

Vulnerabilities and Constraints Faced In the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria

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Abstract: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which depicts an amalgamation of International Development Goals, whose target year for achieving stated objectives was set at 2015, serves as a platform for increased partnership and cooperation between the developed and developing countries. Through the efforts of global partnership, the MDGs seek to eradicate poverty and enhance human development in the best possible ways. Just like other developing countries, Nigeria which was an enthused signatory to the MDGs did not record an overall progress at the end of the MDGs in 2015. Some natural and made-made factors led to this setback. Nevertheless, this research paper seeks to identify the bottle necks in the achievement of these goals in Nigeria and profound possible solutions with good policy recommendation especially with the adoption of new sustainable development goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which has greatly changed the global development focus has become an index for measuring the development of society at the global, national, state and community level. They have influenced development activities of development partner and agencies. The Millennium Declaration agreed upon by 189 countries and 23 international organizations at UN General Assembly in 2000, encompasses wide range of actions and targets, which are particularly directed to the development challenges of the developing countries.

For these laudable goals to be achieved, the MDGs were subdivided into eighteen (18) clear-cut target and forty-eight (48) indicators to serve as acid-test facilitators. The indicators were agreed upon by experts from the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and OECD. Nevertheless, the MDGs includes the following: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

The Millennium Development Goals represents a landmark move taken by world leaders that offers both rich and poor an avenue to share common ideas and adopt strategies that would promote human and sustainable development universally (Otiye, 2006). However by 2015, some factors negatively affected the over-all performance record making the

Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria to be termed an “unfinished business”. Those constraints and vulnerabilities are what this paper seeks to analyze.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Of a truth, the 2015 target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, has come and gone. Nigeria like other developing countries, encountered some challenges on their path towards attaining the MDGs.

Ogunmola and Badmus (2010) were of the opinion that the MDGs task was an overwhelming one for the Nigerian government. The objectives of the MDGs from available data suggest that the task is far from being accomplished in Nigeria (Adeolu & Ojor 2010).

It was discovered by Onyenechere (2010) that most of the agencies assigned to deliver the dividends of the MDGs in Nigeria did not even carryout the projects, money was disbursed for. In fact, with this absence of projects, the future of the MDGs in Nigeria looked bleaked. Consequently, the House of Representatives threatened to halt financial allocations to such parastatals or agency that failed to work towards the implementation of the MDGs (Vanguard 2009, quoted in Ogunmola and Badmus, 2010).

Corruption was identified by Awofadeji (2009) as the major setbacks towards the achievement of the MDGs in Nigeria; as evident in the misappropriation of the Debt Relief Funds (DRF). He added that, in most case scenarios, project whose contractors were fully mobilized were not executed. Thus, on visit to such sites, one is left perplexed. Corruption does not only weaken governance and administrative structures, it also widens the gap in the distribution of national income.

In addition, Adeolu and Ojor (2010) observed that there existed a serious lack of required co-ordination among the three tiers of government in Nigeria. The implication of this, reflected in the duplication of projects. For instance, both federal and state governments funded the same type of project (like erecting a health centre) in the same locality. With proper co-ordination, co-operation and institutional collaboration, the resources used to duplicate projects in one community would be utilized to the benefit of another community. After analyzing the stance of the government in regards to the DRFs spending, they concluded that the

government was not interested in the evaluation of the DRF spending on the target communities.

Furthermore, another major challenge of achieving the MDGs in Nigeria is the fact that, MDGs implementing agency in most cases, did not evaluate the relevance of projects to a particular community before the contracts were awarded. That means, projects were sited in localities where they were not needed by the beneficiary communities (Adeolu & Ojor, 2010). In summary however, bad governance manifested in disheartening corruption, wastefulness and inefficiency posed as serious setbacks towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

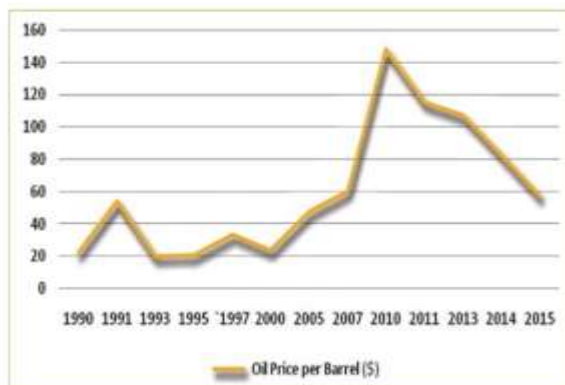
III. FINDINGS

Some factors have posed as constraints in the effective implementation of development programmes such as the MDGs. The under-listed factors collectively slowed down the pace of Nigeria in the walk towards the actualization of the MDGs. They include:-

(A) Oil Price Volatilities

In his opinion, Akonor (2015) stated that volatility of oil prices has meant volatility of the economies that largely depend on oil. There is no gainsaying that the growth and fiscal sustainability of oil producing states have been greatly threatened by the sharp decline in world oil prices. In Africa, countries such as Nigeria, Egypt, Angola, Libya, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea and Algeria are most vulnerable to the declining oil prices. In the Nigerian scenario, the decline in world oil prices has led to decline in the production of oil and in investment thereby highlighting the vulnerability of fiscal revenues. The oil and gas sector accounts for 95% of Nigeria total exports and over 70% of government revenue. It therefore means that growth momentum and fiscal revenues would be negatively affected by a sustained reduction in oil prices (Oxford Policy Management / World Bank, 2015). The price of oil according to available data clearly reveals price instability and fluctuation within the MDGs implementation period.

Figure 1: Oil Price per Barrel (\$), 1990 - 2015



Source: Independent Statistics and Analysis, 2015.

As evidenced from the above figure, the price of crude oil in January 2015 had returned to their 2005 levels of less than \$50.0. In 2014, oil price stood at \$82 per barrel indicating a sharp decrease from the 2010 price which stood at \$148.14. In addition to price fluctuation, the production of crude oil has also not been stable in the country. Oil lifting fell from 2.38 to 2.19 million barrels a day in the period between 2011 and 2014, indicating a 7.5% decline (Oxford Policy Management / World Bank, 2015).

The negative effects of oil price fluctuations and output shocks no doubt have had dire consequences on the country's capital budget and the resources needed to finance the MDGs. Therefore, every intervention mechanisms must be centred on non-oil tax revenue as they serve as a more stable and predictable source of government revenue.

(B) Militancy in the Niger Delta

Historically, the crisis in the Niger Delta dates back to the 1990's, owing to the agitations by ethnic groups in the region – the Ogoni and Ijaw in particular – over issues of neglect and underdevelopment. The Niger Delta region is the major source of oil revenue in the country but despite this great contribution to the country's revenue, the region is still marred with poverty amidst poor infrastructures. The economic activities of the locals in the region such as farming and fishing is further halted as a result of pollution and environmental degradation experienced during oil exploration. The agitation of the ethnic groups was further exacerbated with the establishment of laws which they saw as being oppressive. The laws which includes but not limited to the Petroleum Act, the Exclusive Economic Act and the Land Use Act vests the ownership of oil resources and land on the Federal and State governments (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

However, the crisis in the Niger-Delta region has impacted on the Nigerian economy negatively. It has led to the emergence of social vices such as oil bunkering, armed robbery, kidnapping and firearm business (Olusola, 2013).

Consequently, there has been a remarkable decline in revenue generated from oil as a result of loss of millions of barrels of crude oil on recurring basis. In 2006, Nigeria was reported to have lost about 211,000 barrels of crude oil daily which was equivalent of 8.4% of what the country was exporting daily (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015). In 2012, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) audit report categorically stated that oil thieves stole crude products worth billions of Naira in 2012. Activities of pipeline vandals also led to the loss of about ₦31,771,108,795 in the same period; while crude theft and sabotage led to the loss of 2,842,116 barrels of crude oil per day valued at ₦1,960,607,108. The crisis therefore led to the loss of revenue that would have otherwise helped in the financing of developmental programmes such as the MDGs (Ibid).

(C) “Bokoharam” And the Rising Wave Of Insecurity

Globally, insurgency poses as a serious security challenge impeding developmental efforts of countries. The Middle Eastern countries of Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Yemen and North Africa are confronted by the terror of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In East Africa, the Al-Shabaab group is a menace that has bedeviled the country’s peaceful existence; while in Nigeria and her environs the BokoHaram has posed as a major security challenge.

The BokoHaram which officially calls itself “Jama’atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda’ Watiwaljihad” translated as “People committed to the Propagation of the Prophets teachings and Jihad”, is a radical Islamic group which forbids western education. The dreadful activities of the group which is anti Western-derived incursions that threatens the traditional values, customs and beliefs of the Muslim communities in the Northern part of the country has led to thousands of death and displacement of a great number of people. With the use of light weapons improvised explosives and engagement of suicide bombers, the group attacks public places such as mosques, churches, schools, market places, public transport, office buildings, police and army barracks.

The BokoHaram sect was responsible for the August 26th, 2011 bombing of the United Nations House in Abuja; the killing of a great number of students of the College of Agriculture Gujba, Yobe State on 9th September 2013; and abduction of about 276 girls from Government Secondary School, Chibok in Borno State to mention but a few (Boye, 2015).

According to Yahaya (2015), over 4000 people were killed and about 500,000 persons displaced in Borno State alone as at the end of 2014 owing to the BokoHaram menace.

The activities of the sect no doubt served as a constraining factor in the achievement of basically all the MDGs especially in the North-Eastern part of the country. The populace of the most affected states such as Borno, Yobe and Adamawa has fled their homes, farmlands and economic activities in search of safety; the resultant effect is evidenced in worsened socio-economic conditions. The attack on schools amidst the insecurity situation led to the flight of students, teachers and even parents to safer zone; thereby increasing the rate of out-of-school in the country. Those who managed to escape have greatly deterred from returning to schools (Galadima and Aluaigba, 2015).

An estimated number of 15,000 children according to the Borno State Ministry of Education stopped attending schools by 2013, as a result of the activities of the BokoHaram. Therefore, the actualization of Goals 2 and 3 were greatly hampered in the North-Eastern region. Government agencies and development stakeholders could not freely intervene with highly needed measures because the areas were considered to be a “risky zone” (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

(D)Farmers – Herdsmen Frequent Clashes

Frequent clashes between farmers and herdsmen have also posed as a serious security challenge especially in Benue, Taraba, Bauchi, Katsina, Plateau, Nasarawa and Kaduna states. These conflicts take place when herdsmen invade farmlands in search of grazing. Farmers and the community at large frown at grazing on an already cultivated land because it leads to the destruction of their crops. At the event of grazing by herdsmen, violent clashes occur, leading to the loss of lives and destruction of properties. Undeniably, such clashes further impoverish the farmers in these areas.

According to Sulaiman and Ja’afar-Furo (2015), farmers-herdsmen clashes in parts of Bauchi state led to a loss worth ₦87,456,185 in the period between 2003 and 2007. While in 2014 the same conflict in Moroa chiefdom of Kaduna state led to the death of more than 200 persons – with children and women inclusive – and the destruction of food bans, farmlands and houses.

Nevertheless, these clashes had grave implications for the attainment of the MDGs, because by reducing farming production it increased poverty; the education of children was interrupted while access to health care provision was also reduced.

(E) Environmental Degradation and Desertification In The North

The effect of climate change in the Northern region of Nigeria is seen in the delay of rainfall from around March/April to May/June and up to August/September in some extreme years. The resultant consequences are poor harvest for rain-fed agriculture and limited water in streams and rivers for herdsmen.

With agriculture as the mainstay of eleven Northern states of the country, desertification poses as one of the greatest impediments to alleviation of poverty in those areas. This is because many farmers have lost their cultivated and cultivable land to sand dunes; leading to low agricultural output (Mohammed, 2015). Therefore, the achievement of the poverty goal, which has the elimination of hunger as a target has environmental degradation and desertification as impediments.

(F)The Impact of Flooding and Erosion

Erosion in the Southern parts of the country, particularly in the South-eastern geo-political zone is also an issue worthy of mentioning. It does not only affect farmlands but leads to displacement of persons and disruption of economic activities. Anambra state which had about 62 critical erosion sites and 550 non-critical erosion sites is one of the South-Eastern most affected by erosion (Okonkwo, 2008).

The devastating effects of erosion lead the affected communities to possibly join the circle of poverty. On the other hand, flooding in Nigeria has become a common occurrence. The source of flooding in the country is from both

internal and external avenues. The internal source of flooding arises from rising sea levels and tidal surges in the Coastal states of Lagos, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers. For the latter, the release of water from dams outside the country, like that of the Lagdo Dam in neighbouring Cameroon led to serious flooding in the nearby Nigerian States of Taraba, Adamawa, Benue, Gombe, Kogi and Bauchi. Flooding has rendered thousands of people homeless; disrupted business activities, washed away farmlands, destroyed properties and exposed the populace to such diseases as diarrhea, cholera, malaria, skin infections amongst others.

Flooding greatly affected the achievement of goals 2 and 3, this is because schools were also affected by floods. The teaching and learning environment ravaged by flood is a great threat to education. In the same vein, the contamination of water and spread of waterborne diseases undermined the attainment of goals 4 to 6. Owing to the above, erosion and floods to a great extent, had negative impacts on the realization of most of the MDGs in Nigeria (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

Nevertheless, aside the general challenges faced in the actualization of the MDGs in Nigeria, each of the goals had its peculiar setbacks as could be seen as follows:

Challenges faced in the attainment of Goal 1

Some factors contributed greatly to the limited success recorded in the attainment of the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. These challenges among others are:-

- Low literacy level / awareness deficit
- Rapid population growth
- Over-concentration of projects and programmes on a few of the indicators
- Leanness of resources and intervention projects
- Social inequality and
- Unemployment (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

Challenges Faced In the Attainment of Goal 2

The following factors served as impediments to the overall attainment of Millennium Development Goal 2. They include but not limited to the under listed:-

- Existence of bureaucratic bottlenecks which resulted to late release of the appropriated funds as well as inability to access the funds promptly;
- The scope and coverage of MDGs in the Education Sector was greatly affected because of the drastic reduction in Federal Ministry of Education DRGs budgetary appropriation;
- Delay in the approval of proposals;
- There existed lack of reliable data needed to enhance decision making in education leading to the problem of data integrity;
- Lack of commitment to Federal initiatives in education by benefitting states and communities;
- Low literacy rate of 15 – 24 years old;

- Inadequate funds for monitoring and evaluation of MDGs projects and programmes;
- Reluctance of states to absorb the completers of the Federal Teachers Scheme programmes;
- Inconsistency in funding the MDGs projects / programmes leading invariably to lack of continuity and sustainability of the projects/programmes; and
- Existence of primary school enrolment gap (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

Challenges Faced In the Attainment of Goal 3

Though, impressive steps were taken to bridge gender disparity in education, there exist some challenges that calls for improvement in the following areas;

- i. Most girls who pass out from primary schools do not enroll for secondary education; leading to a low enrolment rate of girls in secondary education;
- ii. The decline in the number of female candidates who obtain five credits in the Senior School Certificate examinations including in English and Mathematics; which are pre-requisites for tertiary education in Nigeria; and
- iii. The decline in the number of females that enrolled in universities (Federal, State and Private) in relation to males (British Council Gender in Nigeria Report, 2012).

Challenges Faced In the Attainment of Goal 3: Indicator 3.2

The under-listed factors served as constraints to the wage employment of women in Nigeria. They include but not limited to the following:-

- Existence of cultural barriers which impede women from seeking employment in the formal sector;
- Existence of discrimination against women in different workplaces especially the married ones; and
- The general low levels of education compare to those of men (Nigeria MDGs, 2015).

Challenges Faced In the Improvement Of Child Health

The under-listed are some of the factors that militated against improvements in child health indicators. They include:-

- Inadequate number of skilled birth attendants;
- Most births take place at home with minimal or no contact with health facilities;
- Low medical attention at the occurrence of fevers, acute respiratory infections and dehydration from diarrhea;
- Non-compliance with OPV reported across some states due to misinformation to target groups; and
- Existence of harmful traditional myths amongst other socio-cultural factors (Ibid).

Challenges to Maternal Health Improvement

In the quest to achieve Goal 5, the following factors in one way or the other served as impediments. They include:-

- Lack of basic health facilities and equipments
- Existence of socio-cultural and religious obstacles
- Persistent security challenges especially in the North Eastern region
- Re-deployment of Midwives to other levels of care
- Lack of skilled birth attendants and
- Lack of coordination on the part of government in monitoring the activities of Midwives, provision of accommodation for health workers and replacement of consumables in the facilities.

IV. CHALLENGES OF GOAL SIX

- Stigmatization: As a result of stigmatization, most HIV positive pregnant women did not show up in health facilities. As a result, most of such women do not access antenatal care; and become ignorant on how to prevent Mother-to-Child prevention;
- The existence of labour disputes and subsequent strike actions also hampered access to PMTCT and antenatal care services; and
- About 80% of funds for HIV and AIDS programmes are provided by donors. The dwindling donor support to the health sector over the years was a major challenge in eradicating the scourge of HIV/AIDS (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2015).

Other challenges includes:-

- i. Delays in payment of Contractors.
- ii. Improper supervision of the Contractors by the PSU to ensure quality goods delivery.
- iii. Government and Communities perceived lack of serious commitment to the sustainability of the MDGs projects.
- iv. None provision of Staff to oversee health and educational facilities.
- v. Inadequate funding of the operational account in the PSU office.
- vi. Inadequate education on ownership of projects by benefitting communities.
- vii. Local Governments not adequately motivated to support projects in their area or take over the running cost of these projects.
- viii. Illiteracy also made some parents deny their children the opportunity of attending school, despite the construction/renovation and supply of school instructional materials.
- ix. Some children and women were still prevented from accessing primary health centers, because of cultural and religious belief; which also encouraged their use of local and traditional medicines (The MDGs Conditional Grants Scheme to State Comprehensive Project Implementation Report, 2014).

V.CONCLUSION

Key success drivers and incentive-based interventions such as the Conditional Cash Transfers and the Conditional Grants

Scheme in addition to other multi-stakeholder partnerships (such as interventions by OSSAP-MDGs, Civil Society Organizations, MDAs and international development partners) helped to facilitate the implementation of the MDGs in Nigeria.

Nevertheless, the country was confronted by both human – generated impediments and natural disasters, which hampered the overall progress of the MDGs in Nigeria. Policy objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals cannot be effectively implemented in the face of falling oil prices, insecurity, flooding and even erosion. All these extant risks and vulnerabilities constituted serious hindrance and in large measure impacted negatively on progress of the MDGs in Nigeria.

VI.RECOMMENDATIONS

For seamless execution of the new development agenda, there is a need for early implementation, domestication, advocacy and follow-up plans. This will be carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Country System, International Development Partners, MDAs and sub national governments. All mechanisms and processes must be well-integrated into the development plans of the government at both national and state level.

Future development initiatives should be mainstreamed to the grassroots; the rural populace must be enlightened on the plans and policies of such development efforts.

In order to promote ownership, accountability and sustainability of development agendas, a culture of participation that will involve beneficiary communities and civil society organizations should be institutionalized.

Adequate strategies should be devised to overcome man-made challenges such as inefficient resource utilization, corruption, tribalism and nepotism, weak governance, social inequality, poor absorptive capacity and insecurity.

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