

LESSONS FROM THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS): A COMPARISON OF NIGERIA AND HER SUB-SAHARAN NEIGHBOURS

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*<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v14i3.2>

Introduction

Since September 2000, countries of the world have been on a race to achieve Millennium Development Goals. More so the race has been among countries judged to be economically under-developed/less-developed or developing, with the developed ones and international organizations doubling as spectators and judges. The adoption of the Millennium Declaration committed these countries to a series of international development objectives to be reached by 2015. These eight goals which culminated as to the declaration are widely cited as yardstick to which advances in international development are to be judged. The MDGs for the past ten years have thus been considered as a motivation for development planning both for developing and developed countries. This argument borders on the fact that by one country achieving these goals it would significantly reduce world challenge on each and every goal (Kenny & Sunner, 2011). The MDGs thus, could be considered as a motivational force which moves all countries to towards planned action for international development.

Policy analysts across the world are at par that the MDGs would either be met or missed by 2015. By observing various set indicators and reviewing MDGs assessment report over a ten-year period, it becomes evident that while some

countries are on-track in achieving some of these goals by 2015 others are off-track. Strikingly, some countries believed not to be on-track in achieving these goals have attempted to get back on track over the years. This has been pursued vigorously by (i) re-introducing programs(ii) strengthen political, economic and social institutions(iii) improving baseline data to inform policy decisions and (iv) increased partnership with relevant stakeholders among other things. As such, some countries have since made giant strides in this race to meet the MDGs before the target date.

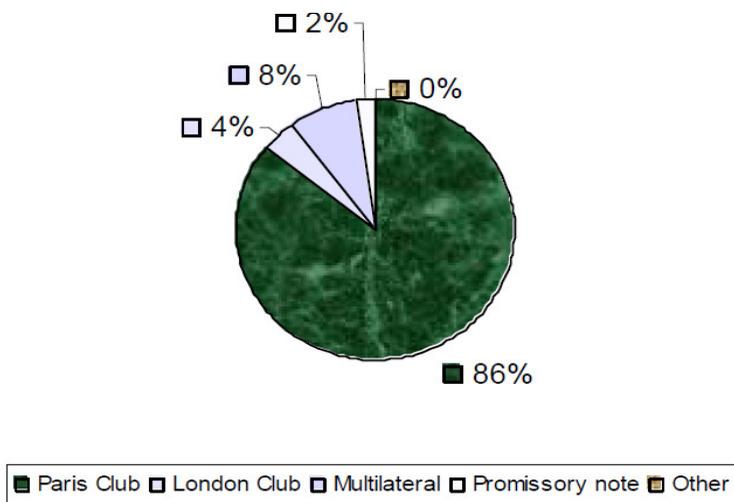
In sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda –a country recovering from the genocide of the early 1990s –is a model of such positive development planning fashioned towards the MDGs. Poverty rates in Rwanda were increasing in the late 1980s and early 1990s and stood at 47.5% in 1990. Because of the 1994 genocide, the rate of poverty rose dramatically in the same year peaking at 78%. Since then, with the help of MDGs induced policies and programmes, a significant decline in this number has been recorded and current poverty rate stands at 44.9 % (Sangado et al, 2003). Fecundating this, renowned development economist Paul Collier said he was deeply impressed with Rwanda pulling off the rarely seen ‘hat of trick’ of rapid growth, sharp poverty reduction and reduced inequality.

The Nigerian MDGs Experience

At the turn of the new millennium in 2000, Nigeria joined 189 countries to sign the Millennium Declaration. This declaration represents a global compact between rich and poor nations encapsulated in the eight Millennium Development Goals. These eight inter-related development goals were formally adopted in 2001. Because the MDGs had specific indicators and targets, Nigeria just like other developing

countries was thus faced with the challenge of financing her commitment of achieving the MDGs before 2015. Notably, Nigeria’s inability to meet her international obligations during the early years of 2000 was hinged on the level of her indebtedness. In 1999, *The Economist* (in Azmi, 2005) estimates that African leaders had over \$20bn in Swiss banks accounts alone, twice the amount that sub-Saharan Africa spends on servicing debts. Nigeria by this time was indebted to many countries; most prominent among them was the Paris Club.

Figure 1: Nigeria’s External Debt by Sources as at the end of 2004



Source: (Ogunlana, 2005)

The debt relief granted to Nigeria provided enormous finance to pursue development plans within the spectrum of the Millennium Declaration. According to the former Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs Hajiya Amina Az-Zubair, the Debt Relief Grant (DRG) for the MDGs

programmes would assist in (i) Scale-up existing high-impact MDG-related interventions and (ii) Supplement capital expenditure, not to pay debts, salaries or other re-current expenditure (MDGs Mid-Point Assessment, 2008).

Deliverables on the Nigerian MDGs

Since the establishment of OSSAP-MDGs, Nigeria has initiated different sectorial programmes to ensure the targets of the MDGs are met. But questions arise as to if such programmes have actually made the much needed difference in the lives of Nigerians. Within international circles, the call in 2007 to review of such achievements of the MDGs by the United Nations and other development oriented institutions (e.g. World Bank and DFID), led developing countries to undertake a mid-point assessment of the MDGs in 2007. The Mid-point assessment of the MDGs in Nigeria thus represents determined effort of all the stakeholders on the past seven years and an expression of the task for the next years. In Nigeria, the assessment indicates that goals concerned with Universal Primary Education, HIV & AIDS, environmental sustainability and the building of a global partnership for development are nearing achievement (MDGs Mid-Point Assessment, 2008).

Universal Primary Education enrollment (MDG 2) in Nigeria has improved since the introduction of the MDGs. According to the *Mid-Point Assessment of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria*, the net enrollment ratio in primary education has consistently increased. From about 8 in every 10 eligible children in 2004, it increased to 9 in 2007 as a result of the implementation of programmes like Universal Basic Education (UBE) among others. Apart from the success recorded with the freebasic education programme introduced in different states, the report also indicates how literacy rates

have improved in Nigeria, although citing differences in urban and rural figures. Also, Nigeria has been able to make significant progress in education enrollment under the MDGs with the training and re-training of over 145,000 in-service teachers and additional recruitment of over 45, 000 new teachers. Other programmes like the Girl Education Project (an initiative supported by DFID and UNICEF), the provision of school buildings, furniture and teaching aids have also been recorded. All over Nigeria with different programs like the UBE, Quickwins and the Conditional Grants Scheme, achieving the MDGs 2 seems possible. Recently the *Debt Relief Gains Report (2012)* based on geospatial data collection, indicates over 5000 education related projects have been executed under different MDGs programme in Nigeria. Noteworthy also is that these success have also been marred with certain challenges which policy analyst warns should be addressed during the next set of Post 2015 development planning. Most prominent of these challenges is the decline in primary six completion rate and drop-out rates which are on the raise in some geographical areas. The report indicates decline of primary six students from 8 pupils out of 10 in 2004 to 7 in 2007.

Mid-Point Assessment also indicates Nigeria is on track to achieving targets for MDG 7 –mostly on targets which borders on environmental sustainability considerations for national programme implementation. Remarkable strides made in reduction of gas flaring. Feelers from government indicates a drop rate of 6 percent (BluePrint, 2013) while the assessment reports a reduction of 2.71 percent between 2000 and 2007 and a projection of 12.29 overall percentages in 2015. However, Nigeria has not performed well in the other environmental targets of the MDG 6 (improving the number of people with access to water and improving the lives of slum dwellers).

Comparatively is Nigeria Making Progress towards the MDGs?

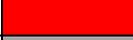
Generally, it is difficult to make a comparative analysis of country-by-country MDGs progress level. Considering that every country has its peculiar levels and differing socio-economic system, it becomes cumbersome to efficiently compare countries. Easterly (2009) contends that the general measure of the MDGs by country level has been unfair to Africa, thus making sure that “they are programmed to fail.” Although the development professor’s view holds water, there is still the need to measure (at least in ranking) for progress made towards the MDGs in Africa. Consequently, the model adopted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) along with the United Nations End Poverty 2015 campaign, where based on “simple aggregation of ranking across the first seven MDGs” could be used to identify which country is actually making progress. Focus here would be on poverty; basic education enrolment; maternal and child health/mortality.

Consequently, by this international MDGs card, Nigeria has not done well in her bid to achieve the MDGs. More specifically, international observers like the Department for International Development (DFID) believe Nigeria is still lagging behind and is off-track on some of the MDGs. According to the *DFID Annual Report 2012*, Nigeria is off track on MDGs 1, 2, 6 and 7 using specific indicators.

Figure 2: DFID Rating for Nigeria’s MDGs

MDG Indicator	Proportion of population below \$1.25 a day	Net enrolment in primary education	Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	Under 5 mortality ratio	Maternal mortality ratio	HIV prevalence, 15-49 years old	Improved water source
Current Assessment	Red	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Red

-  *Source: DFID Report, 2012*
Rated ‘severely off track’ (Countries have made slow progress, no progress at all, or have regressed)
-  **Rated ‘off track’ (Countries have made progress, but too slowly to reach the target 2015. Continuing at the same rate, they will reach the goal by 2040.**
-  **Countries have either ‘achieved’ their target or are ‘on track’ to achieve their target. i.e they have a rate of progress that, if continued, will mean that they will reach the target by 2015**

	Poverty	Net Enrollment in Primary School	Maternal Mortality Ratio
Ethiopia			
Ghana			
Kenya			
Malawi	No data		
Nigeria			
Rwanda	No data		
Uganda		No data	
South Africa			

Considering poverty indices in Nigeria, one does not need a randomized experiment to prove that the poverty rate in Nigeria is on the rise. The rate of poverty in the country has not reduced since 1990s (NBS, 2010), instead people are getting poorer. However, Nigeria has recorded economic growth (GDP expansion of 6.99 % in the fourth quarter of 2012) both championed by the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (CBN, 2012). Although this growth – specifically due to agriculture –has led to a significant reduction of underweight children, from 35.7 % in 1990 to 23.1 % in 2008; calls have been made for this growth to be more equitable and broad based leading to creation of jobs by both the public and private sectors (UNDP, 2008). Comparatively, Nigeria and Ghana’s overall poverty rate by the early 90s was different at 42.7 percent and 51.7 percent respectively (World Bank, 2012). Population consideration makes these differences worrisome because Nigeria’s population was higher than Ghana’s at this same time. But unlike Nigeria, Ghana has made significant achievement in meeting global MDGs target for poverty reduction. Available data indicate that Ghana has managed to halve the proportion of the people living in extreme poverty from about 36.5 % in 1991/92 to about 18.2% in 2005; And also she has recorded a reduction in the proportion of population below the upper poverty line from its high level of 51.7 % in 1991/92 to 28.6% in 2005/2006 (MDGs Ghana, 2006). This means that the MDG 1 of halving the proportion of the population in extreme poverty by 2015 has been achieved well ahead of the target date, thereby making Ghana the first sub-Saharan African country to achieve this. Surprisingly, Ghanaians are not singing ‘uhuru,’ despite sufficient time still available for the MDGs, programmes and research are now focus on targeting

food insecure areas and areas whose malnutrition figures dipped slowly compared to other regions.

Like most developing countries in the world, Nigeria has a young population, with children under 15 years accounting for 45 per cent of the population. Nigeria is not the only sub-Saharan African country to record high basic primary school enrollment. Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Malawi have recorded overall increase in primary school enrollment since 1990. Specifically, Kenya with support funding from UK's DFID has targeted enrollment in rural areas thereby increase enrollment on one hand and ensuring female to male ratio in primary schools are within the MDGs target.

Maternal and child mortality is another area where Nigeria MDGs effort seems not to be felt. Nigeria ranks among the highest maternal mortality ratio. Nigeria is failing to achieve this goal despite age long institution like the National Primary HealthCare Development Agency, National Health Insurance Scheme and Community Health Care Programmes. On the flip side, some African countries have not done too well on this goal, but a glance at data presented by the *DFID Annual Report 2012*, shows that Rwanda (like many Asian developing countries) has in fact made significant progress in reducing child and maternal mortality. Despite decades of civil war and widespread genocide in the mid 1990's which devastated the country's health system, in recent years Rwanda has been a model of improving access to maternal health care. By prioritized hiring and training community health workers to provide family planning education, services and counseling to men and women through the country, Rwanda reduced mortality rate by more than 25 percent in five years (USAID, 2008).

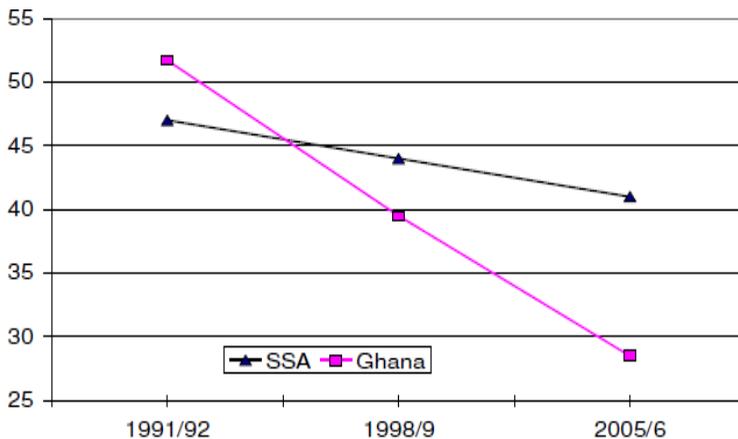
Learning from Experience for Post 2015 Development Planning

No doubt, Nigeria is not getting it right for the MDGs. Why? This been said, considering indicators from the *Mid-Point Assessment Report*, Nigeria has done considerably well on the target for HIV/AIDS as prevalence rate dropped 4.4 % in 2005 from a high of 5.8% in 2001 (MDGs Mid-Point Assessment, 2009). The concern here is to identify from experiences of other developing countries in sub-Sahara Africa how best to attempt to achieve the future 'MDGs 2.0' which would be initiated by 2015.

What Nigeria can do differently for the next set of international development planning is to properly integrate these goals into its national development plans. Specifically, since the MDGs were time bound, such development plans could be adopted within short and medium term frameworks.

Such short term programmes can lend credence to implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) which provides framework for supporting the designed implementation of national agriculture and food security strategies all over Africa; thereby reducing rural poverty and mitigating global food price shock.

Figure 3: Comparison of Poverty Rates in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa 1991/92 – 2005/2006



Source: Ghana Statistical Services (2007) Patterns and Trends of Poverty in 1999 – 2006

Other areas which Nigeria could approach MDGs differently would be ‘targeting’. By been able to identify, initiate and sustain programmes for areas which have not done well for the MDGs, Nigeria can make progress of development. While poverty rate is high in one geographic area it appears to be low in another. The same applies to child and maternal, basic education enrollment, gender issues among others. For the next set of international goals, targeting could be employed to meet targets and improve general development of Nigeria. International assessment of the MDGs is done on a general basis.

In Tanzania, such development targeting was introduced to address the maladies of education enrollment. Apart from integrating this idea into her short and medium development plans, the Tanzania government introduced such targeting under the Primary Education Sector Development

Programme (PESDP) in 2002 which was strategically designed to meet the MDGs and Education For All (EFA) targets. With economic hardships which saw a reduction in number of teachers, infrastructure, teaching aid as well as decline in schooling standards from 1980s until mid-1990s and structural reforms of the same period, the programme translated policy intentions into feasible and coherent development framework (Simwanza, 2007).

More so actual debt relief gains (DRG) projects carried out under the MDGs are not sustained at community, local government, states and national levels. In 2012, the DRG geospatial project mapping exercise conducted by OSSAP-MDGs in partnership with the National Population Commission (NPoC) and National Bureau of Statics (NBS) reflected an ever increasing number of projects implemented since 2005 by using DRG funds. The question is that all over Nigeria, what is the actual number of such projects which are working effectively? What is the actual number of available functional water sources, functional skill acquisition centers, properly renovated classroom blocks and primary healthcare centers, actually supplied medical equipment and teaching aids or school furniture, concluded teachers and health workers training, all these cannot be quantify.

Sustainability for the new set of international development goals has to be holistic and engaging all stakeholders to ensure achievements is recorded. Community engagement has to be integrated in policy actions and plans as this is international best practices. People have to be taught and capacity built on how simple techniques of maintaining infrastructures provided by the DRG funds could improve their lives.

Conclusion

While some countries have are on-track, Nigeria seems to be off-track in terms of achieving the MDGs. Consequently, polemics from government agencies cannot divert Nigerians and the entire world from the realities on ground about the failures to meet MDGs. By admitting the realities on ground, learning from her mistakes and the experiences of other Africa countries, Nigeria has a chance to meet these goals but not by 2015. Such peer review, could assist Nigeria form the African perspective, on how best to address her development challenges and save herself from the quagmires encapsulated by the MDGs. The next set of international development agenda/goals (Post-2015) will provide her with this opportunity. This can only be possible if and only if the nation is prepared.

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