

EDUCATION AND EXTENT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Education is the bedrock of any economy whether at the nursery/ primary, secondary and/or tertiary levels. Education has become one of the most powerful weapons for reduction of poverty in all nations of the world. The challenge of development and eradication of poverty has attracted the attention of scholars, politicians and leaders of many nations over the years.

Development as a concept has different perspectives, however, the general consensus of development is that it will and should lead to good change in a given society, manifested in increased capacity of people to have control over mankind, assets as well as intellectual resources. Further more, development helps to obtain physical necessities of life, such as food, clothing and shelter;- employment, equality, participation in government, adequate education, gender equality amongst others. Agreeably, many have asserted that the purpose of development is, and should rightly be, to improve the people's lives

through expansion of their freedom, choices, and dignity (Igbuzor, 2005).

In order to eradicate the problem of poverty and promote sustainable development in many nations of the world, the United Nations (UN) in September, 2000 declared the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This lead paper therefore hopes to examine the MDGs and the extent of achievement of the goals for sustainability.

Historical Perspectives of Millennium Development Goals

In. September 2000, under the United Nations (UN), 189 Heads of States and Governments unanimously adopted a comprehensive Millennium Declaration urging nations to a partnership for a "peaceful, prosperous and just world". (Okpaya, 2008).

Components of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with achievement date of 2015 with their targets are listed-below: -

Goals (MDGS)	Targets	
1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce by half the proportions of people. Living on less than \$1 (about ₦150-₦155) a day • Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. 	<p>development into country polices and programmes reverse loss of environment sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. • Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 1200 million slum dwellers by 2020. • Develop further an open trading and financial system. • Address the least developed countries special needs. • Address the special needs of landlocked and small Island developing states. • Deal comprehensively with developing countries debt problems. • In co-operation with developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth. • In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing nations.
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all boys and girls complete full course of primary schooling. • Increased enrolment must be accompanied by efforts to ensure that all children remain in school and receive a high quality education. 	
3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and all levels by 2015. 	
4. Reduce Child Mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the mortality rate among children under five (5) by two third r 	
5. Improved Maternal Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce by three quarters the maternal death ration. 	
6. Combat HIV/AIDs, Malaria and other Diseases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. 	
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the principles of sustainable 	
		<p>8. Develop a global partnership for development</p>

Source: Okpaya, E. I. (2008). Achieving Milleniums Development Goals.

Importance of Millennium development Goals (MDGs)

It is very pertinent to note that the Millennium Development Goals, are not just statements, but guidelines that were established exclusively for the world's development challenges. The goals have strategies and targets for measurable achievement to free all men, women and children from various forms of dehumanizing extreme poverty. The target date of achievement of the goals by both developing and developed nations being 2015.

According to Igbuzor (2005), in the Nigerian context, the Society Consultative Forum on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) held in Abuja on 20th April, 2004 provided the following reasons why Nigeria needs to be involved in MDGs.

- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide additional entry point to engage government on developmental issues.
- MDGs affect all segments of the society and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), serve as the link between government and the grassroots.
- MDGs provide the link between local and international actions towards human centered development.

The MDGs therefore, draw together in a single agenda. Issues that require priority to address the developmental question and concerns as they affect various nations of the world, particular, the 189 countries including Nigeria. The MDGs have actually received the endorsement and attention of world governments, since the goals were set in measurable terms. Most importantly, the MDGs have added urgency and transparency to international development in both developing and developed nations, since the goals have made various governments to make explicit financial and other resource commitments to achieve the MDGs.

Extent of Achievement of Millennium Development (MDGs) in Nigeria

Assessing the extent of achievement of MDGs in Nigeria, is a difficult task due to lack of adequate data to match targets of the MDGs with achievements. The new World bank had reported that most African Countries including Nigeria will not meet, most of the MDGs particularly now that we have 4 years away from 2015 date. However, this paper shall make an attempt at the extent of achievement of the MDGs in the Nigerian context.

Goal Number One - Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger Targets

- Reduce by half the proportions of people living on less than US \$1 or N150-N155 a day.

- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Extent of Achievement of Goal

According to Igbuzor (2005) in Review of Nigeria Millennium Development Goals - 2005 report, it was asserted that more than 1.2 billion people about 20 percent of world population which includes Nigeria live and survive on less than US \$ 1 per day. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. Nigeria's population is over 150 million people as reported in the last census of 2006. Nigeria, the report farther stated, was one of the richest 50 countries of the world in early 1970s, but regrettably, has retrogressed to become, one of the 25 poorest countries of the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Ironically, Nigeria is the 6th largest exporter of oil and at the same time hosts the third largest number of poor people after China and India.

Statistics, Igbuzor, highlighted, show that the incidence of poverty using the rate; US \$1 per day increased from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1985, and declined to 42.7 percent in 1992, but increased again to 65.6 percent in 1996. In 1997, poverty level increased to 69.2 percent.

However, according to National Planning Commission, the incidence of poverty among Nigerians was said to have decreased to 54.4 percent in 2004 which is still very high a figure.

Following this fluctuating incidence of poverty among Nigerians, in 2003, the Nigerian government approved a poverty reduction strategy under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) I & II to move closely to align to achieve the MDGs.

NEEDS, has been a home-made reform programme for wealth creation, empowerment generation, poverty reduction and value reorientation in response to the challenge of increased poverty in the country. The government has made attempts to eradicate poverty, nonetheless it is difficult to ascertain actual percentage of achievement of this goal since we do not have data of the actual number of people living on less than US \$1 (N 150-N155) per day.

Goal Number Two - Achieve Universal Primary Education Targets:

- * Ensure that all boys and girls complete full course of primary schooling.
- * Increased enrolment and assurance that all children remain in school and receive quality education.

Extent of Achievement of Goal

To achieve this MDG, the Federal Republic of Nigeria under Needs thrust, planned to reduce the number of unqualified teachers by 80% through encouragement to acquire educational qualification through institutions such as National Teachers Institute (NTI) with headquarters in Kaduna. The NTI, over the years has been organizing annual workshops with very rich manuals for the re-training of Primary School Teachers to achieve this goal.

The re-training of teachers at this level, as referred to in the National Policy on Education is seen as the foundation upon which the rest of the educational system is built. The government of various states have made efforts to increase enrolment of boys and girls at the primary school level, although slowly. This goal is near impossible to achieve in Nigeria, due to religious and cultural reasons in some parts of the country, which do not embrace either girl-child education or education of the males. Again, the measure of extent of achievement is difficult and unrealistic due to unavailability of authentic data.

Goal Number Three - Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women Target

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary education preferable by 2005, and all levels by 2015.

Extent of Achievement of Goal

The government of Nigeria is trying her best through instrumentation of

law at various levels to encourage girl-child education at primary and secondary levels. The government is also making efforts to empower women at all levels of our economic development. The 35% affirmative stand of President Jonathan for women in governance, is a step in the right direction towards achievement of this goal No. 3.

Goals Numbers Four and Five -

Reduce Child and Maternal Mortality Targets:

- Reduce the mortality rate among children under five (5) by two thirds.
- Reduce by three quarters the maternal death rate.

Extent of Achievement of Goals

To achieve this goal, the government of Nigeria under NEEDS thrust, have set u comprehensive Health Centres at local, state and National levels to cater for the health needs of children and mothers. The government also has in place immunization programme particularly eradication of poliomyelitis from Nigeria. Other causes of child ad maternal deaths are being tackled by the government at various levels’.

However, like other goals, there is the challenge of appropriate record of births and deaths in Nigeria, particularly that of children and mothers, making extent of achievement of this goal difficult. Most rural communities in

Nigeria we all know still lack basic health facilities to cater for children and their mothers.

Goal Number Six – Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

Target:

- Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

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Extent of Achievement of Goal

The government is working hard on achieving this goal through massive educational campaign on combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases among Nigerians. A massive scale-up malaria control programme is on-going through the provision of enough insecticide-treated mosquito nets to protect more than 578 million people at risk in the sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Nigeria.

Malaria, we know is a killer disease, which according to world reports kills a child in the world every 45 seconds, 90 percent of the children being Africans. Efforts of government is recommended though not in quantifiable terms.

According to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "we have finally reached the first report of Millennium Development Goal 6-by halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV. This report shows that

there is a global decline in new infections of HIV/AIDS; worldwide, which includes Nigeria. This is an achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 6.

In a recent world report, many donor countries, foundations and cooperations at the UN on 4-5 October, 2010 meeting, pledged \$11.7 billion new funding over the next three years to support the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This amount the report said, is the largest-ever pledged for collective effort to fight the three diseases which have gone pandemic (worldwide).

Specific achievement levels of this goal as per locality abound in literature. Most reports indicate reasonable achievement of goal 6.

Goal Number Seven - Ensure Environmental Sustainability Targets:

- * Integrate principles of development into country policies and programmes to reverse loss of environmental resources.
- * Reduce half the proportion of people living without access to portable drinking water.
- * Achieve significant improvement in the lives of slum dwellers by 2020.

Extent of Achievement of Goal

The government of various levels have tried to meet goal 7, by the provision of affordable housing and maintenance of environmental sanitation through various agencies. The

government is also making efforts to provide portable drinking water to its citizens, although very slowly, particularly in the rural areas.

There is minimal achievement of goal 7 presently, considering the report on the world water day (22nd March) where it was stated that half of the world's people live in cities today and about 828 million people live in slums or informal settlements, often without portable safe drinking water or toilets. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon had called for a pledge from world leaders to reverse the alarming, decline in pro-poor investment in water and sanitation.

Goal Number Eight - Develop a Global Partnership for Development Targets:

- * Develop further an open trading and financial system.
- * Deal with developing nations' debt problems.
- Develop decent and productive work for youths.
- Address the special needs of developing nations.

Extent of Achievement of Goal

The government at various levels have put in place agencies to achieve this MDG 8. Most of the agencies are involved in human capacity building through entrepreneurship Education, although this needs a more pragmatic approach considering the teeming unemployed youths in various nations including Nigeria. To achieve this goal for instance, the United Nation Millennium

Development Goals Monitor extended a debt relief to Nigeria in 2005.

Suggestions for Improved Level of Achievement of Millennium Development Goals for Sustainability

The following suggestions are made for improved level of achievement of millennium Development Goals, they are:

1. Political Awareness and Will

The political class should be fully aware of the MDGs and develop the will power to work towards attainment of these goals

2. Policy and Programmes

The government should continue to entrench the goals in its policy statements and programmes for implementation. Such policies must be monitored by professionals and frequent evaluation of the policies done.

3. Inclusion of Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs) in School Curricular

The MDGs should be included in school curricular for awareness of all stakeholders and follow-up by all. For achievement of MDGs, this requires the collective efforts of both the government and the governed (citizens). All aspects of education are included in the MDGs, therefore the need to teach them as units in general courses/subjects in schools.

4. Encourage Entrepreneurship Education

To have entrepreneurial development among the youths, teachers should be trained on entrepreneurship education to cater for the skill acquisition needs of the teaming youths. When the educational content is skill-based, rather than grammar-based, poverty and hunger will be reduced drastically and less burden will be placed on government for white-collar jobs. Encouraging this type of education ensures food security and an all-round-development in children. This is because, by the time we have skilled-based education, the three domains of cognitive, affective and psychomotor must have been developed.

5. Health Education in Local Dialects

To reduce child and maternal mortality rate especially among rural dwellers, health programmes and intentions of government should be done in local dialects or indigenous languages. When the beneficiaries of government programmes do understand government policies, there will be optimum co-operation towards achieving goals and policies.

6. Co-operation and Collaboration Among the 3 Tiers of Government

For improved achievement of the MDGs, in Nigeria, there is urgent need for co-operation and collaboration among the

local, state and federal governments in the implementation of policies geared towards achievement of the MDGs. Implementations of LEEDS, SEEDS and NEEDS will help Nigeria to meet the No. 8. MDG in 2015.

7. Need for Accurate and Timely Statistics

A nation that FAILS to PLAN, PLANS TO FAIL. If Nigeria must achieve the MDGs to a reasonable level in the next four (4) years, there is urgent need for accurate and timely data for use by the National Planning Commission and other relevant bodies to be effective and efficient in their work.

8. Increase in Minimum Wage/Creation of Jobs

To meet MDGs, the government must endeavour to pay the present minimum wage of N 18,000.00 (which is about US \$4 or N600.00 per day). This amount is grossly inadequate to sustain life in an average family of six (6) especially where only one adult is working. To meet the MDG 1, therefore, the minimum wage should quickly be reviewed upwards, if we must respond to the target of the MDG 1 by 2015. We can, if corruption is eradicated from our system.

9. Broaden Campaign Groups on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

There is urgent need to continue to broaden the scope of campaign groups on MDGs in Nigeria for improved achievement to include more Faith - Based Organizations (FBOs), Women Groups, Farmers, Social Movements, Labour, Celebrities (e.g musicians, actors & actresses, models etc) as ambassadors of MDGs.

10. Involvement of the Private Sector

If Nigeria must attain the No. 8 MDG by 2015, the economy must be private-driven. Individuals should be encouraged to partner with the government in initiating policies, all aimed at eradicating poverty.

11. Need for Peace and Unity

To achieve the 8 MDGs, there is need to have and maintain peace and unity in Nigeria. No nation progresses when there is violence, therefore all Nigerians must embrace peace and harmonious living to be able to work together towards achievement of the millennium goals in 2015 for sustainable development.

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12. Need for Improved Economic Management

To improve on our achievement of the MDGs as a nation, there is need to improve our present economic management. We need to reduce expenditure at various tiers of government

to be able to meet up with the financial needs, of the populace. We must continue to tackle corruption, as it has eaten deep into the entire fabric of the nation's economy.

13. Need to Face the Problem of Climate Change

To improve on the achievement of MDGs in Nigeria, there is urgent need for all stakeholders to address the issue of climate change. Climate change is a major challenge to human development in the 21st century, therefore, failure to respond to this challenge, will stall and later cause a reversal on the effort of countries to reduce poverty. Climate change, we know, causes floods, storms and droughts which do not support any form of human development.

Conclusion

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have occupied the attention of many countries since its declaration by United Nations in 2000. With only four (4) years from 2015, the dateline for achievement of the outlined eight (8) goals, it is pertinent for all concerned to make viable contributions particularly through Education to the achievement of these Goals for Sustainable Development.

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