

## Editor's note

The debate on the extent to which the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)<sup>1</sup> will be met globally has been intense over the recent years and has intensified further in the wake of the potentially devastating effects of the current world economic recession as well the implications of the so-called climate change. With the MDG target date of 2015 round the corner, the United Nations Secretary-General has invited world leaders to a summit in New York (20–22 September 2010) with a view to assessing the MDG's current status and mapping the way forward for accelerated progress to achieve the MDGs. Mr Sieraag De Klerk and Prof John Kahimbaara from Statistics South Africa provided the following summary on South Africa's 2010 report, which is currently being prepared, on the MDGs.

“The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a result of a commitment by the majority of the countries of the world, including South Africa, to the Millennium Declaration of 2000 to promote human rights. MDGs are time-bound goals, with quantifiable targets and measurable indicators designed to promote gender equality, access to education, health, water, sanitation, and environmental sustainability. They are measured from 1990 to 2015. For South Africa, however, the reference year used will be 1994.

To date, South Africa has produced one MDG Country Report (MDGR) which was completed in 2005. Internationally, we have reached the mid-term reporting cycle on MDGs and Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) has undertaken the task of coordinating its production. To address the criticisms of the MDGR 2005, a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) was established to govern the MDGR 2010 process with Stats SA as the focal point. The country produced its first MDGR for the midterm review of 2005 and followed with updates in 2007 and 2008. A report, coordinated by Stats SA, is being produced for the current midterm. A structure to ensure transparency has been set up to govern the report-writing process. The structure consists of a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) to oversee the project; a Sectoral Working Group (SWG) to assemble data from various data providers; a

Report Drafting Team to write the report; and a Secretariat to manage the project. The MDGR 2010 has since been ratified by the NCC and is being edited after which the necessary protocols will be followed for the President to present it to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010.

The MDGR 2010 affords South Africa an opportunity to institutionalise MDG reporting as part of the country's National Statistics System and to place it firmly on the country's development agenda. This can be done by institutionalising the NCC and SWGs. In addition, the MDGR 2010 can be used as a tool by the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation for monitoring progress given the considerable overlap between MDG indicators and the national development indicators. It can also be used to build alliances both within government, between government and the private sector, and between government and civil society. To this end, the MDGR 2010 offers South Africans an advocacy tool that can be used to build awareness of development challenges, as well as to encourage government to put in place 'MDG friendly' policies. If the adage is true that “what gets measured gets done”, then South Africa has to commit to measuring and reporting on the MDGs, if it hopes to build sufficient critical mass to achieve the objectives of the Millennium Declaration. Critical to South Africa is the need to address three issues; namely, incorporation of MDGs in policy programmes, data gaps, and data discrepancies. Data gaps refer to the dearth of accurate information specific to the MDGs while the latter refers to competing data sources that provide conflicting estimates. This requires that the various stakeholders in the NCC form closer relationships among themselves and improve the level of statistical organisation, coordination, and standardisation for the purpose of reporting accurately on matters that serve the nation's interests.”

### References

1. United Nations. The Millennium Development Goals Report. New York. 2009.