



PRESS RELEASE

THE 2010 Basic Capabilities Index: Progress has slowed down

The 2010 Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) developed by Social Watch shows that in the last twenty years poverty reduction has slowed down. The evolution of this index since 2000, when the Millennium Development Goals were set, indicates that progress is decelerating instead of accelerating, and the international community's efforts have not translated into a more rapid improvement of people's lives.

Social progress does not automatically follow economic growth and better indicators are needed to more accurately monitor the evolution of non-monetary poverty in the world.

The BCI, an annual monitoring report on the evolution of basic social development indicators, does not incorporate monetary income as one of its components. Human capabilities are measured directly through three indicators: the percentage of children who reach the fifth year of primary school, the mortality rate among children under five years old and the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel.

Countries are grouped in various categories. Countries in the gravest situation are those with a Critical BCI. In the Very Low BCI category there are countries facing major obstacles to achieving well-being for the population. The countries with Low BCI are at an intermediate level as regards the satisfaction of basic needs, and their performance varies in some dimensions of development. The countries that have progressed and now satisfy most or all the population's basic capabilities are in the two categories with the highest values: Medium BCI and Acceptable.

The 2010 BCI has been calculated for three points in time, with different sources of free access information: 1990, 2000 and 2009. It was calculated for 162 countries for 2009, 163 for 2000 and 163 for 1990. The index makes transparent that over the last twenty years the group of countries with medium and acceptable values on the one hand, and the group of countries with low, very low and critical values on the other, inverted their positions: the former increased from 40% to 61% of all countries for which the BCI can be calculated, and the latter fell from 60% to 39% of all countries considered. In both groups the big fall in the number of countries in the worst situation and the increase in the number of countries with relatively better levels came about before 2000, and in the new millennium change has been slower.

In the light of the recent evolution in BCI values it becomes clear that extreme poverty, measured in terms of access to a pool of services that are basic to human survival, will continue to decrease over time, but the speed of poverty reduction is not automatically determined by the economy. Per capita income growth accelerated from 17% in 1990-2000 to 19% between 2000 and 2009, but BCI growth slowed from 4% in the 1990s to 3% in the first decade of this century. This indicates that the Millennium Declaration and the international community's efforts to reach the goals it set have not translated into more rapid progress in social indicators, even when resources were available. On the contrary, the data confirm the findings of recent research, which show that since 2000 progress in these indicators has become slower.