



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Global Monitoring Report 2007

Argentine Republic

A viewpoint from Civil Society Organizations

<p>FOCO (Citizen Forum of Participation for Justice and Human Rights) Focal spot of the GCAP in Buenos Aires</p>		<p>Argentine GCAP Platform "No poor homes in Argentina" Regional office in Buenos Aires</p>
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INDEX

1. Introduction	6
2. Financial and Social Context in Argentina	8
3. MDGs, critical and propositive analysis conducted by Civil Society Organizations	12
I. Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty	12
II. Achieve universal primary education	17
III. Promote decent work	22
IV. Promote gender equality	27
V. Reduce child mortality	33
VI. Improve maternal health	38
VII. Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Chagas, Malaria and other diseases	43
VIII. Ensure environmental sustainability	47
4. Conclusions	52
5. Bibliography/Sources	56



1. Introduction

Millenium Development Goals (MDGs)

In September 2000, 189 countries adopted the United Nations Millenium Declaration¹: it includes an integrated overview of the current situation and potential strategies for action designed to meet goals and commitments agreed to be achieved by 2015. On the basis of this declaration, the UNDP set a specific number of goals, targets and indicators which would contribute to monitor the progress and fulfilment of each goal in every signatory country. Such goals derive from earlier international development targets having been analyzed at different world summits since 1990 and became officially known as Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).

UN MDGs are eight, as follows:

- 1- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- 2- Achieve universal primary education;
- 3- Promote gender equality and empower women;
- 4- Reduce child mortality;
- 5- Improve maternal health;
- 6- Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Chagas;
- 7- Ensure environmental sustainability;
- 8- Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

Argentina joined the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and suggested an additional goal: "Promote decent work". Therefore, there are 9 Millenium Development Goals stated at the Argentine report, which break down into 17 quantifiable targets that are measured by 48 indicators.

The year 2007 represents a basic event in the Declaration of the Millenium Targets, as we find ourselves half the way towards the end of the agreed deadline. It is the right time to pause and meditate about what we have achieved so far. Will the remaining time be enough? Will we accomplish our designs by 2015? If not, new policies must be set then, and different strategies must be followed. The current year is also significant, due to the fact that most of the signatory countries —Argentina among them— expect to have achieved some intermediate set targets.

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) Campaign

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty is a growing alliance that brings together trade unions, NGOs, women and youth associations, community and religious groups and other campaigners committed to making a breakthrough on poverty and inequality.

¹ 55/2 Millenium Declaration, approved by the UN General Assembly 8th session, September 8th, 2000. See www.un.org/spanish/millenniumgoals/index.html

It was officially launched at the World Social Forum in Brazil in 2005, and it is currently regarded as one of the major alliances worldwide. The GCAP operates in more than 100 countries, being its mission to maximise efforts in order to end poverty and to remove trade barriers that bring about unfair trade practices. According to the ECLAC, Latin America and Caribbean regions are not the poorest, but the most unequal ones. For this reason local organizations decided to add to the current campaign the phrase "Alliance for equality"; poverty —and the causes of it— will not be eradicated unless equality is achieved.

The MDGs and Targets set for Argentina present certain shortcomings, we are aware of that: they cannot offer an absolute guarantee for a more equitable society. The goals are by no means high, but it is our moral obligation not to expect them to be lower. As part of the organizations involved in the GCAP, we are convinced that the Targets represent both an opportunity for public discussion and the leading of social organizations towards a full democracy and a fairer society.

This report consists of the following points: an evaluation of the financial and social context of Argentina during the past 30 years, focused on the neoliberal policies and the strong implementation of them during the 1990's; the 2001 financial crisis and the economic recovery beginning in 2003.

A viewpoint from Civil Society Organizations analyzing each one of the MDGs is presented as follows: for that, an evaluation of the present situation is offered, showing the progress in the achievement of Targets registered in Argentina by 2007. In the same way, we mention some issues which might have not been taken into consideration by de MDGs, and we offer a range of possible suggestions to have them fulfilled.

This document has been written by FOCO (Citizen Forum of participation for Justice and Human Rights), focal spot of the GCAP in Buenos Aires; and by the Argentinian GCAP Platform "No poor homes in Argentina", the Regional Office in Buenos Aires.



2. Financial and Social Context in Argentina

The economic policies implemented in Argentina during the 1990's reflect the maximum expression of a model that had been first adopted in the middle of 1970's, under the dictatorial régime, leading to industrial concentration, foreign investment and loss of governmental autonomy. Orthodox orders coming from the Washington Consensus started to be followed at the beginning of the 1990's, and they became the only concept to work under. This situation led to a complete change in the state-market relation, becoming financial interests more relevant than political ones, which had a substantial impact on society.

In this way, overvalued exchange rate, open economy, deregulation and privatization, all of them part of the economic policies, led to a radical transformation on the production structure. Some economic sectors underwent a process of modernization, but at the same time, a number of consequences arose: wealth condensation, transnationalization, a loss of foreign markets and a rise in the imports. Starting in the 1990's, the economic model underwent a process of financierization², along with reprimarization, becoming the productive sector more relevant than the financial one; which led to speculation instead of production, where imports were more profitable than exports.

There was a substantial rise in unemployment due to this system of open economy and deregulation. In May 1990³, the unemployment rate was 8.6 percent, and in May 1995 it reached 18.5 percent, fluctuating between 12.5 and 18.3 percent from 1996 to 2001, until it reached 21.5 percent in 2001. Informal employment also increased significantly, many people found themselves living in poverty and destitution. This phenomenon occurred both as a result of a loss of competitive financial capacity—due to the combination of fixed and overvalued exchange rates—and because of indiscriminate market openings; also, as a result of a drop-off in domestic market due to economic recession and structural unemployment at the end of the 1990's.

Furthermore, institutional reforms and labour legislation flexibility brought about lack of legal protection for workers during the 1990's, they found it difficult both to join the labour market and to keep such jobs.

Rising unemployment, poverty, destitution and deterioration of living conditions were happening at the same time. Poverty increased from 16.1 percent in May 1996 (lowest

² Some precedents of this economic model can be noticed in Martínez de Hoz's political period (during the Videla dictatorship he ruled as Minister of Economic Affairs). See Basualdo, E. (2003): "Las reformas estructurales y el Plan de Convertibilidad durante la década de los noventa. El auge y la crisis de la valorización financiera", *Realidad Económica*, N° 200, noviembre-diciembre *Structural reforms and Convertibility Plan during the 1990's. Financial valuation; Prosperity and crisis. Economic reality, Copy 200, Nov-Dec.*

³

rates seen during the 1990's), to 35,4 percent in October 2001: 7 out of 20 people were poor. Destitution also grew significantly, from 6.9 percent (measured in number of people) in October 1996 to 12.2 percent in October 2001⁴. As regards quality aspects, a deterioration of the social fabric was noticed, including low self-esteem, discouragement, lack of individual projects, damaged family bonds; all of this part of a more complex situation showing uncertain living conditions, hard access to housing, no access to public utilities, and growing slums.

Within this framework, the concept of social rights as a universal recognition of guarantees was left aside as social policies were implemented; a biased, incomplete concept of poverty, which became understood as "lack of incomes" was adopted instead, according to recommendations from multilateral corporations. In this way, policies against poverty were enforced, focused only in a monetary compensation for those who were not able to buy goods; as a result of that, social security underwent a process of mercantilization. Policies dealing with poverty issues must develop their set of strategies in order to contribute to a practical solution as regards poverty itself, and at the same time, must discourage solvent sectors to get access to social assistance, that is to say: the amount of money given should be low enough as to discourage solvent sectors to foresee the possibility of getting access to such programmes. Nonetheless the consequences were disastrous in two ways: they both transformed the universal concept of redistribution and solidarity, reducing the level of coverage, and at the same time the quality of services provided was deteriorated, leaving low and middle class sectors out of coverage. These groups of people, finding themselves within a general situation of unemployment, were unable to get new coverage, which led to a growing worsening of quality of life.

Before the mid 1980's the employment rate in Argentina was stable, really high and formal (compared to other latin american countries), showing upward social mobility. The implementation of neoliberal policies brought about significant labour market flexibilities, rising unemployment and fragmentations in society. Sectors of population that had not significantly existed before appeared: groups of people completely excluded from labour market, with no protection from the point of view of social rights, people getting jobs under uncertain and unstable working conditions. These conditions, along with rigid convertibility, interruption of outside financing, and deterioration of the social situation, grew rapidly and brought about the collapse of the model by 2001. Catastrophic consequences emerged: there was a 30 percent reduction of GDP between mid 2001 and early 2002; poverty edged up to 57.5 percent, and destitution to 26.3 in May 2002 (in other words, 4 out of 10 people had no food to eat); unemployment reached 23.3 percent and underemployment 18.6 during 2002⁵.

The end of convertibility and the implementation of heterodox macroeconomic policies enabled financial competitive capability that had been lost during the 1990's (with an approved exchange rate), as well as a rise in exports and domestic market recovery. At the end of 2002 there were signs of general recovery, due to a rise in demand and commodities prices, a fall in international interest rates and reduced inflation.

As regards financial matters, annual growth rates of 9 percent were noticed, along with a rise in tax revenue and economic surplus. As regards politics, there was a gain of trust after the "que se vayan todos" (go away, all politicians!) period; a strengthening of institutions thanks to some reforms introduced to the Supreme Court of Justice's

⁴ From INDEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, *National Statistics Institute*): a continuum from May 1988 to May 2003. Poverty rates refer to Greater Buenos Aires, but they illustrate as well the increasing deterioration of living conditions in the whole country.

⁵ For Poverty and Destitution, see INDEC, EPH May 2003. For Unemployment and Underemployment, see INDEC, EPH, 2002, 2nd quarter.

structure and to the introduction of a Human Rights Policy; and a growing proficiency to negotiate with transnational corporations (TNC) and multilateral organizations (MO). As regards social matters, unemployment rate fell from 23.3 percent in May 2002 to 8.5 percent by mid 2007; poverty level fell from 54 percent at the beginning of 2003 to 23,4 percent in the early 2007, and destitution fell from 27.7 percent in 2003 to 8.2 in 2007.

Nevertheless, beyond this progress shown in numbers, every crisis places our country into a lower social stratum, according to Claudio Lozano (2006). In 2006 poverty rate was hardly exceeded, compared to 1996, but the current income distribution is worse than the respective average during the 1990's⁶. This way, even though an heterodox, productivist economic model was adopted, allowing the creation of jobs, it continues to favour concentration, as it promotes a regressive tax scheme based on VAT, low unemployment benefits coverage and income levels placing Plan Jefes beneficiaries (around 900,000 people) below destitution rates.

During 2003-2007 period, employment policies were given special attention at the public agenda: nearly 2,800,000 jobs were created; salaries were raised (particularly formal and retirement sectors), and lots of people were given the possibility of joining the retirement regime. Despite the continuous GDP growth in the last 4 years, along with the rising exports and the labour market recovery, the current model shows substantial flaws. Due to the neoliberal system—or to the present model as a natural result from it—it still favours wealth condensation, and it fails to modify the unfair income distribution affecting the poorest sectors.

Despite the substantial growth noticed, there are still 1.4 million people receiving social assistance plans ("Jefes", "Familia", etc.) as one of their major income sources. Although there was a 40 percent GDP growth between 2003 and 2007 and a 8.5 percent fall in the unemployment rate, the upholding of social assistance reveals that Argentina still presents serious issues dealing with employment. This can be seen in the following points: 23.4 percent of the population lives in poverty, 40 percent of people are engaged in informal works, and income distribution remains as uneven as in 1996. Then, a society showing two groups of people emerges: one group including those who "belong to the system", and another group including those who "are out". What is even more shocking is the fact that Argentina is able to produce food for more than 330 million people, and having said that, starvation is a problem affecting thousands of inhabitants, whose rights are being neglected.

It is true that, as a result of the new production model, a more substantial macroeconomic sustainability has been noticed, but there are yet some points to be solved: the future of certain regions and zones, the environmental sustainability of the model; distribution gaps, considering the social aspect (unemployment, low salaries, regressive tax), the spatial aspect (production imbalance and unequal incomes when comparing provinces) and the age aspect (children and elderly living in poverty, young people with no acces to education or jobs).

As for income distribution, it continues to show a regressive quality: the gap between the richest people (10 percent of the population) and the poorest people (10 percent) indicates a steady difference of 31/1; more than 40 percent of the EAP (Economically Active Population) are not officially registered and their salaries are 50 percent lower—and they have no possibilities of getting better wages or improving their labour rights—and more than 900,000 young people between the age of 18-24 do not work or study. Minimum pensions on retirement are really low, just above destitution level; different

⁶ According to the average, during the 1990's, the richest people (equivalent to 10% of the population) earned 20 times the amount the poorest people (equivalent to 10%) did; and during 2007, this gap favoured the richest group in 31/1.

regions and zones reflect unequal concentration, showing the North West and North East regions, along with the entire province of Buenos Aires, the worst social indicators. It is true that people are starting to build mid-term projects instead of short-term ones, but issues regarding social cohesion and environmental sustainability are no longer part of the neoliberal model exclusively but signs of the new production scheme.



3. MDGs. A critical and propositive approach offered by Civil Society Organizations.

I. Eradicate Hunger and Destitution. Reduce Poverty

Not only in Argentina but in Latin America, after the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1990's, poverty indicators —already seen during the “lost decade” (terms given by ECLAC to the 1980's period)— were not exceeded as expected: they even aggravated. By 2005 more than 30 percent of Argentine population lived in poverty, according to national statistics (INDEC, 2006).

As a paradox, at the same time neoliberal policies were gaining ground, Human Rights Treaties were given full attention within the National Constitution. On the one hand, Human Rights were granted full recognition in written documents, but on the other, they were being violated. As we can see, the problem bears no relation to legal matters; despite the fact that there are lots of laws and legal articles about the fight against hunger, it continues to exist, becoming this a real contradiction in a country capable of producing food for more than 300 million people. Rights must be in line with a social justice theory which takes the matter seriously and operates towards the achievement of them.

After the creation of the MDGs in 2000, efforts were made around the world to come to an agreed conclusion about the fact that living in poverty leads to the violation of rights. Demonstrations and marches were staged in favour of social rights and the relation between Human Rights and the overcoming of poverty. The central motto here is that poverty is a violation of Human Rights per se. Although there are some basic needs to be met, and actions are taken towards having them fulfilled, this appreciation only reinforces the existence of a much broader situation where not only basic needs are to be met, but potential abilities and privileges claiming for attention and development. The extent to which such abilities and privileges are fulfilled varies according to our social belonging. The question of poverty is, therefore, multicausative and transversal affecting the poorest, vulnerable sectors.

Causes of poverty and global capitalism's impositions

We are aware that the causes of poverty are not only a direct result of lack of incomes, but a consequence of global asymmetries, impositions and structural restrictions affecting poor countries. Wealth condensation (land, natural resources, etc.) owned by transnational companies; foreign debt; double standards (environmental, financial, trade-related) implemented in poor countries; impositions from Multilateral Organizations like the WTO and others, that support protectionism in developed

countries and are against nominal rates of protection implemented in developing countries; the defense of intellectual property rights in patent medicines, HIV vaccines, seeds and other products: all of them represent obstacles for the development of countries, forcing them to live in poverty.

Actual possibilities for development in our country are being undermined by the foreign debt. The Argentine Debt is “odious”⁷: most of the loan was contracted during the dictatorial period and, far from being used in favour of the people, ill-fated situations took place instead, such as a flight of capital and a massive purchase of weapons. In 2000, Judge Ballesteros sentenced the following: *“the external debt has increased significantly since 1976, thanks to a vulgar and offensive implementation of financial policies that made the entire nation feel humiliated, by supporting private corporations (national and international) to the detriment of state corporations which eventually collapsed”*. He declared the debt to be *“illegal, immoral, illegitimate and fraudulent”*⁸. It was generally believed in our country that a debt refunding implied the cancellation of it. Indeed, the amount of such payment represents only 9 percent of the global debt: 140,000 million dollars⁹.

It is true that by this “cancellation”, the number of IMF audits that used to be made every year has decreased, but the financial impositions have not. The IMF will continue to favour creditors around the world. In other respects, there are 39,000 million dollars in debt securities owned by the Paris Club, by other international financial institutions and private bondholders. Argentina will be able to pay provided that a scheme of permanent surplus is followed, but this only makes it cumbersome to carry out public policies which might give a chance to attain the MDGs.

In addition, while considering causes of poverty we cannot leave away wealth condensation and unequal distribution¹⁰. While measuring income distribution, a significant variation has been noticed: the richest group of people, equivalent to 10 percent of the population, doubled their incomes between may 2002 and the first quarter of 2007: from \$3461 to \$6678 (about 95 percent). The poorest 10 percent, who earned an average salary of \$109, earned \$337 later. Unequal distribution of wealth is, obviously, one of the major problems in our country.

As Gines González García, Minister of Health, stated: *“Argentina is not a poor country, but a country with lots of poor people living in it”*¹¹. The entire argentine population could be fed just with a ninth of its total production. But our food industry is centralized and foreignized. Within the production line, commercial agents put great pressure on prices, making it even more difficult for people to get access to food (to be able to pay for it). The market —instead of people— is able to make use of resources here. In making an evaluation of the argentine food production we find there are no flaws: a sustainable surplus is generated, our country operates autonomously. All of these

⁷ The theory of the Odious Debt originated in 1898 when the Americans captured Cuba from Spain. It includes three conditions: 1) lack of consent, 2) no benefits for the people and 3) the creditor is not aware of the purpose of the funds.

⁸ www.agenciacta.org.ar/article5704.html

⁹ VAS Infomoreno newspaper. An interview to Alejandro Olmos Ganoa. “Evaluation of the foreign debt in Argentina”, by Mariane Pécora. October 19th, 2007. Olmos thinks that the cancellation of the debt has no benefits, because by 2007 the Minister of Economy will need 3,000 million dollars issued in debt securities, in order to compensate for the reserve funds used, at a 9.5 percent annual rate. The 9,500 million pesos paid to the IMF had a 4.5 percent annual rate.

¹⁰ Clarín Newspaper. October 13th, 2007. “5 percent of Argentine population controls a quarter of national incomes”. By Natalia Muscatelli. This article deals with a report on the distribution of wealth written by CCR Consultant: there are 500,000 homes in Argentina, that represent the 5 percent of population who handle one fourth of the total incomes in the country, having an average annual income of \$20,876. Information related to the top of the pyramid is not officially reflected, as rich people are not willing to participate on this kind of research (EPH, Encuesta Permanente de Hogares: Interviews made to citizens at Home).

¹¹ Document. Interministerial meeting on MDGs about Health and Environment. June, 18th, 2005. Mar del Plata, Argentina.

aspects (sustainability, autonomy, surplus) are not enough though: despite production sustainability, a serious *inequity* as regards distribution¹² can be seen.

Poverty in Argentina: Analysis

Table 1
Poverty — Monitoring Indicators, Intermediate and Final Targets.

Indicators	Year							
	1990	2000	2001	2002	2005	2006 (*)	2007 Target	2015 Target
Poverty gap coefficient (I)	0.356	0.415	0.438	0.534	0.429	(n/i)	(n/t)	(n/t)
Gini-coefficient (II)	0.461	0.479	0.503	0.526	0.490	0.485	(n/t)	(n/t)
Incomes Gap (II)	13.0	14.4	17.3	23.1	14.6	(n/i)	(n/t)	(n/t)
People living under destitution line: population rates (I)	12.7	9.0	11.6	24.8	12.2	8.7	<10.8%	Eradicate
People living under poverty line: population rates (I)	42.6	33.4	35.9	53.0	33.8	26.9	<30%	<20%
Underweight Prevalence in children under 1 (III)	n/i	n/i	n/i	2.9	n/i	n/i	n/t	n/t
Underweight Prevalence in children under 5 (III)	n/i	n/i	n/i	2.8	n/i	n/i	n/t	n/t

Note: Information concerning 1990 matches Greater Buenos Aires. Information concerning 1990, 2000, 2001 and 2002 matches May period. Information concerning 2005 matches the second half of that year. **(n/i)**: no information; **(n/t)**: no target.

Sources:

(*) INDEC, 2006, last quarter

(I) EPH-INDEC. www.INDEC.mecon.ar

¹² "Unequal distribution" here refers to "unnecessary, avoidable and unfair inequalities". While equality shows an empirical characteristic, equity is associated with social justice and human rights (Whitehead, M. The concepts and principles of equity and health. Doc EUR/ICP/RPD/414., WHO Office for Europe. Copenhagen 1990).

(II) Gini-coefficient and income gap information was obtained thanks to SIEMPRO-CNPS (System of information and evaluation of Social Programs), based on data from EPH-INDEC.

(III) Anthropometric survey on population under 6, carried out by Programa Materno Infantil 2002. An evaluation of 8 jurisdictions reflecting 60% of total population under 6 (in need of Public Health assistance) is shown here.

There are several indicator parameters that help define the unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) of people, and they are based on living conditions information, such as: number of rooms a house has and built area per person, connections to the water supply network, sanitation, etc. The concept of unsatisfied basic needs also include homes where the head of household has not finished elementary education, where there is one person who works out of four or more who do not, or where there are children who should be attending school and do not. If a person is living under just one of the conditions mentioned above implies the fact of having unsatisfied basic needs. This kind of poverty is known as structural poverty. In 2004 there was a 10 percent fall in this rate, as a result of an enhancement of public utilities and ground installation works. A key point to be taken into account while analyzing a country's social situation is the growing regional heterogeneity. Poverty and destitution exist in every province of the country, and among them, but during the past years these factors have been growing unequally. The difference in the rates is really distressing: social and financial rights are being protected unequally, depending on the province. Formosa, Chaco and Santiago del Estero show the highest rate of structural poverty, with more than 30 percent of their population presenting unsatisfied basic needs. La Pampa, Santa Cruz and Buenos Aires city present less than 11%, but there are some southern neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires which have similar rates to the poorest regions.

The target suggested for 2007 regarding Poverty Reduction has been fulfilled according to the 2005-2006 monitoring report, but it does not fit in with the 9 percent of annual financial growth seen in our country during four consecutive years.

In five years poverty has fell from 54 percent to 27 percent and unemployment fell from 22 percent to 9 percent in Argentina. It is a great achievement, undoubtedly, and it corresponds to a five-year growth in the financial field, to macroeconomic politics focused on productivity and employment generation strategies. Nevertheless, there is a point to be noticed here: when we see a change in INDEC rates, it means that not only financial data has changed (inflation rate), but social data, too. Food prices are the most significant indicators to determine poverty and destitution rates, and they turn out to be higher than shown¹³. The whole situation of poverty regarding adolescents under 14 (bad education and health, rising drug consumption —cheapest substances) shows that a segment of structural and permanent poverty is being established. In other words, a financial recovery has been noticed, along with political reconstitution, but at the same time, a growing segment of poverty will eventually affect a third of the population, beyond any statistical improvement^{14, 15}.

Income distribution showed slight progress. According to INDEC reports, the income gap between the richest 10 percent and the poorest 10 percent during the first quarter in 2007 decreased from 36 times to 30 as compared to 2006. During the first quarter in 2007, taking into account a total of 31 urban agglomerations, the average income per person belonging to the richest 10% was thirty times the income belonging to the

¹³ It is likely that without these distortions the real poverty rate in Argentina would reach 33 percent, instead of 27 percent, as ATE-INDEC points out. According to the first number, 48 percent of adolescents under 14 are living below poverty line, and according to the second, 40 percent.

¹⁴ La Nación newspaper, April, Thursday 26th, 2007. "Los índices y la cuestión social", *Statistics and social issues*, by Rosendo Fraga.

¹⁵ According to ATE-INDEC, the basic food basket for an average family in destitution in July 2007, would be 16.2 percent higher than official: It would raise from \$432.52 to \$502.77. The basic food basket for an average poor family is 7.1 percent higher, from \$929.93 to \$995.59. In consequence, destitution and poverty are higher than officially shown.

poorest 10 percent^{16, 17}. However, the actual gap equals the one existing during the Menem-period.

As to Gini-coefficient, implying that the more closer to 0 (zero) the coefficient is, the more equal a society is, a slight improvement in income distribution has been noticed, comparing this, though, to the worst period during the 2002 crisis. Nevertheless, the existing inequality in society is so significant that according to the last rates it is not better than the one observed during 1990. In fact, the estimated Gini-coefficient for the third quarter in 2006 is the same as for 1996. Apparently, the regressive income distribution in Argentina is associated with a number of structural factors that exceed the financial cyclic periods.

Consequences of poverty

Inaccessibility to nutrition is a factor closely connected to malnutrition —severe cases of undernourishment, overweight and hidden undernourishment (lack of specific nutrients). These kind of problems are disastrous at an early age, as the child's brain is affected in such a way that it will never recover completely, leading to structural and metabolic consequences.

As a child is constantly growing, he needs a lot of energy and proteins, and becomes more vulnerable to infections. Programs created to cope with nutritional problems do not operate properly most of the time, showing a restrictive, regressive and assistentialist pattern. As a result, they are good only for keeping rates in a mere acceptable level.

As for nutritional deficiency, it can be noticed that undernourishment and malnutrition (anemia, overweight) are growing, people do not have access to proper nutrition. In this way, hunger goes beyond rachitic children with protruding bellies: it reveals in children with growth delay, who are anemic or obese, as a result of poor intakes of iron and zinc.

This situation is significantly critical in children under 3, leading to terrible neurological consequences for them. At present, 270,000 people are living below poverty line in Buenos Aires city, and the number of children presenting nutritional problems raised from 1630 to 2500 during 2003-2005 period. Having said that, strategies for reducing poverty should regard health as a priority.

To sum up, according to the information we have, the targets that had been set for 2007 have been satisfactorily achieved. There is a promising trend towards fulfilling the final target regarding the reduction of poverty; however, it will not be possible to eradicate destitution by 2015 at this rate. We think that 20 percent of population living in poverty in our country is still a percentage that should not be accepted as "reasonable". Income distribution and regional differences should be analyzed more seriously. Specific, real targets should be set for the rest of indicators dealing with other issues than poverty and destitution.

¹⁶ The richest 10 percent, is equivalent to 2,409,000 inhabitants earning a familiar salary of \$2,201 (total income amount of 5,302 millions pesos). The poorest 10 percent is equivalent to 2,412,000 inhabitants, earning a familiar salary of \$73 (total income amount of 175,9 million pesos). The concept "income *Per capita*" means that the total income per family is divided among its living members at home. Taking into account individual incomes matching 24,098,000 inhabitants, of which 12,975,000 (53.8%) have jobs and 11,091,000 do not, during the first quarter in 2007, the richest 10% earned 34% of the total income amount (5,154 million pesos) and the poorest 10%, 1.2% (\$182.3 million pesos).

¹⁷



II. Reach Elementary Education

In Argentina, elementary education has been widely achieved. That is why this specific MDG set by the UN, “Reaching Universal Primary Education”, is not significant *per se*. As a more personal and challenging goal, our country set higher targets for 2007, 2010 and 2015 than those suggested by the UN.

During the 1990’s, rates corresponding to elementary and compulsory education raised in Argentina; girls and boys’ access to the educational system was leveled. At present, the “Reaching Universal Primary Education” goal is about to be entirely achieved, consequently, Argentina set intermediate targets and made a commitment to revert the gaps that can be seen in the NE and NW regions of Argentina where lots of improvements need to be made yet. The 2005 Argentina Country Report shows the following rates obtained after having carried out a census in 2001: 98.1 percent of elementary and compulsory education achieved (2001); 90.7 percent of students finishing 5^o course; 98.2 percent of students finishing EGB1 y 2 (2001); 98 percent of literacy in 15-24 year-old young people. In accord with the information provided by the National Council for Social Politics and considering a number of planifications and projections, the targets set for this specific MDG¹⁸ will be possibly achieved by 2015.

There have been many contributions to Public Education during 2003-2007 period: national enactments such as the Technical Education Law; a raise in education budget that reached GDP 6% in 2010; a salary increase for teachers, and the New Education Law. All of them reinforce the concept of public education contributing to equal opportunities and social inclusion.

Table 2:
Education: Targets set for Argentina.

2007	2010-2015
To niversalize access to kindergarten (5-year-old children)	Guarantee that all children and adolescents have compulsory education (10 years) finished by 2010.
Guarantee the continuance of education up to 5 ^o course/year in NE and NW regions, increasing the actual rate.	Guarantee the completion of post-compulsory education (Polimodal/ Media) for all adolescents by 2015.
Raise the number of young people that start and finish Polimodal.	

¹⁸ National Council for the Coordination of Social Politics, Presidency of Argentina, MDGs State of Affairs, 2007.

Education in Argentina: diagnosis

Public education is significant in the sense that it conveys values, sense, sociabilization and training for life and work; nevertheless, the fact that more people are attending school (almost 100 percent) does not mean quality in education has improved.

Public education shows serious flaws, such as lack of material and symbolic stimuli for teachers, low salaries, low social esteem, infrastructural problems, outdated curriculum, etc., that result in low - quality public education, even though the sanctioned laws during the last years have been really significant. That is why not only is it necessary to broaden the cover, but to improve the quality as well, surpassing the social and spatial gaps that prevent many people from getting access to education.

Next, some of the educational problems in Argentina are mentioned:

Major cover problems are found in childhood education (1-3), in children under 5 and in high school, all of the categories presenting poor quality education.

Childhood education

It includes two instances: daycare centre (from 45 day-old children to 2 year-old children) which is optional, and kindergarten from 3 to 5, which is compulsory. By the Federal Education Law, compulsory public education in all provinces is guaranteed for children from 3 to 5. However, the lack governmental investment to build adequate number of centres has a negative effect on this right. None of the provinces is able to ensure educational inclusion for 5-year-old children. In centres for children under 5, educational offer is even more deficient, and the lower the incomes are, the lower the attendance, according to official information corresponding to 2003¹⁹. In considering children from 3 to 5, half of them do not attend kindergarten, and from 1 to 3, there are 1,000,000 children who do not attend childhood education²⁰. According to Verona Batiuk, *"a child who is born in a solvent home has much more chances (more than double, in fact) to attend school than a child born below poverty line"*²¹. As a result, when there are few vacancies in the public system, the children who are able to attend childhood education are those whose parents can pay for a private centre.

Elementary and Secondary Education

As regards elementary education, attendance is practically complete. Nevertheless, there are still some problems to be solved as regards native children (belonging to native groups of inhabitants) and disabled children. Having said that, the real issue in Elementary Education is connected to over-age students and grade repeaters.

According to information provided by the Statistics Institute for UNESCO (2005), 10 percent of girls and boys who should be attending school are not doing it. Besides, the level of over-age children and grade repeaters is high, which leads to the fact that students leave school early. According to information provided by the Ministry of Education, 2005, there were 245,000 students (two out of ten) who abandoned

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, 2003.

²⁰ CETRA and EPH sources, 2005, 1st half.

²¹ Portal Periodismo Social Source.

secondary school. According to UNICEF, more than half working-adolescents (58.2 percent) from 13 to 17 do not attend school.

Attendance and quality are the main flaws found in high school. According to the Ministry of Education, attendance grew from 45 percent in the 1960's to 54 percent in the next decade; to 63 percent in the 1980's; to 71 percent in the 1990's and to 85 percent in 2001. Between 1996-2006 EGB and Polimodal registration grew 10 percent and 23 percent respectively. Nevertheless, neoliberal reforms, decentralization of education towards provinces, and governmental expenditure cuttings during the 1990's brought about changes in education. There was a significant deterioration in the social situation affecting children and families, and this will be very difficult to overcome in a near future. Schools became a place that provided refuge rather than education, for instance, 39 percent of children do not even consider getting a school degree; only 40 percent of children register for secondary school at present.

Spatial gap: inequality among provinces and regions.

Another major problem affecting public education is regional disparity: depending on the province a child is born, he or she would have access to different levels of education as regards quality. The regions whose GDP contributions are lower, are not in a position to offer excellent education.

For instance, the percentage of children (91 percent) attending kindergarten in Argentina is not homogeneous: in some provinces, like Misiones, the percentage only reaches to 67, this means 1 out of 3 children (5-year-old-children) do not attend school, which means 31,000 do not attend school. Opposedly, 95 percent of children attend school in Buenos Aires, being this city, along with Tierra del Fuego (97 percent), the only ones showing the highest rates. While 36 percent of children (from 3 to 5) attend kindergarten in Misiones, the corresponding percentage in Buenos Aires is 83. Within this framework, the access to education shows serious inequality, which implies a situation of exclusion and violation of rights towards children. La Pampa and the NE region reflect the most unequal situations as regards childhood education. In La Pampa 13 out of 100 children do not attend school, and in the NE, 34 out of 100. Similar situations are shown in cities placed away from the capitals. Having said this, unequal situations regarding registration in Polimodal education are seen in some NW provinces. While in Tucumán the attendance grew 30 percent during 1996-2006, a growth of 13.8 percent was seen in Jujuy. Moreover, in the whole country, illiteracy reaches 2.6 percent, but in the NW region it reaches 6 percent, and depending on different cities, 26.

This information shows the strong heterogeneity taking place in early schooling, within different regions and social sectors. Another issue to be pointed out are rural schools. Their common difficulties are inadequate infrastructure, lack of water supply, lack of power, lack of training material and teachers. According to information provided by a governmental bureau (Dirección de Escuela), there are 11,324 rural schools in Mendoza. In many of them (4,000) there is only one teacher working for all students and courses. Apparently there are about 1,500,000 children attending rural schools undergoing these difficulties, which makes it very hard to teach properly.

Late enrolment is the common characteristic present in rural schools, due to the few available choices for childhood education and hard living conditions in the countryside. Because of such hard living conditions there is a certain number of children who fail to attend school for a long period of time, as they have to work hand in hand with the rest of the family (sometimes they have to take care of younger siblings), or because of

climate conditions. In most cases the low levels of performance are related to deficient curriculums, which leads to retaking the same course, and the generation of over-age students. Keeping attendance becomes, then, a very difficult task to achieve. A significant number of young students do not succeed in registering for the EGB 3rd course, being likely to leave education early. With the new Education Law, the extension of school compulsoriness might work against young rural students: regional education offer is not enough.

“Achieve Universal Primary Education”: Remarks and Suggestions.

According to what we have just explained, we are in a position to come to the following conclusion: “Achieving Universal Primary Education” favours social inclusion. The Argentine education system shows serious flaws —except for attendance in primary schooling— which need to be restored urgently, in order to achieve equality and quality, taking into consideration children and adolescent’s rights, and following the set targets for 2015. The fulfillment of set targets for 2007 and 2010-2015 is probably a significant challenge in a matter of public policy, but if the real intention is to guarantee quality and full insertion into society, the targets per se are not substantially modifying.

This way, targets and indicators set for 2007 and 2010-2015 turn out to be deficient:

- I) They only settle quantitative indicators, as if the only important point was the extension of cover (attendance) —indeed, a significant issue due to the great number of students who retake the same course, or leave school early but they do not take into consideration the improvement of quality.
- II) The percentage of items that should be modified is not clearly specified in the indicators for 2007 and for 2010-2015. Without this parameters will be impossible to determine whether the results are satisfying, or if they could have been better.

Having said that, it is necessary to introduce a target dealing with childhood and day-care centres’ cover.

It is also essential to introduce qualitative targets for the improvement of education quality, reducing the gap between those who have access to learning and those who do not. It is also necessary to consider regional disparities and give preferential treatment to the most unfavoured regions. Finally, given the conditions of: regional disparity; deficient infrastructure and reduced number of teachers working in childhood education; high levels of grade repetition and school abandonment, it will be really difficult to achieve the targets set for 2015.

Henceforward, it is essential to introduce a curriculum that help students understand the cultural changes taking place, so that they would be able to feel ready and competent for future jobs. At the same time, flexible teaching methods should be considered, allowing an adjustment to student’s profiles, thus reducing the expelling character seen in the education system so far. Finally, with such a high level of illiteracy and school abandonment, subventions or some kind of stimulus should be implemented, due to the high number of adolescents who leave school²².

Likewise, in order to achieve quality in education is essential to link the education system to the country’s profile (as regards development and specialization) and change

²² According to 2001 Census, 67,368 people were considered illiterate between ages of 10-19. According to ECLAC, about 1,000,000 young people do not work or study in Argentina.

public schools, in the sense that a person feels included and able to overcome situations, instead of feeling “protected”. At present the education system does not create equal opportunities: it reflects inequalities²³, and the solution does not come along with higher salaries and better infrastructure, those are just the first step to stop deterioration. “Universalizing quality in education” involves a global understanding of society, beyond the education system and specific public policies implemented to achieve the agreed targets at the MDGs; it involves a real transformation in society.

²³ Critical report on MDGs, National Coordinating Table, Argentinian Platform.



III. Promote Decent Work

After the 1990's crisis, labour market underwent serious structural changes. Public policies were put into effect to restore that situation during these last years; hence, labour policies contributed to this MDG of promoting decent work.

Table 3:
Comparison on targets set for 2007 and 2015 and results obtained by 2007.

Indicator/Target	2007 Results	Targets for 2007	Targets for 2015
Unemployment rate	8.5%	12%	<10%
Employment not officially registered	41.6%	39%	<30%
Proportion of workers earning salaries below basic food basket	44.3% (I)	48%	<30%
Percentage of population benefiting from unemployment compensation	9% (I)	28%	60%
Child labour rate	6.5% (2004)	3%	eradicate

Source: this chart was created considering data from Progress Report 2005-2006. MDGs, INDEC.

(I) National Council for Social Policies, Presidency of Argentina, MDGs, State of Affairs and Challenges, 2007

Unemployment decrease versus actual employment issues.

Unemployment has decreased, according to the MDGs indicators. From the year 2000 to the present day, a significant and progressive improvement has been noticed as regards labour market. As pointed out in a previous analysis regarding national context, this period was seriously affected by the neoliberal crisis and the falling apart of the main social indicators (labour indicators, specifically). Even though the end of convertibility led to an out of scale process of consequences, it was just the result of a

productive deconstruction process that had started in the mid 70's, going through neoliberal reforms during the 1990's, having then the worst impact on society.

**Table 4:
Unemployment and Underemployment evolution during 1990-2007. Final Targets.**

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2005	2007	2015 Target
Unemployment (*)	8.6 %	18.5%	15.4%	16.4%	21.5%	15.6%	12.5%	8.5%	<10%
Underemployment (a)	9.3%	7%	9.5%	9.6%	12.7%	14.4%	8.9%	7.5%	n/t

Source: INDEC, EPH

(*) Belonging to research done in May.

(a) The leading underemployment information is taken into account since 1993 onwards.

The implementation of heterodox macroeconomic policies, a high exchange rate and good export prices contributed to a rise in financial activities, leading to a decrease in unemployment. The highest unemployment rate had been seen during 2002, and after that, numbers started to fall and in 2007 the percentage decreased to 8.5. As a result, unemployment rate is placed below 12 percent, which is the set target for 2007.

Whereas the fact of having achieved such target is promising, there are still 2 million people who are unemployed or underemployed, with the corresponding problems of basic needs unsatisfied and personal development at a standstill. Being the average financial growth 9 percent, the actual unemployment rate reflects labour market flaws: people with less qualifications have difficulty in getting jobs; policies regarding training and education are deficient; policies involving massive employment for vulnerable sectors are not being implemented.

Unregistered labour, unstable jobs, low salaries.

It is true that the rate corresponding to unregistered labour showed a fall of 8 points, from 49.7 percent in 2003 (third quarter) to 41.6 percent in 2007 (first quarter)²⁴, and most of the jobs created in 2003 are officially registered, but the decrease in informal jobs is very slow and this does not match the level of growth. This way, unregistered labour rate is above 39 percent, which is the set target for 2007.

A number of changes were noticed: reduction of unemployment, labour market recomposition, governmental regulation recovery, labour law amendments, a rise in adjustable minimum living wages; nevertheless, all of these achievements are not enough, as there is more than 41.6 percent of unregistered people working for private companies. The same situation is seen at the civil service, where workers are hired in different ways. Therefore, promotion of decent work, that is to say, a job offering protection according to the worker's rights (payment to pension funds, health,

²⁴ Source: INDEC, EPH

occupational accidents insurance, etc), establishes a substantial point regarding social inclusion.

Unstable jobs and wages below poverty level still exist. Under the actual productivist model formal employment has risen, but informal employment is still unregistered. Therefore, two groups of workers are noticed: those who earn good salaries (whose rights are protected) and those who earn very low salaries (with no rights). Unless higher financial supervision and policies guaranteeing social rights (irrespective of labour conditions: pension, social insurance, and the number of rights protecting informal employment) are implemented, this situation will remain unchanged.

Child Labour in Argentina

Child labour represents an issue that is often minimized by public policies, though it is significantly noticed both in big cities and rural sectors. According to the 2004 EANNA (Encuesta de Actividades de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes; *Survey on Active Children and Adolescents*) 6.5 percent of children (boys and girls) and adolescents are employed²⁵. Having said this, child labour rate is 3.5 points above the set target for 2007. Despite the fact that child labour has decreased during the last two years, it is, unfortunately, above the 3 percent agreed for the 2007 target. According to some research done by governmental organizations and civil societies, there are more than 2 million children working in cities and rural sectors in Argentina²⁶.

Most of the children work in cities, they are involved in street selling, cardboard collection, building industry, clothing and shoes manufacturing and family business. They also do housework, both in private homes or in their own houses, taking care of younger brothers. While it is true that those children working indoors are not as exposed as those who work at the streets, they find themselves equally unable to handle situations for which they are not prepared, given their age and training.

What is even more distressing is the fact that child labour is a concept widely accepted and practiced in rural sectors. Nevertheless, it is important to draw a line between helping at home and working outside, for another people.

It is not the same to work as a means of contribution or collaboration to the family than to work along with their relatives, pressed by the poverty situation, and accepting some abusive kinds of contracts such as “work by the job”. These kinds of jobs are common in Misiones, during the yerba mate harvest; in Salta during the tobacco harvest; in Chaco during the cotton harvest; in San Juan during the onion harvest; in Río Negro during the pear and apple harvests; in Tucumán during the lemon harvest; and in Buenos Aires, during several fruits and vegetables harvest in farms. Children are usually hired because they are paid less than adults²⁷.

To eradicate child labour is essential, it is an issue not to be regarded just as a labour policy. Children who work have their education, their health and protection deteriorated. A global view and inter-ministerial strategies are necessary to eradicate child labour, as a violation of rights is at stake: the right to education, to health, to recreation, to grow in healthy environments, all of them are being left aside. Only by providing good and

²⁵ 2004 EANNA covered almost 50 percent of population from 7-17. The situation gets more relevant, taking into account that 20 percent of adolescents between 14 -17 work. There are more boys adolescents (25%, i.e. 1 out of 4) working than girls adolescents (12.5%, i.e. 1 out of 8). Child Labour in Argentina, 2007, ILO, Ministry of Labour, Bs. As.

²⁶ Data from Secretariat for Social Security of Argentina, based on a Survey on Living Conditions from SIEMPRO, 2001.

²⁷ According to The Argentinian Union of Rural Labourers and Dockworkers, about 6,000 and 7,000 children leave school during yerba mate harvests, in Misiones and Corrientes.

genuine jobs to parents child labour will decrease; a government commitment is required for this, in order to offer global protection to children, combining public policies dealing with education, social development and health. Poverty will decrease only by combining work with continuity of education.

Unemployment Compensation Programs

According to ANSES (Administración Nacional de Seguridad Social, *Social Security Administration*), around 75,000 workers received benefits from unemployment insurances in June 2006. According to the National Counselling for Social Policies only 9 percent of unemployed workers had social cover. Based on this information, we can come to the conclusion that the target set for 2007 will be very difficult to reach (28 percent of unemployed workers having unemployment insurance), and more difficulties will arise by 2015 if an unemployment insurance system is not implemented in a way that includes unemployed workers, irrespective of their work experience²⁸. At present there is a certain number of requirements that restrict the access to this insurance, for instance, the requirement of having been a registered worker with 12 months-working experience, or admitting having been an unregistered worker willing to speak up against the previous employer. Achieving the set target for 2015 will be tough, due to the low level of existing cover and the actual conditions restricting the access to Unemployment Insurance.

It would have been of great significance to achieve this target, even though it would have meant a benefit for only 28 percent of unemployed workers, guaranteeing them some sort of income and social cover, thus reducing the possibility of destitution and ensuring access to social rights. However, the set target for 2007 is not ambitious: there lots of workers being left out. It is true that some administration mechanisms were implemented so that informal workers could have access to some kind of unemployment insurance, but just to enhance the coverage does not necessarily imply an active policy guaranteeing the acceptance of unemployed people and their corresponding grant of benefits.

Beneficiaries of Social Plans (“Jefes y Jefas”)

While the number of beneficiaries is decreasing (from 2,100,000 in May 2002 to 818,881 in October 2007), both because of the transfer of women with children to the “Plan Familias” (*Families Plan*), and because of the transfer to the “Plan Seguro de capacitación y empleo” (*Training and Employment Insurance Plan*), it remains significantly high.

The actual number of beneficiaries indicates that public policies fail to make people showing poor education join the labour market. There are no active strategies for massive employment (massive training, regional agreements and promotion of proximity employment programs). The high number of beneficiaries also indicates that 900,000 people (a third of Buenos Aires population) gets \$150, placing them below destitution level.

Having said that, we can come to the following conclusion: there exists a public policy that—in spite of inflationary rates—has not been updated since 2002, as regards the amount of the benefit, misrepresenting thus its purposefulness. An acceptable amount of benefits should give acces to a level above destitution line, and should be updated every month. It should, at the same time, demand graduation from compulsory

²⁸ National Council for Social Policies, Presidency of Argentina, MDGs, State of affairs, 2007.

education, or a sort of training facilitating labour reinsertion, both offered by the government and massively implemented.

Finally, the Training and Employment Insurance Plan is an important step, as regards extension of social rights (payment to pension funds), education (graduation from school, training for labour reinsertion, etc) and labour connections (public works, self-managed works). It represents an income in return for training courses or productive work, being the last of them filled out by the employer. What is of high importance here is the fact of giving recognition to labour reinsertion, and its financing education for the unemployed workers. Talking about shortfalls, the amount of payment is to be noticed: though in some cases it is complemented by employers or public programs, the original amount of \$225 is not enough for the payment of basic needs, including transport to work, or food, among others.

MDGs: Unregarded points

Youth is one unregarded major issue when considering social inclusion. The MDGs do not take into account young persons, even though inter-generational gaps are substantially clear. Young people are being severely affected by unemployment and poverty. According to the last NSI survey, 24.9 percent of young people are unemployed which, compared to the national average percentage of 7.5, represents almost the triple. Young people feel they have to face a serious, competitive environment, where education standards are becoming difficult to reach. Job offers are usually poor and labour insertion is fragile, with low wages. In Buenos Aires province there are about 500,000 young people who neither work nor study, the total number of young people in the whole country edging up to 900,000. This scene reflects lack of opportunities, low self-esteem and a growing deteriorated social fabric.

To sum up, the 2000-2007 period shows a tendency between 2000-2001 highlighting labour indicators which have deteriorated since the 1990's. The situation becomes even worse between 2002-2003 and from 2003 onwards, a slow process of recovery begins. Nevertheless, as regards informality, child labour, etc., we are below the results obtained in the previous decade. As a result, despite the fact that unemployment has decreased, we can see that social inclusion and poverty reduction does not occur automatically. In order to make **work** become the main mechanism for social inclusion there are still lots of things to be done. Meanwhile, employment policies should be implemented in a more strong, massive way (make education a universal right, allowing access, permanence and reinsertion at the labour market; taking into consideration the most vulnerable groups, such as the young people and women from monoparental homes, older than 45; developing regional strategies for the creation of jobs, etc), and along with this, labour rights and social policies should be universalized, offering protection for those who are not completely included in the labour market.



IV. Promote gender equality

Gender equality represents an essential condition for strengthening the development and democratization processes, and gratifiedly achieving the majority of the MDGs: it is present in every one of them. World interpretation and understanding is often dictated by man unilateralism, as we can see in the following aspects: family, religion, education, government, etc; which leads to the disregard of women within financial and political affairs.

The concept of *gender* gives a “relational, contextualized approach, instead of analyzing women as a universal, ahistorical and essentialist entity. Feminine and masculine cores are created mutually”²⁹. Gender, as a category, is a social one; it allows the decoding of meanings and the understanding of complex connections existing among different kinds of human interaction. This androcentric society³⁰ has favoured a distorted view of the world, it grants a privilege to one side of the human task: that is why it is necessary to revise the processes determining the approval of this arbitration procedure as *natural*³¹.

In 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the fact that some countries admitted the close connection between poverty and gender meant a major achievement. This led to a combination of efforts into redirecting policies in order to eradicate poverty, giving special attention to women needs, in rural areas, specifically. Women playing financial roles is essential, in the sense that millions of people will be able to escape hunger and poverty. Giving women access to financial and educational opportunities, plus necessary autonomy to make good use of such situation would mean surmounting a substantial difficulty in eradicating poverty.

The Beijing Platform for Action also called government’s attention to “*initiate legal and administrative reforms guaranteeing women full and equal acces to financial resources, heritage and possession of land included*”. Nevertheless, progress in that area has not been significant.

Besides, since 1994 our country acknowledges equal opportunities and treatment for men and women, giving constitutional rank to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women). In like manner, our country has recently approved the CEDAW facultative protocol.

Poverty: the feminization of it

²⁹ María Cecilia Cangiano and Lindsay DuBois, “De mujer a Género” (*From Women to Gender*), Buenos Aires, Centro Editor de América Latina, 1993, p 10.

³⁰ Androcentrism: Placing male human beings at the center of one’s view of the world, culture and history.

³¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “La dominación masculina” (*Domination is androgenic*), Barcelona, Anagrama, 2000, p12.

Most of the people living on a dollar a day, or less, are women. Income levels between men and women are still significantly uneven. Women living in poverty are often denied loans, land and heritage. Their work is neither approved nor paid. Their needs regarding health assistance and nutrition are not seen as priorities; women do not have proper access to education and support groups; their decision making, both at home and within the community is not equal. They end up “walking in circles”, unable to get away from poverty, with no resources or services that could make a difference in their situation³².

The gap between men and women stuck in this situation has increased during the last ten years; this phenomenon has been called “**feminization of poverty**”. Under this concept, the growing impoverishment of women in the material field is noticed, along with a deterioration in their living conditions and a violation of basic rights. While the general concept around the world is that of women gaining power and improving their living conditions, the actual numbers say the opposite. It has been proved that in first and third world families, for example, rent sharing is not equal: it is agreed on a basis of a hierarchical structure, following gender judgement.

“Not only is poverty being feminized: subsistence is undergoing the same process as well”, declares Saskia Sassen (Dutch Sociologist). Indeed, food production for subsistence, informal labour, migration or prostitution, are all financial activities that have become much more important as survival options for women. The truth is that women only get a place in this development process through sex industry, show business and money sent to their native countries³³.

Massive integration of women into the labour market.

The implementation of neoliberal policies and the government reduction seen during the 1990's in our country emphasized processes of inequality, exclusion and poverty. Within a framework of socioeconomical phenomena, capitals were transferred to the tertiary sector (tertiarization), with a significant level of feminization added to this: office jobs grew substantially (secretaries, receptionists, teachers, etc). Externalization and collectivization processes related to activities formerly performed by women at home, led to growing jobs in fields of education and health, which is, concurrently, a way of getting access to labour market.

A “feminine invasion” set forth: while labour market deregulation took place, many middle-class men started to lose their jobs (losing their hierarchical position as head of household, as well) and changes in family structures were noticed. As a result, women had to “leave the house” in order to take charge of their families maintenance. Consequently, men started to feel frustrated not only because they had lost their jobs, but because their wives were out, working: they had failed in being the breadwinners. Having analyzed this, we can see that gender oppression affects everybody, not just women³⁴.

Within this framework, we can understand the way in which the labour market changed as regards the growing number of women getting new jobs since the early 1990's; from

³² Information document nº 1, “Igualdad de géneros, desarrollo y paz para el siglo XXI” (*Gender equality, development and peace for the XXI century*); New York, July, 5th-9th, 2000-

³³ El País/Opinión Newspaper “The feminization of poverty”, by Rosa Cobo y Luisa Posada. June 15th, 2006.

³⁴ In fact, as regards education, the general concept is that of man being responsible for the maintenance of the family, that is why many boys do not finish school and start looking for a job.

that year to 2005 the activity rates corresponding to 15 to 65-year-old women rose from 43.2 percent to 55.6³⁵.

Growing capitals make use of less labour force, with time, which leads to growing unemployment and unstable jobs, as well as people losing formal jobs where they had good salaries and social protection.

By the means of employment people get access to society; ergo, unemployment generates exclusion and poverty. By exclusion not only do we mean people who do not have jobs, but people who have unstable jobs, having their social rights violated, as well. As a result, there are employed people who are poor, being biased for that reason.

Within the family structure, payed or unpaid jobs affect hierarchical orders, and this new order is due to the feminine invasion we mentioned above. In like manner, as a result of financial cuts to social programs, structural adjustments programs coming from neoliberal policies have increased unsalaried jobs within the house and the community, intensifying community work and self-consumption production: health, nutrition, education and others, are issues taken on by the families³⁶. Volunteer work is assigned to women, and many times local social projects depend on women's unsalaried work. Women earning a salary gain financial independence and freedom, but unless the "former roles" socially assigned to be played within the family structure are modified, they end up exhausted. Social responsibility values are now seen as "women stuff", making women feel worn-out, with no proper cover for children's care or job-training opportunities.

The "feminine invasion" to the labour market will only be solved by means of a change in public policies as well as a change in family structures. Women should be guaranteed sustainable social cover, apart from unsalaried jobs or volunteer work.

They are often associated with the private sector of domestic/familiar help. In the financial world not only does the production sector exist, but the reproduction sector, as well. The financial aspect of reproduction is to be acknowledged. A false dichotomy between the social and financial aspects is noticed, "impacts" on these sectors are mentioned. This way, women have very few possibilities of exerting pressure on financial affairs. This concept is based on the common image of the woman seen as a responsible, caretaker person, with no recognition of her abilities regarding reproduction, nourishment, human care. Such acknowledgement establishes the basis for equality.

According to Maxine Molyneux, *"women, in essence, have been concerned about the community: they had no selfish motivations, and their growing social inclusion (in the family and the neighborhood) along with their sense of duty towards being head of households predisposed them to popular activism"*³⁷. Molyneux analyzed the changing situation of women in Latin America, highlighting the difference between individual interests creating community programs versus women making volunteer work.

Sexual division of labour

³⁵ "Labour market situation diagnosis" (Diagnóstico de la situación laboral de las mujeres). 2005, Second half, DGE, FPE, SPTyEL, 2005.

³⁶ Patricia Amat y León. *De lo cotidiano a lo público: visibilidad y demandas de género*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*

Occupational structure shows segregation, according to gender. Jobs with no qualifications needed, domestic help, teaching, social services and health are often assigned to women.

The concept of sexual division of labour is useful here to explain the difference seen in labour insertion, as regards men and women, in social production and reproduction aspects³⁸.

Under this concept, several points are analyzed: unsalaried domestic help, the lowest labour rates regarding feminine activities, the existence of male and female jobs, the difference in labour distribution as regards areas, sectors, kind of corporations, specific jobs and qualifications. In like manner, there is an income disparity: the more “feminine” the job, the less the income. Salaried women earned about 66% of what a man earned in the same job³⁹, though a regression has been noticed during 2001.

Scarcity of women at managerial posts is another kind of evidence. Both, at the government (legal, executive areas) and in corporations, education, federations, unions, etc., lack of female representation in senior posts is noticed. The main social-political movements have been created by women, yet they are not present at managing areas: the fundamental feminine existence is not reflected at senior posts.

All of these kinds of discrimination have a direct impact on women’s decision making: homes are not necessarily equitable units where resources and incomes benefit everybody in the same way. Financial decisions (who works?, who is in charge of the kids?, who studies?), as well as conditioning factors (not based on a “shared functionality” rationale) having influence over the family well-being, are determined by the power of individual negotiation, expressing power relations and collaboration within the family structure.

It is important to eradicate the implications of sexual division of labour, in order to strengthen women’s autonomy and their ability to negotiate, in every aspect of life.

Monitoring indicators chosen for the evaluation of progress in regard to gender equity are not exactly convenient. Taking into consideration the fact that gender equality has historically existed in our country as for women participation in formal education, and being aware that in the whole territory this reality is uneven, such situation should not be regarded as an achievement per se, but as the starting point to analyze the differences among provinces.

On the other hand, despite gender equality is present when talking about getting access to all levels of education, this statement does not apply to the fact of gaining access to labour market, and far less, to senior posts: there is 43 percent of salaried women, but only 27.54 percent of them work in managerial posts.

³⁸ Agenda de las mujeres. Portal de las Mujeres Argentinas, de Iberoamérica y del MERCOSUR. “La división sexual del trabajo” (*Sexual division of work*) by María E. Ginés.

³⁹ Presidency of Argentina. MDGs, Progress Report 2005-2006, December 2006.

Table 5
Gender Equity: Monitoring indicators, Intermediate and Final targets

Indicators	Years						
	1990	2000	2001	2003	2005	Target 2007	Target 2015
Femininity rate both in EGB and Polimodal (I)	97.2	93.6	97.7	95.2	98.0	100.0	100.0
Femininity rate in EGB, Polimodal, Tertiary and University education (I)	98.3	101.4	103.7	102.2	104.2	100.0	100.0
Literacy rate in young men between 15-24 (I)	99.4	99.1	99.2	99.3	99.2	100.0	100.0
Literacy rate in young women between 15-24 (I)	99.1	99.4	99.3	99.6	99.5	100.0	100.0
Percentage of salaried women in other than agricultural areas (I)	35.8	40.1	40.3	43.0	42.5	40.0	45.0
Incomes gap corresponding to unsalaried people (I)	0.73	0.76	0.76	0.71	0.66	0.6	0.8
Ratio of Women and Men regarding public and private senior posts (I)	n/i	0.5	0.53	0.45	0.35	0.4	0.6
Percentage of seats gained by women at the National Congress (II)*	6.0	n/i	30.6	35.3	30.6	30.0	45.0
Percentage of seats gained by women at Jurisdictional Legislatures (III)*	n/i	22.2	22.1	26.1	26.6	30.0	45.0

Notes: Until 2003, EPH waves correspond to May. From 2004 onwards, they correspond to the first half of 2004 (*). Seats are gained every two years. Information corresponding to 1990 (base line) have been analyzed by SIEMPRO, based on EPH and INDEC; they show GBA.

n/i: no information

Source:

(I) Information based on EPH, INDEC, processed by SIEMPRO-CNPS

(II) and (III) Information processed by CNM, based on National and Jurisdictional Legislative Powers information.

As for seats gained by women at the National Congress and Jurisdictional Legislatures⁴⁰, Argentina was one of the first countries to sanction a minimum quota (30%) for women candidature, after the electoral reform in 1991, to be implemented in 1993. The Law of Quotas allows the intervention of justice (based on a penalizing system), giving the inhabitants in an electoral district the possibility to impugn a slate, if they consider it violates the Law (24.012). The Law also establishes the following: the places to be gained by women in each slate should guarantee them the possibility of election. In order to do so, a system of intercalation of candidates, according to sex, was established: under this regulation, those slates that do not meet the requirements, will not be made official. Some improvement has been noticed after the Law of Quotas, but we are far from achieving gender equality in political aspects yet.

⁴⁰ Jujuy is the only Argentinian province with no "Law of Quotas".

Intermediate targets are mostly fulfilled according to the indicators, except for the percentage of seats gained by women at the National Congress and Jurisdictional Legislatures, this point has not been achieved (2007).

MDGs: Unregarded points

The viewpoint from the MDGs is rather sexist: when talking about gender equity, a heterosexual society is considered, with no attention to multiple gender identities, such as transsexuals, travestis, lesbians, gays. The MDGs only make reference to discrimination towards women, and it is important to take into consideration the fact that diversity of social participation is the basis for equity. With no respect for diversity, a real democracy will not be possible.

Sexual and domestic violence (often unnoticed issues, but really significant) are not considered in the MDGs. Only 10 percent of sexual violence situations are reported, which means there are about 60,000 sexual abuse cases a year, that is to say, sixteen per day. One out of five Argentine homes reflects violence episodes against women. To sum up: 25 percent of women are victims of abuse, and 50 percent of them undergo a violent situation at some point in their lives (BID info at CEDAW, 2002). Having this subject analyzed is substantially important, and have it included as a comprehensive part of a group of strategies promoting maternal health could make a significant improvement towards gender equity.

According to what has been mentioned above, and leaving aside the fact that men and women should be guaranteed equal incomes in equal jobs, new tasks should be included: women should be given broader participation in managerial posts, and the recognition of performing double roles both at the labour market and at home. Also, tasks evaluating women's situation at uniparental homes should be included, reversing the feminization of poverty and improving living conditions such as health, children education, housing, access to services and salaried housework. Social insurance systems should be reviewed, covering a new kind of mobile labour market, without taking as a fact precariousness, uncertainty and vulnerability as unavoidable items. Democracy and governance are not guaranteed under a rule of law. Some kind of recovery or reinvention of the social standing is necessary, being implied the recognition of social rights and labour conquests. Raising family, education, marriage, pregnancy and maternity allowances could mean getting off to a good start. Unless these changes are implemented, family's vulnerability, originated after the market flexibilization and the welfare state's disintegration, will increase.



V. Reduce Child Mortality

Child mortality rate reflects the number of children who die by the age of one per thousand live births; it represents a vital indicator measuring the social development, childhood situation and health system within a country.

The child survival concept is based on financial and environmental development levels, as a consequence, it is really sensitive to poverty levels and environments where children have been born and grown. This MDG is essential for the promotion of human development and wellbeing levels in society, closely connected to other MDGs, such as the one dealing with eradication of poverty: the higher the levels of poverty, the higher the child mortality; and to the one dealing with maternal health, because a decrease in child mortality implies a recovery in mother's health during pregnancy, good medical care during pregnancy, and good care of the new-born baby at high-technology institutions.

Main causes

The main causes of child mortality are related to health problems during the perinatal period (premature births, mother and child showing low weight), to respiratory and infectious diseases, congenital defects and, in less proportion, to sudden death. In 2004, 86 percent of mortality in children under 1 was associated to these first causes⁴¹. Most of the problems are preventable provided timely treatments are given, according to UNICEF in Argentina. "In order to revert this situation, an improved vaccination program is necessary, along with an improved nutritional program, primary health care service, a better distribution of wealth and adequate training for mothers⁴²", declared Hugo Sverdloss, from SAP (Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría- *Society of Pediatricians in Argentina*). One major cause of death is Severe Diarrhea (EDA Enfermedades Diarreicas Agudas), due to polluted waters and poor hygiene at home. Such deaths would be preventable if running water nets and toilets were installed. Sanitary deterioration originates in toilets without running water, and the consequent pollution of groundwater sources. According to the 2006 HDR, there are about 12 million Argentinians living with no drains; 8 million people do not have access to running water nets. Only Buenos Aires and Tierra del Fuego offer sanitation service to 90 percent of the population. Only 10 provinces guarantee water supply to more than 90 percent of the population. Those provinces offering poor water supply systems and drains show higher child mortality rates. Deaths by lower respiratory tract infections are also noticed. According to the director of WHO, about 20 percent of people use wood or other solid fuels for cooking or heating. These fuels burn up slowly in homes with no

⁴¹ Dirección de Estadística e Información de Salud (Ministry of Health, Argentina)

⁴² Mujeres Hoy. El portal de las Latinoamericanas. "Argentina: Mortalidad infantil podría evitarse en un gran porcentaje" (*Argentina: Child mortality could be highly avoided*) July 19th, 2005.

proper ventilation, and as a result, children, who are exposed to the smoke, start suffering from respiratory infections.

Table 6
Child mortality: Monitoring indicators, Intermediate and Final targets.

Indicators	1990	2000	2002	2005(III)	2006	2007(III) Target	2015(III) Target
Child mortality rate in children under 5 (per thousand live births)	29.6	19.3	19.5	15.5	n/i	14.6	9.9
Child mortality rate under 1 (per thousand live births)	25.6	16.6	16.8	13.3	12.6	12.6	8.5
Ginni-coefficient showing interprovincial distribution and mortality rate in children under 5. I	0.113	0.126	0.132	0.102	n/i	0.117	0.102
Ginni-coefficient showing interprovincial distribution and mortality rate in children under 1. I	0.100	0.124	0.130	0.104	n/i	0.116	0.090
Percentage of one-year-old vaccinated children against measles (II)	93.0	91.0	95.0	>98.0	n/i	exceeded	>95.0%
Percentage of 18-month-old vaccinated children (triple-quad., full doses)	87.1	82.5	80.1	86.0	n/i	exceeded	>90.0%

Note: n/i: no information. (*) There is no final information at present, but the 98% of one-year-old vaccinated children against measles has been exceeded.

Source: Development Report 2005-2006. MDGs, Presidency of Argentina, Institutional Report, Argentine Republic.

- (I) Statistics and Health Information Department. Ministry.
- (II) Immunization Department. Ministry of Health.
- (III) Information offered by the National Council for Coordinating Social Policies, Presidency of Argentina.

Child mortality diagnosis in Argentina

In 2005 the child mortality rate in Argentina corresponded to 13.3 per thousand live births, decreasing the next year to 12.6 per thousand, according to declarations from the Minister of Health, Ginés González García. He also pointed out the fact that, since 2003 onwards, more than 7000 children have been prevented from dying. All of this has been possible thanks to strong policies having been implemented during the last four years (2004-2007), such as Mother/Child Program, milk supply, medicine supply, the "Remedy Plan" (Plan Remediar), the "Birth Plan" (Plan Nacer) and the Reproductive Health Program (Programa de Salud Reproductiva). As for indicators showing improvement in immunization, at a national level, according to the 2005-2006 MDGs last report, Argentina has exceeded the set target for 2007, with a significant increase in cover being noticed, as regards quadruple vaccines and measles.

Nevertheless, specialists agree on the significant decrease in child mortality rates, but such figures are still considered to be high when compared to development rates seen in Argentina during the last years. Given the possibilities of development existing in the country, numbers remain high. Such deaths are avoidable, as they bear close relation to high levels of poverty and poor education for mothers.

Raúl Mercer, sanitarian and pediatrician, declares the following: the rates reflect *“a substantial decrease, but this improvement is not to be considered as exceptional; there is a global phenomenon taking place”*. Such decrease *“is not what we had been expecting, considering the potential and richness the country offers, within a specific historical context. Not only that: rates should be much lower. Take Chile, for example, they have reached the rate of 8 per thousand, a number Argentina should have achieved much earlier”*. Our country is at a disadvantage against other countries. Other Latin-american countries such as Chile, Costa Rica or Cuba, despite the fact that their development has not been significant, they only show single-digit numbers.

Regional disparity

A substantial decrease in child mortality has been noticed, it is true, mostly in provinces offering “the worst conditions” (according to the Ministry of Health⁴³), such as Tucumán, Chaco, Corrientes y Misiones, but it is also true that at the same time a growing gap showing differences among provinces has been registered.

The major differences become practically unnoticed when child mortality is shown as an average number all throughout the country. According to the last published research corresponding to 2005, great differences are still noticed regarding children and their possibilities of survival depending on the region they live; the highest numbers are found in Formosa, showing a child mortality rate of 25.1 per thousand live births, which exceeds the national average, representing almost four times the numbers of Tierra del Fuego (6.7 per thousand live births). Having seen these rates, and no changes being noticed, the actual Ginni-coefficient at inter-jurisdictional districts is not acceptable as any possible indicator of having achieved any target.

Despite the fact that a sharp decrease in child mortality rates was seen during the 1990-2000 period (from 25.6 percent to 16,6 percent), inter-jurisdictional differences grew significantly. In Table 6, a sort of stagnation (about 13 percent) or very slow decrease in child mortality rates can be observed during the last years. Furthermore, as for the worst times during the crisis, a progressive fall in the inter-jurisdictional gap can be seen. Anyway, great differences among provinces still exist, and according to the registered figures during 1990, the set target for 2007 has not been achieved yet.

Lack of resources represents a major issue in the evaluation of infant population, according to a investigation carried out by SAP and UNICEF (Estudio Salud materno-infanto-juvenil, 2006). The most affected regions are the NW and NE of Argentina where the poverty rate reaches 64.2 percent and 72.1 percent, respectively, affecting people under 18. Poverty has an effect on maternal education: pregnancy tests are deficient, medical care is offered in poor institutions. According to the president of CONIN, “when a baby is born to an illiterate mother, their chances of survival are divided by three”⁴⁴.

⁴³ <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2007/09/14/um/m-01499288.htm>

⁴⁴ News article at Risolidaria. Solidarity on the internet. “El futuro en riesgo” (The future is at risk) April 2007.

All the information given at Table 6 can be separated into two categories: avoidable and unavoidable deaths, taking into account pathologies, available scientific information and health systems characteristics. Possible solutions are not only simple but cheap. In 2004, causes of preventable deaths reached 56.3 percent. In other words, almost 60 percent of those deaths are avoidable provided that a scheme of prevention, diagnosis and timely treatments during pregnancy, birth and to new-born babies are followed, considering premature births and respiratory infections as the main causes of health problems during the first periods of life. Having said that, a continuous (and sharpened) fall in child mortality rates could be possible.

Child mortality is closely related to gender inequality: it has been proved that children born to uneducated women show poor living qualities and higher probabilities of death. Until the age of five, children depend almost exclusively on their mothers; for this reason, having mothers educated is essential: if they could reach a basic level of education and had access to information, mortality rates in children under 5 would certainly decrease. Lots of girls have left school after the 2001 crisis and, what is worse, these institutions have become “social assistants” for children.

In August 2002 a number of NGOs presented a report to CEDAW, reflecting growing adolescent pregnancy rates. It has been estimated that 15 percent of live births correspond to mothers under 20. This proportion gets modified depending on the different regions throughout the entire country (poorly educated adolescents, lower socio-economical level). The proportion of mothers under 15 has increased during the last 5 years: from 0.04 percent of total number of live births to 0.05 percent. As for “child-mothers” (aged 9-13 years), 80 percent of them have become pregnant after having relations with men 10 years older (or more), which leads to a final conclusion presuming abuse, rape or incest.

Challenges for achieving this goal: unresolved points

Child mortality will only be reduced provided that certain changes are noticed: better living conditions for people in general; health considered as a commonweal; reduction of existing gaps among provinces. Also, other important issues should be considered: improving pregnancy test's quality, promoting breast-feeding, improving women's medical care in general, more specifically during pregnancy periods, childbirth, childbed. Prevention is an important topic as well.

The following points are to be considered as keyline items: the whole family members (mothers, children) should have free access to elementary education, health service, information, community outreach, nutritional resources and drinking water. Tools for reducing child mortality are already present in the world, there have been major health-care improvements, food production is enough. Even though a slow progress is noticed, the fight against child mortality is global. At this rate, the MDG will have been achieved by 2045 (30 years later than planned), according to what has been predicted.

As mentioned above, this goal bears close relation to the one dealing with maternal health. Children need special attention during the first two years, and breast-feeding is essential. Until six months age, breast-feeding is exclusive; after this period, other nutritional complements should be added, maintaining breast-feeding until the age of two.

Health care systems show significant flaws in our country. It is difficult to make use of available resources in order to find practical solutions when considering health problems. Therefore, substantial progress could be achieved in the field of health,

regarding the improvement of quality and cover of prenatal, paediatrician and perinatal care. Technology investment is necessary (which has been implemented already), as well as better nursing care plans: two nurses every one doctor are required, and the actual average in our country is less than one. Having nurses trained in neonatology is also essential. To sum up, by having skilled health workers attending deliveries, having institutions technologically equipped and offering available resources, along with a proper assistance system, then certain progress will be made. Public policies guaranteeing a more uniform, qualified cover should be implemented.

Different —and vital— kind of questions are yet to be solved: reduction of poverty and destitution, being all this related to employment, dignified living conditions and drinking water. In the same way, given the high rates of adolescent pregnancy, it is necessary to highlight the importance of sex education and gender violence analysis.



VI. Improve Maternal Health

Maternal death represents a key indicator for the evaluation of equity and development levels in society. Maternal health also gives indication of structural, financial, social and cultural aspects determining levels of well-being for a woman, as regards health and nutrition, access to education and other resources found within society⁴⁵. With reference to the MDG dealing with maternal health, Argentina has set the following target for 2015: to reduce **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** by three-quarters (of the total amount registered during 1990), and reduce the gap showing differences among provinces by 10 percent.

Table 7:
Maternal health: Monitoring indicators, Intermediate and Final targets.

Indicators	Years						
	1990	2000	2003	2004	2005	2007 Target	2015 Target
Maternal death rates per 10 thousand live births	5.2	3.5	4.4	4.0	3.9	3.7	1.3
Inter-jurisdictional Ginni-coefficient in MD rates	0.346	0.436	0.363	0.303	0.311	0.344	0.311
Percentage of deliveries attended by skilled health-care personnel ”	96.9	99.1	99.1	99.1	99.1	99.0	99.0

Source: Statistics and Information Health Department. Ministry of Health, Argentina.

As shown above, rates reflecting MD have not presented significant variations (40 per 100 thousand live births); in fact, regional disparities exist. Huge differences can be found in NW and NE provinces, where the rates reach 100 and 180 per 100 thousand live births. The coefficient measuring equity among provinces indicates 0.311 (it should be 0 in the best-case scenario); as a result, we do not agree in considering this target as “achieved” by 2005.

This goal can be also monitored by making use of the following indicator: “percentage of deliveries attended by skilled health-care personnel”. This target has been achieved in 2000; and having said that, there is some value in taking into consideration that MMR has been relatively steady (4 per 10 thousand live births) since then.

⁴⁵ Presidency of Argentina. MDGs. An opportunity for a new reunion. October 2003.

According to actual reports, the major causes of maternal death include complications of pregnancy, delivery or childbed; 32 percent corresponds to abortion. Generally speaking, maternal death is closely related to women living in poverty, showing low levels of education or living in rural areas, this leading to deficient medical care during pregnancy, lack of information or health problems caused by malnutrition.

Sex Education and Reproductive Health

Maternal health, sexual rights and reproductive health are closely related. In fact, it is difficult to analyze one of these subjects without making any reference to the others. Within the framework of WHO's definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, "*reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life*". Reproductive and sexual health are interconnected with reproductive and sexual rights. Topics like these, openly discussed, create controversy. They bring on certain issues which are commonly avoided, such as gender and social class inequities, patriarchal authority, medical authority, sex as a source of pleasure per se (regardless of reproductive consequences), rights for sexual minorities, free motherhood or abortion rights⁴⁶.

*Reproductive health, therefore, implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this are the right of men and women to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice, and the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant*⁴⁷.

The National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Parenthood was passed in October 2002 in Argentina (Law 25673). It certainly meant a significant step towards the recognition of Human Rights dealing with sexual and reproductive health. The programme includes items such as prevention, having free access to reproductive health services (free contraceptives), access to information, early detection of genital and breast-related problems, promotion of women's participation in decision making, quality and cover of sexual and reproductive health.

The government has expressed formal support to women, highlighting their rights to decide on reproduction and health matters. Nevertheless, not all women belonging to different social sectors have obtained benefits from it. Domestic violence is one major obstacle here, which has prevented authorities from giving special attention to women who are willing to take preventive measures (contraceptives). MMR will not decrease unless domestic violence is considered a key point to be seriously analyzed.

In other respects, a certain number of laws and policies are not being implemented. Oral contraceptives, which are free of charge according to the law, are being sold in certain public sectors. In a way, the actual laws prevent women from having access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice, and the right of access to appropriate health care services. IUD or emergency

⁴⁶ Susana Checa. "Encrucijadas" UBA magazine. Sexual and reproductive health.

⁴⁷ Definition of Reproductive Health, UN 1995. Population and Development, volume 1: UN International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, from 5-13 September 1994, Programme of Action, paragraph 3.14. N.Y. Financial and Social Information Department, Policies Report, UN.

contraception are being called into question (considered as abortion-inducing agents); vasectomy and tubal ligation are regarded as “unethical”; health workers are forced to press charges against women who ask for post-abortion care.

In Argentina, having access to surgical sterilization (one of the most effective methods) is very difficult. In many public hospitals —where international human rights standards of privacy, non-discrimination and health are thus violated— the woman is required to have her husband’s permission to undergo surgery, she must have at least three living children, and she must be older than 35 in order to be considered as an eligible patient. Still more, in certain cases, she must have a judicial authorization in order to undergo tubal ligation even though she had met all previous specifications⁴⁸.

Sex education is also a controversial issue connected to maternal health. A national law has been recently passed, in order to deal with this matter, but not all provinces meet with jurisdictional laws promoting sex education at schools, in all levels. Activities within the health sector (that should be carried out with no strings attached) are challengingly implemented given this situation. Improvements would only be made by guaranteeing the enforcement of existing laws, policies and programmes. Having said that, an eventual legal reform is essential.

Abortion

About 30 public projects to reform the Penal Code, which include the decriminalization of abortion (in different situations, including regulations for non-punishable abortions), have been presented to Congress since 1984. To date, though, no formal legislative debate about abortion in Argentina has been conducted.

As shown in the chart above, the MMR corresponds to 3.9 per 10 thousand live births (2005). Abortion complications are the leading cause of MM (32%). Every year, around 100 women die because of this situation⁴⁹. The causes of death include, in most cases, procedures carried out illegally, outside proper sanitary conditions. Furthermore, health institutions are not properly prepared to assist women arriving in such conditions.

Under the legal provisions of the Penal Code for Argentina, there are two exceptional considerations for non-punishable abortions: *“when pregnancy represents a threat to the mother’s life, and there are no other ways to avoid such threat, then an abortion request is justified”*⁵⁰, meaning that the mother’s physical or psychic health is at risk; nevertheless, in real practice, the medical recommendation suggesting therapeutic abortion is restricted to those situations where the woman’s life is seriously threatened. The second exceptional consideration is: *“when a woman showing mental retardation or mental disorders becomes pregnant after having been raped, then an abortion request with her legal representative consent is justified”*⁵¹. Before performing legal abortions, health professionals always require judicial authorizations, fearful of standing trial for abortion or malpractice. This requirement, however, is not considered by law, and their demand, in some cases, prevents women from exercising their basic rights of health, integrity, personal autonomy, and non-discrimination. Poor women are significantly affected by this petition, which results in a situation of discrimination: there is a difference between women who can afford a safe abortion in private institutions — or a lawyer— and women who cannot. To sum up: abortion penalization dissuades

⁴⁸ Artemisa Noticias. Periodismo de género para mujeres y varones. “Día por el derecho al aborto: los límites y en panorama en la Argentina”.

⁴⁹ Faúndes, A. y Barzelatto, J. “El drama del aborto. En busca de un consenso”. Bogotá, Tercer Mundo, 2005.

⁵⁰ Penal Code of Argentina, article 86, 1st clause.

⁵¹ Penal Code of Argentina, article 86, 2nd clause.

health professionals from performing this procedure unless they are given judicial authorizations, even though it is not required by law.

Backstreet abortions in Argentina vary in terms of method and security, being connected, at the same time, with women's financial condition (Viladrich, 1990). Upper and middle class sectors have the possibility of having abortions practiced in private clinics, guaranteeing both, asepsis and security. Poor women turn to dangerous practices such as self-introduction of catheters, parsley's stems, knitting needles, intake of certain substances, or abortions carried out by non-skilled people. Complications caused by such practices are the leading cause of maternal death in our country.

In Argentina, about 40 percent of pregnancies end up in illegal abortions, obviously indicating that women are in no position to have control over her own health and fertility. Even though it is significant the number of confined women (after having undergone abortions) in Argentina, the fear of going to prison exists⁵². Abortions carried out illegally are difficult to monitor. According to the last estimates, there are 460,000 abortions per year⁵³. The only available information is based upon the number of women who leave hospitals after abortion complications⁵⁴—with no distinction between miscarriage and illegal abortions— which represents only a portion of the total number. According to the last available information (2000) 78,894 abortions were registered throughout the country: 15 percent corresponding to young women under 20, and 50 percent to women between 20-29. The highest rates are shown in La Rioja: in 12 provincial departments (being 18 the total number of departments) between 18 - 44 certificates of discharge after abortions were signed per 100 live births^{55 56}.

The Ministry of health created a Guidebook: "How to offer health assistance after incomplete abortions"⁵⁷, including a series of instructions for health professionals. Such document suggests Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA)⁵⁸, highlighting the importance of being more humane towards these women, showing confidentiality, an unbiased attitude, trying at the same time, to give some advice regarding post-abortion contraceptive resources. However, not all women benefit from this treatment: lots of them leave hospitals without having received any advice at all⁵⁹.

MDGs: Unregarded points

⁵² Information based on research made during Sep-Oct 2004, before this period, and later. A member of Human Rights Watch interviewed more than 40 women and a young girl showing health problems after having undergone illegal, unsafe abortions (they had difficulties in getting access to contraceptives), in Buenos Aires, Tucumán y Santa Fe. Artemisa Noticias.

⁵³ Based on number of women who leave hospitals after having had complications due to illegal abortions (Singh. S y Wulf. D.: "Illegal abortion estimated rates in six latin-american countries", from International Family Planning Perspectives, special edition, 1994), and based on residuary method average rates (Bongaarts. J. "A framework for the analysis of the proximate determinants of fertility", from Population and Development Review, vol 4, number 1, 1978).

⁵⁴ Only 40 percent of 3,318 institutions informed about abortion situations in 2000.

⁵⁵ The total amount of real pregnancies is unknown, that is why the number corresponding to live births is taken as an estimate of actual pregnancies.

⁵⁶ " Morbilidad materna severa en Argentina: prevención y calidad de atención para reducir la incidencia y consecuencias adversas del aborto (Severe maternal morbidity in Argentina: Prevention and quality of health assistance for the reduction of abortion consequences)", Report presented at "Comisión Salud Investiga", Ministry of Health, Argentina, 2007.

⁵⁷ www.msal.gov.ar/htm/site/promin/UCMISALUD/publicaciones/publicaciones.htm

⁵⁸ MVA is a simple, safe and fast procedure. It has been used in many countries for more than 30 years, to assist women who had either miscarriages or abortions. It is not very common in our country.

⁵⁹ According to a report (from a public hospital in Buenos Aires) on inpatient women after an abortion, only 45 percent of them were informed about contraceptive methods before leaving the institution (Romero, M.; Zamberlin, N. y Gianni, M. C.: "La calidad de la atención en las complicaciones de aborto: un desafío para la salud pública y los DDHH" ("The quality of health assistance after abortion complications: a challenge for public health system and human rights") Research presented at 11th World Congress on Public Health, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2006).

The goal of reducing maternal mortality by 75 percent by the year 2015 presents a challenge that can be achieved through the effort of including measures against intra-family violence as an item being part of integral strategies for promoting maternal health, which would lead to improvements in gender equity issues.

In order to both, prevent abortions in all possible institutions and guarantee women who decide to interrupt pregnancy their security and their exercise of rights, the analysis of legal, social, financial, political and institutional matters is essential. Targets such as sex education (from an early age) and better quality, access and availability regarding reproductive health should be included, too. The inadmissibility of judicial authorizations must be highlighted, as well as the doctor's professional responsibility and obligations towards women asking for non-punishable abortions (making corresponding protocols specifying duties). Post-abortion care should be included within the framework of sexual and reproductive rights, as an essential part of women's rights, and it also should be regarded as a health care provider's obligation, showing respectful, confidential, and unbiased treatment.

More information to hospitalized women (after abortion complications) should be offered; convenient access to hormonal contraceptives timely prescribed and counselling on reproductive health and contraceptive methods should be also granted. Considering international experience and evidence on Misoprostol's benefits⁶⁰, the ANMAT - Administración Nacional de Medicamentos, Alimentos y Tecnología (National Administration for Medication, Food and Technology) should approve the use of it. The MVA should be also included as an alternative practice to dilation and curettage.

Abortion penalization does not affect the practice of it: the number of abortions have not decreased or ceased. Such penalization only endangers women's health and lives. Consequently the penalizing system shows serious flaws, as it causes damage to what it should be protecting instead. At the same time it discriminates against poor women, who are the most likely to suffer from post- abortion complications.

Beyond legal aspects, health institutions should assist all women presenting post-abortions complications, doing their best in order to protect and save lives. Having access to medical care makes the difference between life and death.

The solution to this problem is not simple. Appart from changing rates, a serious analysis of abortion causes is essential, as well as a sincere discussion about penalization and legalization.

⁶⁰ Misoprostol is a medication which is available in more than 80 countries. It induces uterine contractions, often used off-label as abortion pills for pregnancy (cervical ripening, labor induction) and termination. On the evidence of medication abortion, a sharp decrease in complications is shown. Nevertheless, high dosis of medication taken during late pregnancy will probably bring along severe consequences.



VII. Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Chagas, Paludism and other diseases ⁶¹

To halt and eradicate diseases like the ones mentioned above represents an essential challenge for health public policies in any country. There has been some global progress in beginning to reverse the spread of such diseases thanks to improvement in prevention programs and medication; nevertheless, some regions have shown a rise in infection rates. This represents a major issue as diseases like these are directly connected with poverty, misuse of medication and deficient prevention programs. The appearance of them (or death after them) can be seen within the poorest social sectors, affecting the most vulnerable people (children, adolescents, elder, etc.).

Table 8
Monitoring indicators, Intermediate and Final targets

Indicators	1990	2000	2003	2005	2007 Target	2015 Target
AIDS Incidence Rate (1 million inhabitants)	17.0	58	46	40	35	32
Percentage of HIV – infected pregnant women aged 15-24 (considering the total number of pregnant woman at the same age)	n/i	0.64	0.39	0.37	0.35	0.32
Percentage of young men confirming to have used condoms in their last sexual relationship (with non-regular partners)	n/i	n/i	n/i	46	67	75
Deaths due to AIDS (per 100,000 inhabitants)	0.90	4.00	4.09	3.7	3.8	3.5
TB prevalence rate (per 100,000 inhabitants)	38.1	31.8	32	29.1	32.2	23.1
Death rate due to TB (per 100,000 inhabitants)	3.66	2.64	2.40	n/i	2.1	1.21
Percentage of TB cases timely detected and treated under supervision	64.6	75.1	75.5	n/i	82	90
Annual parasite rate (per 1,000 inhabitants)	0.756	0.219	0.062	0.150	<0.1	<0.1
Number of provinces confirming interruption of vector-borne transmission of Chagas disease	n/i	n/i	4	5	11	24

Source: 2005 Country MDGs Report, 2005-2006 Progress Report, Presidency of Argentina.

⁶¹ Several problems have arisen while analyzing this MDG: by the year 2007 there is no available current information.

HIV/AIDS

The spread of HIV/AIDS was significantly high during 1990's. The AIDS incidence rate has been decreasing since 2000, though it is still high when compared to 1990. The fast spread of the virus during the 1990's had to do with the fact that most of the infections diagnosed were acquired through heterosexual contact without protection, becoming this the main source of infection (homosexual contact was previously the main source of infection, as well as drug abuse).

According to recent estimates, there are about 127,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in our country, from which 60 percent are not sure about their sexologic orientation⁶². Youngsters and women are the most affected portions among heterosexual population (women aged 14-24 particularly⁶³). The number of infected women, specially those who are in reproductive age, implies the probability of vertical transmission to children, showing certain cases of violation of women's rights. However, after strong prevention programs, vertical transmission cases decreased 50 percent between 2003-2004. Actually, according to the National Council for Social Policies Coordination, AIDS mortality reduction target was achieved in 2005 (per 100,000 inhabitants)⁶⁴.

Poor women are more likely to transmit HIV/AIDS vertically, due to restrictions on early detection (late treatment) and proper prenatal care. The growing "feminization" of such outbreak is related to a growing spread among heterosexual population. Women are more vulnerable, biologically speaking; furthermore, they find it difficult to "negotiate" the use of condoms when looking for secure sex and.

The low rate of condom use among youngsters represents a clear indicator of the rise of young people infected with HIV/AIDS. In 2004 only 46 percent of young people reported to have used condoms in their last sexual relationship with non-regular partners. Having said this, unless massive and creative young-oriented prevention programs are implemented, the target will not be achieved. It is true that the results of awareness-programs can be seen, but a strong cultural barrier is to be overcome yet. Besides, free access to condoms is not being completely granted by health care facilities. To sum up, "feminine, heterosexual and young" are the leading characteristics of HIV/AIDS in Argentina.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Despite the fact that tuberculosis mortality rate show little change between 2000-2002, it started to decrease after that period, comparing those numbers to the 1990's. Even though there is no recent available information (up to the year 2007), reported TB cases are thought to be less than in the previous decade, which leads to the assumption that the incidence of this disease is being reversed. Nevertheless, according to official data, more than 12,000 people per year get infected in Argentina, and more than 1,000 of them die⁶⁵, in spite of free available medication. Only 60 percent of infected people follow treatment and get cured. The remaining 40 percent abandon treatment or never start, due to different reasons (social, cultural, financial, hygienic issues).

⁶² Ministry of Health of Argentina, Publication on HIV/AIDS in Argentina, Buenos Aires, Year XI, book 24, September 2005.

⁶³ National Council for Coordinating Social Policies, Presidency of Argentina, MDGs, State of Affairs, 2007.

⁶⁴ AIDS infected men/women ratio was 92/1 in 1987. In 2005, it decreased to 2.29/1.

⁶⁵ Ministry of Health, Argentina.

In Argentina, vaccine cover rises to nearly 100 percent considering that in 1980 it was represented by 51 percent. There are 2,000 newly infected people every year in Buenos Aires (half of them come from other cities than the capital). There are 28 new cases every 100,000 inhabitants, showing a mortality rate of 7 percent. 11.4 percent of children under 15 get infected, despite 100 percent BCG cover. The maximum incidence rate is found in children under 6, their parents having transmitted the disease to them.

In like manner, a new outbreak has been noticed during the last years, associated with other diseases (HIV, diabetes, etc.), that is to say, weak immune systems allow the entrance of TB. Significant regional disparity must be highlighted regarding the spread of such disease. People living in northern provinces are 10 times more likely to get infected, which leads to the conclusion that a direct association between TB prevalence and poor living conditions, poverty and lack of information exists. TB can be prevented by having a healthy life, receiving the corresponding BCG vaccines.

Chagas disease

Chagas disease is directly connected with poverty, precarious living conditions and good health. Both, the agent impact (*Trypanosoma cruzi*) and Chagas disease *per se* must be seriously analyzed taking into consideration social, cultural, financial and political factors, due to the fact that Chagas and issues related to poverty (nutrition problems; breathing, venereal and diarrheal diseases, etc.) are closely connected.

Children under 10 represent the most vulnerable age group. On the other hand, the most affected age group regarding post-infection consequences is represented by men and women between 30-40, who find it difficult to get a job, failing to achieve a good quality of life. According to data from FALCHA – Fundación Argentina de Lucha contra el Mal de Chagas (Argentine Foundation for fighting against Chagas Disease), 1998, this disease represents one of the major problems dealing with sanitary conditions in our country. Around 3,000,000 people suffer from Chagas, from which 15–30 percent present irreversible heart (or other organs) affections. Survival rate corresponding to Chagas-infected people is related to heart affections. Once the pathology is diagnosed, the average survival period is no longer than 5 years (Rassi, 1995).

Although the highest incidence is shown at rural areas, an outbreak at urban sectors has been noticed. According to late 1990's estimates, and after having seen migrations towards Buenos Aires and metropolitan area, more than a million infected people is estimated to live around Buenos Aires. The "vinchuca" (insect vector) is present in all provinces, except from Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego.

According to data from the Ministry of Health, possibilities of infection have decreased, thanks to measures such as: improving housing and sanitary conditions in rural areas; promoting early diagnosis and supervision; prevention programs; testing of blood donors; monitoring both, infected mother and child. Nevertheless, a marked disparity is noticed among regions and provinces: Santiago del Estero, Chaco, Formosa, La Rioja and other provinces present serious risk of infection and include the majority of infected and untreated people.

To sum up, only 5 provinces (Entre Ríos, Jujuy, La Pampa and Río Negro) reported to have eradicated the disease by the year 2005, therefore, the set target for 2007 (to halt the transmission of Chagas disease in 10 provinces) is far from being achieved according to projections based on this situation. In like manner, the target of

eradicating the transmission in all provinces will be hardly achieved by 2015⁶⁶. The eradication of precarious housing is the major challenge here in order to guarantee the halt of transmission, as well as the improvement of health assistance to infected people, improving their quality of life.

⁶⁶ Nacional Council for Coordinating Social Policies, Presidency of Argentina, MDGs, State of Affairs, 2007.



VIII. Ensure Environmental Sustainability

During the last years two concepts have come to be known as inseparable and thought to be directly connected with the quality of life: development and environment. People's insertion into society as citizens enjoying civil, political, financial, social, cultural and environmental rights bears close relation to such concepts. Starting from that development-environment relation, the idea of sustainable development is conceived as forms of progress that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to development is a global right. The achievement of it depends on promoting respect for all rights, including those related to environment, securing their universal and effective recognition and observance. The environmental issue is nowadays included in the Human Rights field, having been incorporated to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), as well as other Pacts, Conventions and Protocols endorsed by USA (Argentina included), dealing with specific environmental matters.

Targets and indicators

1. Integrating by 2015 the principles of sustainable development into every country policy and programmes; reverse loss of environmental issues.
2. Reduce by two thirds the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water between 1990-2015.
3. Reduce by two thirds the proportion of people without sustainable access to basic sanitation between 1990-2015.
4. Reduce by half the proportion of slum dwellers living in precarious conditions.

At a national level, matters dealing with sustainable development and environmental protection have been recently included into the public agenda, becoming part of national programmes and policies. In the same way, but locally, children, adolescents and young people have shown growing interest on them. Children are more sensitive than adults when considering environmental care and rational use of natural resources; as a consequence, a significant change is taking place in that specific population sector: it is the kind of change sustainable development involves.

Table 9
Monitoring indicators, intermediate and final targets

Indicators	1990	2000	2002	2004	2007 Target	2011 Target	2015 Target
Percentage of native forest areas	n/i	n/i	10.86	10.70	11.2	11.3	n/t
Percentage of total protected land area designated for conservation of biodiversity	4.39	6.30	6.56	6.79	7.3	8.3	>10.0
Necessary tons of oil for producing GDP \$1000	n/i	0.216	0.233	0.23	0.2	0.2	n/t
Renewable energy sources' participation in Total Primary Energy Supply	7.3	9.27	9.3	7.83	9.9	>10.0	>10.0
Percentage of population having access to drinking water supplies	66.2	66.2	78.4	78.4	80.8	82.4	>84.0
Percentage of population having access to basic sanitation	34.3	34.3	42.5	42.5	47.9	51.5	>55
Percentage of slum dwellers living in precarious conditions	7.6	n/i	n/i	6.1	5.9	4.8	3.9

Source: 2005-2006 Progress Report. MDGs, Presidency of Argentina, Institutional Document, Argentine Republic.

According to the above mentioned MDG: "Ensure Environmental Sustainability" indicators, good results have been noticed. In making a comparison to the year 2000, several points have been achieved regarding native forest protection, provision of drinking water and basic sanitation, housing and use of non-renewable resources. However, while the importance of sustainable development has achieved public recognition and some policies have been implemented⁶⁷, the analysis of environmental issues at a national level has not been easy, showing contradictions between national and jurisdictional legislations.

The main environmental problems and corresponding indicators are shown as follows:

- a) **Native Forest:** on the one hand, the MDG expresses the commitment to stop indiscriminate land clearing in native forests, in order to preserve animal and plant species by enhancing protected areas (as shown, according to one indicator) as well as to avoid or regulate natural disasters' consequences (floods, landslides, etc), and also as a means of preventing serious climate changes; but on the other hand, there is no national law protecting Native Forests that put a halt on land clearing when talking about extending farming

⁶⁷ Some policies are the following: Programa Social de Bosques Nativos (Social Programme for Native Forests), inclusion of environmental subjects into the EGB (elementary school) and Polimodal (Secondary school) curriculum, Plan Integral de Saneamiento de Cuenca Matanza-Riachuelo (Global Plan for Drainage of Matanza basin and stream), Programa Federal de Construcción de Vivienda (Federal Programme for building houses) and other Plans for Drainage (extension of drinking water supplies and sanitation).

frontier. The Forest Law has been "on file" for a long time at the National Congress, and has been recently revised and activated again, after strong signature campaigns, launched by Greenpeace and other organizations. However, national government policies are not clear enough about this issue and, as a consequence, there are provinces which, trying to improve fundraising, sell public lands to private firms, leading to land clearing for future soja crops or industrial forestation (for example: Santiago del Estero, Salta, Chaco, Formosa, Tucumán y Misiones).

The indicator for the preservation of Native Forests is not really demanding, as its primary target is to stop land clearing, instead of reverting its growing tendency. For instance, it establishes a percentage of 11.2 percent of native forest cover for 2007, but in 2002 an ever higher percentage already existed: 11.6 percent. Furthermore, there are no tax or auditing policies motivating the preservation of native forests.

- b) **The extension of farming frontier and rural depopulation:** official announcements about putting a halt on farming frontier in view of soy and biofuels expansion towards non-traditional areas are no more than empty words, as long as there are no legal regulations about soil use. In the same way, as soy activities predominate over other activities (cattle raising, dairy farming and regional crops) the labour force gets reduced and rural depopulation takes place. The enacting of rational soil use policies is essential, as well as the implementation of a national plan for sustainable agriculture that halts the expansion of farming frontier over native forests. In order to maintain biodiversity and avoid soil erosion and aridification, motivating and dissuading mechanisms (taxes and subsidies) promoting crop rotation and the combination of both agriculture and dairy farming, and encouraging the use of new species in those lands that are not suitable for soy are seriously required. It is also necessary to promote industrial forestation where soils are suitable for it, and to impose a tax on extraordinary incomes favouring balanced development of lands.
- c) **Open-sky Mining and environmental pollution:** The global and national financial situation has led to a considerable increase in mining-related activities, regarding both precious stones and ferrous and non-ferrous minerals's extraction, carried out by transnational companies mainly⁶⁸. Jurisdictional authorities favour such activities, as they represent one of the main sources of income (royalty income, export, bidding); nevertheless, environmental impact is underestimated, specially when gold, silver and copper mining in Andean provinces is involved. The consequences are the following: soil, water, rivers and groundwaters are polluted, and surrounding populations are seriously affected by highly toxic metals. In like manner, severe environmental problems caused by open-sky mining have led to local demonstrations, becoming such issues known at a national level, but achieving no final positive results (Botnia Paper mill and ENCE-Forest Exploitation). In relation to this, the absence of indicators regarding water, soil or air pollution must be pointed out, as well as the lack of interest in monitoring highly toxic metal related diseases.
- d) **Non renewable Resources and Energy Resources:** Initial improvements in Argentina are shown at the above mentioned MDGs documents (2003, 2005, 2006) as regards non renewable resources used. Such sources of energy have been incorporated to the public agenda becoming one of the main points to be analyzed, given the situation of climate change, global warming and exhaustion

⁶⁸ Reaserch on Transnational Mining Companies working in Argentina by Ricardo Ortiz, Observatory of Transnational Corporations Bulletin, FOCCO, march 2007, Argentina.

of hydrocarbons. However, the indicator showing Renewable energy sources' participation in Total Primary Energy Supply is not really demanding as regards the target set for 2007: 9.9 percent is required to be achieved, which equals the numbers for 2003. This way, the use of alternative sources of energy would show no significant improvements. Moreover, the set target for 2011 and 2015 is to exceed 10 percent, and by not establishing a specific goal, the use of non renewable resources will not be increased, even though the threat of a new energy crisis is present for us in a near future. To sum up, although short term alternative sources of energy to hydrocarbons are difficult to develop, considering technological and money issues, it is difficult to accept the fact that during the period 2003-2007 effective policies have not been implemented, or that significant plans for exceeding the set target for 2011 have not been made. In contrast, the growing oil and gas exports that compromises actual reserves are not mentioned. Hydrocarbon imports will rise and oil incomes will be taken over unless private investments are increased.

- e) **Growing extension and coverage of drinking water supply networks:** It is a substantial improvement, as drinking water avoids disease transmission, specially when talking about children and old people. Furthermore, the extension of networks is a sign of distributive justice towards unprotected social sectors, taking into account the fact that after general privatization during the 1990's water became an item of merchandise, having been public property. The coverage is growing rapidly, as a consequence of private companies investments, regardless of profitability. The government promotes investments for such extension and by doing so it assumes a new role of public utility provider in certain districts and provinces. Nevertheless, considering the amount of investments needed, the corresponding drinking water target for 2015 has been modified from >90 percent to 84 percent; and the one corresponding to sanitation has been modified from >75 percent to >55 percent. In this way, more pro-active measures should be put into practice in order to provide this service in those provinces and cities (most of them rural places) where it has not been implemented yet.

In addition, water is not considered at the MDGs as a strategic resource or a public asset to be protected by means of special regulations regarding the use of it. Argentina has significant fresh water reserves (Guaraní aquifer): that is why it is essential to make progress at this point. Finally, to guarantee a healthy environment, targets related to air, water and soil pollution as a consequence of toxic metals, agrochemical products and industrial waste matter should be set. Action has been taken in view of the growing tendency of precarious human settlements and shantytowns emergence. The right to home ownership is directly connected with quality of life and inclusion, as it strengthens family and social ties. For this reason, the growing national and jurisdictional investments assigned to housing is of great value, as shown since 2003.

However, home ownership is not reduced to the idea of getting a house. As Yves Cabannes⁶⁹ puts it: *"It is true that land and home are basic rights, which should be respected and guaranteed, but they are no more than initial points. The assurance of home ownership is part of a much greater right: the right to full and active citizenship. Social, financial, cultural, political and territorial inclusion, implied in home ownership, represent essential aims for the disadvantaged and excluded people"*. The poor are being set apart, people in big cities do not accept them as social elements of an integral habitat; urban planification is usually postponed within the public agenda, or it is considered as technocratic. Also, civil organizations do not succeed in participating in a practical, real way when a city is created. The concept of guaranteeing the right

⁶⁹ Coordinator at UNCHS (United Nations Center for Human Settlements, Habitat), Mexico, October 2000.

to home ownership and the fact of improving urban infrastructure involves promoting a whole process of urban reform, giving recognition to the rights to home ownership and citizenship. A better quality of life will be guaranteed when property regulation and adequate provision of public utilities and infrastructure are implemented at the same time. Relocation processes should not have an effect on Human Rights. Democratization of acces to public utilities and differential duties represent essential conditions for social inclusion⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ "Desarrollo y Subjetividad: el malestar en las grandes ciudades" (Development and Subjectivity: Discomfort in big cities), dissertation given by García Delgado, Daniel at the Congress of Philosophy in Mendoza, National University of Cuyo, Faculty of Philosophy, October 2007.



4. CONCLUSIONS

According to what we have seen throughout this report, significant improvements have taken place in Argentina during the period 2003-2007, regarding the achievement of set targets for that last year. Such improvements are shown in the following targets: to achieve universal primary education, reduce child mortality, poverty and unemployment. Nevertheless, considering the level of financial growth seen during the last four years, recovery percentages shown by social indicators could have been even more substantial. In fact, some of them do not exceed rates corresponding to those seen during the 1990's, although they successfully exceeded rates set for 2002 (this year considered as the worst crisis period).

According to projections made, in some indicators corresponding to environment, gender, maternal health and employment, among others, the lack of effectiveness and promptness noticed so far will not make it possible to achieve the targets set for 2015. At this rate, we will hardly succeed. A more global and serious analysis evaluating the causes of poverty and a redefinition of public policies guaranteeing their pursuance are essential. The way policies are being implemented should be modified: policies need to be more transversal; greater inter-ministerial and inter-jurisdictional interaction is required, as well as strategic planning and higher budgets; the continuity of policies should be ensured, in the interest of real citizens.

In making such analysis, while evaluating the causes of poverty, it is necessary to highlight the existing gap between macrofinancial improvements on the one hand (regarding growth, reduction of poverty and unemployment, surplus capital and high exchange rate, etc), and the terrible living conditions most of the population faces at the same time, on the other hand. Poverty will hardly be reduced unless wealth condensation process, transnationalization of corporations and lack of control over natural resources are dealt with. The same concept applies to destitution, child work or environmental problems. We must bear in mind that this situation of wealth condensation only enlarges the huge existing gaps—social, spatial and inter-generational gaps—deteriorating social fabric and society. Sustainable macroeconomics shows certain flaws: comprehensive and inclusive development is not completely achieved (García Delgado, D and Noretto, L., 2006) as it does not guarantee full social insertion to people, or endows them with the rights of citizenship enabling collective participation.

Comprehensive and transversal policies are required at a national level, in order to achieve the MDGs. Poverty is a central point of discussion, and at the same time, it is present in every MDG, behind the most vulnerable sectors. By this we mean that all MDGs should be analyzed together, jointly; transversal public policies are required here considering the fact that, by implementing employment, gender, environmental or other policies, poverty can be reduced, as it is present in most of them. In other respects, the MDGs leave some questions aside, failing to achieve the idea of

comprehensive development. Causes of poverty are not seriously considered and specific targets dealing with equal distribution are not launched forth.

As regards education, actions taken towards improving quality and not quantity (of children receiving education) are required. In like manner, targets regarding childhood education are not shown, bearing in mind that this state of life is of basic importance for both sociability and comprehensive development of children. Moreover, regional disparity related to educational access and cover is not formally considered, which leads to greater inequities.

Another unregarded point is youth issues, and considering the fact that a high percentage of them neither work nor study, they are led to exclusion and social vulnerability situations. Also, the existing gap between education for adolescents (curriculum taught) and labour market requirements is significant, obstructing social and labour insertion.

As regards gender, this subject should be approached in a less sexist way, taking into consideration different sexual identities, and giving a thought to the role of women both in production and reproduction. Inter-family violence, sexual and reproductive rights, and abortion seen as direct causes of violation of women's basic rights should be analyzed.

Beyond the unregarded points above mentioned, there are some subject matters which are not considered at all by the MDGs, such as ethnic and sexual discrimination, as well as discriminations related to physical disabilities; violence against women; non-recognized rights of old people; non-recognized rights of Argentinian Indians, among others⁷¹.

As for environmental issues, there are several points missing: basins and fresh water reserves degradation, deforestation, over-exploitation of sea reserves, soil erosion and pollution, open-sky mining and overuse of non-renewable resources, biofuel production and rise of food costs. Global interaction plans are required at the MDG dealing with Environmental Sustainability; developed countries should really commit themselves to guarantee such sustainability because they are the ones who practically "deplete" natural resources endangering our planet and all species living on. For instance, the Americans consume 25 percent of the total hydrocarbons, but they only produce 4 percent. Furthermore, developed countries move their polluting corporations and production systems to developing countries, promising new jobs and industrial development. However, the results are rather different: the rate of employment is low, products are industrialized at parent companies (from where technology is also brought) and waste matter is left there, leading to pollution and diseases.

In the same way we think that national conditions favouring the eradication of poverty and the development of towns go hand in hand with global conditions and powers, along with the level of autonomy reached by every Latin-american country. That is why the MDGs will be hardly accomplished at a national level unless the uneven structure of power through which rich countries, multilateral corporations and transnational companies go by (imposing conditions and dominating poor countries) is substantially modified.

⁷¹ Results from a Civic Survey: "MDGs Goals from a viewpoint of Civil Society Organizations in Argentina", carried out by FOCO, October 2007.

Lack of resources is no longer a direct cause of poverty. The fact that developed countries (a fourth of world population) consume 75 percent of terrestrial resources, administer 80 percent of trade and 93 percent of industry, is the result of uneven power operations coming from central countries, international financial institutions and transnational corporations, being imposed on developing countries. Unless change is introduced into world trade and financial asymmetric regulations that favour developing countries and impose conditions on others, the latter ones will continue living in poverty.

Wild capitalism will finally make our world an impossible place to live: terrible consequences such as violence or social and environmental expenses lead to violation of Human Rights and determine the development of countries. ILO's main concern in 2003 bore relation to unequal financial and trade regulations leading to asymmetric effects on rich and poor countries and the lack of regulations pertaining to global competition, international investments and migration.

Goal number 8, "Develop a Global Partnership for Development", makes reference to the GDP contribution of 0.7 percent that developed countries had committed to donating to poor and developing countries. Such international cooperation contributions are urgent, and poor countries certainly need them, but unless causes of poverty are thoroughly analyzed poverty and hunger will not be eradicated.

This MDG is particularly valuable in the sense that it promotes global interaction in pursuit of the development of nations, through more open trading systems; through common strategies for condonation of poor countries' debts; offering access to essential medicines; collaborating with private sectors and making good use of technology, specially in the field of information and communication.

In order to develop a global partnership for development, a democratization of international financial organizations (IMF and World Bank) is required, offering at the same time alternative regional financing methods, as in the case of Banco del Sur, enabling a growing financial autonomy.

In like manner, it is essential to modify legislations in order to administrate restrictions on transnational corporations presenting cases of disputes against different nations at the ICSID (belonging to the World Bank) and implementing MERCOSUR regulations at FDI. By introducing such restrictions, a halt will be brought to devastation of natural resources and to excessive profits earned without having made any contributions to technology or local development. As for economic dependence, the corresponding financial institutions law should be revised in our country, in order to allow small and medium size enterprises to have access to financing plans; in this way, a more equitable and fair wealth distribution will be achieved.

It is also necessary to review world trade regulations at the WTO. It is not good enough to open our markets to industrial production in return for lower custom tariffs for primary commodities in developing countries, as structural conditions are not equal and profits coming after such opening will not be equally helpful. On the contrary, only developed countries will make a profit. For this reason, the fact that the DDA (Doha Development Agenda) has come to a standstill represents, for southern countries, a good outcome. Several factors are present at this entire situation: global capitalism, asymmetric regulations, imposition and domination actions for the taking over of natural resources.

Under the "right to development", people have the right to "*promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom*". This right, included in the Preamble of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be fulfilled. The concept of guaranteeing dignified living conditions enabling people to achieve their goals within a framework of sustainable development, implies the fact that serious and real policies, strategies and plans are implemented for the creation of jobs and for modifying human development indicators. Also, focusing on the eradication of structural causes of poverty is of the utmost importance. Civil society plays a major role here: it is true that poverty has always existed, regardless of men and governments, but people should not become reconciled to the idea of poverty as a “natural” phenomenon that is unable to be reversed.

Having said that, it is essential to exceed the MDGs and to make governments, private sectors and international organizations get involved in common deeds, jointly with social movements and citizens in general, for the fulfillment of a more fair, inclusive and plural society.

The GCAP (Global Call to Action Against Poverty) represents a growing worldwide alliance of global NGOs and other campaigners, asking local NGOs to work together and make governors get involved in the commitment of achieving the MDGs, considering such goals as personal matters. These goals need to be set, evaluated, enriched and monitored. Unless citizens do not become active participants, the MDGs will be no more than good thoughts and empty words: the real world will not be changed and millions of people will continue to live in poverty, destitution and unequal conditions, as it actually happens in Latin America and the rest of the world.

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