during the 14th SAARC Summit [5].

There has been an attempt by many regions and respective countries to Regions to localize the MDGs. One of such attempts is the preparation of SAARC Development Goals (SDGs) [6]. These goals essentially revolve around the MDGs [7]. With a view to fulfill the mandate given to SAARC, the SAARC leaders at their Sixth Summit held in Colombo in 1991 established an Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation (ISACPA). The Commission was established to recommend the ways for the eradication of poverty in South Asia. The Commission prepared a report and submitted it to the seventh SAARC Summit (Dhaka, 1993), in which it provided a conceptual frame work for poverty alleviation through social mobilization and empowerment in South Asia [8]. The seventh SAARC Summit accepted the recommendations and decided to introduce a strategy of social mobilization and a policy of decentralized agricultural development, village re-awakening, small- scale, labor- intensive industrialization & human development for eradication of poverty from the region [9].

The Twelfth SAARC Summit held in Islamabad in January 2004 recommended the reconstitution of ISACPA to prepare a report on "*Our Further our responsibility*" [10]. The Commission was asked to prepare a comprehensive and realistic blue print, setting out SAARC Development Goals (SDGS) for the next five years in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, health and environment, and submit it in the next summit. This action reflected South Asian leaders' recognition of the regional imperative for galvanizing a popular imagination of poverty free South Asia as well as the international imperative of achieving the MDGs by 2015. Collective wills of the SAARC leaders to go further and faster, beyond the MDG targets inspired the identification of the SDGs [11]. The Commission at its third meeting held at the SAARC Secretariat on 25 January, 2007 finalized the recommendations and decided to prepare a report titled "*Taking SDGs Forward*". Taking into consideration both the South Asian context and specificities and the relevant linkages with international goals such as the MDGs, the report recommends adoption of 75 indicators for the 22 SDGs to be attained within a period of five years from 2007-12. The third SAARC Ministerial meeting on poverty Alleviation, held in Kathmandu on 5th April 2013, has extended the terminal years of SDGs from 2012 to 2015 to coincide with the Millennium Development Goals [12].

III. PROGRESS OF GOAL 1 (ERADICATION OF EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER) IN SAARC MEMBER STATES

Poverty is a term for which there is no universally agreed definition. Multidimensional measures of poverty incorporate income as well as aspects such as health, education, shelter and nutrition, amongst others. Viewed in this light, the goal of eradicating poverty would incorporate many of the subsequent MDGs. However, in the context of the MDGs, extreme poverty is more narrowly defined in terms of income, as the proportion of people whose income/expenditure is less than \$1.25 a day [13]. This goal has three targets.

Target 1: Halve between 1990 & 2015 the proportion of population whose income is less than one dollar a day
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Indicator 1.1: Poverty head count Ratio (percentage of population below national poverty line)

Poverty head count ratio is the percentage of population whose income/consumption expenditure is below national poverty line [14]. The world reached the MDG Target five years ahead of 2015 deadline [15]. South Asia has made remarkable progress in reducing the poverty head count ratio. The poverty rates fell by an average of one percentage points annually- from 51 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2010 & from 51 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2010 when excluding India [16].

Although South Asia has succeeded in reducing poverty to a great extent, the challenges remain formidable because of the sheer number of poor people, large variations within countries & worsening inequality [17].

Pakistan has been the biggest success story by reducing the proportion of population living below national poverty line from 26.1 percent in 1990-91 to 12.4% in 2010/ 11 [18]. Likewise in India, the proportion of population living below national poverty line declined from 47.8% in 1990 to 21.9% in 2012 [19]. The rapid pace of economic growth and the sustained levels of development assistance have allowed the government of Bhutan to continually increase investments in social sector & decrease poverty. The proportion of population living below national poverty line decreased from 36.3% in 2000 to 16.7% in 2012 [20]. The sustained growth rate in excess of 6 percent in Bangladesh achieved in recent years has played positive role in eradicating poverty. The poverty declined from 56.6% in 1992 to 35.2% in 2010 [21]. According to National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007-08, the proportion of population below the national absolute poverty line in Afghanistan is 36 percent, meaning that approximately nine million Afghans are not able to meet their basic needs. The NRVA 2011-12 shows that consumption patterns have not changed significantly since 2007-08, possibly suggesting limited change in both poverty & poverty vulnerability over time. Nepal has made significant progress in meeting MDG1. The proportion of people below national poverty line declined from 42 percent in 1990 to 25.4 percent in 2010 [22]. Maldives, which was considered as one of the world's 20 poorest countries is on its way toward official middle- income status, building on generally sustained growth and rising prosperity. The country was successful in achieving the target of halving proportion of population below national poverty line in 2004 [23]. Sri Lanka has made considerable progress in poverty reduction over the long term. From a baseline figure of 26.1 percent in 1990/91, the proportion of people living below poverty line rose to 29 percent in 1995/ 96 & then declined sharply to 23 percent in 2002 & to 8.9 percent in 2010. The MDG target of halving poverty has been achieved much ahead of 2015. However, inter-province variations in poverty levels are large [24].

Table 2: Poverty Head Count Ratio at National Poverty Line (%).

Country	1990	2001/02	2006/07	2010	2012
Afghanistan ^a	33 (1991)	-	36	36	-
Bangladesh ^b	56.6	48.9	38	31.5	-
Bhutan ^c	-	34.8	23.2	-	*12.0
India ^d	47.8	-	37.2 (2005)	29.8	21.9
Maldives ^e	3 (1997)	-	1	-	*1.7
Nepal ^f	42	38	30.3	25.4	-
Pakistan ^g	26.1	34.5	21.4	21.0	12.4
Sri Lanka ^h	26.1	22.7	15.2	8.9	-

Sources:

^aNRVA 2008, 2012

^bHES 1991-92, HIES 2000, 2005, & 2010, BBS

^cPoverty Analysis Report 2007, mdgs.un.org/unsd/indicator

^dPlanning commission

^eVulnerability and poverty Assessment 2004, 2009

^fNepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2013.

^gHouse hold surveys, Pakistan Bureau of statistics various Years

^hHIES, various years, Department of census & statistics

*<http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mdg>

Indicator 1.2: Poverty GAP Ratio

Poverty gap ratio is the mean distance separating the population from the poverty line (with the non-poor being given a distance of zero), expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. The ratio provides a useful perspective on the depth and severity of poverty in the country [25]. The Increase in average incomes since 2000 has enabled many people to lift themselves out of poverty & has reduced the depth of poverty of those who remain extremely poor. Although South Asia as a whole is performing well vis-à-vis other regions in this regard, the lion's share of the benefits has been accrued by the richest quintile of society [26].

Available data suggests that almost all the countries in south Asia have made good progress with regard to this indicator. The poverty gap ratio in Bangladesh has declined from 17.2% in 1991-92, to 6.50% in 2010. Thus, Bangladesh has already achieved the target of halving the poverty gap that was targeted to be achieved in 2015. Similarly, India has also achieved the target by reducing its poverty gap ratio from 13.6% in 1994 to 4% in 2012.

Poverty gap ratio declined sharply in Pakistan from 23.2% in 1991 to 4.4% in 2005 & 3.5% in 2008. Sri Lanka, with the lowest poverty gap ratio of 5.6% in 1990 has reduced its poverty gap ratio to 1.7% in 2010. Nepal has also performed well on the indicator by reducing its poverty gap from 11.75% in 2000 to 6.1% in 2012. Maldives achieved the target much ahead of 2015. It reduced its poverty gap from 3% in 1997 to 1% in 2004 & further 0.87 in 2009. As of 2010, poverty gap ratio in Afghanistan was 8%, same as 2005 baseline value. It had however increased to 9.4% in 2008. The government of Afghanistan aims to bring down this value to roughly 5% by 2020. Available data for Bhutan shows that the Country has achieved the target by reducing the poverty gap ratio from 8.6% in 2004 to 2.6% in 2012 [27].

Table 3: Poverty GAP Ratio at National Poverty line, percentage.

	1990	2001/02	2006/07	2010	2012
Afghanistan^a	-	-	8.0(2005)	8.0	-
Bangladesh^b	17.2(1991)	12.9	9.0	6.5	-
Bhutan^c		-	8.6(04)	-	*2.60
India^d	13.6 (1994)	-	8.3(05)	6.2	*4.0
Maldives^e	3.0 (1997)	-	1.0 (04)	0.8 (09)	-
Nepal^f		11.75	7.55	-	6.1
Pakistan^g	23.2(1991)	7.9 (02)	4.4	3.5(08)	-
Sri Lanka^h	5.60	5.1 (02)	3.1	*1.70	

Sources:

^aNRVA 2008, 2012

^bHES 1991-92, HIES 2000, 2005, & 2010, BBS

^cPoverty Analysis Report 2007

^d<http://data.worldbank.org/indicators>

^eVulnerability and poverty Assessment 2004, 2009

^fNepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2013.

^gHouse hold surveys, Pakistan Bureau of statistics various Years

^hHIES, various years, Department of census& statistics

*<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/indicator>

Indicator 1.3: Share of poorest quintile in national income or consumption

Despite rapid economic progress, the share of poorest quintile in national income or consumption has shown a declining trend in some countries of South Asia and in some countries, the improvement has been marginal. The benefits of economic growth have been accrued by limited sections of the society and the income inequalities are increasing between the rich and the poor [28]. The share varied among the countries and ranged from 9.6 percent, the highest among all states of South Asia in Pakistan in 2012 and 6 percent, the lowest of all states in Bhutan in 2004 [29].

Table 4: Poorest Quintile's Share in National Income/Consumption.

Country	1991	2003	2005	2010
Afghanistan^a	-	-	9.3	9.0
Bangladesh^b	-	6.6 (04)	6.5(07)	6.8
Bhutan^c	9.6	-	8.8	8.9
India^d	8.8 (94)	--	8.4	8.2
Maldives^e	6(97)	-	6 (04)	-
Nepal^f	7.9(96)	6.5	6.2	8.3
Pakistan^g	8.1	9.4(02)	9.2	9.6(08)
Sri Lanka^h	8.9	7(02)	7.1(07)	7.7

Sources:

^aNRVA Surrey 2007/08, 2012

^bdata world bank. Org/ indicator

^cVPA, 2004, 2007, 2010

^dPlanning commission

^e<http://millenniumindicators.un.org>

^fNPC & World Bank (2013) Nepal: Small area estimates of poverty 2011, Kathmandu.

^gPakistan MDGs Report 2013.

^hDepartment of census and statistics HIES, various years

Target 2: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and youth

Following the wide spread conviction that poverty can only be reduced if people have decent and productive jobs, target 1B was added under MDG 1 in 2006: Reaching full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women & young people [30].

Indicator 2.1: Employment to Population Ratio

The most vulnerable members of society are those most unlikely to find work. There exists huge gender gap in employment in all the countries of South Asia. While in Nepal and Bhutan, the gap is not much, the gap is more pronounced in all other countries of the region. Male employment is relatively high suggesting that the low employment to population ratio is being driven by lack of female employment [31].

Table 5: Employment to Population Ratio (%).

	1990			2000			2005			2010		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
Afghanistan^A	55.9(92)	79.7	30	56	79.9	30.2	58.8	81.7	34.1	--	-	-
Bangladesh^B	51.2	86.2	14	54.9	84	23.9	58.5	86.8	29.2	59.3	82.5	36
Bhutan^C	-	-	-	69.8	74	66	58.6	69.4	46	66.3	71.5	61.4
India^D	58.3(94)	81	34.4	56.8	79.3	32.7	57.7	78.9	33.2	52.9	75.4	31.1
Maldives^E	51.3(95)	74.2	27.9	54.2	71.2	36.8	54.9(06)	69.5	40.3	59	-	-
Nepal^F	67.2(96)	71	63.7	84.3	88.3	80.5	91.6	90	93	82.2	79.2	84
Pakistan^G	40.5	68.9	9.8	39.5	66.1	11.3	40.4(04)	66	17.2	40.9	63.4	21.6
Srilanka^H	50.2(92)	69.4	30.9	52.4	72.2	32.9	51.2	72.2	31	52.3(07)	70.7	38.6

Sources:

^{a,c,d,e,f,g,h}<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/indicator>

^bLabor force survey, various year, BBS

Indicator 2.2: Proportion of employed people living below \$1 per day

Although, the employment- to- population ratio has grown over the years in almost all the countries of South Asia, it is surprising to learn that almost half of the employed People live below \$1 per day. However, while some countries have not been able to reduce the proportion of employed people living below \$1 a day, some have demonstrated a remarkable progress in this regard with Nepal registering highest rate of progress, followed by Indian and Pakistan [32].

Table 6: Proportion of Employed People Living Below USD1 per Day (%).

	1990	2000	2005	2010
Afghanistan	-	-	46.8	-
Bangladesh	70.4 (91)	58.0	49.4	41.7
Bhutan	-	26.8 (03)	10.7 (07)	-
India	68 (91)	47.7	39.1	29.3
Maldevis	16.9 (98)	-	1.1	-
Nepal	62.9 (96)	48.2 (03)	-	21.9
Pakistan	54.7 (91)	29.9 (02)	19.3	18.1(07)
Sri Lanka	-	18.9	8.4 (02)	-

Source: <http://milleniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>

Indicator 2.3: Proportion of own- account and contributing family workers

Own account workers are those who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the type of jobs defined as self- employment (i.e. remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits derived from the goods and services produced), and have not engaged on a continuous basis any employees to work for them during the reference period. Contributing family workers, also known as unpaid family workers, are those workers who are self- employed, as own- account workers in a market oriented establishment operated by a related person living in the same household. The share of vulnerable employment is calculated as the sum of contributing family workers and own- account workers as a percentage of total employment. Vulnerable workers earn less, have fewer benefits and work in poorer conditions than those in decent work, as well as having no social security or legal rights [33]. Although South Asian countries have reduced the proportion of own- account and contributing family workers in total employment over the years, there is still a good share of own account and contributing family workers with highest (81.9% in 2010) in Nepal and the lowest (21.7% in 2005) in Bangladesh [34].

Table 7: Proportion of Own- Account workers in total Employment (%).

	1995	2000	2005	2010
Afghanistan	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh	40.1	33.8	21.7	-
Bhutan	-	-	68.0 (06)	68.8
India	83.1 (94)	83.4	83.1	80.8
Maldives	46.3 (90)	50.3	29.6 (06)	-
Nepal	-	83.1	-	81.9
Pakistan	65.0	59.3	61.9	62.6
Sri Lanka	38.0	-	40.7 (07)	42.0

Source: millennium indicators.un.org /unsd/ mdg

Target 3: Halve, between 1990 & 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Indicator 3.1: Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption.

According to the MDGs, the standard calorie intake for adults who undertake light activity is 2200 calories. Using this figure, South Asia suffers from some of the highest levels of hunger in the world, with just over one fifth of the population not consuming the guideline 2200 calories a day. This makes it the second hungriest region on earth after Sub- Saharan Africa [35].

The information from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2005 using Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) method indicates that there was a modest decrease in Bangladesh in the proportion of population not having the minimum level of dietary energy consumption (2,122 Kcal/day), from 47.5 percent in 1990 to 40.4 percent in 2005. Since 2005, per capital daily calorie intake has significantly increased due to changing food habit of people as well as due to increase in quantity of food consumption. The proportion of malnourished people declined to 29 percent in 2012. The country is still far away from the 2015 target of 24 percent [36]. In Pakistan, the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption of 2,350 calories per adult per day decreased very little from 27.2 percent in 1990 to 17.2 percent in 2012. The proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption (2100 Cal. /day) in Afghanistan was 30 percent in 2005 which increased to 39 percent in 2008 & then again decreased to 29 percent in 2010. The target to bring the figure to 11 percent by 2015 & subsequently to 9 percent by 2020 does not seem possible. Nepal and Maldives have already achieved the target by reducing the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary consumption from 49 in 1990 to 15.7 percent in 2012 and from 11.3 percent in 1991 to 5.4 percent in 2012 respectively. India reduced the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary consumption from 25.5 percent in 1990 to 17 percent in 2012. Keeping in view the past performance, the country is likely to miss the MDG target by 2015. With as high as 50.9 percent population undernourished in 1990, Sri Lanka has not been able to reduce the percentage over the years which was 50.7 percent in 2006. The country is off track on this indicator and is going to miss it by 2015. In Bhutan there is lack of data for this indicator. However, the data which is available shows that the proportion of undernourished population was 3.8 percent in 2003 which increased to 5.9 percent in 2007. The country is required to reduce the percentage to 1.9 percent by 2015 [37].

Table 8: Proportion of People below Minimum Level of Dietary Consumption(%).

	1990	2000	2005	2010	2012	2015Target
Afghanistan^a	-	-	30	39 (08)	29 (10)	9 (2020)
Bangladesh^b	47.5	44.3	40.4	-	29	24
Bhutan^c	-	3.9 (03)	5.9 (07)	-	-	1.9
India^d	25.5	21.1	21.5	18.5	17.0	13
Maldives^e	11.3 (91)	9.7	11.5	6.5	5.4	6.6
Nepal^f	49	47	40	22.5	15.7	25
Pakistan^g	27.2	23.8	26 (02)	18.3	17.2	13.5
Sri Lanka^h	50.9	51.3	50.7(06)	-	-	25

Sources:^aAfghanistan MDGs Report 2012^bHES 1991-92 and HIES various years ,BBS^cMDG status Report 2005, AHB 2007^d<http://minimum indicators.un.org/unsd/mdg>^eHouse hold income and expenditure surveys various years^fMOHD New era & ICF International, 2012**Indicator 1.8: Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age**

Nearly two thirds (66 percent) of Bangladesh's children under –five years of age were under-weight in 1990. According to Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey (BDHS) 2011, it came down to 36 percent in 2011, indicating a reduction rate of 2.16 percent per year against the MDG target requirement rate of 2 percent per year. In view of recent progress made in reducing underweight prevalence rates for children under- five years of age, it seems likely that Bangladesh will reach the MDG target of 33 percent prevalence rate by 2015 [38]. In Pakistan, Prevalence of underweight children under-5 decreased slightly from 40 percent in 1990 to 30.9 percent in 2011, but is still far off the MDG target of less than 20 percent by 2015. Nepal has already achieved the target by reducing the prevalence of under- weight children under-5 years of age from 57 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 2011 [39]. UNICEF reported in 2002 that at least 41% of those under- 5 years old were under- weight in Afghanistan. Two year later in 2004, another survey indicated that the figure has decreased to 32.9 percent. No further survey has been carried out for this indicator after 2004, however, consistent with general improvement in standard of living in Afghanistan, currently fewer under-5 children are expected to be under- weight compared to 2004 [40].

Table 9: Proportion of under- weight children under five years of age (%).

Country	1990	2000	2005	2011	2015 Target
Afghanistan^a	-	41 (02)	32.9 (04)	-	No Target
Bangladesh^b	66	57	48	36	33
Bhutan^c	38 (89)	19	-	12.8 (10)	19
India^d	52	43 (99)	40 (06)	-	26
Maldives^e	43 (94)	25 (01)	-	17.2 (09)	16
Nepal^f	57	53	43	29.1	29
Pakistan^g	40	41.5	38	30.7	20
Sri Lanka^h	38 (93)	29	26	21.6 (09)	19

Sources:^aUNICEF Survey 2004^bBDHS for 2004, 2007, & 2011^c[http/ millennium indicators.un.org/unsd/mdg](http://millennium indicators.un.org/unsd/mdg)^dNHFS (2005-06) * data is shown for children under three years of age.^eNational Nutrition survey 1994, DHS 2009^fMOHP New Era & ICF International (2011)

^eNational Nutrition surveys 1998-99, 2000-01, 2011-12

^bDemographic and Health surveys various years.

There have been notable improvements in the nutritional status of children in Maldives. The percentage of under-weight children declined from 43% in 1994 to again to 17.2% in 2009 and in on track to achieve the target by 2015. Similarly, Bhutan and Srilanka also have made commendable progress in reducing the percentage of under-5 children who are under- weight from 38 percent in 1989 to 19 percent in 2000 & then again to 12.8 percent in 2010 and from 38 percent in 1993 to 21.6 percent in 2009 respectively. All India trend of the proportion of under- weight children below three years of age shows India is going slow in eliminating the effect of malnourishment. From estimated 52 percent in 1990, the proportion of underweight children below three years is required to be reduced to 26 percent by 2015. According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2005-2006, the proportion of under-weight has declined to 40 percent in 2006 meaning that India is going to miss the target by 2015 [41].

IV. CONCLUSION

The Millennium Development goals which were framed by the international community are to be achieved by 2015. The listing of poverty eradication as the Goal one shows the priority which the world leaders attached to it and their determination to eradicate it by 2015. The SAARC member states are signatories to the Millennium Declaration and have pledged to achieve these goals by their target date. The achievement of Goal one becomes increasingly significant in view of its impact on the achievement of other goals. In the context of SAARC member states, the goal becomes highly relevant as the region is amongst the poorest regions in the world. Since the adoption of MDGs, all these states have prioritized these goals in their national development plans and barring few, almost all have made a good head way towards eradicating poverty. However, challenges remain as the number of poor people in these has gone up despite significant reduction in percentage terms. The region is still home to a large number of poor people in the world. Furthermore, the benefits of economic gains have been accrued by a small number of elite classes in these states and the gap among the rich and the poor has gone up. What is needed in these states is to have a holistic approach towards eradicating poverty and to allocate more resources towards fighting this menace.

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