

2015 World Development Indicators highlight 25 years of progress

by Jonathan Pryke
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This week the World Bank released their latest edition of [World Development Indicators \(WDI\)](#) (an accompanying blog post is available [here](#) and online tables are available [here](#)). Updated WDI forecasts are released every quarter, and the [World DataBank](#) is the bible for most development statistics, so the new data in and of itself isn't big news. But this edition is the last that will report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and brings with it new indicators, maps and tools displaying the progress made for each MDG from 1990, where the baseline for most targets was set, and 2015, when the world aimed to achieve these targets.

The WDI report also introduces three new indicators, bringing the total number to 87.

The first new indicator collects data on [shared prosperity](#). This is half of the World Bank's new core objective of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity around the world. Promoting shared prosperity is defined as fostering income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the welfare distribution in every country. The indicator is measured by calculating the annualised growth of mean per capita real income or consumption of the bottom 40 per cent of the population. It currently

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only covers 72 countries, but the results for these countries are encouraging: average annualised growth in mean consumption or income per capita for the bottom 40% of these countries is growing at 3.7% while the total population is growing by 2.7%, per cent, meaning the bottom 40 per cent is slowly catching up. Data for the Pacific on this indicator is unfortunately lacking.

The second measures **statistical capacity**. The aim of this measure, which is scored against **25 criteria**, is to help national statistics offices and governments identify gaps in their capability to collect, produce and use data. The measure shows that, on a scale of 0 to 100, the average score for a developing country has risen from 65 to 68. Of the Pacific countries measured, however, only Fiji and the Solomon Islands have seen improvement in the past decade (Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have all slipped slightly while PNG has remained the same).

The final indicator measures **particulate matter concentrations**. This is a particularly terrifying new measure revealing that in most of the developing world air pollution is increasing rapidly. It shows that in the past two decades global air pollution has increased by close to 11 per cent. East Asia and the Pacific (largely driven by China) alone has seen air pollution increase by 38 per cent.

The latest edition of the WDI gives us an opportunity to take stock and reflect on the achievements made in global development over the past 25 years. However, as the new indicators illustrate, there is still a lot more work to be done.

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