

Nigeria and the Millennium Development Goals

R.U. Chidobi (Ph.D)¹ Okenwa G.N. (Ph.D)²

*Department of Educational Foundations, Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu, Nigeria
West Africa*

Abstract: *This paper focuses on the problems and prospects in the attainment of millennium development goal (MDGs) in Nigeria, as it relates to poverty eradication which means reduction by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. There was an overview of other MDGs goals like actualization of universal primary education, closing the gender gaps which exist in Nigeria not only in education but all levels, also increasing women's share of wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and increasing the proportion of seats held by woman in national parliaments. The goals needed to be attained because empowerment of women ensures the achievement of other MDGs. It also looked at reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and combating of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other deadly diseases, the environment better sustained and partnership with other parts of the world. Finally, the paper evaluated the problems and prospects in the attainment of these MDGs.*

I. Introduction

The millennium development goals (MDGs) set crucial goals for a global partnership and co-operation to fight poverty, and other seven goals, paving ways for a shared vision of better world by the year 2015, and the question is what are the problems and prospects of achieving these eight goals in Nigeria. Development has been a problem which occupies the minds of scholars, activists, religious organization, and politicians etc, both within and outside Nigeria. This is important because there is a general consensus that development will lead to a positive change that will improve people's lives by expanding their freedom, opportunities and dignity.

In view of the above, therefore, the international community made the MDGs which focuses attention on development especially in the area of human development which is the basis for maintaining social and economic progress in all the countries. Most of the targets of MDGs were initially set out by international conferences and summits held in the 1990s and were later compiled and accepted as International Development Goals. (For further information on their progress see <http://www.paris21.org/betterworld>). In September 2000 the member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Millennium declaration of which the Development Goals is a pointer for the implementation of Millennium Declaration. The eight goals represent an unprecedented global partnership, both in size and scope and symbolizes a new age of humanitarianism. Nigeria as one of the countries of the world is not left out in this developmental race but the question is; what are problems and prospects of achieving these laudable goals in Nigeria? Talking the 8 agendas one after the other, the problems that are associated with each of them will be glaring.

The Millennium Development Goals

Poverty Eradication: poverty which manifests itself as material deprivation and this is the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It aims at reducing by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. In short, it is a global plan to reduce poverty and human deprivation at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative action (Hulme 2007). With the goal number one, the end to abject poverty is in sight. But when one tries to review the progress made in Nigeria in this regard, the prospect of achieving it in 2015 is in doubt; because there are a lot of problems staring on our face. In this country where are more than 1.2 billion people or about 20 percent of their population survive on less than one US dollar per day. Nigeria which was one of the richest 50 country in the beginning of the twenty first century. This decline is attributed to several factors.

These include, poor relations that govern how valued resource are distributed in the society: the wide gap that exist between the rich and the poor, over reliance on petroleum at the detriment of agricultural product, etc.

The World Bank in its 2001 report titled "Attacking poverty" points out that physical capital was not enough and that at least attention focused on health and education was not sufficient and proposed a strategy for attacking poverty in three ways;

1. Creating opportunity like encouraging effective private investment, expanding into international markets, building up the asset of poor people, addressing asset inequalities across gender, ethnic and social factors, and getting infrastructure and knowledge to poor areas: rural and urban.

2. The number two strategy is no facilitating empowerment, like laying the political and legal basis for inclusive development, creating public administration top foster growth and equity, promoting inclusive decentralization and community development, etc.
3. The third strategy is on enhancing security such as formulating a modular approach to help poor people manage risk, etc (Igbuzor 2006).

In addition to the above strategies, this goal can be closed and over reliance on petroleum reduced.

Actualizing Universal Primary Education

This means that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary school. This has to do with early investment in basic education by the government. In Nigeria, apart from initial problems which affected the Universal Primary Education, on one can safely say that Nigeria is not lagging behind in this regard. Furthermore, with the introduction of universal primary education (UPE) in 1976, followed by the re-introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 2004, a lot has been achieved on this.

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Gender equality is equal education for both male and female. Evidence gotten from research shows that the gap is slowly closing in school enrolment in the developing world in recent time as opposed to what it was in 1999 and years back. Research also revealed that the largest gender gap still exist in west Asia, Oceania and sub-Sahara Africa where respectively 91,89 and 89 girls enrolled in primary schools for every 100 boys, more gaps increase with higher levels of education.

The situation in Nigeria is that the gender disparity in primary and secondary education has drastically reduced, but yet to be closed in other areas apart from education. Discrimination against women still exist in Nigeria in the areas of women having less voice and representation in public policy, decision making, occupying reasonable seats in politics and having less job prospect, these gender issues are very necessary because without progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women, none of the MDGs will be achieved. The achievement of these goals Nigeria is a male dominated society where only males can shine leaving the women in the kitchen. Some culture forbid women from participating in all activities their male counterparts do. Even some religious practices do the same too. Efforts should be made to put the Nigeria women on the same pedestal as their male counterparts.

Reduction in Child Mortality

The largest is to reduce child mortality by two-thirds from 93 children of every 1,000 dying before age five in 1990 to 31 of every 1,000 in 2015. Research has showed that these deaths occur mainly in the developing world, including Nigeria. The crux of the matter is that health care systems are not provided in all the rural areas. Illiteracy and ignorance forbid parent from taking care of their children especially during infancy. People in the rural area do not have adequate awareness on the need to keep their environment neat for healthy living, and the importance of taking care of their children.

The situation now is that UNICEF in partnership with governments, WHO and others are making frantic effort to scale up and provide, high nutritive interventions to reduce the number of neonatal and young children dying from preventable, easily treatable and curable disease. They purchase vaccines used for immunizations. Nigerian government on their part should try and provide health care system in the rural areas and massive campaign on improving family care practices. The persistent fight to combat fake drugs should be enhanced. Improve maternal health This has to do with the reduction by three quarters of maternal mortality ratio and achievement of universal access to reproductive health. In order to achieve this, the United Nations UN has made a frame effort to use computer technology to aid health workers in effective health information, especially as it concerns childbearing. Many women in the developing countries of which Nigeria is one of them, die because of lack of knowledge and ignorance. They are afraid of going to the hospital because they do not want to be operated upon. This is in the line with what Maputo (2005) said that despite the efforts being made by World Health Organization (WHO) member states in the Africa Region is unlikely to be able to achieve those goals by 2015 delivery time. Their report further says that the slow pace of implementation of the MDGs – which aimed at reducing infant mortality, improving maternal health and reducing the burden of HIV/AIDS and other diseases is attributed to several factors.

These include; weakness of health systems, inadequate resources, civil unrest and greater inequality. The maternal mortality rate, currently estimated at 1,000 deaths for 100,000 live births is higher than what it was in 1987, according to the report This ugly situation is applicable to goal number 6 which is combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. HIV/AIDS is a critical “poverty” issue, in the words Adetoun A.O. and Adepeju O.O (2007) which unfortunately affects women and children most. Scholars believe that HIV transmission in Africa is driven by unequal gender relations and hunger. WHO documents equally reported that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and woman aged 15-24 years with malaria is showing little or no sign of decline,

especially in African countries of which Nigeria is inclusive. For example, AIDS prevalence is round 20% among pregnant women with malaria the data on prevention and treatment are alarming. In Nigeria, in particular, the HIV/AIDS scourge has reached alarming proportion, according to UNAIDS/WHO (2005) report. This report reveals that youths between the age ranging of 15-19 years, with an estimated number of 240,000 are affected. According to Oyelude A.A. et al (2007), estimation about 140 children per day will die of HIV/AIDS of the same diseases. Efforts are needed to be made on intervention programmes on HIV/AIDS and incidence of malaria and other killer diseases by 2015 in Nigeria.

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a serious, global issue that requires complete response from all sectors of the society. The UN MDG developed the targets under this: integrate the principles of sustainable development into country's policies and program and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss. The UN MDG target 3 says that the population people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation should be reduced to halve; and improve the halves of at least 1000 million slum dwellers by 2020. Poverty and ignorance constitutes the basic problems in attaining this in Nigeria. This could be achieved, with the provision of adequate shelter, and security, and focusing on responsible environmental practices. The integration of the principles of sustainable development into the country's policies and programme is essential.

Developing a Global Partnership for Development

This is the last but not the least of the MDGs. It has to do with developing further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory, which includes a commitment to good governance development and poverty reduction-nationally and internationally. It has to address the less developed countries' special needs. These includes tariff and quota-free access for their exports, enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries, cancellation of official bilateral debts; and more generous official development, assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction. It also involves dealing comprehensively with developing countries' debts problems through national and international measures to make debts sustainable in the long term. Furthermore, in cooperation with the developing countries, develop productive work for youths, provide essential drugs in developing countries, and make available the benefits of new technologies-especially information communication.

In sum this requires combined efforts of all governments, civil societies, organizations and the private sector, in the context of a stronger and more effective global partnership for development. The MDGs are an important influence on our strategy and activities because of the emphasis on global and local partnership to realize practical impacts that challenge lives, and the clarity provided by the focus on real measures of human development.

There is every indication that achievement in MDG goals number 8 is in progress in Nigeria. For example, the nation has initiated or joined a range of partnerships with several UN agencies, multilateral organizations and national development agencies-including UNESCO, UNDP, WHO and USAID to mention but a few. All these provide joint effort, in human development. In order to achieve the MDGs by 2015 or thereabout, it requires more focus on development outcomes and less on inputs. Nigeria being a developing country needs help from rich countries to fund development programmes and multilateral institutions to help in the implementation of some of the countries' external debt burden reduction. Finally, another strategy is to lower trade barriers, allowing a freer exchange of goods and services.

Why Engage in the MDGs?

The first reason is that MDGs pull together in a single agenda issues that relate to development especially as it concerns human beings. Also the MDGs have received serious backing by world's governments. Another point is that the MDGs have the advantages of being measured, for example they are few in number, just eight, restricted on human development and then a target time given-2015. In addition, MDGs has the advantage of emphasizing promptness and transparency to international development. Finally, the world especially the world powers have made explicit resource contributions in order to achieve the MDGs. In Nigeria, for example, the civil society consultative forum on MDGs held in 2004 in Abuja mapped out three reasons why we needed to engage on the MDGs.

- MDGs create an opportunity to involve the government on development matters. MDGs affects all facets of the society and there was an agency like Civil Society Organization (CSO) bringing connection between the government and the grassroots.
- The last advantage is that MDGs creates a link between the local and international actions towards human centered development.

Limitations of MDGs

The limitations of goals to what is measurable is advantageous on one hand and disadvantageous on the other. There is a flaw here because many aspects of development cannot be easily measured some of the goals fail to give a holistic approach on the problems for example the MDGs on education is addressing only full course of primary school without giving cognizance to secondary and tertiary education. Finally, the goal number one seems to be highly unattainable because of the number of people that are poor especially in the development world.

The Road to the Achievement of MDGs in Nigeria

In the Nigeria evidence from the 2006 Millennium Development Goals Report shows that there is a likelihood of achieving three out of eight goals. A lot of achievement has been made in the Universal Basic Education, making sure that there is environmental sustainability and developing global partnership for development. Whereas in health and other MDGs achievement are relatively low, in spite of the remarkable effort the three tiers of the government are making some of the problems lie on unavailability of up-to date of population and the others; lack of fund, policies, ethnic rivalry etc. At the same time all hopes are not lost; because in terms of health, the Federal Government in conjunction with WHO are currently facing many challenges, notably those related to resources mobilization; health systems strengthening within the framework of integration of health services to strengthen the capacity to offer care; intensifying priority interventions like the integrated management to childhood illness, promotion good governance and the empowerment of women and girls.

II. Conclusion

The eradication of poverty aims at curbing poverty from the world poorest countries. But the negative experience was that a lot of problems needed to be addressed in order to achieve this goal. This is also the situation with the other goals. As it affects Nigeria, effort should be made by all and sundry to quicken the achievement of the MDGs especially in Nigeria, within the time frame of 2015.

References

- [1] Annual Dpi/NGO Conference (2004) "Focus on Millennium Development Goal". Amsterdam NCDO.
- [2] Asiedu, K. (2008) "In Pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Conflict affected Countries in Africa: An Uphill Challenges and Policy Lessons. Ethiopia: ISS Nairobi.
- [3] Bulletin of the World Health Organization October 2008 86(10)
- [4] Harcourt, W. (2004) "The Road to the UN Millennium Development Goals". Amsterdam NCDO.
- [5] Hulme, D. (2007) "Global Public Policy and the Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs): A Short History of the World's Biggest Promise Manchester.
- [6] Igbuzor, O. (2006) Action Aid International Nigeria.
- [7] Odetonu, A.A. & Adepeji, O.O. (2007) World Library and Information Congress South Africa.
- [8] Sullivan, E. (2009) "Reaching Millennium Development Goals: Eradicating Hunger in Easter., Kenya: ICEO.
- [9] The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) May 30th, 2006.
- [10] UN (2001) "Reconciling the IDGs and Millennium Declaration Goals". Collins Bradford.
- [11] UN (2002) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- [12] UNICEF/HQ99-0611/Pirozzi
- [13] United Nations Development Programme (2009) Nigeria.
- [14] WHO (2005) "Regional Committee for African Press Releases".