



Challenges of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria: Lessons for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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<p>Abstract: This study examines the challenges of implementing the MDGs in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the secondary method of data collection and evaluative method was employed in this research work especially data from the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDGs (OSSAP), the National Bureau of statistics (NBS), National poverty Eradication programme (NAPEP), text books, internet etc. while content analysis was used to analyse the data collected. This study revealed that poor infrastructural development, poverty, bad governance, corruption, inadequacy and misapplication of Fund, leading to lack of value for money and many more have impeded the implementation of MDGs in Nigeria. Although, Nigeria has made appreciable progress on Goals 2 and 8, as well as some partial progress on Goals 3 and 6, but faces serious challenges on Goals 4, 5 and 7 and some indicators of Goals 6. Therefore, there is the need to consolidate on areas where progress has been made in the SDGs project while concrete effort is required to get the country back on track in the areas where it faces serious challenges during the implementation of the MDGs. This underscores the need to address implementation bottlenecks and defects in current SDGs implementation policies. Finally, government should provide opportunities for greater involvement of the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDGs – related projects.</p>	<p>Review Report</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: Margaret Oyekan Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Veritas University, Abuja-Nigeria</p> <p>How to cite this paper: Margaret Oyekan & Zekeri Momoh (2023). Challenges of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria: Lessons for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). <i>Middle East J Islam Stud Cult.</i>, 3(4): 37-42.</p> <p>Article History: Submit: 16.10.2023 Accepted: 17.11.2023 Published: 24.11.2023 </p>
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INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the century, 189 world leaders met under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly to address the issues of social economic development as it relates to people around the world. This was against the background of lofty aspirations of expected improvements in social economic indices of people around the world by the end of the century as expressed in such slogans as education for all by year 2000, health for all by year 2000 and water for all by year 2000 and so on (United Nations 2000).

It was however revealed at the UN Assembly that while there have been dramatic improvements and the goals set in most of the areas have been realized in the developed countries, the situation was different in most developing countries. There was therefore the need to take action towards remedying the observed gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” in the different parts of the globe (United Nations 2001).

Thus, the Millennium Declaration in which developed and developing countries agree to work for improvement in the areas of poverty eradication, primary education, women empowerment, child mortality, maternal health care, combating diseases, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development or put differently, the millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Each of the goals had minimum specified targets that each of the countries must work towards its attainment by year 2015, if any of the countries is to be on a path of human development (The Africa Report 2011:73-74).

Basically, the eight MDGs agreed at the year 2000 by the UN General Assembly for achievement in 2015, include, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other disease; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. Besides the MDGs

were basically meant to ginger governments, especially in developing countries where poverty remains widespread to the need to take more seriously and with greater urgency, the welfare and development of their people. The MDGs were eventually adopted by UN member states in 2001 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme.

Furthermore, Nigeria is one of the countries that assented to the millennium Declaration and this is not a surprise given the fact that the country has over the years performed poorly in most of the areas listed in the MDGs. Nigeria's poverty rate is still about 55 percent with more than half of the population still living below the poverty line, (i.e. on less than one dollar a day), high child mortality rate, poor maternal health among others (National Bureau of Statistics, 2005). However, Nigeria only began serious efforts at achieving the MDGs in year 2005. For example, an MDG awareness campaign, which involved a cross section of the Nigerian society, was carried out in 2005 while a baseline survey of MDGs awareness was also undertaken in 2006. Also in 2006, the Federal Government inaugurated the presidential Committee on the assessment and monitoring of the MDGs in Nigeria (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDG's, 2008: 24-25).

In addition, the Federal Government also established the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals (OSSAP-MDGs) to serve as a secretariat to the Presidential Committee on MDGs, develop a coherent approach for the achievement of MDGs and facilitate the design of appropriate systems to tag and track debt relief funded MDG expenditure. Following accruals from the debt relief given to Nigeria in 2005 by Paris Club of creditors, a Virtual Poverty Fund established to fund the MDGs initiatives at the federal level. The Office of the OSSAP-MDGs is also responsible for the establishment of the Virtual Poverty Fund. Monies realized from the debt relief have been channeled to the Poverty Fund to carryout MDGs initiatives using government, Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

Consequently, the office of OSSAP-MDGs is that of coordination and not of implementation. Thus, the office of the OSSAP-MDGs has the function of monitoring, guiding and supporting the implementing agencies on how they spend the debt relief gains. About \$1 billion have since 2006 being channeled on an annual basis to fund initiatives that will lead to improvement in health, education, energy, housing, women's rights, HIV & AIDS, and other Poverty Education Schemes. The deliberate policy of setting aside the Debt Relief Gains (DRGs), which is nevertheless appropriated, in the annual budget has resulted in further visibility for the MDGs projects (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDG's, 2008: 24-25). It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the

challenges in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria.

Policy Framework for the Actualization of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria

The Obasanjo's administration initiated measures to deal with problems of socio-economic development in Nigeria 2000 - 2007 the Obasanjo's administration initiated series of economic reforms having the Millennium Development Goals as its focal point. In May 2004, the Obasanjo's administration initiated the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was a follow up of the International Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The equivalent of NEEDS at the state level is State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the local level. Other programmes include National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Small and Medium Scale Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) etc (Amadi, S. *et al.*, 2004).

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was launched as Nigeria's home-grown Poverty Eradication Strategy (PRSP), which was built on the earlier two-year effort to reduce the interim poverty reduction strategy paper (I-PRSP), and the wide consultative and participatory processes associated with it. Although, NEEDS enjoyed greater participation and consultation such that, the draft presidential Economic team comprises of 35 committee including ministers, representatives of ministries and agencies, president of the Nigerian labour congress, chairman of the coalition of civil society organizations, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group e.t.c who fully endorsed the programme. In addition, consultations were planned in the near term to get further inputs from major stakeholders that had not had the opportunity to contribute to the NEEDS design (Momoh, 2011).

NEEDS was nationally coordinated framework of action in close collaboration with the state and local governments and other stakeholders to consolidate on the achievement of the last four years (1999 – 2003) and build a solid foundation for the attainment of Nigeria's long-term vision of becoming the largest and strongest African economy and a key player in the World economy. Besides, NEEDS focuses on four key strategies: reorienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth, and generating employment. It was based on the notion that those goals could be achieved only by creating an environment in which business activities could thrive, government was re-directed to providing basic services, and people were empowered to take advantages of the new livelihood opportunities that plan would stimulate. At the state level, the SEEDS are developed to compliment NEEDS. The state government has produced SEEDS documents that define policy targets in areas such as primary health care, basic

education etc, and it provided a full strategy of how it can be achieved (Momoh, 2011).

The SEEDS document was published and made widely available in the form of a political commitment from the state governors to the people. Once this was in place, the state government presented a coherent fiscal strategy, and sets budgets that are reliable to guide the actual spending and such budgets must demonstrate a clear link between resource allocations and poverty reduction strategies as defined in SEEDS (David, A. *et al.*, 2008:5-8).

Besides, state governments also had to set realistic budgets for IGR, VAT and statutory allocations based on historical collection patterns and Federal government indication, loans and grants were evidence by signed agreements. Furthermore, the state government was expected to have a consistent policy on the delivery of services, informed by baseline data and through the SEEDS process. Service delivery strategies in key sectors took due accounts of national and local policies and other service providers, including other tiers of government plans to ensure “due process” particularly in procurement procedures were developed and positively assessed against Federal Government due process standards.

However, there were key principles behind the crafting of the SEEDS bench-marking exercise in the states. During the first run of the exercise in 2005; 35 of the 36 states and the FCT voluntarily enlisted for bench marking. The exercise focused on the use of policy instrument to guide decision-making, budget and fiscal management service delivery, and communication and transparency. Moreover, these benchmarks collectively represent an attempt to institutionalize procedures and citizens participation in administering the state instead of relying on the rule of thumb and discretion. The exercise revealed best practices as well as the weakness associated to economic management at the state level.

In addition, the benchmarking exercise has encouraged improvements in government procedures, including policy, Marking, budgeting and communication and record keeping. This became noticeable from the results of the second exercise in 2006. The participatory process of SEEDS involved: the state Houses of Assembly, state planning commission, state ministry of finance, the states executive council, the private sector and people across the states.

In line with SEEDS at the state level, Local Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (LEEDS) was put in place at the local government level in Nigeria to ensure that the local government developed, published and implemented a strategy that advanced its policy target by: Ensuring responsible and prudent fiscal management that effectively contains the negative impacts of revenue fluctuation. To establish the budget

as a comprehensive, transparent and binding tool for the implementation of government priorities. To ensure that government strategies to improve service delivery both in terms of quality and in terms of reach were developed and can be implemented; and to ascertain that policies are planned and implemented in a transparent and accountable manner (Momoh, 2011).

Above all, NEED became a platform for both the federal and state government to cooperate more closely. There was a synergy as well as coherence between federal and state reforms, for the first time, in a very long time. This had ensured purposefulness, focus and objectivity. The trend then was far cry from pass experience, by these two levels of government, which had sometime worked at cross-purposes. The Federal government under NEEDS, and the state government under SEEDS, as well as local government under, LEEDS coordinated a planning framework, with agreed common priorities in agriculture, public finance and public sector reforms, with emphasis on the social sector (National Planning Commission 2004:5).

On the whole, The United Nations prosecutes the crusade against poverty in every part of the world under the slogan “poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere”. (NAPEP 2007a:1). It was against this background, that the Obasanjo administration demonstrated its commitment to the eradication of poverty in Nigeria by establishing the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001. NAPEP is charged with the responsibility for coordinating and monitoring all poverty eradication programmes at all levels in the country (NAPEP 2007b:7).

Challenges in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria (2000-2015)

Scholars have admitted that there are several challenges have impeded the implementation of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria (Abani, *et al.*, 2005, Igbuzor, 2006). Ones of these challenges has to do with ineffective and efficient infrastructural development. It is important to note that effective and efficient infrastructure in the rural area is key to alleviating poverty and hunger there. This provides an environment that enable business to flourish and transforms people’s lives positively, consistently and speedily, as experienced in the in the Asian economies in the past three decades. Efficient transportation modes, good roads, safe drinking water, uninterrupted power supply (as experienced in Ghana in recent times), modern health services and good efficient education of the citizens offer good opportunities for creating wealth and a minimum standard of development to pursue so as to extricate people from the clutches of poverty and hunger and accelerate speedily towards achieving the goal are absence in almost all rural areas in Nigeria.

Besides, the Agricultural sector of the Nigeria economy is dominated by aged people and the use of crude implements are causes of poor yield. Agriculture has been characterized by decaying infrastructure, high post-harvest losses, inappropriate technology and modern inputs, ineffective control of pests and diseases, and the sporadic nature of poultry diseases caused by avian influenza.

There is also weak industrial processing technology and weak market linkages, resulting in glut and low price of agricultural commodities, which ultimately creates disincentives to farmers. There is escalating cost of production and reduced purchasing power of farmers resulting from lack of infrastructure and disharmony between macroeconomic policies and the agricultural policies that limit the realization of the full potentials of agriculture (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDG's, 2008: 24-25).

Besides, Nigeria still faces various challenges, particularly programme implementation and complementary actions for instance, the large size of the UBE programme goes with challenge of running it in the face of dwindling financial resources. UBEC has stated emphatically that it does not have enough funds to carry out the programme as originally envisaged. Almost all the public primary schools in the country suffer from infrastructural decay, a lack of teaching / learning materials and inadequate facilities generally. Quality assurance and M & E mechanisms are weak despite a plethora of inspection services. This contributes to the failure of many pupils to reach the minimum standard required (Momoh, 2011).

The high level of poverty in the country, which is a major factor in high dropout rate, is a constraint to the universal of education in Nigeria. Additionally, young boys no longer wish to attend schools in some states because they do not consider the benefits from formal education worthwhile, particularly in view off the associated difficulty in finding jobs. There are frequent disruptions to academic programmes in schools because of industrial disputes among the trade unions in the educational system at all levels of education. Added to this is the high cost of providing basic facilities in schools and capacity building programmes for teachers. There is also lack of funds to meet such statutory costs as promotions, annual increments ad employment of new staff to address labour shortage in schools. Politicization of enrolment figures is yet another major problem that needs to be addressed. It is a situation where schools, Local government and states deliberately inflate enrolment figures released to the UBE National Coordinating body apparently to attract more Federal Funds. This makes planning and programme implementation difficult.

A number of challenges militate against reducing the gender disparities include poor

implementation of government policies, weak monitoring mechanism, poor budgetary allocations to the educational sector, poverty, cultural and religious practices like early child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, and so on. Inequality in employment prospects is yet another challenge that has not been addressed. Another major challenge in achieving Goal 3 of the MDGs is the negative social perceptions of the role of women in the public sphere and especially their participation in politics, which is generally perceived as men's territory. Generally, women's apathy to politics, the socio-cultural biases against their participation, the low level of their education and high costs of political participation, among other things remain key policy challenges (Momoh, 2011).

The weakness of the country's primary health care system and limited referral system constitute a critical challenge focusing the health sector. There is a high level of ignorance among parents on adopting conventional health seeking behaviour, a factor that is associated with low literacy level and high incidence of poverty. Unfavourable religious and cultural beliefs that adversely affect willful release of children for immunization and adoption of safe health seeking practices. Inadequate funding of the health sector, especially health capital. Limited access to beneficiaries' immunization programmes especially in the riverine areas. Immunisation coverage usually focuses on grass rather than net figures. The difference between percentage of children vaccinated by age 12 month and for all ages tends to suggest that a number of children were vaccinated out of time. Poor transportation of medical equipment and preservation of vaccines and other consumables and low government support and encouragement for non-governmental organization that are willing to assist in achieving the MDGs (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDG's, 2008: 24-25).

The poor state of health infrastructure in the country contributes directly to the observed poor maternal health results. This includes low motivation for health professional workers, an annual budget preparation process the report calls a 'ritual', a culture of corruption and little consultation between federal and state health authorities and between federal and state health authorities and between the Federal Ministry of Health and Other Ministries. Other challenges hindering reducing maternal mortality and morbidity are: Teenage pregnancy, Cultural and attitudinal factors, Delay in seeking antenatal care, Ignorance of trained Birth Attendants, Aversion to caesarean section, Absence of basic essential obstetrics care in most health institutions, Non-commitment of state governors and Local government chairman to providing skilled manpower at state hospitals and primary health centers, Inadequate funding, Doctors' and health workers' refusal of rural posting and lack of data for planning.

Another challenge have to do with the filling capacity gaps to implement and the absorption of the sustainable financial resources made available by external partners and donors. Inadequate on the supply of strategic information that would permit accurate interpretation of data. The current inadequacy is partly due to a lack of disaggregation of existing data on the factors and behaviour that drive the HIV epidemic, having no effective leadership in some states has resulted in weak policy implementation. Filling funding gaps to achieve the targets, mobilizing capacity building and technical support for states to implement the operational plan. Involving the civil society and the private sector groups in the planning and budgeting of the state action plans has also been a challenge (Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the president on MDG's, 2008: 24-25).

The high pressure on forest resources has not abated. This is due to high price of Kerosine, which has made the fuel less unaffordable to most Nigerians, thereby putting pressure on the country's wood resources, being the alternative source of energy available to the poor. The increased dependence on firewood has tended to aggravate forest depletion. Similarly, uncontrolled animal grazing and forest fires constitute additional pressures on forest resources. All these contribute to the impact of strategies such as Timber and Non Timber forest products Development and sustainable Management of forest estates. Increasing rate of building construction is another source of pressure on forest resources.

Nigeria still finds access to international market as a major challenge. Some WTO members operate protective policies such as the agricultural subsidies offered by western nations on their agricultural products while simultaneously discouraging developing countries from doing so. The trade-related intellectual property rights constitute another of several policies, which still limit Nigeria's agricultural products from accessing the international markets.

Finally, democratization of global institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Agencies also has not ensure the voices of developing countries are heard on certain matters that affect them such as the issue of debt, and limitation on growth potentials imposed by excessive borrowing are also often ignored (BBC Focus On Africa October 2011). In conclusion, all these factors have hindered the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Some people have concluded the MDGs is not more than abstract targets a kind policy mirage that just disappear with the passage of time. It is also important to point out that there is a problem utilizing MDGs as

framework for measuring development. Firstly, they risk simplifying what socio-economic development is all about by restricting the goals to what is measurable. Also, some of the targets do not address the problem holistically. For instance, the MDG's goals on education, (that is goal 2 "Achieve Universal Primary Education") takes only a full course of primary schooling with no reference to secondary and tertiary education. Furthermore, it is not possible to meet the goal of halving the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day by 2015 and the target to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2030. So the Millennium Development Goals have just been a Utopia. This study examines the challenges hindering the actualization of the MDGs in Nigeria. On the whole, this study, therefore, presents the following recommendations to aid the actualization of the SDGs in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the infrastructure challenges are real and very crucial to poverty eradication. Infrastructure like multi-modal transport system (roads, rails and water), water supply and power supply are essentially Social Overhead Capital (SOC), which government should mostly provide. Therefore, government at all levels should concentrate their energies on providing them. This will help to create a conducive environment for the private and the informal sector to operate effectively within the system. This is another way of encouraging mass participation in the economic development process, which is crucial to poverty eradication.

Second, Agriculture and rural development are strategic to poverty eradication in Nigeria. The economy is agric-based and its growth is essential to reducing mass poverty and food insecurity. This requires a productivity revolution especially in smallholder farming. To achieve this, government need to provide rural roads, irrigation water (Land augmentation technology) and land reforms.

Third, government at all levels in Nigeria should set up a sustainable financial framework to ensure that primary education remains a priority as inadequate funding has stifle the UBE goal attainment. Federal intervention in UBE should be funded through not less than 2 percent of its consolidated revenue in the form of federal guaranteed credits as well as local and international donor grants. The intervention fund to states should be used to broaden access, improve quality and ensure equity in basic education, but not for teachers' enrolment and overhead costs.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) as well as various non-governmental organizations should engage in continuous, aggressive enlightenment campaigns on the importance of women's involvement in the development process and the political process.

Moreover, the main policy priority should be increasing access to basic health facilities. Specifically, there is need to focus attention on primary health care facilities. By developing a monitoring framework to ensure effective and efficient use of fiscal and other resource allocations for providing health facilities and medical care delivery, especially to the infants.

Also, articulation and implementation of the National Maternal New Born Child Strategy and the creation of demand for public health facility-based reproductive health services by scaling up the provision of free delivery of facilities, free essential obstetrics and Gynecology care and use pre-natal clinic to give away ITNs in all federal, state and private non-for-profit health facilities.

Furthermore, the institutional and human capacity involved in the management of Roll Back Malaria Programme should be better equipped to scale up its activities and resources and enforce transparency and accountability in the management of such resources.

In addition, government at all levels should adopt a more effective mechanism for controlling logging, deforestation and marine fishing and committed implementation of afforestation and desert acclimation programmes.

Finally, government should provide opportunities for greater involvement of the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners' inn the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDGs-related projects.

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