

## PART I OVERVIEW

### Chapter 1

## Introduction and Key Findings

This report is a review of progress toward the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in selected small and island states, including the 32 Commonwealth small states (CSS) and 14 non-Commonwealth countries classified by the UN as small island developing states (SIDS). For ease of reference these will be referred to collectively simply as ‘the 46 small states’.<sup>2</sup>

It is now over a decade since the MDGs were agreed in New York in September 2000. It is hoped that this report, together with other recent UN and regional reviews, will help stimulate fresh discussion about the goals. In recent years they have been knocked off the global agenda – seemingly replaced by the new priorities of climate change and action to correct the economic crisis that began in 2007.

The primary aim of the review is to illuminate the achievements of the small states in pursuing the MDGs, as well as to bring attention to those that are lagging behind or are off-track. The report demonstrates that despite their many common factors of economic and environmental vulnerability, a ‘Big Divide’ separates these states across the range of economic, social and environmental indicators in the MDG system. While much progress has been made by many states in moving towards the targets set, interstate inequity remains a formidable issue to be addressed in formulating international strategies to get value for money in promoting sustainable development. The review highlights aspects of the MDG system that are not well attuned to the interests of small states, and makes recommendations on how these issues can be resolved.

League tables calculated from the UN MDG database outline the performance of the 46 small states in comparison with 10 benchmark states: two small island states, Iceland and New Zealand; three large states, France, the UK and the USA; the four BRIC states, Brazil, Russia, India and China; and South Africa.

In the context of the drive towards sustainable development and the Barbados Programme of Action and the 2005 UN Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, the review suggests priorities for policy and action

by governments and international partners, and sets out a reassessment of implementation at national and regional level.<sup>3</sup>

A major problem identified in the report is the absence of key data – even on headline commitments such as halving poverty by 2015. Without more accurate and regular reporting, it will be difficult to target already stretched resources and MDG attainment may remain out of reach.

In spite of all this, the principal findings of this report are:

#### 1.1 Progress and population size

The 46 small states have made comparatively less progress<sup>4</sup> in achieving the MDGs than larger states. The report shows that success is positively related to population size, with microstates with populations under 100,000 having made the least progress.

In total, the 9 microstates achieved just 27 per cent progress on the MDGs, as compared with 38 per cent progress achieved by the other 37 small states.

The 9 micro states made less progress than both the other 37 small states and the 10 Benchmark states, on each of the eight MDGs. (see Annex A1.18 and figure on front cover).

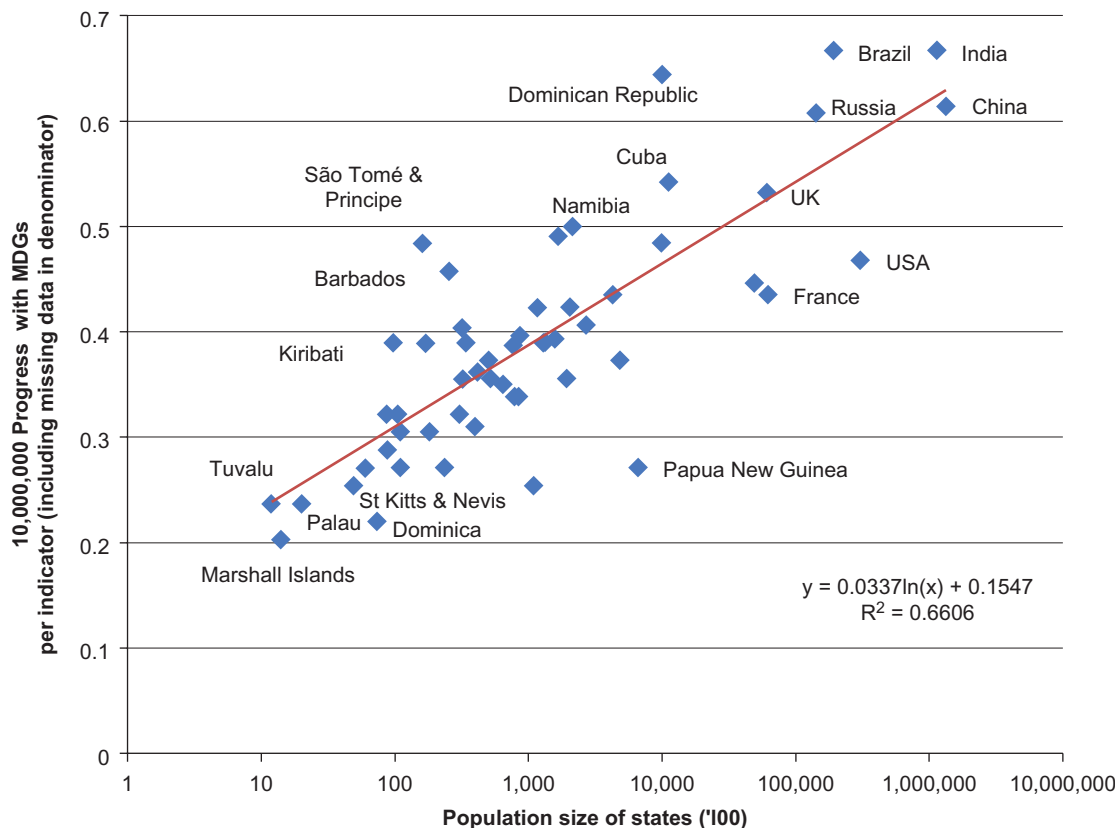
#### 1.2 MDG 1: Poverty relief

Overall, the 46 small states made less progress with poverty relief than the 10 benchmark states. Forty-nine per cent of the small states have not reduced the percentage of the population that is undernourished since 1990.<sup>5</sup> The poverty divide across the 46 small states in 2007 (or latest year available) ranges from 2 per cent of the population living below US\$1 a day<sup>6</sup> in Seychelles to 51 per cent in Comoros.

#### 1.3 MDG 2: Universal education

The 46 small states achieved less progress with education achievement than the benchmark states. The emerging BRIC states (Brazil, Russia, India and China) reported twice the level of progress on this

**Figure 1.1 The MDGs and population size**



Source: Calculated from 2010 UN data

MDG compared with the small states (67 per cent compared to 34 per cent). The education divide across the 46 small states in 2007 (or latest year available) ranged from 62 per cent of children enrolled in primary education in Solomon Islands to 99 per cent in Cyprus.

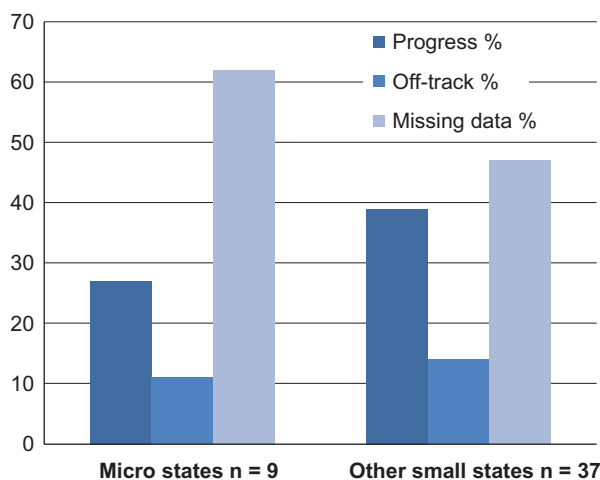
### 1.4 MDG 3: Gender equality

The benchmark states substantially outperformed the 46 small states on gender equality. The small states reported 48 per cent progress compared with 88 per cent reported by the benchmark states. More girls than boys enrolled in tertiary education across the 46 small states. As of 2009 (or latest year available), none of the 32 Commonwealth small states had more than 43 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women, while six had no female parliamentary representation at all. The gender divide in the 46 small states in 2007 ranged from a share of 10 per cent for women in non-agricultural employment in Bahrain to 49 per cent in Cyprus.

### 1.5 MDG 4: Child health

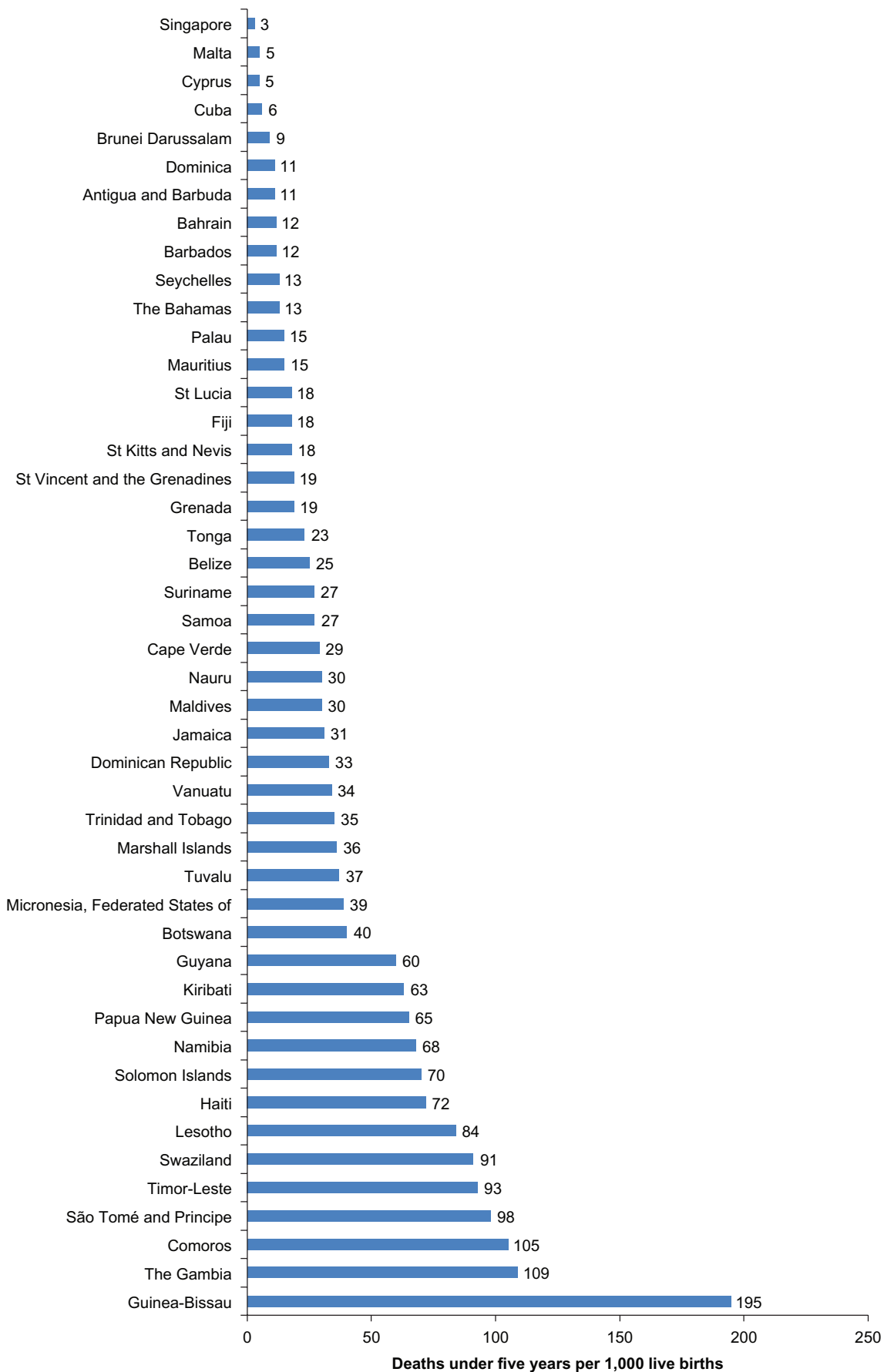
In contrast, the 46 small states outperformed the benchmark states in reducing child mortality, with

**Figure 1.2 Microstates and the MDGs**



Source: UN MDG database 2010

86 per cent making progress compared with 77 per cent of the benchmark states. Many of the states facing the greatest challenges in child health, such as Haiti,<sup>7</sup> Papua New Guinea and the Dominican Republic, reduced their infant deaths in the period 1990 to 2007/2008 by a greater number than other small states.

**Figure 1.3 Reduction in Childhood deaths**

Source: UN MDG database 2010

The child health divide in the 46 small states in 2007 ranged from a child mortality rate<sup>8</sup> of three in Singapore to 195 in Guinea-Bissau.

## 1.6 MDG 5: Maternal health

The 46 small states made greater progress on reducing maternal mortality than the 10 benchmark states; but within those small states there is a large variation in performance. Women in Lesotho, for example, are 100 times more likely to die during pregnancy than those in Cyprus. The risk of maternal death was shown to relate to the level of service of skilled professionals, the provision of antenatal care and undernourishment in the population. The maternal health divide in 2005 ranged from a maternal mortality ratio (MMR)<sup>9</sup> of eight in Malta to 1,100 in Guinea-Bissau.

## 1.7 MDG 6: Disease control

The 10 benchmark states outperformed the 46 small states in the control of major diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis), with 34 per cent making progress and 7 per cent off-track, compared with 25 per cent making progress and 11 per cent off-track among the small states.

The Big Divide in disease control in the 46 small states is evident from the wide range of risks and services for the major disease groups.

### 1.7.1 HIV/AIDS

Access to antiretroviral drugs in the 46 small states in 2007 ranges from 18 per cent of the population in The Gambia and 20 per cent in Guinea-Bissau to 79 per cent in Botswana and 95 per cent in Cuba for those with advanced AIDS. Focused support is needed to close these gaps.

### 1.7.2 Malaria

Reported child deaths from malaria per 100,000 population in the 46 small states in 2008 range from 0 per 100,000 population in Belize and Comoros to 87 in The Gambia and 136 in Guinea-Bissau. There were some fragmentary data for the number of children sleeping under insecticide-treated bed-nets; the lowest reported rates were 3 per cent of children in Suriname in 2000 and 1 per cent in Swaziland in 2007, while the highest reported rates were 39 per cent in Guinea-Bissau in 2006, 49 per cent in The Gambia in 2006 and 56 per cent in São Tomé and Príncipe in 2009. Malaria has been successfully eradicated in a number of small island states in the Caribbean, in Cyprus, Mauritius and Singapore.

Greater control of this disease is clearly possible and more support is needed to reduce discrepancies in risk.

### 1.7.3 Tuberculosis

In 2008, there were a total of 11,000 deaths from tuberculosis in the 46 small states. Eighty per cent of these were in seven countries. The highest death rates per 100,000 population were in Timor-Leste (83), The Gambia (44) and Botswana (32). The lowest rates were in Barbados and St Kitts and Nevis, which reported zero deaths in 2008. In the benchmark states, the highest tuberculosis death rate was 39 per 100,000 in South Africa and the lowest was 0.1 in Iceland. People in Timor-Leste are more than 800 times likely to die from tuberculosis than those in Iceland. A sharper focus is needed on tuberculosis to direct resources to the countries in greatest need.

## 1.8 MDG 7: Sustainable environment

The 10 benchmark states outperformed the 46 small states in the pursuit of environmental sustainability. The benchmark states made collectively 69 per cent progress with the indicators in MDG 7, with 19 per cent collectively off-track. The 46 small states, however, only made 38 per cent progress, with 28 per cent off-track.

### 1.8.1 Forest cover

Since 1990, some 48,000 square kilometres of forest cover has been lost across the 46 small states. While 870,000 square kilometres of total forest cover remained in place in 2005, this was largely accounted for by just four (9%) of the countries. The Big Divide on forest cover in the 46 small states in 2005 is that nine of the small states have less than 5 per cent forest cover, with Lesotho having the lowest level (0.3%), while the Federated States of Micronesia has 91 per cent. The Big Divide on terrestrial and marine protected areas as a percentage of national territory in 2009 ranges from 0.1 per cent in Solomon Islands to 32 per cent in Brunei Darussalam.

### 1.8.2 Safe water and sanitation

By 2008 there were about 12 million people without access to safe water and about 22 million without access to safe sanitation in the small states reviewed. The principal problems of provision were in Haiti, Dominican Republic, Papua New Guinea, Cuba, and Namibia. The Big Divide on safe water provision in 2006 in the 46 small states ranges from 47 per cent of

population with safe water in Fiji to 100 per cent in Barbados. The Big Divide on safe sanitation in 2006 ranges from 32 per cent of the population in Solomon Islands to 100 per cent in The Bahamas.

### 1.8.3 Slum population

The highest levels of urban slum population in 2005 were reported in Dominican Republic (70%), Bahrain (69%), Jamaica (61%) and Belize (47%). In Guyana, the proportion of the urban population living in slums rose from 5 per cent in 1990 to 34 per cent in 2005; and in Jamaica the proportion increased from 29 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 2005. The Big Divide in the slum population in 2005 ranged from 5 per cent in Antigua and Barbuda to 70 per cent in Dominican Republic.

### 1.8.4 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

While in general carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission levels are a function of increasing GDP, among the 46 small states Singapore and Brunei Darussalam have begun to decouple environmental pollution from economic growth, following a pattern associated with reported levels from the USA, the UK, Iceland and France. The Big Divide in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per head of population in the 46 small states ranges from 0.2 metric tonnes per head in Comoros to 30 in Bahrain.

## 1.9 MDG 8: Partnerships

The 10 benchmark states outperformed the 46 selected small states on the indicators for this MDG. Overall, small states made 69 per cent progress, while the ten benchmark states made 80 per cent progress.

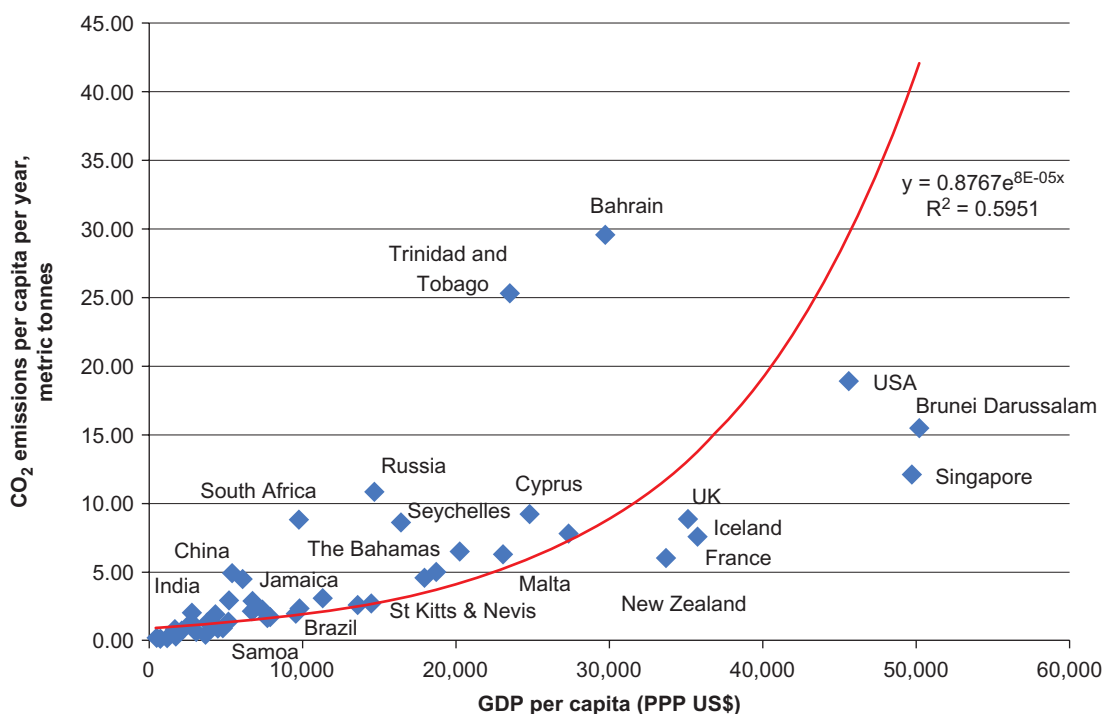
### 1.9.1 Official development assistance (ODA)

To achieve sustainability SIDS need to reduce the proportion of their national income that is derived from aid. Sixty-eight per cent of the 38 SIDS in this review achieved this against the 1990 baseline. Only four, St Kitts and Nevis, Haiti, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau increased their dependence on ODA in 2008. The highest latest levels of dependence on aid are in the Federated States of Micronesia (36%), São Tomé and Príncipe (26%) and Seychelles (26%). The lowest levels of ODA receipts as a proportion of gross national income (GNI) are in Barbados (0%) and the Dominican Republic (0.35%).

### 1.9.2 Heavily indebted poor countries

Of the 46 small states, six were heavily indebted poor countries qualifying for debt relief under the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) scheme. These were Comoros, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana,

**Figure 1.4 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and GDP in small states**



Sources: UN MDG database and UN Statistics Division 2010

Haiti, and São Tomé and Príncipe, although Comoros and Guinea-Bissau have yet to reach the completion point for agreement on the special debt relief programme.<sup>10</sup> Within the programme, the four states that have reached completion received in total US\$1,191 million. A further US\$615 million has been committed to Guinea-Bissau and an additional US\$146 million to São Tomé and Príncipe.

### 1.9.3 Debt servicing

Seventeen of the 46 small states (37%) reduced their level of debt servicing as a percentage of exports of goods and services between 1990 and 2008 (or latest year available). In 2008, debt servicing ranged from 1 per cent of exports of goods and services in Botswana to 17 per cent in St Kitts and Nevis.

### 1.9.4 Information and communication technology

All of the 46 small states increased provision of mainline and mobile telephones and internet usage on their 1990 baseline levels. But a wide range between different countries remains.

The Big Divide in the 46 small states for mobile phones in 2008 ranged from 158 per cent in Antigua and Barbuda, 159 per cent in Barbados and 186 per cent Bahrain (more than one phone per person) to 1 per cent in Kiribati, 2 per cent in Marshall Islands and 3 per cent in Cuba.

The highest reported provision of mainline phones was 59 per cent in Malta and Barbados, while the lowest was 0.2 per cent in Timor-Leste, 0.9 per cent in Papua New Guinea and 1.6 per cent in Solomon Islands.

For internet provision, the highest level of use was in Antigua and Barbuda at 75 per cent and Barbados at 74 per cent, while the lowest levels were in Timor-Leste at 0.2 per cent, Papua New Guinea at 2 per cent and Solomon Islands at 2 per cent. Since information and communication technology (ICT) access is a key element in modern development, action on this front is likely to yield sound returns.

## 1.10 Assessing the real numbers

Despite the advances that have been made toward the MDGs since 1990 there is much work to be done. For example, this report shows that for the 46 small states to meet the targets:

- 7 million undernourished people need to be better fed (MDG 1, target 1C, indicator 9);<sup>11</sup>
- 30,000 infant lives need to be saved each year (MDG 4, target 4A, indicator 2);<sup>12</sup>

- 48,000 square kilometres of forest cover should be re-established (MDG 7, target 7A, indicator 7.1);<sup>13</sup>
- 71 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should be cut (MDG 7, target 7A, indicator 7.2.1);<sup>14</sup>
- 5 million people should be provided with safe water (MDG 7, target 7C, indicator 7.8);<sup>15</sup> and
- 13 million people should be provided with a safe toilet (MDG 7, target 7C, indicator 7.9).<sup>16</sup>

## 1.11 Lagging behind

The report shows that in 2005 just 13 per cent of the 46 small states (Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Botswana, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia) accounted for over 80 per cent of the total undernourished population. Meanwhile, 78 per cent of the infant lives that must be saved to meet the 2015 target were in just 17 per cent of the countries (Papua New Guinea, Haiti, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Dominican Republic, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland).

Six (13%) of the small states (Papua New Guinea, Botswana, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Guinea-Bissau and Brunei Darussalam) accounted for 99 per cent of the forest cover that needs to be re-established. Nearly eighty per cent of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to be saved came from just seven (15%) of the countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic, Bahrain, Singapore, Jamaica, Cyprus and Namibia). In addition, over 88 per cent of the people who lacked safe water lived in just five states (Papua New Guinea, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Guinea-Bissau).<sup>17</sup>

## 1.12 Off-track status

The review shows that an assessment of progress by reference solely to the declared MDG targets can be misleading when identifying the states that are most in need of support. The assessment of off-track status can result from a marginal decline in performance from a high level of achievement.

For example, a decline from 99 to 98 per cent registers as far off-track as a decline from 2 to 1 per cent. The measurement of 'proximity to target' to help judge relative performance gives a more relevant picture of progress towards achieving the MDGs.

## 1.13 Missing data

The 46 small states had a higher percentage of indicators with missing data than the benchmark

states. Assisting smaller countries to collect and monitor information is a major task ahead if a clearer picture of progress is to emerge by the target date of 2015.

Overall, 26 of the 46 small states had 50 per cent or more data items missing. The countries with the highest levels of missing data were Nauru, Tuvalu, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Timor-Leste, all of which have more than 62 per cent missing data.

Microstates, although they had fewer indicators off-track compared with other small states (11% as against 14%), had more missing data (62% as against 47%).

### 1.14 Use of percentages

For many indicators, performance and targets are expressed in percentages without reference to the denominators on which they are based. So, for example, the MDG system reports the percentage of the population without safe water or safe sanitation, but variations in population size among the small states obscures the overall scale of need across the selected states.

This report shows that more attention needs to be given to the relative size of need in assessing the total support required and priorities for action. For example, the report shows that in 2007/2008 close to 50 per cent of deaths of infants in their first year (MDG 4, indicator 2) occurred in only three of the 46 small states (Haiti, Papua New Guinea, Guinea-Bissau). Similarly, 65 per cent of those without safe water in the selected states in 2005–2008 lived in two of the 30 small states for which data were available (Papua New Guinea and Haiti).

### 1.15 Investment for progress

The report also examines action taken by small states since 2007 to stimulate progress towards achieving the MDGs by tracking reports of fiscal stimulus packages and national budget and related official statements from 2008 to 2010. Some countries are reshaping their development policies to give greater emphasis to promoting key elements of sustainable development, despite the impact of the world financial crisis.

Such commitments embrace aspects of the MDG agenda, including poverty, education, health and the environment, although few of the national budgets examined explicitly mention progress towards achieving the MDGs or the specific targets to be achieved by 2015. Indeed, few of these states referenced in their national budgets a commitment

to Agenda 21,<sup>18</sup> the 2005 UN Mauritius Strategy for SIDS or the MDG programme.

Exceptions include Singapore, Malta and Mauritius. Singapore was one of the most severely hit victims of the global crisis of 2008–2010, which exposed its economic vulnerability. But its integrated sustainable development programme, complete with specific targets, has allowed it to recover quickly. Although in the league table of progress on MDGs Singapore lies at nineteenth position out of 46 (Table A1.1), it is now moving towards ten new targets for 2030.

Malta, twenty-second in the league table, has declared in its 2009 budget a fresh commitment to eco-friendly programmes. Meanwhile Mauritius, thirteenth in the league table, is introducing a supplementary set of 30 sustainable development indicators covering aspects of production and consumption and natural resources linked to a strategic policy for a sustainable Mauritius.

### 1.16 New measurements

Approaches to monitoring welfare and the environmental impact of development are explored in this report and provide illuminating supplementary tools for policy-makers concerned with the future sustainability of life on this planet.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is now, for instance, promoting the ecological footprint of countries as a measure of pressure exerted on the environment through the process of economic development.

Through the Happy Planet Index (HPI), the London-based New Economics Forum has shown that many small states attain a high level of wellbeing from only modest use of environmental resources. This stands in contrast to larger states that have lower levels of wellbeing and a heavier ecological footprint.

### 1.17 Microstates and progress

Nine of the 46 small states are microstates, with a population of less than 100,000. These microstates made less progress with the MDGs (27%) than the other 37 small states (38%), and although they had fewer indicators off-track (11% as against 14%), they had more missing data (62% as against 47%) (see Figure 1.2).

### 1.18 Recommendations

The report makes technical recommendations that include the following.

1. Provision of technical assistance at regional and country level:
  - More support on the monitoring and pursuit of MDGs for the smallest states through regional technical assistance;
  - Integration of the MDG process within planning, investment and governance systems at national and regional levels;
  - More explicit assessment of the marginal and total costs and benefits of making progress toward specific targets on each indicator, as well as the identification of priorities for intervention.
2. Research and development on technical 'best practices' and the evidence base for intervention:
  - More systematic documentation of the scientific and technical evidence base for interventions within an economics framework that includes social and environmental costs and benefits;
  - Establishment of methods for developing standards of best practice for interventions for the pursuit of MDGs and systems of exchange of technical information and resources.
3. UN agency focus on documentation on SIDS in line with the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI):<sup>19</sup>
  - Comprehensive documentation of MDG and related data from SIDS and the extension of this into the programmes and publications of international agencies (e.g. UNEP, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Commonwealth Secretariat).
4. Further development of UN and national data and indicator monitoring systems to meet the requirements of the MSI:
  - Extension of the MDG framework for the 46 small states and SIDS to cover the priority areas in the MSI and the Barbados Programme of Action.

## Notes

- 1 In 2011 South Africa was included formally in the BRIC group which was then renamed BRICS. South Africa is included as a separate one of the 10 Benchmark states in this report whose database was compiled in 2010.
- 2 Of the 46 states covered in this report, 38 are defined as SIDS. Of the 32 Commonwealth small states, 24 are classified by the UN as SIDS.
- 3 See, for example, UNDP (2004), Jamaica MDG Report, Country Reports, p. 50.
- 4 Progress in this report is defined as having the status of 'achieved' or 'on-track' for performance against a target. Where assessments are reported that cover more than one indicator or more than one country, the sum of 'achieved' and 'on-track' indicators is divided by the sum of indicators assessed for each country. See Section 2.4 for definition of MDG status. The assessment is made against the value of each indicator in each state in 1990, the baseline year defined by the UN.
- 5 Data are for 2005, and excludes nine countries for which data were unavailable. Thus 18 (49%) of the 37 small states for which there are data had not reduced the percentage of their population that is undernourished since 1990.
- 6 2007 at purchasing power parity (PPP) – an arithmetical adjustment by UNDP to exchange rate values of the local currency to better express their purchasing power against a range of common goods and services.
- 7 The data from Haiti relate to the period before the 12 January 2010 earthquake.
- 8 Number of deaths in children under five years old per 1,000 live births.
- 9 Number of deaths of mothers in childbirth per 100,000 live births.
- 10 By September 2011.
- 11 Data are missing for nine countries: Bahrain, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Tonga and Tuvalu.
- 12 Data are missing for Nauru and Tuvalu.
- 13 Data are missing for Marshall Islands and Nauru.
- 14 Data are missing for two countries: Lesotho and Tuvalu.
- 15 Data are missing for 21 countries: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Lesotho, Malta, Marshall Islands, Nauru, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Swaziland, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.
- 16 Data are missing for eight countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Nauru, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles and Timor-Leste.
- 17 This analysis excludes countries for which data were missing.
- 18 The Declaration of the Rio de Janeiro 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Earth Summit, was a 40-chapter blueprint for implementing sustainable development, commonly referred to as Agenda 21 – the Agenda for the twenty-first century.
- 19 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation: the UN General Assembly Commitment to the Implementation of the 2005 UN Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.