

LEVEL OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS AT PRINCESS ALIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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Abstract

The study is aimed at investigating the extent to which students at Al-Balqaa' Applied University - Princess Alia University College are aware of the Millennium Development Goals. The descriptive survey design was adopted and the purposive sampling technique were employed to select 271 participants to respond to questionnaire items developed by the reseracher based on their knowledge. Statistical analysis of the responses using the t-test showed that awareness among students of the Millennium Development Goals is generally low. Additionally, there is statistical significant difference in the awareness of the Millennium Development Goals between students pursuing a bachelor's degree and those pursuing a diploma, where the former are more aware of the Millennium Development Goals. Implications of these findings were discussed and it was suggested instructors should give more attention to relevant topics and that raising awareness is a task that is not confined to one stakeholder, the universities in this case, but rather requires that all stakeholders get involved in the process. Research Limitations and implications: Financial constraint has automatically re-defined the researchers' need to expand the scope of coverage, limiting the investigation to students at Al-Balqaa Applied University – Princess Alia University College. Therefore, the generalization of the study are limited to the sample of students involved

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, Awareness, Development

Introduction

In September 2000, representatives of 189 countries and 147 heads of state met in New York at the United Nations Millennium Summit, in which they came out with the binding outcome titled the “Millennium Declaration”. The Declaration was later supplemented by a UN working group which devised a set of 8 Goals to be achieved by 2015. The goals were eventually

formulated as 21 Targets that were measured by 60 indicators.¹⁴

Since they were adopted by all UN Member States, the Millennium Development Goals have made a huge difference, helping to set global and national priorities and fuel action on the ground. They have shaped a broad vision that remains the overarching framework for development work across the world.¹⁵

The core eight Millennium Development Goals are:

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, malaria and other diseases,
7. Ensure environmental sustainability,
8. Develop a global partnership for development.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the achievement of the first seven goals is intricately bound to the efforts in the industrialized countries in that they can support the developing countries by meeting their commitments on Goal eight. The rich countries must provide increased aid and debt relief, and access to their markets and technology¹⁷. Where the Millennium Development Goals represent a Global Partnership for Development.

While Financial Resources are of a crucial influence, its not the sole and perhaps not the most important mean for progress, certainly not where deep structural problems in the government's system on the national as well as local are the reason behind a poor record of rapid progress. Excessive focus on aid is risky although it can and it will play a role in the improvement of the lives of the poor.¹⁸

Based on the annual assessment reports of the Millennium Development Goals achievements UN Member States became vigilant of the fact that the

¹⁴McKinley, Terry, "Evolution of the MDGs: Progress and Problems", Presentation at the LIDC conference, London : 2008.

¹⁵ UNDESA, "The role of responsive and accountable public governance in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda", New York: United Nations, 2013. <<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/e%20c16%202013%202%20eng.pdf>>

¹⁶UNDP, "The eight millennium goal", New York: United Nations, 2013. <<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html>>

¹⁷ UNDP, "Policy, not charity: what rich countries can do to help achieve the Goals", Human Development Reports, New York: United Nations, 2003. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr03_chapter_8.pdf>

¹⁸ Nashash, Hyam, "Roadmap for localizing the Millennium Development Goals: Lessons and Models in selected Developing Countries", Making public governance work for the post-2015 development agenda, CEPA 12th session, New York: ECOSOC – United Nations, 2013. <<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/e%20c16%202013%202%20eng.pdf>>

goals are not achievable by 2015, mainly due to the lack of awareness, access to financial resources and accountability¹⁹ along with the three global crisis, food, fuel and financial crisis. Thus, during the September 2010 Millennium Development Goals Summit, they initiated steps towards advancing the development agenda beyond 2015 and are now leading a process of open, inclusive consultations on the post 2015 Development Agenda.²⁰

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement and Awareness

To achieve the Millennium Development Goals, grassroots is required before demand, where people must first be aware of the Millennium Development Goals and work with them to demand their fulfillment from their governments.

During the launch of the Global Monitoring Report in 2008 which is a program aimed at monitoring the progress or achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, the question of whether people are aware of the Millennium Development Goals arouse.²¹

Initially to reconcile the gaps of knowledge, parties agreed to, make the Millennium Development Goals aims more transparent and comprehensible to the common public, through developing new communication tools to raise public awareness. To advance that further numerous agencies with the UN taking the lead went ahead and put the new communication tools in the core of their communication strategies.²²

Aspects of the aims being measurable, time-bound targets and that they prioritize basic needs were found to make them more likely appealing to the public. This in turn makes them seem more helpful to address intangible aspects of developments similar to program aid, sector wide approaches and budget support.

The Millennium Development Goals can also be utilized to raise awareness as they allow asking more precise questions at a greater depth of detail when conducting national or international polls or surveys, where conducting common surveys allows the gathering of common or harmonized data, which facilitates comparative analysis of trends of opinions on the international level. Subsequently, this would provide useful data to develop

¹⁹ UNDESA et. al, "Review of the contributions of the MDG Agenda to foster development: Lessons for the post-2015 UN development agenda", Discussion Note, UN Task Team on the Post-2015 Agenda, New York: UNDESA and UNDP, 2012. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg_assessment_Aug.pdf>

²⁰ United Nations, "Beyond 2015", New York: United Nations, 2013. <<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/beyond2015.shtml>>

²¹ Fransman, J. et al, Public Opinion Polling and the Millennium Development Goals, New York: OECD, 2004. <<http://www.oecd.org/dev/devcom/33873214.pdf>>

²² Ibid.

and target awareness raising campaigns better.

Sustainable Development and Millennium Development Goals

The UN had been tackling the notion of sustainable development since 1972, however, it was focused on the environmental aspect up until 2012. Where it shifted the focus “to address the complexity of sustainable development and the linkages among its multiple dimensions, while recognizing that human development and a healthy planet go hand in hand.”²³This shift was done to “avoid repeating the mistake of presenting sustainable development as mainly an environmental issue”.²⁴

Additionally, in the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) other goals included securing political commitment for sustainable development along with assessing the progress of the Millennium Development Goals and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes, while tackling the emerging challenges.²⁵This in turn highlights the importance of the notion of sustainable development has in today’s developing policy making.

Education also proves to be a crucial element for the progress of sustainable development “as it fosters the change of lifestyle that is needed to achieve the sustainable patterns of consumption and other behavior required to ensure the needs of future generations will also be met”.²⁶ An example of that is that it empowers students to develop awareness, skills understanding and values to take part in decisions being made. This will lead to an individual and collective improvement in the quality of life both on the local and global level.²⁷

Impact of education quality on development goals

The impact of quality education is reflected on individual income where “A more educated -society may translate into higher rates of innovation, higher overall productivity and faster introduction of new technology”. Additionally, its impact extends to also be reflected on economic growth as “It is well established that the distribution of personal incomes in society is strongly related to the amount of education people have.” Quality of education also impacts behavior change where “preprimary programs

²³ECE, ESCAP, UNDESA, UNEP, UNFCCC, “Building on the MDGs to bring sustainable development to the post-2015 development agenda”, New York: United Nations, 2012

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶Owolabi, Henry et al, “Assessment of junior high school students’ awareness of climate change and sustainable development in central region”, Ghana: Educational Research Journal Vol. 2(9), 2012.

²⁷Durango Foundation for Educational Excellence, Colorado: DFEE, 1999.<<http://www.dfee.net/>>. (Retrieved 29th, April 2013).

operated with modest resources often showed a positive impact on students”.²⁸

Nonetheless, successful qualitative reforms require a very strong leading role by government and a robust long-term vision for education, where education for sustainable development empowers and enables students even those who are educationally or physically challenged to improve their skills to participate in decision making, this can be done through educational curricula.

Thus, what matters for education quality is that it affects the individual’s development as a base for society development in large where the Millennium Development Goals are considered to be a baseline in the process.

Raising Awareness through University Contribution

Despite the fact that the Jordanian government has been working thoroughly and closely with the different national and international stakeholders for achieving the Millennium Development Goals before 2015; the lack of knowledge and ownership of the Millennium Development Goals by the public is viewed as one of the main challenges to a full engagement of all sectors of the society in achieving the goals.²⁹

Launching a partnership with universities as a main stakeholder, given the wide strata it includes, entails the benefit of dealing with students and Academia in parallel, therefore, this course of action ensures the establishment of a sustainable virtuous circle between knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination and activation.

Many initiatives were launched towards raising awareness of Millennium Development Goals through the educational system, whether in schools or universities, where the targeted people are considered to be the vehicle for a faster sustainable development, based on the intended outcomes “the students we want to have in the future.”

The UNDP established an initiative with Cairo University to assess students’ awareness of the Millennium Development Goals, by conducting surveys among the university students. The initiative incorporated two components, the first is to raise students’ awareness and the second to promote Millennium Development Goals related research.³⁰

²⁸EFA Global monitoring report, 2005. “The Importance of Good Quality: What Research Tells Us”, New York: UNESCO, 2005. <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001373/137333e.pdf>>

²⁹ UN et al., “Keeping the promise and achieving the aspirations”, Second National Millennium Development Goals Report Jordan, Amman: UN and Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2010.
<<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Country%20Reports/Jordan/2010%20en.pdf>>

³⁰ Cairo University, “MDGs Awareness Initiative in Cairo University, Research Document”, Cairo:

This initiative can be replicated as an assessment tool, to measure where students' knowledge lies when it comes to the 8 goals and subsequently identify how their knowledge levels can be boosted.

In Lebanon, the UN launched the "Teach Ins" initiative to shed the light on the importance of the Millennium Development Goals and the work being done to actually achieve them, where UN officials and staff members spoke at different schools and universities from all regions of Lebanon.³¹

Another initiative in Kenya named "The Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda" was also launched it was aimed at equipping students with knowledge of the eight Millennium Development Goals, in order to raise their awareness about the Millennium Development Goals.³²

Not only are governments taking steps to raise awareness about the Millennium Development Goals but global associations too, where the World Association for girls' guides and girls' scouts launched its own educational initiative titled the Global Action theme to affirm its commitment to what they say is the most compelling agenda of our the time: the Millennium Development Goals".³³

Art as a medium was also used to generate awareness of the Millennium Development Goals, where an initiative named " Art for a" took place in Hondauras in 2004 and in Spain in 2010.³⁴

Statistical Analysis

Hypotheses

1) Level of Millennium Development Goals awareness among Princess alia University college students is significantly high.

2) There is no significant difference between diploma and Bachelor's degree students in their level of Millennium Development Goals awareness.

Methods

The study was conducted in Princess Alia University College. The survey design was adopted for the study. A total sample of 271 students were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. The sample profile

UNDP and Cairo University, 2010. <www.mdgs.cu.edu.eg/MDGs%20Awareness.pdf>

³¹UNDP, "UNV Leads Teach-In Initiative In Lebanon", New York: United Nations, 2010. <http://www.undp.org.lb/unv/Awariness_Campaign.cfm>

³²UNIC, " UNIC Accra & WFP raise awareness of the MDG's and the post-2015 agenda", Accra: United Nations, 2012. <<http://accra.unic.org/unic-accra-wfp-raise-awareness-of-the-mdg's-and-the-post-2015-agenda/>>

³³ WAGGS, " Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Global Action Theme", London: WAGGS, 2013. <http://www.wagggsworld.org/en/take_action/gat/mdgs>

³⁴ Chimbelu, Chiponda., "Riot of color to generate awareness on the MDGs", Sevilla: United Nations, 2010. <<http://www.unv.org/en/news-resources/news/doc/riot-of-colour-to.html>>

showed that 151 were bachelor degree students and 120 were diploma students. The instrument used in the present study was a self developed 14 item questionnaire tagged "Millennium Development Goals Awareness Questionnaire." The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through the expert opinion of 3 in the field of development and Millennium Development Goals. The reliability estimate through Cronbach Alpha was 0.7664.

This figure confirmed that the instrument was reliable in achieving the study objective. To collect data for the study, questionnaires were distributed by the researcher when classes were in session. This measure ensured that the sampled subjects completed the questionnaire, and a 100 percent return rate achieved. Data obtained were subjected to statistical analysis using the population t-test.

Results

Hypothesis 1:

The level of Millennium Development Goals awareness among Princess Alia University College students is significantly high. The only variable is the level of Millennium Development Goals awareness among Princess Alia University College students. Population t-test is used to analyze the data obtained. A summary of the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Population t-test analysis of the level of Millennium Development Goals awareness among Princess Alia University College
N = 271

	Expected Mean μ	X-	SD	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Students' level of MDGs awareness	0.70	.22	.416	-18.941	0.000

*Significant at 0.05; df=270, critical t-value = 1.96

The result presented in Table 1 reveals that the calculated t-value of -18.941 is found to be lower than the critical t- value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 270 degrees of freedom and the Sig value (0.000) is lower than 0.05. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that the level of Millennium Development Goals awareness among Princess Alia University College students is not significantly high within the study area. This result further demonstrates that the observed mean level of Millennium Development Goals awareness is lower than the expected mean. Furthermore, a statistical comparison of the observed mean (x=0.22) and the expected mean value of 0.70 using population t-test gives a negative t-value. This implies that students' level of awareness of Millennium Development Goals is generally

low.

Hypothesis 2 There is no significant difference between bachelor’s and diploma students in their level of Millennium Development Goals awareness. The independent variable is students’ certificate, while the dependent variable is level of Millennium Development Goals awareness. Independent t-test statistical analysis is used to compare the mean scores of bachelor’s and diploma students. A summary of the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between bachelor’s and diploma students in their level of Millennium Development Goals awareness.
(N = 271)

	Certificate	N	Mean	SD	t -value	Sig (2-tailed)
Students’ level of MDGs awareness	Diploma	121	.17	.373		0.04
	Bachelor's	150	.27	.444	- 2.006*	

*Significant at 0.05; df = 270; critical t-value = 1.96

The result presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of - 2.006 is found to be lower than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 270 degrees of freedom and the Sig value (0.04) is lower than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This means that there is a significant difference between bachelor’s and diploma students in their level of Millennium Development Goals awareness within the study area. The result in Table 2 further reveals that the mean score of bachelor’s degree students ($x=0.27$) is also higher than the mean scores of diploma students ($x = 0.17$). Statistical comparison of the mean scores using independent t-test statistical analysis gives a significant negative outcome. This implies that bachelor’s degree students have higher mean awareness of Millennium Development Goals than their diploma counterparts.

Discussion of the results

The analysis of hypotheses one clearly demonstrates that students’ awareness of the Millennium Development Goals is generally low, indicating that they lack knowledge about the goals, targets and their achievement level. This result goes in line with several previous studies that were conducted to assess the public’s awareness, the World Bank noted that in a survey conducted in the European commission 88% of respondents in 25 EU countries had never heard of the Millennium Development Goals.³⁵ Another

³⁵World Bank, " Are the MDGs well known outside the development community?" New York: World Bank, 2013.<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/0,,contentMDK:20637864~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:469372,00.html#map_features>

study by the OECD came to the same conclusion providing that despite the high-level discussions, “debate and awareness has not trickled to public opinion”³⁶ and the polls conducted in Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States showed that there is poor awareness of the Millennium Development Goals existence, and in cases when the public is aware they question the possibility of achieving them.³⁷ Similarly, the initiative between the UN and Cairo University attested to that further by noting that the base line survey showed a noticeable low level of awareness among the university students as about three-quarters of the total sample had no knowledge of the existence of the eight millennium development goals and accordingly they were not aware of any efforts at any level aiming to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.³⁸ During the Arab Development Forum’s, second regional consultation on the post-2015 global development agenda, Helen Clark, the UNDP’s administrator agreed with the aforementioned where she stated that “The consultations have also shown that there is acute awareness of the connections between sectors and Millennium Development Goals”.³⁹

Nonetheless, although there is a dire shortage in surveys or polls in the developing countries that directly tackle the assessment of the Millennium Development Goals awareness levels, achievement strategies repeatedly noted that awareness is a backbone for achievement. However, it should be noted that when reports tackled the importance of awareness raising the focus was always on health issues and women empowerment, such as the Youth lens report⁴⁰. Keeping the Promise report, a full-length research on Jordan’s Millennium Development Goals achievement levels in 2010, solely focused on women and health related awareness⁴¹. Similarly, in Tunisia the lens was only focused on raising awareness related to health issues.⁴²

³⁶ Fransman, J. et al, Public Opinion Polling and the Millennium Development Goals, New York: OECD, 2004. <<http://www.oecd.org/dev/devcom/33873214.pdf>>

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Cairo University, “MDGs Awareness Initiative in Cairo University, Research Document”, Cairo: UNDP and Cairo University, 2010. <www.mdgs.cu.edu.eg/MDGs%20Awareness.pdf>

³⁹ Clark, Helen, “Speech at the Arab Development Forum”, Amman: UNDP, 2013.

⁴⁰ UN, et al. The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth lens”, New York: UN and Arab League States, 2007. <<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/ead-07-3-e.pdf>>

⁴¹ UN et al., “Keeping the promise and achieving the aspirations”, Second National Millennium Development Goals Report Jordan, Amman: UN and Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2010. <<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Country%20Reports/Jordan/2010%20en.pdf>>

⁴² League of Arab States, “Assessing Development Strategies to Achieve the MDGs in the Arab Region”, Tunisian Ministry of Development and International Cooperation, Cairo: UNDP and League of Arab States, 2007. <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/cairo_training_mdgs/presentations/tunis_country_presentation_2april07.pdf>

As for hypothesis two, it demonstrated that students who are pursuing a bachelor's degree are better aware of the Millennium Development Goals than those pursuing the diploma. This demonstrates that the level of education students are exposed to implicates their awareness level, which is an expected result given that the bachelor's degree students spend 4 years in comparison to their counterparts in the diploma who spend 2 years only, this allows them the opportunity to attend more classes and enroll in more courses, which attain them more knowledge and experience, hence, leading to more exposure to global issues and better awareness.

Conclusion

Millennium Development Goals awareness involves creating knowledge, understanding and values, attitude, skills and abilities among individuals and social groups towards the issues of development for attaining a better quality of life.

In order to fasten the awareness towards Millennium Development Goals it is necessary to know the level of awareness the public posses. Since, education has a serious role to play in helping to give out the correct message about Millennium Development Goals so as to mitigate and alleviate its effects.

Education is considered to be the core aspect for achieving a better life, through gaining knowledge, experience and skills that empowers individuals to seek better more informed options thus make better decisions. The role of instructors will go a long way in being part of the purpose of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, where they can provide a link to deliver relevant knowledge and adopt the solutions to those challenges.

However, raising awareness is a task that is not confined to one stakeholder, the universities in this case, but rather requires that everyone gets involved in the process such as the governments, private sector, NGOs and the United Nations as well as other international organizations. Following this course of action will enable students to comprehend how crucial it is for them to be aware of the Millennium Development Goals, as this manifests the initial step towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals eventually.

End notes

¹McKinley, Terry, "Evolution of the MDGs: Progress and Problems", Presentation at the LIDC conference, London : 2008..p.12

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