

# 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Development  
Progress



Development Progress is an ODI project that aims to measure, understand and communicate where and how progress has been made in development.

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ODI is the UK's leading independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues.



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## 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Around the world, amazing progress is being made. More than 1 billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty since 1990,<sup>1</sup> with major gains made in health and education and in other areas that contribute to human well-being. While the world still faces considerable challenges, including inequality, conflict and climate change, there are many lessons to be learned from countries that have, against all the odds, improved the well-being of their people.

### **What have different countries done to help drive the global progress of recent years?**

To find out, ODI's Development Progress project has produced a series of 50 case studies, exploring countries that have achieved impressive progress on a range of issues. Here we highlight 10 of the best.

#### **Projecting future progress**



How is the world expected to fare over the next 15 years? Check out our scorecard on the Sustainable Development Goals at [developmentprogress.org/SDGs-scorecard](https://developmentprogress.org/SDGs-scorecard)

## People in developing countries living on less than \$1.25 a day<sup>2</sup>



### Malaria, measles and tuberculosis<sup>3</sup>

**59 million**

deaths averted since 2000

### The economies of 'Least Developed Countries'<sup>4</sup>

**3 fold increase**

between 1990-2014

### Children enrolled in primary school<sup>5</sup>



The number of countries where an equal number of boys and girls attend school has increased by nearly 75% since 2000

### Green energy investments in new renewables<sup>6</sup>



Renewables such as wind, solar and biomass generate an estimated 9.1% of the world's electricity

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# 1 VIET NAM<sup>7</sup>

## Poverty reduction

### What happened?

Only 25 years ago, Viet Nam was one of the poorest countries in the world. Progress since then has been dramatic: extreme poverty – affecting almost two thirds of the population only two decades ago – has been all but eliminated.<sup>8</sup>

### How did it happen?<sup>9</sup>

- **Basic services:** Government investment in healthcare and education enabled people living in poverty to work more productively and participate in the growing market – attracting foreign investment and fuelling growth. Around 21% of all government spending goes to education – one of the highest rates in Asia.<sup>10</sup>
- **Agricultural investment:** Agriculture has been boosted by Government efforts to increase crop yields, introduce new technology and improve rural infrastructure, alongside reforms to liberalise markets and redistribute land. Public investment in agricultural R&D almost quadrupled between 1996 and 2008 from \$23 million to \$86 million.<sup>11</sup>
- **Trade reform:** An unorthodox approach opened domestic markets to international competition in some sectors while protecting national industries in others, with a focus on retaining manufacturing and management skills within national borders.

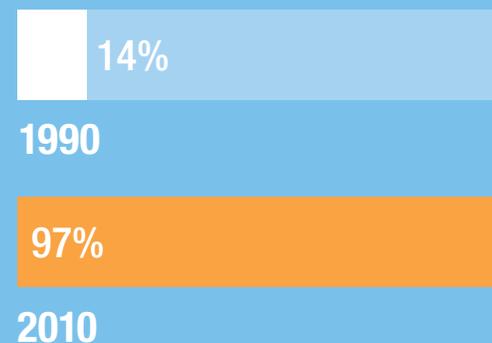


### Population living on less than \$1.25 a day<sup>12</sup>



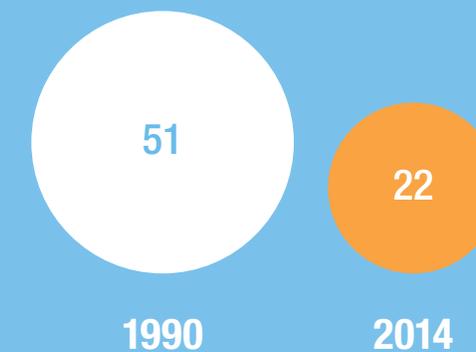
### Access to electricity

Percentage of the population



### Under-five mortality rates

Deaths per 1,000 live births<sup>13</sup>



# 2 NEPAL<sup>14</sup>

## Maternal health

### What happened?

Nepal has reduced its maternal mortality by an estimated 75% since the early 1990s,<sup>15</sup> despite being ranked 145 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index.<sup>16</sup> While global progress on maternal mortality has lagged behind ambition, Nepal shows us that rapid change is possible, even in the most difficult circumstances.

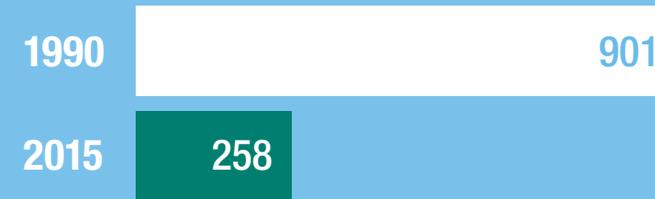
### How did it happen?

- **Falling fertility:** Women in Nepal have far fewer children than they did a generation ago. Contraceptive use doubled between 1991 and 2011.
- **Female empowerment:** Women's educational levels and average incomes have risen.<sup>17</sup> In 2011, more than half of expectant mothers received the recommended four antenatal visits, a five-fold increase in just 15 years.
- **Supply of services:** The Government almost doubled spending on health from \$34 per person in 1995 to \$66 per person in 2010, prioritising family planning and maternal healthcare, expanding access to services in rural areas and abolishing user fees.



### Maternal mortality<sup>18</sup>

Per 100,000 live births



### Number of health posts

Providing basic health services



\*Supported by an additional 50,000 female community health volunteers

### Number of children per woman<sup>19</sup>



### Early 1980s

5.8 children



### 2013

2.3 children

# 3

## KENYA<sup>20</sup>

### Beyond basic education

#### What happened?

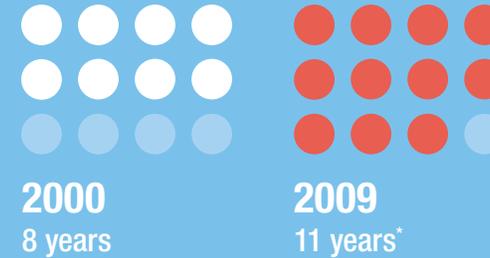
Kenya has lengthened the time children spend in school, increasing secondary school gross enrolment from 40% in the early 2000s to 67% in 2012<sup>21</sup> and inspiring more students to join higher education – enrolment in public universities more than doubled between 2007/08 and 2012/13.<sup>22</sup>

#### How did it happen?

- **Demand:** As more children moved from primary to secondary school, demand for higher-education services increased, with employers also looking for higher-level qualifications. Lower fertility rates allowed families to spend more on education for each child – paying for text-books and uniforms for example.
- **Investment:** Public spending on education rose by 42% in real terms between 2003/04 and 2010/11.<sup>23</sup> Decentralised funding has supported infrastructure development and bursaries.
- **Prioritisation:** Election promises became policy. On the day the Government introduced free primary education in 2003, an extra 1.1 million students went to school. Free secondary education (for non-boarding students) was subsequently introduced in 2008.
- **Alternative providers:** Community and faith-based schools, and growing numbers of private universities, have expanded educational opportunities.

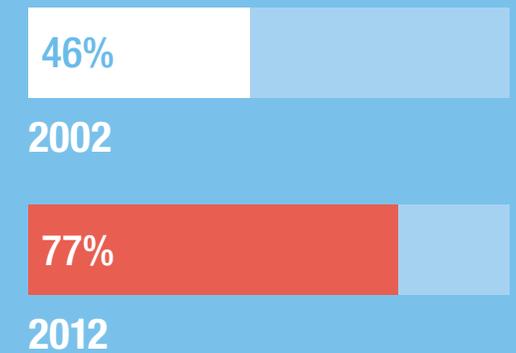


#### Average number of years children spend in school



\*Higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa

#### Children transitioning from primary to secondary school<sup>24</sup>



#### Enrolment in public universities<sup>25</sup>



# 4 PERU<sup>26</sup>

## Urban poverty

### What happened?

Urban poverty in Peru fell from 42% in 2001 to 16% in 2013.<sup>27</sup> While slum settlements are growing, living conditions within such settlements have markedly improved, with more access to water, sanitation and electricity services and greater use of better building materials.

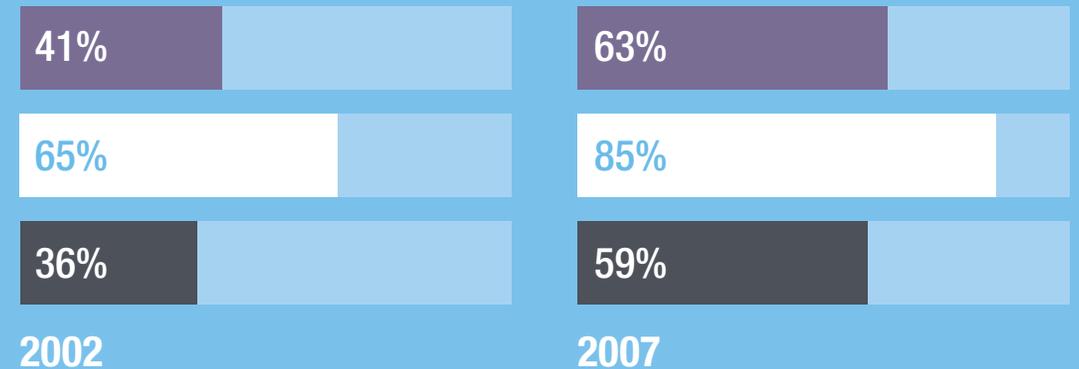
### How did it happen?

- **Utilities and housing programmes:** Since the 1990s, the Peruvian Government has embarked on major programmes to provide services, housing and title deeds. Between 1992 and 1996, for instance, the National Housing Fund spent \$892 million improving basic services in slum areas.
- **Demand from neighbourhood organisations:** Communities have demanded services and title deeds through negotiations, road-blocks and marches, putting pressure on local authorities.
- **Personal investments:** In Peru, 80% of housing is self-built. Families work hard to build a home and use many strategies and assets to improve conditions, drawing on family, relatives and extended social networks.



### Household access to piped water, electricity and sanitation in Peru's slum settlements

● Water piped directly to households ● Access to electricity ● Piped sewerage systems



### Houses with brick and cement walls



# 5 BURKINA FASO<sup>28</sup>

## Agriculture and climate change

### What happened?

Smallholder farmers in Burkina Faso's Central Plateau region face variable rainfall, soil degradation and desertification. Yet many are adapting to these pressures by adopting sustainable agricultural practices that have reclaimed thousands of hectares of once degraded land. These measures help mitigate the impacts of climate change on nutrition, food security and rural incomes.

### How did it happen?

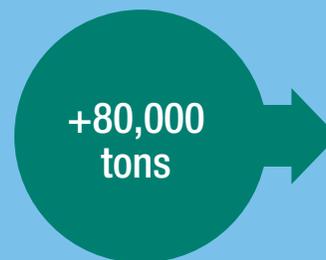
- **Effective adaptation:** Innovative techniques to conserve soil and water have been blended with traditional practices – creating the improved *zai*, *countour stone bunds* and *demi-lunes* techniques that draw on farmers' local knowledge of suitable methods.
- **Dissemination:** Information about techniques has been diffused through strong community networks and locally-led initiatives, with civil society and government support.
- **Finance:** Adoption of sustainable practices by the poorest farmers has been encouraged, with support for initial labour and start-up costs provided by government, donors and civil society. In the 2000s, official aid to Burkina Faso grew six-fold (using current US\$) – often focused on agriculture and the Central Plateau region.<sup>29</sup>



### Degraded land reclaimed and brought into productive use

# 200,000–300,000 hectares

### Additional food crops produced each year



### Providing food security for an additional

# 500,000 people



# 6 TUNISIA<sup>30</sup>

## Women's political voice

### What happened?

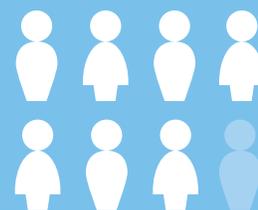
Tunisia is seen as a strong performer on women's rights in the Arab and Muslim world, sustaining decades of progress towards gender equality by advancing women's access to healthcare, education and jobs. Women's political representation has improved markedly and survived the Arab Spring: women occupy nearly one third of seats in the current Parliament.

### How did it happen?

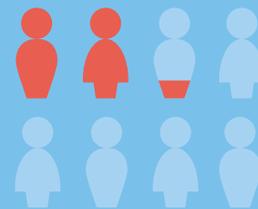
- **Nation building:** A commitment to build a modern, secular state and prevent more conservative movements coming to power aligned elite interests with a gender equality agenda, backed by political support for policies that created an enabling environment for women's empowerment.
- **Socioeconomic policy:** Reforms to expand access to education and affirm reproductive rights fuelled greater access for women to paid employment and helped to increase their collective agency.
- **Women's movements:** Emerging movements, empowered by women's increasing role in economic and public life, have generated public debate on gender equality and supported the drafting of key pieces of legislation.



### Number of children per woman



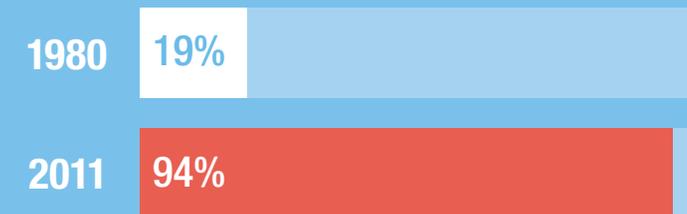
1960  
7 children



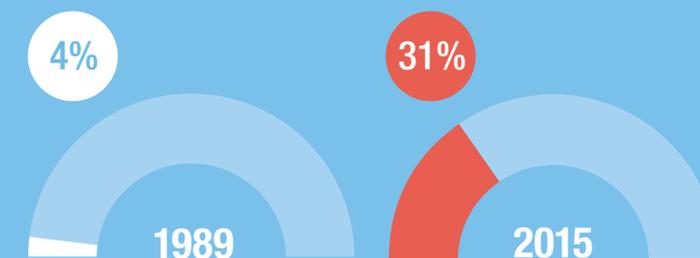
2011  
2.2 children

### Girls in secondary school

Gross enrolment



### Seats in parliament occupied by women



In 2005, 29% of judges were women compared to just 17% in the UK

# 7 TIMOR-LESTE<sup>31</sup>

## Security and personal safety

### What happened?

Despite being classed as a 'fragile state', with a history of conflict that took the lives of over a hundred thousand people, Timor-Leste has reduced various forms of violence since 2008 and, importantly, many citizens report feeling safer. Politically motivated violence and martial-arts violence have decreased considerably, despite incidents that could have sparked wider unrest.

### How did it happen?

- **International support:** International actors have strengthened Timor-Leste's legitimacy as an independent state, generated financial resources and provided peacekeeping forces.
- **Stable politics:** The 2007 election of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão and his coalition Government signalled a shift towards a new stability that has reduced political violence and mounted effective responses to security threats.
- **Buying the peace:** Growing oil and gas revenues (the Petroleum Fund has assets of over \$16 billion – over 10 times larger than Timor-Leste's GDP)<sup>32</sup> have allowed the Government to improve state services and support former combatants through cash transfers and one-off payments – 'buying the peace' from veterans and others.



### The average number of violent incidents per month



2009  
3 per sub-district

2014  
1.5 per sub-district

### Global Peace Index

# 51st

out of 162 countries in 2013

The highest ranking achieved by Timor-Leste and an impressive position for a fragile state

### Cash transfers for veterans

Government incentive for those who chose to demobilise and return to civilian life after the 2006 crisis

# \$8,000

offered to each petitioner

By 2012 there were 64,000 recipients of cash transfers

### Peacekeeping funding

Between 1999 and 2012



Whilst development assistance reached an additional \$4.2 billion

# 8 SRI LANKA<sup>33</sup>

## Employment

### What happened?

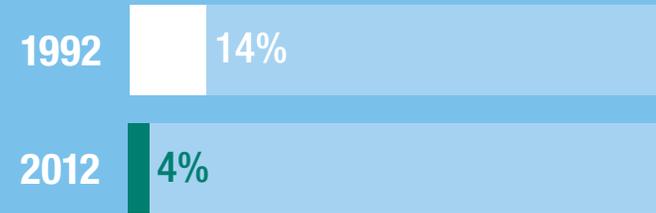
Sri Lanka has made impressive progress on employment. Despite years of conflict, economic shocks and the devastating 2004 tsunami, unemployment fell to just 4% in 2012, declining faster among women than men. The quality of jobs on offer is impressively high for the region – the percentage of working poor almost halved during the 2000s.

### How did it happen?

- **Hybrid policy:** Sri Lanka's Government has pursued pro-market reforms and export-oriented industrialisation while prioritising job creation in the public sector. A drive to attract foreign direct investment boosted the export manufacturing sector, which became a major source of employment opportunities.
- **Skills training:** Sri Lanka's education enrolment rates are high, while the number of people gaining technical and vocational qualifications more than trebled from 2005 to 2014<sup>34</sup> – supporting the manufacturing boom.
- **Migration:** Estimates suggest that over a million Sri Lankan migrants work abroad<sup>35</sup> – easing pressure on domestic job creation and increasing remittances (which accounted for almost 8% of GDP in 2010), despite risks – particularly for women.



### Recorded unemployment



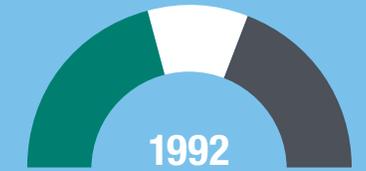
The largest drop among South Asian countries over the period

### Output per worker<sup>36</sup>

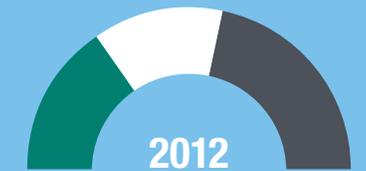
Constant 2011 international \$ in PPP



### Employment sectors



- Agriculture 42%
- Industrial 20%
- Service 38%



- Agriculture 31%
- Industrial 26%
- Service 43%

# 9 ECUADOR<sup>37</sup>

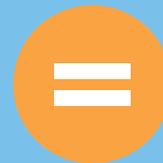
## Inequality

### What happened?

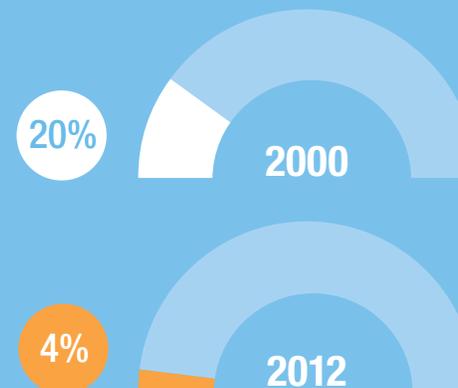
Ecuador has reduced income inequality dramatically. The incomes of the poorest 40% grew by more than eight times the national average between 2006 and 2011, creating the world's most inclusive economic growth over that period.

### How did it happen?

- **Stability and growth:** Ecuador stabilised the economy (adopting the US dollar, using conservative fiscal policy and exploiting the high price of oil) and increased jobs and wages in sectors employing the poorest people.
- **Redistribution:** The 2006 election of President Rafael Correa brought to power a Government committed to redistributive social policies and radical measures to finance them, including rewriting oil contracts and establishing a windfall tax.
- **Social spending:** Ecuador increased its social expenditure from 2.9% of GDP in 2000 (one of the lowest levels in Latin America), to 8.3% in 2012. Cash transfers benefitted the poorest households, alongside other measures to eliminate barriers to education and health services.

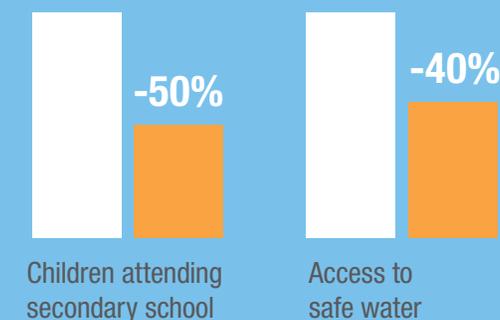


### Population living on less than \$1.25 a day



### Gap between richest and poorest quintiles

Between 2006 and 2014



### Increase in wages

2000–2012

Average



Bottom quartile



# 10 ETHIOPIA<sup>38</sup>

## Multidimensional progress

### What happened?

Over the past 20 years, Ethiopia has seen one of the world's largest declines in extreme poverty, while maintaining low levels of income inequality. Primary education has soared (especially among girls), putting the country on course to achieve universal enrolment. Urban unemployment fell by 10% between 1999 and 2013 and the share of workers in the informal sector more than halved between 1999 and 2010.<sup>39</sup>

### How did it happen?

- **Unifying principle:** Despite a decentralised governance system, Ethiopia's Government integrates all ministries, sectoral policies and national strategies under one overarching goal – broad-based poverty reduction – aiming to achieve middle-income status by 2025.
- **Social spending:** 70% of the Government's capital spend goes to five pro-poor sectors – education, health, water supply, transport infrastructure and agriculture. Ethiopia also maintains the largest social protection programme in Africa, covering 1.5 million households.
- **Growth:** Near unprecedented economic growth (an average of 11% per year over the past decade) has fuelled poverty reduction and funded private-sector support programmes and agricultural development: funding rural roads, farmer training centres and agricultural support workers.



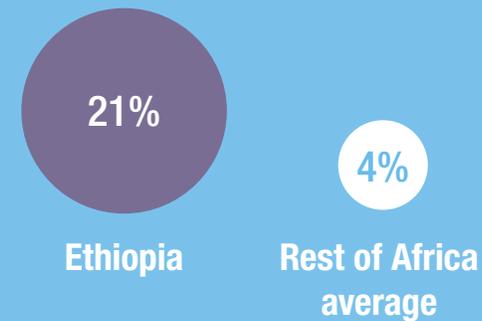
### Population living on less than \$1.25 a day



One of the largest declines in the world

### Investment in agriculture

Percentage of government spending in 2010



### Out of school children

Primary-school-aged



## CONCLUSION



As we have seen, some countries have managed gains far beyond average progress made worldwide. What do these countries tell us about how we can go further and faster over the decades to come?

While much depends on local context, analysis by the Development Progress project reveals that certain common drivers emerge again and again across the 50 case studies. The following ingredients, with some adaptation where necessary, are critical for lasting progress.

**Political leadership:** politicians and policymakers who can mobilise and sustain coalitions of support behind a particular vision of progress and foster cross-sector collaboration.

**Effective policies:** policy reforms to boost economic growth, address basic service supply and demand and target the poorest and most marginalised deliberately and explicitly.

**Capable institutions:** the creation of new institutions or the reform of existing institutions to increase their capacity, bring governance closer to the people and promote accountability.



**Public finance:** the effective provision of sustainable finance, often shifting the burden of paying for services away from households and on to the state.

**Donor partnerships:** the significant role played by official development assistance in covering costs, financing infrastructure or contributing to political stability.

**Collective action:** the critical role of citizens in demanding reforms and high-quality services that meet their needs and interests, overseeing service provision and at times even providing services themselves.

Another key conclusion, common to every case study, is that despite the amazing levels of progress that have been achieved, some groups of people continue to be left behind – the most impoverished, marginalised and vulnerable.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out ambitious targets for the world. If this collective ambition is to be met by 2030, no one can be left behind, with the poorest and most marginalised an important focus for future development progress.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2015) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Available at: [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015\\_MDG\\_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%201\).pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UNDP (2015) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*. In October 2015, the World Bank produced a new poverty line of \$1.90 (2011 prices). We maintain the use of the \$1.25 line in this publication. This collects all those living on less than \$1.25 a day as a share of the total population, using 2005 international prices.

<sup>3</sup> Figures extrapolated from UNDP (2015) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*.

<sup>4</sup> Applies to all countries that had LDC status in 2014 and for which there was available data over the time period. World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>5</sup> Author's calculations based on data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics database [Accessed 1 December, 2015] and UNESCO and UNGEI (2015) *Gender and EFA 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges*. Paris: UNESCO. Gender parity in education has now been achieved in 62 countries, up from 36 in 2000.

<sup>6</sup> UNEP (2015) 9th *Global trends in renewable energy investment 2015*. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme; BNEF (2015) *Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment*. London: Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

<sup>7</sup> VIET NAM CASE STUDIES: Vandemoortele, M. with Bird, K. (2011) *Viet Nam's progress on economic growth and poverty reduction: impressive improvements*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute; Scott, A. and Greenhill, R. (2014) *Turning the lights on: sustainable energy and development in Viet Nam*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute. Where possible, statistics in this resource have been updated from the figures quoted in the original case study produced by the Development Progress project.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolai, S., Hoy, C., Berliner, T., Aedy, T. (2015) *Projecting progress: reaching the SDGs by 2030*. London: Overseas Development Institute. Available at: <http://www.odi.org/publications/9895-sdgs-progress-scorecard-projecting-2030-development-goals>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>11</sup> ASTI (2013) *Benchmarking Agricultural Research Indicators Across Asia-Pacific*. Washington D.C.: Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators. Available at: <http://www.asti.cgiar.org/pdf/ASTI-Asia-Pacific-Regional-Synthesis.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Nicolai et al. (2015) *Projecting progress: reaching the SDGs by 2030*.

<sup>13</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>14</sup> NEPAL CASE STUDY: Engel, J., Glennie, J., Adhikari, S.R., Bhattarai, S. W., Prasai, D.P., Samuels, F. (2014) *Nepal's story: understanding improvements in maternal health*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolai et al. (2015) *Projecting progress: reaching the SDGs by 2030*.

<sup>16</sup> UNDP (2015). Human Development Index. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi-table>

<sup>17</sup> Nicolai et al. (2015) *Projecting progress: reaching the SDGs by 2030*.

<sup>18</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>20</sup> KENYA CASE STUDY: Nicolai, S. and Prizzon, A. with Hine, S. (2014) *Beyond basic: the growth of post-primary education in Kenya*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>22</sup> Kenya Bureau of Statistics (2013) 'Statistical Abstract: University enrolment'. Nairobi: Kenya Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>23</sup> Government of Kenya, Ministry of Devolution and Planning (2013) 'Comprehensive Public Expenditure Review: Eye on Budget: Spending for Results'. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education (2014) *Education For All: The 2015 National Review*. Nairobi.

<sup>25</sup> Kenya Bureau of Statistics (2013) 'Statistical Abstract: University enrolment'.

<sup>26</sup> PERU CASE STUDY: Cockburn, J.C., Romero, J.Q., Lucci, P., Lenhardt, A (2015) *On the path to progress: improving living conditions in Peru's slum settlements*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>27</sup> Adopting national poverty lines. World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>28</sup> BURKINA FASO CASE STUDY: Lenhardt, A., Glennie, J., Intscher, N., Ali, A. with Morin, G. (2014) *A greener Burkina: sustainable farming techniques, land reclamation and improved livelihoods*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>29</sup> World Bank (2015) World Development Indicators. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>30</sup> TUNISIA CASE STUDY: Chambers, V. and Cummings, C. (2014) *Building momentum: women's empowerment in Tunisia*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>31</sup> TIMOR-LESTE CASE STUDY: Valters, C., Dewhurst, S., de Catheu, J. (2015) *After the buffaloes clash: moving from political violence to personal security in Timor-Leste*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>32</sup> According to data compiled from the World Bank (on GDP) and the Petroleum Fund Annual Report.

<sup>33</sup> SRI LANKA CASE STUDY: Byiers, B., Krätke, F., Jayawardena, P., Rodríguez Takeuchi, L., Wijesinha, A. (2015) *Manufacturing progress? Employment creation in Sri Lanka*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>34</sup> TVEC (n.d.) Labour market information system. Available at: [http://www.tvec.gov.lk/Imi/labour\\_market\\_vocational\\_training.php](http://www.tvec.gov.lk/Imi/labour_market_vocational_training.php)

<sup>35</sup> ILO (2015) at <http://www.ilo.org/colombo/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>36</sup> ILO (2015) *Key indicators of the labour market (KILM)*. 9th edition. Geneva: ILO. Available at: [http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/WCMS\\_422456/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/research-and-databases/kilm/WCMS_422456/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>37</sup> ECUADOR CASE STUDY: Ordóñez, A., Samman, E., Mariotti, C., and Borja Borja, I.M. (2015) *Sharing the fruits of progress: poverty reduction in Ecuador*. Development Progress Project. London: Overseas Development Institute; plus Nicolai et al. (2015) *Projecting progress: reaching the SDGs by 2030*

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**Statistics are calculated using constant 2005 international \$ PPP unless otherwise indicated.**



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