



THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS) FRAMEWORK AND THE NIGERIA DEVELOPMENTAL AGENDA: HOW CONGRUENT?

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Abstract: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute a world programme for addressing abject poverty and other human miseries such as illiteracy, gender inequality, squalor, infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDs, malaria and environmental degradation. As a committed member nation to this course, Nigeria evolved an all-embracing Reform Agenda for pursuing and attaining the eight time-bound MDGs by the year 2015 (the targeted date). Between 2003 and 2012, Nigeria evolved as part of the Agenda, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy NEEDS I (2003 -2007); NEEDS 2 (2008 – 2011); and Transformational Agenda (2011- 2015). Although so much resources have been committed to this pursuit, periodic assessment of Nigeria's performance within the context of MDGs using the instrument of Reform vis-a-vis the National Developmental Agenda, belie the efforts made in this direction,. As a panacea for systems improvement, we propose among others: the decentralization theory; scaled-up efforts at capacity building particularly within the core organs whose functions relate to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals; as well as measures to be adopted at both the States, Local Government and Community levels to urgently address the identified nagging challenges.

Keywords: MDGs, Reform Agenda, NEEDS, Transformational Agenda, Decentralization Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute a strategic Agenda for the governance of 189 countries of the world that pledged their commitment to those goals in the year 2000. Emergence of the goals was informed by a genuine concern by both developing and advanced countries to ensure a meaningful development outcome. There has thus, been a concerted approach to managing sustainable human development with these countries reaching a consensus on how best to tackle abject poverty and other human miseries such as illiteracy, gender inequality, infant and maternal mortality, HIV and AIDs, malaria, squalor and environmental degradation. In consonance with the Declaration, developed countries renewed their commitment to raise resources for financing development with a promise to ensure that 0.7 percent of their Gross National Income is made available through Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries while the developing countries also vouched their commitment to improve governance.

As a signatory to this commitment, Nigeria has weaved around these goals what is today referred to as the National Developmental Agenda. In order to achieve these goals within the specific period (2000 – 2015), the

country embarked on a number of reforms which are not restricted to the public service alone. For instance, since 2000, Nigeria has embarked on the following reform initiatives:

- (i) National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and their States (SEEDS) and Local Government counterpart (LEEDS) 2004 – 2011; and
- (ii) Transformational Agenda 2011 to date.

Despite the foregoing efforts made by the Nigerian government, the results seem to belie the actions in that behalf. For instance, both the government and society at large are unanimous in the belief that the huge investments made through the various reform agenda have not been correspondingly compensated for by enhanced performances. Thus perceived, we set out to investigate remote and immediate causes of this apparent paradox. With a focus on the targeted date of 2015 which is less than two years away, the mundane justification for this article therefore is a dire need to x-ray and assess the efforts of Nigerian government through various reforms in achieving the MDGs. This is with a view to identifying impediments in this direction and prescribing treatment variables for systems improvement.

The article is therefore arranged as follows:

- (i) Conceptual clarifications, from where significant parameters for assessing the Nigerian situation will emerge;
- (ii) Analyses of the various reform initiatives;
- (iii) Assessment of the achievement of MDGs;
- (iv) Identifiable hampering challenges; and
- (v) Strategies for ameliorating the situation.

Conceptual Clarifications

The extant literature on Nigerian Public Administration has referred to all efforts made at improving the administrative capability of the public service as administrative reform. In an apparent confirmation of this position, Quah (1976:14) refers to efficiency and effectiveness engineering in the public service as a deliberate attempt to change both the structures and procedures of the public bureaucracies involved, in order to promote organizational effectiveness and attain national developmental goals. In support, Haln Been (1970), argues that administrative reform is an effort to apply new ideas and combinations of ideas to administrative system with a conscious view to improving the system for achieving positive goals of national development. Administrative reform actions are thus needed for developmental processes designed to give the administrative capability needed in the public services as a common denominator to all development efforts. Hence, Jelavic (1982) consequently outlines components of administrative reforms upon which the prospect of any reform action could be evaluated as:

- (i) definition of the objectives, aims and areas of reforms;
- (ii) collection of maximum amount of information on the areas to be reformed;
- (iii) critical analysis and appreciation of the situation;
- (iv) drafting projects of alternative solutions;
- (v) choice of best solutions; and
- (vi) application of the solutions selected and observation of the results of the reform.

All the foregoing listed processes are vital ingredients to the success and acceptability of any meaningful reform action. It could therefore be simply put that reform actions are fundamental changes that have taken place over the years. In subjecting the public service to various reform actions from colonial days to date, it was rationally thought that it could not be isolated from the wind of change which societal ideals were susceptible to, and which must be

managed by the various structures of government to the benefit of the society. And so, up till today, panels upon panels are still being set up to re-organize the public service. To justify this, Dotun Philips (1988:3) posits that the public service is the major instrument with which to implement government policies and as the primary and primate instrument of government, it cannot escape the constant attention of government which is intent in fulfilling its pledge to the people. Like any other instrument therefore, it has to be regularly serviced, shaped, reshaped and reoriented.

The concept of “Development” is explained by Olugbemi (1987:431) as the progressive creation, proliferation and enhancement of the conditions of the good life for citizens within the boundaries of a nation. He provides other definitions thus:

- (i) Sustained increase in such aggregate economic indices as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), Per Capita Income (PCI), etc.;
- (ii) The reflection of (i) above in the enhanced capacity of citizens to meet their vital daily commitments while allowing them a comfortable margin to save for the rainy day;
- (iii) The reduction, if not elimination, of inequality, unemployment, poverty, disease and ignorance;
- (iv) The diffusion of influence and the guarantee of basic freedoms, including the freedom to participate meaningfully in the political process; and
- (v) The assurance of a stable and peaceful political order essential for sustained productive activities and a guarantee of the safety of lives and property.

The foregoing conceptualization of development accords very significantly with the developmental objectives of Nigeria which were declared in 1970, and aimed at achieving:

- (a) A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (b) A just and egalitarian society;
- (c) A great and dynamic economy;
- (d) A land of full and bright opportunities for all citizens; and
- (e) A free and democratic society.

Against this backdrop, development can be seen as being much more than economic growth. It is the creation, the sustenance and the maximization of opportunities – including economic opportunities – requisite for the attainment of full and satisfying life for every citizen. It is similarly not a piece meal or a once-and-for-all process; rather, it is a continuous and cumulative conscious endeavour every turn of which should result in some attainment of any combination of the conditions earlier listed. Furthermore, the pursuit of development is not, and should not be, the responsibility of government alone. The fact that governments, especially in the developing countries, had assumed the role of prime movers of development is attributable to the manifest incapacities of these societies and people.

The Millennium Declaration has been translated into eight goals christened, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, which use 1999 as the base year, aim to achieve the following by 2015:

- Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Goal 2: achieve universal primary education;
- Goal 3: promote gender equality;
- Goal 4: reduce child mortality;
- Goal 5: improve maternal health;
- Goal 6: combat HIV & AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Goal 7: ensure environmental sustainable; and
- Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development.

To ensure effective translation of these goals into concrete development outcomes, the eight-time bound goals have been transformed into 18 targets and 48 indicators. This is to ensure that development activities are better targeted and their implementation is thoroughly monitored and evaluated. Since 2000, the MDGs have become the global framework for setting development agenda for developing countries. The development aspirations of such countries have been built around this framework. Developing countries' development plans and strategies have therefore become the building block and tools of implementing the MDGs.

Nigeria, as a signatory to the Millennium Declaration, is committed to achieving the MDGs by 2015. A major strategic framework to actualizing these time-bound goals is the development of the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004 and its counterparts at the State and Local Government levels (SEEDS) and (LEEDS), respectively. These development strategy documents span 2004 -2011. NEEDS was premised on three pillars: empowering the people in the form of social charter; promoting private enterprise (via creation of competitive private sector, promoting result-oriented sectoral strategy and ensuring regional integration); and changing the way government does its work (by creating an efficient and responsible public sector, promoting transparency and accountability and improving security and administration of justice). All these we posit, could be attained through improved capacities of the various stakeholders.

NATIONAL CHALLENGES

In more specific terms, the challenges being confronted by the Nation for which reform is inevitable are outlined hereunder.

- Near collapse of social and economic infrastructure;
- Per capita GDP remained stagnant prior to 1999; Grew at 2.2% between 1999-2003;
- Total GDP in 2001 stood at \$45 billion;
- Per capita income was \$300 a year;
- External and domestic debt – 70% of GDP (difficult to service debt, domestic debt rose by 200% between 1999 and 2002 – about \$9 billion);
- Real sector dominated by primary production sectors; agriculture 41%, crude oil 13%, manufacturing 5-7% of GDP;
- High macroeconomic volatility (exchange rate, inflation rate, budget deficit, GDP growth rate, GDP per capita – among the worst in the world);
- Finances at all levels of government in poor shape (pension crisis, arrears of salaries, huge debt misallocation and mismanagement);
- Nigerian urbanization rate – 5.3% (one of the fastest in the world);
- High level of poverty (about 70%);
- Dysfunctional education system (low standard, institutions decay, youth militancy etc);
- Unfriendly business environment (public sector dominance, rent seeking, weak institutions, corruption, high cost of doing business);
- High unemployment rate (urban 12.4%, rural 23.2%);
- General insecurity of life and poverty.

DOES THE GOVERNMENT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO CONFRONT THESE CHALLENGES?

In Nigeria, the Government discharges its catalytic functions through the instrumentality of the Public Service. The current capacity in the public service cannot deliver this goal of sustainable human development. This underscores the need to restructure the government to be stronger, better skilled and more efficient in delivering essential services.

It needs to move from the current state of inefficiency to an agent that spurs growth and development as well as serve the people. Achieving the MDGS presupposes that the Nigerian Public Service must be transformed into a cutting edge of quality service delivery in Africa. This cannot happen unless it becomes a knowledge driven, skills propelled and positive attitude-oriented public service. The need to achieve this informed the initiation of Capacity Building Project that is targeted at the Nigerian Public Service using some ministries as pilot.

This public Service Capacity Building initiative of the Federal Government is aimed at supporting the foregoing goal by creating a service that facilitates the achievement of the MDGS in Nigeria. Capacity, in this context, is the ability of individuals, organizations, and society to perform functions, solve problems as well as set and achieve their own goals/objectives. Capacity development is viewed from development context and it refers to investing in people, institutions and practices that will together facilitate the development of national developmental agenda/goals. In a broad sense, capacity development encompasses human, organizational and institutional capacities.

The current thinking sees capacity building as the continuing process of strengthening of abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and understand and deal with development needs. The concept overlaps with and includes human resources development and various management approaches and trends. It centres on organizational development and it is essentially an internal process, which may only be accelerated by outside assistance. Capacity building is the ability of individual, organizations or societies to set and implement development objectives on a sustainable basis. This is in consonance with United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) (1998) guidelines for capacity building which emphasizes the use of three levels in analyzing a holistic capacity, namely: systems level, organization level and individual level.

Capacity development is based on the fundamental concepts of strategic management. Within this framework, it is seen as the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and understand as well as deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. The core competencies required to perform this include: analyzing the environment, identifying needs and key issues, formulating strategies, implementing actions, monitoring performance, ensuring performance, adjusting courses of action to meet objectives and acquiring new knowledge and skills to meet evolving challenges. This tends to suggest a focus on any capacity development initiative in the public service.

Achieving holistic capacity development may be challenging in developing countries because it is dependent on some interplay of forces which may facilitate or hinder the realization of capacity development in the public service. This is apposite to the views expressed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), thus:

“... We also know that capacity means more than technical competence. It extends to the capacity to sustain a dynamic and productive interaction among political leaders, the institutions of government and civil society”. (OECD, 1996).

THE REFORM AGENDA: AN ANALYSIS

Prior to the institutionalization of the reform agenda, the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo observed that:

“Public offices are the shopping floors of government business. Regrettably, Nigerians have for too long been feeling short-changed by the quality of public service delivery by which decisions are not made without undue outside influence, and files do not move without being pushed with inducements. Our public offices have far too long been showcases for the combined evils of inefficiency and corruption, whilst being impediments to

effective implementation of government policies. Nigerians deserve better. And we will ensure they get what is better”.

He continued:

“The reforms being introduced will be all encompassing and all embracing no community, no individual or group would be left out in the reform..... In the process of that reform, if some people are hurt, we have no apology. We will do what has to be done to make Nigeria move forward, to make it what, I believe, God has created it to be, a land flowing with “Milk and Honey”, a country to be respected within the comity of nations, a land of glory; a land of prosperity, a land of what is right and not a land of anything can go”.

Within the framework of the reform are the strategies of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Transformational Agenda both of which are adopted by the same political party in power but two (2) different drivers as Chief Executives of the Nation at different periods from 2004 to date. Given the parlous state of the economy, an integrated and coordinated development approach was adopted, with the sub-national government’s, development plans: State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS). The conceptual issues on NEEDS/SEEDS are based on four goals:

- Poverty reduction;
- Wealth creation;
- Employment generation; and
- Value re-orientation.

The framework for actualization the goals of NEEDS is anchored on three pillars:

- Empowering people and improving social delivery;
- Fostering private sector led growth through creating the appropriate enabling environment; and
- Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of government, by changing the way government does its work.

Having implemented NEEDS and SEEDS for eight (8) years, the table below reflects the performance of this strategy within the period of 2008-2011.

TABLE 1: NEEDS TARGETS AND LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT

VARIABLE	2008		2009		2010		2011	
	TARGET	ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL	TARGET	ACTUAL
MACROECONOMIC VARIABLES								
Growth in real GDP (%)	10.20	10.20	5.00	6.10	6.0	6.51	6.00	5.67
Growth in oil sector (%)	23.0	23.9	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.5	0.0	-4.5
Growth in Nonoil sector	3.3	4.5	7.3	7.5	8.5	8.2	8.3	8.9
Reduction in poverty incidence (%)	5.0	-	5.0	-	-	-	5.0	-
Growth in Real Private Consumption (%)	-	-	4.08	3.08	-	-	-	-
Growth in Real Private Consumption per capita (%)	-	-	2.0	0.69	-	-	-	-
Inflation rate (%)	11.0	14.0	10.0	15.0	9.5	11.6	9.5	8.5
SECTORAL VARIABLES								
Growth in Agriculture sector	7.0	6.5	6.0	4.11	6.0	7.0	6.0	7.17

(%)								
Growth in Manufacturing sector (%)	-	5.7	7.0	6.17	7.0		7.0	9.5
Manufacturing Sector Capacity Utilization	53.0	45.6	>53.0	45.0	-	-	-	-
FISCAL VARIABLES								
MAXIMUM Public Deficit (% of GDP)	-	-2.8	-30.0	-1.7	3.0	>3.0	3.0	>3.0
Total Expenditure (% of GDP)	25.1	17.0	23.5	16.7				
Recurrent Expenditure (% of total budget)	70.0	80.3	65.0	77.2	60.0	-	60.0	-
Capital Expenditure (% of total budget)	30.0	19.7	35.0	22.8	40.0	-	40.0	-
EXTERNAL								
Reserves (\$ millions)	7.18	7.46	7.68	17.26	8.69	28.61	9.68	43.0
Imports Growth (%)	-	3.5	15.0	8.68	18.0	-	25.0	-
Exports Growth (%)	-	55.3	10.0	7.51	20.0	-	25.0	-
Earnings from Non-oil exports	<5.0	3.2	>5.0	3.6	>5.0	-	>5.0	-

Sources: *Targets from NEEDS and **Actual from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, 2012.

As indicated in table 1 above, there has been tremendous and consistent improvement in the performance of the economy since the inception of NEEDS in 2004.

- Real GDP annual growth rate averaged 6.6% (2009-2011) as against the annual target of 6.0% ;
- Oil sector annual growth rate average – 0.23% as against 0.0% targeted (2009 -2011);
- Non-oil sector average annual growth rate; 8.2% as against the NEEDS target of 8.0%;
- Inflation rate (year on year) on the average is 10.03%, (2009 -2011);
- Reduction of fiscal deficits to less than 3% of the GDP;
- Stable exchange rate (convergences of parallel exchange rates):
- External reserves grew by an annual average rate of about 230% from US\$7.68 billion in 2009 to US\$43 billion at the end of 2011 as against 12.2 percent (2008 and 2011);
- Favourable external balance as reflected in increasing value of non-oil exports:
- Phenomenal growth in the net in-flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investment, particularly in the banking and telecommunications sectors; FDI rose from US\$1.866b in 2009 to US\$2.3b and US\$4.8b in 2010 and 2011 respectively;
- Reduction in external debt stock from over US\$30 billion to less than US\$5 billion; and
- Favourable rating of Nigeria by International Credit rating agencies.

The general price level as measured by the composite Consumer Price Index (CPI) has trended downwards during the NEEDS implementation period. The inflation rate on year on year basis declined from 15.0% in 2009 to 8.5% in December 2011. It declined further to 8% in January 2012. The moving average inflation rate has also moved in the

same direction during the period. The NEEDS single digit inflation target of 9.5% has been met and even surpassed since 2011.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL AGENDA: AN ASSESSMENT

The adoption of Monitoring and Evaluation strategy by government institutions and agencies which is referred to as Score-Card, aided the assessment of progress made so far. This is articulated on a sector-by-sector basis.

HEALTH SECTOR

With respect to affordable healthcare, the 6 most relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are life expectancy (47.9%), infant mortality rate (138/1,000), births/maternal mortality rate (800/100,000), percentage of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis (80.13%), number of hospital beds per 10,000 (3beds) and percentage of population with National Health Insurance (NHIS) coverage (3%), it can be concluded that the healthcare targets were met to a large extent.

EDUCATION SECTOR

The performance of the education sector between 2008 and 2010 indicates an increase in primary school enrolment in the period from 18,519,733 to 20,291,709 representing a 9.6% increase. Also, while there were increases in tertiary education enrolment (polytechnics and universities), there was a decrease in monotechnics enrolment as a result of decreasing interest in monotechnics and increasing desire for polytechnics and university education. When the actual value of 2010 is compared with the 2008 baseline value, it can be concluded that only a marginal percentage of the population are accessing education. For 2009, there is a worrying decrease in the number of enrolment versus number of graduates for that year, for example, 1,079,720 were enrolled into Colleges of Education, while only 66,824 graduated in the same year.

JOB CREATION

There was a decline in the number of jobs created from 200,809 in 2009 to 95,997 in 2010. This is a serious trend, bearing in mind that the Nigerian population increases annually. The situation is further compounded by the increase in total man/days lost from 483,530 in 2009 to 593,530 in 2010. This decline can translate into decreased productivity and eventual decline in economic activities. Up-to-date data is required for employment and labour market information and this is not manifest in the submissions from government Agencies. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity would need to partner with the private sector for accelerated performance of its set targets by 2013.

INTERNAL SECURITY

With respect to **internal security**, the Ministry of Police Affairs and its agencies, recorded a marginal increase in the overall crime rate (per 10,000 population) from 6.67 per 10,000 population in 2009 to 7 per 10,000 population in 2010. The targets set for 2011-2012 are due to the expectation of increase in criminal cases as a result of the 2011 election. A survey conducted in 2009 by an independent body, "Clean Foundation" reported that the percentage of respondents who feel safe in their neighbourhoods decreased from 90% in 2009 to 61.10% in 2010. This may be attributed to religious crises in some parts of the country and bombings witnessed in some other areas of the country. In addition, the number of criminal cases successfully prosecuted decreased from 57,695 in 2009 to 24,971 in 2010. The figure however increased to 40,000 and 35,000 respectively in 2011 and 2012. The police response time to emergencies was 25-30 minutes in 2009 and 2010 in line with the targets set, while the target set for 2011 and 2012 was 25 and 20 minutes respectively. Another achievement of the Ministry was the commencement of the implementation of the

Financial Component of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) Reform Programme in 2010. The Planning Research and Statistics Unit of the NPF was also developed and managed to sustain the current tempo of information generation.

EXTERNAL SECURITY

On external security, the level of engagement in international fora by the Ministry of Defence improved remarkably as Nigeria was the 4th World's ranking contributor to peace support operations in 2010. The survey to determine the public confidence in the military is yet to be carried out but is being noted for future attention. Other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the percentage mobilization within timing requirement and armament incidents could not be obtained as they were regarded as classified information. Other notable achievements of the Ministry in 2010 include the ability to meet international obligations to peace operations, assisting internal security with military aids and improved interoperability in joint operation exercises.

INFRASTRUCTURE

For quality infrastructure, the available power supply generated increased from 3,700 Mega Watt (MW) in 2009 to 4,000 MW in 2010. This was achieved through rehabilitation of existing assets. Although there was an increase, it fell short of the 8,000 MW target for 2010. The percentage of power generated capacity utilization also rose from 78.4% in 2009 to 82% in 2010 thus signifying a reduction in transmission loss. The reduction was as a result of increase in power transmission capacity following the construction of transmission lines and procurement of transformers.

TRANSPORTATION

With respect to transportation, the total stock of roads in good condition was put at thirty percent (30%) in 2009. As at the end of 2010, this only increased by 1%, making total roads in good condition to be only 31%. This fell short of the 12% target for recovery of bad roads for 2010. In the rail sector, about 28.8% of the existing 3,500 railway lines have been rehabilitated. The rehabilitated lines increased by 632km from 378km in 2009 to 1,010km in 2010. In this regard, the rehabilitation of the km 0 – km 488 (Lagos – Jebba) narrow gauge rail line as well as 82% of km 488 – km 1125 (Jebba – Kano) narrow gauge rail line were completed. In the Air transport sector, available information showed that passenger traffic grew from 12,553,438 persons in 2009 to 13,720,000 in 2010. Aircraft traffic also witnessed a growth from 220,625 aircrafts in 2009 to 241,373 in 2010. There was also increase in air freight tonnage which grew from 170,282 tonnes in 2009 to 178,306 tonnes in 2010.

WOMEN AFFAIRS

A lot was achieved in the women affairs KPIs, especially in the areas of political awareness of women and support for women aspirants towards the 2011 Nigeria general election such as creating a database of women political aspirants and setting up a women political trust fund. Government's intervention activities saw marked improvement in gender mainstreaming between 2007 and 2010 as the percentage of women in the Senate and House of Representatives respectively, increased from 3.1% to 7.5%. Also the percentage of women in the State Houses of Assembly increased from 9.6% to 14.0% and the number of women as Deputy Governors increased from 2 to 6. More women sought Senatorial (from 5 to 11) and Gubernatorial (from 3 to 6) positions in 2010. The implications of these were increased proportion of women in decision making in Nigeria and the progress made towards achieving the MDGs target by 2015.

(**Note:** The figures used in the foregoing analyses were computed from the Records of various Ministries and Agencies that are driving the sectors).

ASSESSMENT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGs IN NIGERIA

In spite of the foregoing efforts, verdict on Nigeria's performance towards the MDGs is returned by two umpires:

- (i) **The Federal Government:** The Federal Government set up a Presidential Committee to monitor and assess the country's performance on MDGs. In year 2008, the Committee returned a verdict referred to as "Nigeria MDGs Report Card". This is displayed in table 2 below:

Table 2: Summary of Nigeria MDGs Report Card, 2008

S/N	GOALS	VERDICT
1.	Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	Current efforts need to be intensified if Nigeria is to achieve the target by 2015
2.	Achieve Universal Primary Education (UBE)	UBE has achieved marked improvement but needs to accelerate action towards completion rates and gender equality. There should be improvement in quality learning outcomes to achieve the goal by 2015.
3.	Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	Girls and Women missed 2005 gender parity target. Concrete steps and democratic processes of the country should be undertaken to reverse the trend.
4.	Reduce Child Mortality	Unacceptable rates of child mortality prevail and are preventable. Urgent actions are required by all tiers of government to put Nigeria back on track.
5.	Improve Maternal Health	Maternal mortality is now a national emergency; current rates are unacceptable and must be reversed so says Mr. President.
6.	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases	Scaled up efforts are required to sustain gains made to achieve the targets.
7.	Ensure Environmental Sustainability	On-going concerted efforts to be enhanced towards attaining the environmental sustainability target by 2015.
8.	Develop a Global Partnership for Development	Global Partnerships showed marked improvement with genuine efforts to assist Nigeria in its quest for Debt Relief. There is need for substantial and urgent scaling up of development assistance to finance the MDGs.

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria, **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs, Information Kit, 2009). Federal Ministry of National Planning, Abuja.

(ii) **Assessment By Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

In its own assessment undertaken under the aegis of Civil Society in year 2009, the non-governmental organizations returned a verdict titled: "Civil Society Score-Card," which we articulate hereunder:

- (i) 53.6% of Nigerians are still living in abject poverty;
- (ii) 8 Million school-aged children are not in school;
- (iii) Over 43% of Nigerians cannot read or write (60% are women);
- (iv) One out of 100 Nigerian Children die before the age of five;
- (v) 704 out of 100,000 Nigerian women die during child birth;
- (vi) 75 Million people in Nigeria have at least one episode of malaria annually;
- (vii) 72 Million Nigerians have no access to safe drinking water;

Source: This Day Newspaper, Wednesday August 1, 2009.

TREATMENT VARIABLES

(a) At the Federal Level

To promote private enterprise as an engine of growth of the economy, government needs to ensure security of law and order, the rule of law, and provide requisite infrastructure. The public sector is to serve as a catalyst, enabler, regulator and to some extent an implementor especially in the areas of health, education, integrated rural development, safety nets, regional development and security of law and order. The Government is to discharge its catalytic functions through the public service. As stated earlier, the current capacity in the public service cannot deliver this goal of sustainable human development. Achieving MDGs pre-supposes that the Nigerian Public Service must be transformed into a cutting edge of quality service delivery in Africa. This cannot happen unless it becomes a knowledge-driven, skills-propelled and positive attitude-oriented public service. Efforts should therefore be intensified in this direction.

(b) At the States' Level

The following are desirable:

- Citizen's participation in policy design, project implementation and monitoring should be institutionalized.
- States should publish budget allocations at State and Local Government levels.
- Community-based budget monitoring mechanisms should be established at the Local Government Level.
- States should pay up their counterpart fund for Universal Basic Education (UBE).
- All States should create MDGs Offices.
- States to meet the minimum requirements recommended by the MDGs.
- There is need for quarterly open forum for dialogue with the people at LGAs through "Town Hall Meetings".
- States and LGAs should increase budgetary allocation to health.
- Road network should be improved.
- Water supply and sanitation should be prioritized.

CONCLUSION

Building and strengthening of the core public sector capacity through the various Reform Agenda we aver, are urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable growth, reduce poverty and inequality and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the MDGs. Since the commencement of the Debt Relief Gain (DRG) in 2006, efforts have been on addressing the hardcore component of the development challenges. Intervention in public sector capacity needs (which represents the software component) through the instrumentality of the DRG represents a significant investment in the country's efforts to achieve sustainable long-term growth and development in the context of MDGs.

One recent trend in trying to forge a link between the public service and national development, through public service delivery is decentralization. Decentralization, if well implemented, may lead to greater accountability, transparency and better services. Strengthening institutional capability at the sub-national levels (state, local governments as well as community levels) is essential if decentralization is to bring about the most desired development outcomes in form of achieving the MDGs. A combination of the decentralization theory and earlier proposed treatment variables constitute a sure panacea for improving considerably Nigeria's performance with

regards to attaining the MDGs by the year 2015. This is the only way the congruity between the MDGs' framework and Nigeria's Developmental Agenda can be assured.

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