

**RELEVANCE OF UTILIZATION OF ADULT AND NON-FORMAL
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN ATTAINING MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper examined the extent and relevance of utilizing Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes in enhancing attainment of the objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. The precarious issues in the MDGs which the United Nations would like the developing nations to address coincidentally were what Nigeria was already struggling to achieve through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and Education for all (EFA) goals. It was to pull itself out of the quagmire of underdevelopment that Nigeria committed itself to the realization of the MDGs with the on-going reform policies in various sectors of the economy as proof of commitment, including her involvement with the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), which considered education; especially basic education as the key bridge to the future. Adult and Non-Formal Education which is being repositioned as a tool for sustained and broad-based development in all poor and vulnerable regions of the world, and in Africa in particular, provides the strategic gateway to achieving MDGs by 2015. In this paper, an analytic approach involving analysis of how each of the 8 Millennium Development Goals can be realized using relevant Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes, formed the focal points of discussion. The latter part contains recommendations and conclusion.

Concerned about the world's main development challenges of poverty, disease, insecurity, hunger, illiteracy, environmental degradation, general underdevelopment among others, world governments, United Nations agencies, other developmental partners, etc., adopted in September 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a blueprint for building a better world in the twenty-

first century. Set for realization in the year 2015, the MDGs, according to Haladu (2008), constitute an agreed set of goals meant to promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health, gender equality, combat child mortality, HIV/AIDs and other diseases (UNDP, 2005). The point is that the MDGs are based on a global partnership which stresses the responsibility of developing

countries for better governance and investment in their people through health care and education. With respect to the partnership, the developed countries have pledged to support the less developed countries through aid, debt relief and fairer trade. Of course, one thing is clear: that is, the manner of achieving the goals differs greatly from country to country due to their peculiar circumstances. As a matter of fact, the MDGs, are not sectoral targets and do not specify national or international priority areas of action. This is unlike UBE and EFA which have both local and international antecedents respectively. Specifically, the MDGs comprise of 8 goals, which are designed to:

- 1) Eradicate poverty and hunger
- 2) Achieve universal primary education
- 3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4) Reduce child mortality
- 5) Improve maternal health
- 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8) Develop a global partnership for development (UNDP, 2005).

A cursory look at the MDGs reveals that the precarious issues contained therein which the United Nations would want member countries to tackle, are in the objectives of adult education policy goals of most nations of the world (Nwabuko, 2006). For instance, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004:10) stated the objectives of Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education as follows:

To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of formal education. To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system. To provide further education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills. To provide in-service on the job, vocational training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills. To give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Following these lofty objectives, Eyibe (1999) identified literacy programme, remediation programme, skills training programme and retraining programme as inevitable programmes for individual and national development. Beyond this, Nwabuko (2006) confirmed that these programmes identified above by Eyibe (1999) are strong programme areas that can radically uplift the standard of living of every citizen, especially the adults who have the responsibility of achieving the Millennium Development Goals for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Adult Education

Adult education, which is often interchanged with other notions such as literacy, adult basic education, lifelong learning, continuing education, adult and non-formal education etc, usually refers to

"any form of learning undertaken by or provided for mature men and women outside the formal schooling system" (Seya, 2005:97)- Adult education is understood as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes which take place out of the formal education system, with a view to remedying early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfillment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of societies. It is not surprising that adult education counts among those issues that have been targeted in the Millennium Development Goals. Various definitions have been provided for adult education, but generally taking a cue from different perspectives, one could say that, besides being seen as any organized learning activity outside the established framework of the formal school systems it is a collective term covering the institutions and procedures by which adults are enabled and encouraged to experience changes (Fordhem 1980). Others like Delker (1974), Omolewa (1981). Aderinoye (1997) reiterated that adult education is an organized and sequential learning experience designed to meet the felt needs of adults. Furthermore, Anyanwu (2002), explained that adult education can operate in specialized fields like agriculture, health education, the economy, social welfare, youth and women programmes, employment, co-operatives, leadership training etc.

Imhabekhai (2009), was of the view that adult education needs to be seen essentially as an instrument for creating awareness and consciousness for all adults of the society to enable them have more critical view of society, economic and political conditions in their environment. In sum, adult education is a process of removing obstacles and impediments that reduce the full realization of each adult's potentialities.

Non-Formal Education

Defining Non-formal education (NFE), Coombs and Ahmed (1974) assert that NFE in form of lifelong learning is to be the master concept that should shape educational systems while the formal education caters for chronological graded education system. The non-formal education system is defined as any organized educational activity outside the established formal system whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives. Imhabekhai (2009) gave the definition of non-formal education as any form of organized educational activity for youths, children and adults who cannot be integrated into the formal school system as a result of some socially, economically and politically imposed conditions. Aderinoye (2004) reporting Okedara and Bown (1981:17) define NFE as the:

rubrics of education that covers training and instruction outside the formal education system and ranges from individualized apprenticeships to

nationwide literacy. It may be vocational such as staff training centres in Nigeria designed to provide employment opportunities to young school leavers and for other employed persons, or girls vocation centres established in many African countries which train girls in vocational skills and prepare young women for marriage and business.

The above definition makes it clear that non-formal education can be directed towards providing the participants who are unemployed with employable skills and provision of on-the-job or off-the-job training for workers. It can also be directed towards providing social, cultural, political and functional education in all aspects of life to participants. Non-formal education is characterized by focus on specific knowledge and skills needed and practically based and learnt by doing (apprentice-oriented). According to Ngwu (2003), it is adaptable to learning experience, flexible, clientele-driven in location, time and participation, a close relationship between learning factors of skills, motivation and practice. A legion of programmes that are housed by adult and non-formal education according to Oyebamiji (2008) include adult basic education, agricultural extension, distance learning, continuing education, vocational training, apprenticeship among others. The concern of this paper is to analyze the relevancy of utilizing adult and non-formal education programmes in attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Relevance of Adult and Non-Formal Education Programmes in Enhancing Achievement of MDGs.

Goal 1: To Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

According to Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2008), parts of IDEA'S (2000) findings is that in spite of the abundant material and human resources which Nigeria is endowed with, poverty has tended to deepen and expand over the years as the succession of authoritarian regimes mismanaged the economy, polarized society and undermined the basis for national unity and advancement. Akinpelu (2008) sounded more emphatic when he revealed that seventy (70) out of (120) Nigerians i.e. over fifty-eight (58%) percent of Nigerians fall below the poverty dividing line or live in abject poverty of below \$1dollar or ₦160 per day. This is a great challenge which adult and non-formal education programmes can be used to tackle. To Adewale (1998), adult education as a social service plays the role of changing attitudes and raising awareness of people such as the poor concerning various possibilities open to them for personal and community development. Through the strategy of conscientization enunciated by Freire (1975), the marginalized poor in Nigeria can be led to ask questions why they are in poor condition thereby beginning to work themselves out of it. Again, it has been established that poverty and illiteracy are so interwoven that attempting to deal with one without the other may not be successful. Therefore, for adult education

to succeed, its relevant programmes of basic literacy and vocational skills acquisition have important roles to play. According to Haladu (2008), for adult literacy to enable people, especially in the developing countries like Nigeria to improve their social, cultural, and economic situations and strengthen sustainable development, literacy skills have to be given in sufficient quality such that the beneficiaries acquire sufficiency in writing, reading and calculating to be able to go on obtaining and exchanging new and possibly complex information to improve their productivity. Vocational skills education, according to Olajede and Dairo (2008) enables the citizens to acquire appropriate occupational skills that will make them better people, live in peace with others and relate well in their day-to-day life. Through it, Nigerian citizens especially the poor, school dropouts and the unemployed can become self-employed or get paid jobs that can enable them improve their standards of living. Agricultural extension education can lead to improved production of food crops for both consumption and commercial purposes thereby kick out hunger and poverty from their lives and directly contribute to improvement of Nigeria's Gross National Product (GNP) and enhance achievement of the Millennium Development Goal No.1.

Goal II: To Achieve Universal Primary Education.

This goal's target is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a

course of primary schooling. The indicators for this goal include net enrolment ratio in primary and junior secondary schools. Infact, these are challenges to achievement of the goal II by 2015. It is regrettable that the bad state of the Nigerian economy has adversely affected priorities of the citizens (Adebola 2006) with the result that most parents or even children themselves prefer to learn a trade or go into buying and selling businesses to embarking on expensive schooling, which has no guarantee of employment at the end. There is also high incidence of street children, some hawk goods while others are miscreants. In addition, limited resources, improper implementation of programmes and corruption etc stand in the way of much achievement being made with universalization of primary school education in Nigeria (Ukwuaba 2008).

Adult educators have important roles to play. Adebola (2006) suggests that street children can be put in different vocations of their choices where payment for their training, literacy, health education and payment of stipends to serve as bait is undertaken by government. Most importantly, adult educators can take up serious advocacy campaign for parental education particularly women education which has direct relationship with children's stability in school or in vocation centres. From the foregoing, adult and non-formal education must be taken very seriously for the realization of the MDG's target of ensuring that boys and

girls every where in Nigeria complete a course of primary schooling by 2015.

To raise the literacy rate of youths, 15-24 years old, adult basic education is indispensable to enable them survive, develop their full capacities, live and work with dignity, participate fully in development, make informed decisions, and continue learning (Adult Education and Development, 2000). These learning needs of youths and adults are diverse and as suggested by article 5 of the World Declaration on Education for ALL, can be served through a variety of delivery systems, namely: literacy programmes, skills training, apprenticeships, and such other non-formal education programmes in health, nutrition, agricultural extension, family life and other societal issues, all of which arc home to adult education practitioners and agencies.

Goal III: To Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

This important goal of gender equality and empowerment will be seriously jeopardized if adult women continue to remain unjustly marginalized in all spheres of life. In Nigeria like in many Asiatic and South-Saharan countries, women remain disadvantaged in securing paid jobs, suffer disproportional representations in parliament/government and political positions, in addition to limitations imposed on them by different cultures; hence gender equality is considered to be at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2005). To tackle this problem of gender disparity, Haladu (2008) stressed the need

to redress the imbalance between formal education for children and non-formal education for adults. To this end, Bhola (2006) suggested that in-school education for children and out-of-school education for adults should receive equal attention in the form of resource allocation, recruitment and selection of leadership, mobilization of learners, training of teachers, and institutionalization of arrangements for the delivery of adult and lifelong education. Though the situation of women empowerment is changing in Nigeria, the various Governments, NGOs and adult education providers need to embark upon serious planned programmes of women education and empowerment in order to reduce gender disparities and to enable women increase their participation in development.

Goal 4, 5 and 6

These Goals boarder on health care, their targets according to Ukwuaba (2008:206) include:

To reduce by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 the under age five mortality rate. To reduce by three-quarters between 1990-2015 the maternal mortality ratio. To have halted by 2015 and began to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, to have halted by 2015 and began to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Goal 4: The major solution to the reduction of child mortality and improving maternal health is through educating the adults, men and women on safe health practices. Health education programmes consisting of family

planning, reproductive health education, child care education, etc. are adult education programmes and their delivery requires knowledge and application of adult education principles, theories and approaches. It is not in doubt that this can be achieved through education for living as a dimension of rural and urban adult education. Therefore, to achieve Millennium Development Goal No. 4, mothers should be taught the implications of non-immunization of children against the six killer diseases of polio, diarrheria, malaria, chicken pox, etc. Nigerian health providers-nurses, midwives, doctors especially obstetricians, should go for regular on-the-job training to keep on updating their knowledge to stand the test of time. In addition, mothers should learn how to protect their children from infectious diseases, malnutrition, exposure to bad weather conditions, mosquito bites, etc in order to reduce infant mortality in the country before 2015.

Goal 5: To Improve Maternal Health

As revealed by Okuwa (2008), Nigeria's rate of maternal mortality of (800 to 1500 deaths per 100,000 live births as at 2004 is an alarming figure by all standards. The challenge to achieving this goal still boils down to low quality of education of women and illiteracy in the case of rural areas where traditional birth attendants (TBAs) are still highly patronized. Through adult education, awareness can be created for pregnant mothers to patronize health centres or maternity homes nearest to them or hospitals to register for regular ante-and post-natal

care to prevent adverse pregnancy outcomes. Moreso, adult education agencies such as the church, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women organizations, etc should educate both mothers and would – be mothers on precautionary measures necessary for before and immediately after child birth because they are the times when sudden life-threatening complications are most likely to arise. These measures are most likely to improve maternal health by 2015 provided the health providers can stand the test of time.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Awareness creation through adult education on the advent of diseases, prevention and curative methods of existing diseases have been found effective by most development agents. According to United Nations (2001), one of the most fundamental causes of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases has been traced to lack of information by parents. Educating adults (parents) on what is worth knowing about adult diseases through Education for living will go a long way to combating deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc. With parents, particularly mothers, acquainted with preventive measures against HIV/AIDS in particular, they are likely to impart such knowledge to their children so that the children can shun attitudes and behaviour that are likely to expose them to contracting such a deadly malaise. In this wise, adult education is still inevitable and fundamental in halting the spread of

HIV/AIDs and other diseases before 2015. Similarly through educating adults on safe living habits of environmental cleanliness, use of mosquito treated nets and regular check-ups at health centres, malaria and other diseases can be checked.

Goal 7: To Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Ensuring environmental sustainability is the major objective of environmental adult education. According to Nwabuko (2006), adults live and interact with the environment and so most environmental degradations are caused by the adults as individuals in their domestic life and/or in their occupational life. Therefore, educating adults on what is worth knowing in the environment will engender environmental sustainability and help reverse the losses of environmental resources. In most states in Nigeria there is monthly environmental sanitation exercise whereby every citizen both in the urban and rural areas embark upon clean-up exercises. This should be sustained.

Goal 8: To Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Development of a global partnership for development can help in the development of adult education in Nigeria. For example, replication of successful adult education experiences in other countries and maintaining international partnership in Adult Education are virile aspects of global partnership. For instance, the efforts of Adult Education and Development (DVV) Germany are worth mentioning in

the development of adult education for global partnership.

Conclusion

The Millennium Development Goals present the world with daunting challenges. Unless there is a radical improvement, Nigeria will miss the target with disastrous consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable of the citizens. Many of the solutions to hunger, disease, poverty and lack of education are well known. What is needed is for efforts to be properly resourced and for services to be distributed more fairly and efficiently. None of this will happen except every country, rich and poor assumes its responsibility to the billions of poor people around the globe. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria, the goals must become a national reality, embraced by the main stakeholders - people and government. In fact, education, particular adult education, has great implications for attainment of the MDGs. Women education and empowerment, health education, livelihood education, vocational training, environmental education, adults basic education, etc all are very relevant to national development which is a prelude to achievement of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Premised on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are made:

1. That Government and all its agencies should evolve measures for popularizing the Millennium

- Development Goals and ensure its proper actualization particularly among rural dwellers who constitute the bulk of Nigeria's illiterate poor.
2. In view of the inherent values of adult and non-formal education in enhancing achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, all levels of Nigerian government should endeavour to implement all adult and non-formal education policies and blueprints as entrenched in the National Policy on Education.
 3. Most importantly, government should institute a sustainable adult literacy education programme which is fundamental to reducing child mortality, maternal health, combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis as well as ensure environmental sustainability
 4. It is not enough to institute non-formal adult literacy education programme, both government and NGOs should join hands to use mobilization strategies namely: radio, television, videos, puppet theatres, comic strips, and posters to bring people into adult basic education programmes and projects.
 5. Good and life-enhancing programmes should be put into place such as education for self-reliance as was done in Tanzania to make her citizens more productive and self-dependent.
 6. Women education which has a multiplier effect particularly on girl-child education, deserves to be given special attention for its role in elimination of gender disparity in

primary and secondary schools.

7. As a matter of urgency, government should use adult and non-formal education as a means of providing education for understanding and popularizing awareness of the causes, consequences, prevention, and containment of HIV/AIDS.

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