

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: PANACEA FOR ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria presently is one of the 25 poorest countries in the world. This unfortunate situation of the Nigerian State despite its vast natural resource endowments is largely due to the prevalence of poor infrastructure over the years. The Millennium Development Goals initiative of the United Nations offers a unique opportunity for Nigeria to purposefully and strategically address the retarded economic conditions in the country. This paper attempt to highlight the importance of infrastructure development in Nigeria if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

Nigeria is the sixth largest exporter of oil and has the eight largest deposit of natural gas in the world (Ogunmola and Badmus, 2011). Unfortunately, Nigeria is among the 25 poorest countries in the world and plays host to the third largest number of poor people after China and India. This indeed is an irony given that Nigeria is abundantly endowed with a variety of rich natural resources and coupled with the undeniable fact that it was one of the 50 richest countries in the early 1970s. The appalling situation of the Nigeria State is largely due to a number of reasons, one of which is the incidence of poor infrastructure which has prevailed in Nigeria over the years. The Millennium Development Goals, a laudable development initiative of the United

Nations, is therefore another golden opportunity for Nigeria to purposefully target and address the myriad of problems that have persistently worked to retard her economic growth and development. It offers a perfect channel to propel Nigeria to take its rightful place in the comity of Nations.

This paper attempts to state the fact that the development of infrastructure in Nigeria is a chief cornerstone and a veritable tool for the achievement of the Millennium development goal in Nigeria. It therefore serves as a clarion call to the Nigerian government to arise and acknowledge the challenge by placing much emphasis on infrastructure development as a panacea for the

achievement of the millennium development goals in Nigeria.

In addition to this introductory section, this paper contains three other sections. Section 2 presents an overview of the Millennium Development Goals. Issues on infrastructure Development and Millennium Goals are treated in section 3. In section 4, the researcher recommends some strategies as the way forward and makes some concluding remarks.

The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The aim of the Millennium Development (MDGs) is to address the problem of poverty and promote sustainable development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) originated from the Millennium Declaration produced by the United Nations (Wikipedia, 2011). The United Nation Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 at the largest ever gathering of heads of states committing countries both rich and poor to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability (Igbuzor, 2006). The Millennium Development Goals consists of eight goals with 21 targets and are as follows:

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

- **Target 1A:** Halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day
- **Target 1B:** Achieve Decent Employment for Women, Men and Young People
- **Target 1C:** Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

- **Target 2A:** By 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling, girls and boys.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

- **Target 3A:** Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality Rates

- **Target 4A:** Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

- **Target 5B:** Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria, and Other Disease.

- **Target 6A:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- **Target 6B:** Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it.
- **Target 6C:** Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

- **Target 7A:** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources.
- **Target 7B:** Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss.
- **Target 7C:** Have, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
- **Target 7D:** By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers.

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

- **Target 8A:** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.
- **Target 8B:** Address the Special Needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDC).
- **Target 8C:** Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and Small Island developing States.
- **Target 8D:** Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.

Infrastructure Development and Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Infrastructure is the basic physical system, structures and services that are necessary for a country or organization to work properly at the individual home, business and institutional levels. It includes buildings, roads, transportation, water and power supplies, gas, sewage, railways, banks, postal services, telecommunications and administrative systems. Developing modern public infrastructure is capital intensive, involving large initial investment with moderate or limited returns on investment (Change Nigeria Project 2011). However, the development

of basic infrastructures has a great positive impact on the economic growth and development of any nation as it promotes to a large extent, economic performance/productivity and rural and agricultural development and reduction in poverty level.

The Millennium Development Goals strategy to development is simply a comprehensive war against poverty (Alaci and Alehegen, 2009). These goals are achievable in Nigeria especially if there are adequate infrastructures to drive the process. The enormous potentials of Nigeria remain under-utilized largely due to the prevalence of poor infrastructure over the years. The major national challenges are in the effective planning, financing and implementation of infrastructure development, maintenance and expansion. (Change Nigeria Project, 2011).

It is therefore pertinent to note that the availability of adequate infrastructure is critical to the Millennium Development Goals. Most of the goals are directly dependent on the availability of basic infrastructure. For example, goal No. 7, Target 7C is specific on water and this can only be achieved through the provision of adequate and accessible functional water infrastructure.

Also, inadequate water supply affects agriculture, food security, sewage systems, manufacturing and production in general. Similarly, the provision of electricity impacts greatly on almost all the sectors of the economy, hence, the achievement of the eight MDGs hinges on the provision of good power supply. Also,

the transportation and communication infrastructures impact greatly on trade, commerce and economic growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) offers Nigeria the unique opportunity to reverse years of economic stagnation and once again launch the country on the path of sustainable economic growth and development. This paper recognizes the fact that the MDGs are achievable in Nigeria especially if the Government rises to the challenge posed by poor infrastructure which has prevailed in the Nigerian State over the years. The development of infrastructure is therefore a panacea to achieving the millennium development goals in Nigeria. The major challenges of infrastructure development have been identified to be in the area of effective planning, financing and implementation. However, some recommendations have been made in this paper to address the challenges and ensure that the development of infrastructure is accelerated if their contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is to be maximized in Nigeria.

Infrastructure development is a chief cornerstone for achieving the millennium development goals in Nigeria. It is rather unfortunate to note that despite the important role that infrastructure development plays in the economic growth and development of any nation, inadequate financing, poor maintenance culture, corrupt practices at all levels of

government, insincerity of political office holders to the electorate and lack of political will, to mention but a few, have jointly impaired the development of infrastructure in Nigeria. The Researcher therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. Institution of an inter-disciplinary approach to the planning of infrastructure in Nigeria whereby credible Nigerians from private, public and foreign sector are co-opted to produce a standard plan of international standard.
2. Adequate funding of infrastructural development: Nigeria needs to increase its budgetary allocations to infrastructural development at all levels of government (Federal, State and Local).
3. Establishments of strategic Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements to assist the government in executing some of the infrastructure-related projects.
4. Ensuring a safe and stable economic, social and political climate to encourage foreign direct investment in the area of infrastructure development.
5. Deregulation of certain infrastructure sectors to encourage potential investors to intervene and help in accelerating infrastructure development.
6. Legalizing sanctions on vandalism and infrastructure-related offences.
7. Establishing stringent rules that will ensure proper implementation of infrastructure-related projects.
8. Encouraging the various ant-corruption agencies to arrest and charge to court government officials who embezzle public funds meant for infrastructure development.
9. Enlightenment of the citizenry through the relevant media to elect only men and women of integrity to positions of government.

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