

# Missing targets

Many of the targets of the U.N. Millennium Development Goals may remain unachieved in India, if one goes by the latest progress report.

BY R. SURESH

In his keynote speech at the Jaipur Literary Festival held in January, Professor Amartya Sen highlighted the vast disparities of development in India. Whereas in some States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala the human development indices are on a par with many European nations, many States have a score below the poorest sub-Saharan countries.

According to "Millennium Development Goals: India Country Report 2014", brought out by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India's

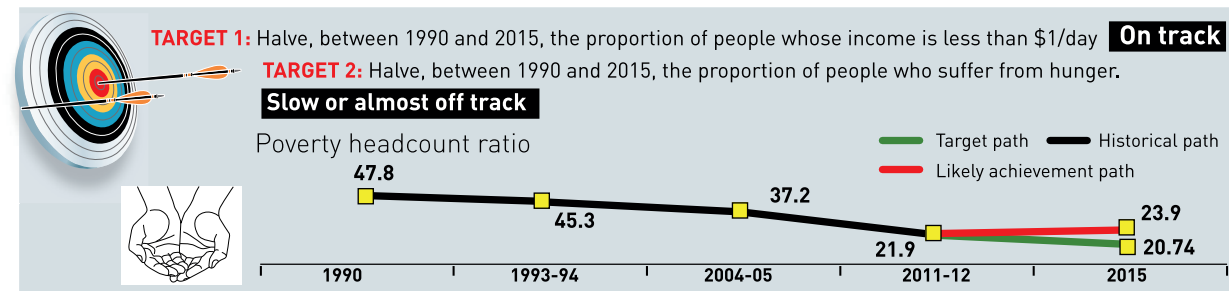
achievement in respect of the MDGs is a mixed bag. It says India is on track to attaining the targets of universal primary education and developing a global partnership for development. However, the results are either mixed or poor in terms of achieving other MDGs.

**Poverty and education**  
While the report says India is progressing towards halving, between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of population below the poverty line, critics dispute this and attribute much of

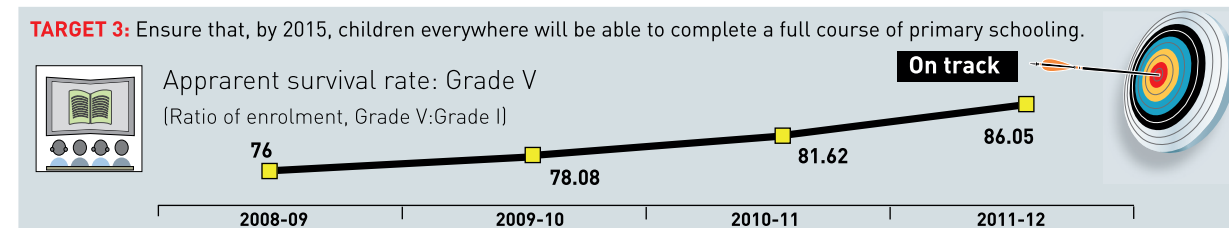
the decline to a statistical mirage produced by tampering with the way poverty is measured. In a new research report, the McKinsey Global Institute has estimated that 680 million Indians, or 56 per cent of the population, lack the means to meet their essential needs. This works out to nearly 1.5 times the government's official poverty figures.

Critics question the quality of education that is available at the primary level in the country. The various Annual Status of Education Reports

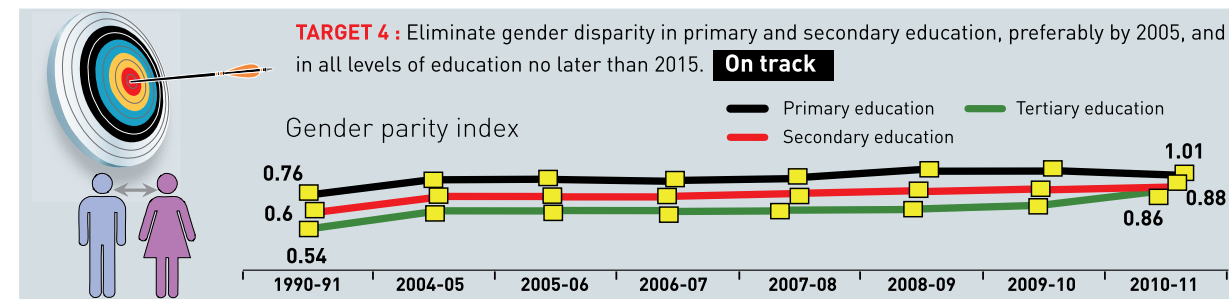
## MDG 1: ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER



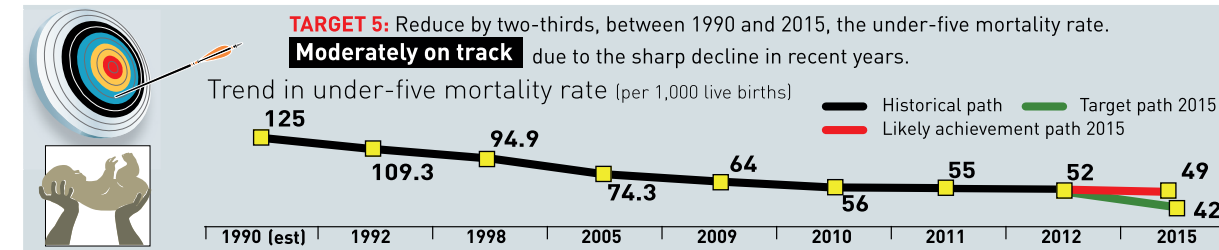
## MDG 2: ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION



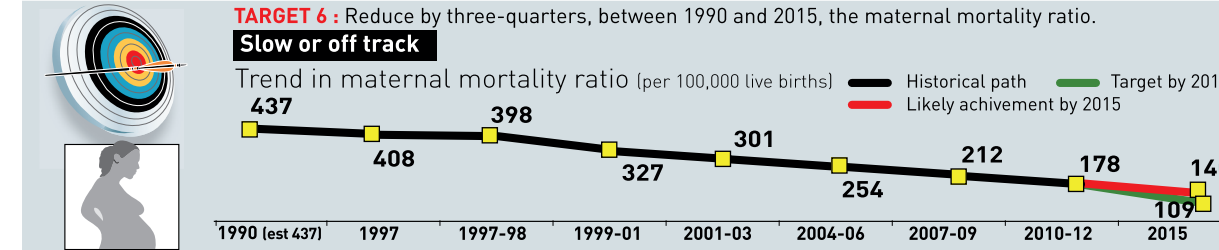
## MDG 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN



## MDG 4: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY



## MDG 5: IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH



(ASERs) of Pratham and a recent UNESCO study indicate that India is a poor performer in this regard.

### Gender and health

On reaching parity in youth literacy by 2015, the government says it is on target. However, gender parity in higher education is yet to be achieved and the progress is slow.

On meeting the targets for under-five mortality rate, infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio, there are sharp swings across States. India also has the largest number of first-day deaths in the world.

### Environment and living

The report says India has performed well in achieving the target of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reversing the loss of environmental resources. However, the ground reality makes this

claim laughable. Given the fact that the government itself has acknowledged that its recent survey has grossly underestimated the number of slums in the country, one should be suspicious of its data on providing access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation, etc.

**Technology:** The report says India is steadily moving towards achieving the target of making available the benefits of new technologies, especially in information technology and communications.

In its obsession to reduce the country's fiscal deficit at any cost, the government is increasingly cutting down budgetary allocations to health care and poverty alleviation. There is also an eagerness to privatise most of the essential services, which will make the poor even more vulnerable.

## MDG 6: COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

**TARGET 7:** Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. **On track** as trend reversal in HIV prevalence has been achieved.

**TARGET 8:** Halt and begin to reverse by 2015 the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. **Moderately on track** as trend reversal has been achieved for the annual parasite incidence of malaria and for prevalence of TB.

## MDG 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**TARGET 9:** Integrate the principle of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. **Moderately on track**

**TARGET 10:** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. **On track** for the indicator of drinking water but slow for the indicator of sanitation.

**TARGET 11:** By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. **The pattern not statistically discernible**

## MDG 8: DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

**TARGET 18:** In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information technology and communications. **On track**

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation