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Millennium development goals and low human development index in Nigeria a lesson for the implementation of the sustainable development goals

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Abstract

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 was partly to improve the performance of human development through the implementation of a number of targeted objectives. On January 1st 2016, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the MDGs. The programme was designed chiefly to meet the development needs of the third-world countries that were and are still grappling with development challenges. Nigeria being one of the countries that adopted the programme, did not achieve much progress as evidence showed she lagged behind in human and socio-economic development indexes. Nigeria's human development index (HDI) ranks among the lowest in the world; and this has been attributed to the country's poor

social infrastructure, high income inequality, oil-dependence, institutionalised corruption, high prevalence of diseases among the youths (male and females), and increased political unrest and corrupt practices by successive regimes. Thus, this paper makes an attempt to advocate, and proffer valuable policy options for a result oriented implementation of the SDGs in other to avoid the mistakes associated with poor implementation of the MDGs. For the country to make any meaningful progress, the country's leadership must develop the executive and political wills to fight corruption and provide basic socio-economic infrastructures and security assurance in order to facilitate a smooth implementation of the SDGs in country.

Keywords: unimpressive, implementation, Millennium development goals, sustainable development

1. Introduction

At the start of the new millennium, global leadership assembled at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations to undertake the historic, yet momentous and daunting task of eradicating poverty in its various forms, the result of which were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which largely set the development agenda through 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have replaced the MDGs, albeit, maintaining several of the same priorities along with new ones with the equivalent overarching aim of combatting poverty and achieving sustainable development" (Anyanwu & Anyanwu, 2017, p. 1) ^[1].

Amidst this development, Human Development Index (HDI) continued to feature as a barometer for gauging the level of global and national development trajectories. As a consequence of its global relevance, the HDI is getting wider attention with increasing globalisation. Developed and developing countries place high emphasis on human capital development, which is necessary for accelerating economic growth by devoting necessary time and efforts towards improving human life. Thus, the human capital is considered as one of the fundamental requirements for a country to enter the International Arena (Marimuthu et al. 2009, p. 25) ^[5].

No doubt, human development has attracted a great deal of attention globally. In virtually all economies in the world today, emphasis is placed on human development index. This is because it has become one of the parameters for measuring the level of development of the economies of the countries of the world. Again, the recent spate of economic depression, occasioned by financial crunch among the world's developed and emerging economies (Notably, the US, the UK, Greece and others) calls, not only, for a sober reflection on the state of the affairs but also the need to take a proactive steps so as to stem the tide of this ugly trend.

The more vulnerable economies of Africa, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and parts of Asia (South Asia) are the worst challenged by the menace of poor human development index (NCDP). Nigeria, since the past two decades, had not had any plausible report about her Human Capital Development Index (HDI).

The unimpressive performance of Nigeria's HDI within the period under review (2000-2020) might not be unconnected with her inefficient leadership and bad governance culture. Thus, the lack of an impressive HDI was and inevitable cog on the wheel of the progress towards the realisation of the MDGs in the country by 2015, as projected. This should serve as a lesson for an effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is the successor to the MDGs.

2. Statement of problem

The UN MDGs which was adopted in 2000 had been phased out in 2015, having completed its 15 years life span. The SDGs was then flag off as a successor development programme to the MDGs. However the implementation of the MDGS, in the context of Nigeria, had been evaluated or appraised with mixed reactions: while some analysts believe the implementation of the programme had impacted positively, yet others on the opposing side refuted this claim. However, evidence resulting from the secondary data collected and examined showed that the implementation of the MDGs in Nigeria, though impactful in some way, left much to be desired.

Evidence from the survey data released by the UNDP (2016; 2018) ^[16] clearly showed that despite the huge funds (mainly grants from foreign donors and the national government) sank into the MDGs programme in Nigeria, the country maintained one of the back seats in the score card of the Human Development Indices (HDIs). "Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) remained the only developing region where the MDG 1 target not achieved. Based on the poverty line of \$1.90 a day, poverty decline in the region significantly lags other developing economies. Thus, understanding the key drivers of and ways of tackling poverty in SSA becomes one of the pressing development challenges of our time. Our empirical estimates for the period, 1980 to 2013, indicates that the key factors significantly feeding poverty incidence and poverty depth in the region include high income inequality, oil-dependence, institutionalised corruption, high prevalence of diseases among the female youth, and increased political unrest (See Anyanwu & Anyanwu, 2017) ^[1]. This paper shall attempt at, not only examining the causes of the low performance of the MDGs in Nigeria, but also recommend credible policy options that may help in the successful execution of the SDGs at the national level.

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to analyse the causes of poor implementation of the MDGs and what lessons should learnt as we head through the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives of this paper include:

- i) To determine the causes and consequences of poor implementation of the MDGs in Nigeria
- ii) To identify the gaps or loopholes characterising the implementation of the MDGs in Nigeria
- iii) To recommend consequential policy option for the implementation of the SDGs

4. Conceptual clarification

For the avoidance of doubt or misrepresentation, the following concepts as applicable are clarified.

Human capital development

Human capital development refers to the "process that relates to training, education and other professional initiatives undertaken to increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets performance"(Marimuthu et al. 2009, p. 266) ^[5]. In tandem with the above definition, human capital implies the totality of those factors or variables which combine to make a person socially and economically viable, not only to himself but also his fellow mankind or immediate environment. Human capital is also defined as "the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in the individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2001, p. 18) ^[10].

The essential elements of human capital are knowledge, skills and abilities. For the individual to possess these variables, it requires a sound, yet, systematic training and development programmes tailored towards improving knowledge, skills, competence and abilities for optimal productivity of the human capital.

Development

A search through development literature reveals that a variety of definitions are replete. In economic terms, development has been understood as achieving sustainable rates of growth of income per capita, in a sense that enable the nation to expand its output faster than the population (Todaro & Smith, 2009) ^[13]. This definition fails to take into consideration the problems of poverty, inequality, discrimination, and unemployment and income distribution. The assumption being that increased out alone is not the true measure of development. Thus to further broaden the frontier of development, it has been conceived:

as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and strong national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty. Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individual and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better (Todaro & Smith, 2009) ^[13].

Development is indeed multidimensional, involving economic growth, high and sustainable GDP output, rising income, stable price regime or less price volatility, cultural changes and modernisation, uninterrupted political transitions, plus improvement in the general well-being of the individual. Economic growth on the other hand, is a narrower concept than economic development. It is defined as the increase in the value of goods and services produced by every sector of the economy. It is usually expressed in terms of the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

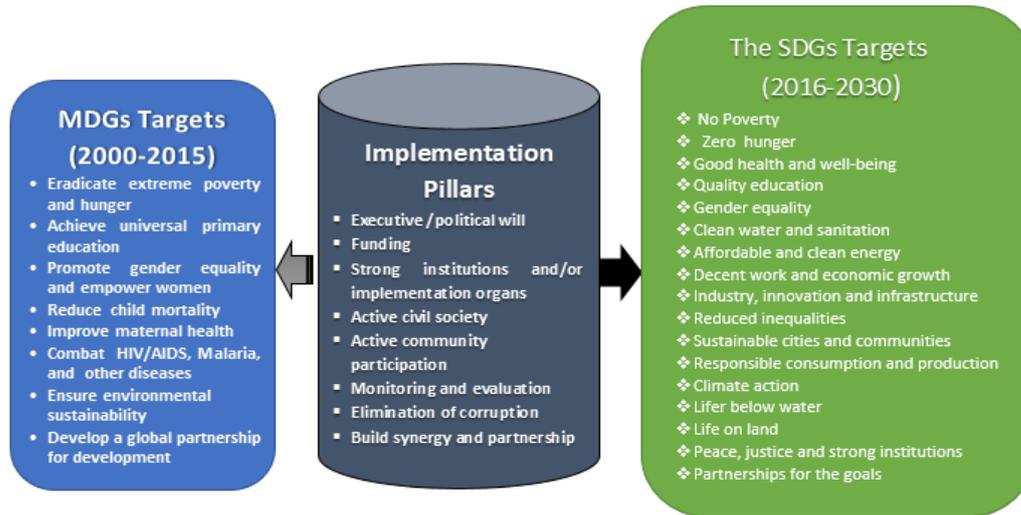
Sustainable Development:

In this study, the Bruntland's definition of sustainable development is adopted. It states that sustainable

development is that form of development effort that “meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations from meeting their own needs (Brundtland Report, 1987). Sustainable development is therefore a new mode of human or societal development in

which resources use should aim to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met, not only at the moment, but also for the generations yet to come.

5. Conceptual Framework



Source: Authors

Figure 1: A conceptual framework illustrating the implementation pillars of MDGs and SDGs

As illustrated in the above figure, it has amply been made clear that the implementation of the MDGs was not well tailored; and as it has been demonstrated, the *implementation pillars* were not adequately fed into the MDGs activities in Nigeria. Absence of executive/political will stunted funding, and exacerbated corruption; lack of virile local civil societies and inactive community engagement also combined to slow down the pace of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, inadequate synergies amongst the stakeholders or partners orchestrated weak institutions and implementation organs of the MDGs in Nigeria.

6. Theoretical framework

This paper adopts the Human Capital Theory, rooted in the field of macroeconomic development theory (Schult, 1993). The human resource is not only considered as merely a source of expenditure in an organisation, but it is also seen as the most prized asset or capital which can be deployed in the production of further wealth. Therefore, the development of the human capital is seen as a concomitant improvement of the organisational or business development. In the context of this paper, we assumed or allude to the fact that true development occurs when the most valuable asset, the human being, is availed the best opportunity to develop his fullest capabilities possible. This thinking, in our view suggests that the development of the society begins with human capability development. The common indicators of human capital development, where there seems to be a consensus involves: economic, socio-cultural, political, and educational development respectively. Economic development involves improvement in all areas such as income, gross domestic product (GDP), education, infrastructure and the standard of life of the people (NOUN, 2008) ^[8]. One of the important determinants of human capital development is the level of increase in the GDP. The GDP per capita is an important indicator of the Human development index (HDI) as

measured on national or country level.

Indices of socio-cultural development include the level of advancement in the tools with which the people work and the manner in which they organise their labour (Rodney, 2009) ^[11]. It must also lead to the creation of more opportunities in the sectors of education, healthcare, employment and the conservation of the environment.

Beckers (1993) ^[2] "argues that there are different kinds of capitals that include schooling, a computer training course, and expenditures on medical care; and in fact, lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are capital too. In the true sense, they improve health, raise earnings, or add to a person's appreciation of development over a lifetime". All these are meant to develop the human capital, which is the reason why investment on the other capitals is made by the way.

7.1. Design of the study

Essentially, this study adopts the secondary data analysis design or method. The justification for the choice of this design was based on the understanding that sufficient secondary data already exist in the bodies of literature on the subject matter. Besides, it is a herculean task for the authors to source adequate funds in order to conduct a national wide survey. Furthermore, data generated by state or international governmental or non-governmental agencies, appears to be more reliable and formal than to collect new data. Therefore, the authors conducted the analysis of secondary data, especially those generated and published

7.2 Sources of data

Data for this study were collected from secondary sources. Secondary data are essentially data obtained from already published or profiled materials. These include publications of governmental and non-governmental organisations, journal articles and other periodicals, books, newspapers and magazines, and also web pages (internet). In this study, we

expressly have explored official bulletins and demographic data published by government and non-governmental organisations, periodicals, and relevant web pages (internet pages).

7.3 Data collection instrument

Basically, the data for this study were collected through the use of a secondary data review guide.

7.4 Data analysis

Data for this study were analysed qualitatively. Information or data sourced were categorised and analysed according to themes. Tables and figures derived from the secondary sources were further subjected to analysis and re-interpretations in consideration of the research problem and objectives.

8.0 Review of literature

A large body of literature exists on the subject matter of MDGs and SDGs. In fact both empirical and conceptual literature abounds in the library and the internet. Below is the presentation of the order in which the literature relevant to this study are reviewed.

8.1 Nigeria's development trajectory

Despite great natural wealth, Nigeria is rated as one of the low income countries. Majority of her population are poor and social development opportunity is limited. If present trends continue, the country is not likely to meet the millennium Development Goals (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2004). Prior to the early 1980s, Nigeria had an impressive record of HDI. "The oil boom of the 1970s forced Nigeria to neglect its strong agricultural and light manufacturing capabilities in favour of an unhealthy dependence on crude oil. In 2000, oil and gas exports accounted for more than 98% of export earnings and about 83% of federal government revenue" (World Bank, 2001).

The discovery and exploitation of oil wealth, came as a mixed blessings to Nigeria. While oil revenue (petroleum and natural gas) contributes about 85% of the total income for Nigeria, some economists have argued that the oil wealth is by and large, a "resource curse". This is because Nigeria's natural resources, which constitutes the major chunk of her national wealth, had fuelled official corruption, resource control agitation and neglect of the hitherto booming agricultural potential.

Following the declining fortune in oil revenue during the early 1980s, poverty began to rare its ugly head, causing serious structural problems to the economy of the country. A major blow was struck at the agricultural sector. "The largely subsistence agricultural sector had not kept up with rapid

population growth, and Nigeria, once a large exporter of food, now imports some unimaginable quantity of her food products" (World Bank, 2011) ^[18]. The neglect of what used to be the mainstay of the country's economy led to the precarious poverty situation in which the country finds itself. For instance, "Nigeria has witnessed increased incidences of poverty due to two basic factors; namely:

- a) Economic Policy reversal; and
- b) Policy deficiencies" (World Bank Report,1996, p. 22)

Statistics have shown that the rate of poverty in Nigeria had increased progressively since the 1980s up to the present era. The table below elucidates the dimensions of poverty since the 1980 to 2004.

Table 2: Dimensions of poverty in Nigeria (1980-2004)

Year	Urban	Rural
1980	17.2	28.3
1985	37.8	51.4
1992	37.5	46.0
1996	58.2	69.3
2004	43.2	63.3

Source: National bureau of statistics (NBS), 2006, cited in Okojile and Ameh (2001. p. 63)

The above table and the statistics therein, is one of the illustrations amongst several HDI issues in Nigeria since the 1980s onward. As shown in the above table, the poverty level in Nigeria continued to soar from the 1980s to 1996 and the trend continues unabated; with rural people being the worst affected. Meanwhile, as the table reveals, there was a relative decline in the figure as at 2004, this might be as a result of the concerted effort taken by the government to practically address the problem of the lingering poverty occasioned by staggering unemployment in the country. The data or table above shows that Nigeria is ranked as one of the countries with low HDI score for 2018, and this trend has continued for a while now. The country ranked 158, with human development index (HDI) of 0.534. Her real GDP per capita for 2004 stood at 1, 154 while her GDP rank minus HDI rank for the same year was -1 (UNDP, 2006) ^[16]. Even as this article is being written, the poverty incidence in the country has not depreciated. Although, "available data from Nigerian Living Standard Survey conducted in 2003/2004 indicates that the incidence of poverty exhibited a downward trend. It declined from 70.0 percent in 2000 to 54.4 percent in 2004" (CBN, 2005, p. 76).

More recent Human Development Report (2019), shows that Nigeria is one of the countries with low human development index; the table below tells the story better.

Human Development Index	Inequality-adjusted HDI	Gender Development Index	Gender Inequality Index	Multidimensional Poverty Index ²
Value	Value (%)	Value	Value	Intensity
2018	2018	2018	2018	2007-2018
Value	Value (%)	Value	Value	Year and Survey ⁴
2018	2018	2018	2018	2007-2018
Value	Value (%)	Value	Value	Headcount deprivation
2018	2018	2018	2018	2007-2018
Value	Value (%)	Value	Value	Survey ⁴
2018	2018	2018	2018	2007-2018
Value	Value (%)	Value	Value	Survey ⁴
2018	2018	2018	2018	2007-2018

Table 1: Human development indices for the low rank countries

LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT													
154	Syrian Arab Republic	0.549	..	..	0.795	5	0.547	136	0.029 ^f	7.4 ⁱ	38.9 ^f	2009 P	
155	Papua New Guinea	0.543	..	..	..	..	0.740	161	..	..	..	..
156	Comoros	0.538	0.294	45.3	-22	0.888	5	..	0.181	37.3	48.5	2012 D	
157	Rwanda	0.536	0.382	28.7	-1	0.943	3	0.412	95	0.259	54.4	47.5	2014/2015 D
158	Nigeria	0.534	0.349	34.6	-5	0.868	5	..	0.291	51.4	56.6	2016/2017 M	
159	Tanzania (United Republic of)	0.528	0.397	24.9	7	0.936	3	0.539	130	0.273	55.4	49.3	2015/2016 D
159	Uganda	0.528	0.387	26.7	4	0.863	5	0.531	127	0.269	55.1	48.8	2016 D
161	Mauritania	0.527	0.358	32.1	1	0.853	5	0.620	150	0.261	50.6	51.5	2015 M
162	Madagascar	0.521	0.386	25.8	6	0.946	3	..	0.453	77.8	58.2	2008/2009 D	
163	Benin	0.520	0.327	37.1	-6	0.883	5	0.613	148	0.368	66.8	55.0	2017/2018 D
164	Lesotho	0.518	0.350	32.5	3	1.026	2	0.546	135	0.146	33.6	43.4	2014 D
165	Côte d'Ivoire	0.516	0.331	35.8	-3	0.796	5	0.657	157	0.236	46.1	51.2	2016 M
166	Senegal	0.514	0.347	32.5	2	0.873	5	0.523	125	0.288	53.2	54.2	2017 D
167	Togo	0.513	0.350	31.7	6	0.818	5	0.566	140	0.249	48.2	51.6	2013/2014 D
168	Sudan	0.507	0.332	34.6	1	0.837	5	0.560	139	0.279	52.3	53.4	2014 M
169	Haiti	0.503	0.299	40.5	-7	0.890	5	0.620	150	0.200	41.3	48.4	2016/2017 D
170	Afghanistan	0.496	..	..	0.723	5	0.575	143	0.272 ⁱ	55.9 ⁱ	48.6 ⁱ	2015/2016 D	
171	Djibouti	0.495	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
172	Malawi	0.485	0.346	28.7	5	0.930	3	0.615	149	0.243	52.6	46.2	2015/2016 D
173	Ethiopia	0.470	0.337	28.4	5	0.844	5	0.508	123	0.489	83.5	58.5	2016 D
174	Gambia	0.466	0.293	37.2	-8	0.832	5	0.620	150	0.286	55.2	51.7	2013 D
174	Guinea	0.466	0.310	33.4	-1	0.806	5	..	0.336	61.9	54.3	2016 M	
176	Liberia	0.465	0.314	32.3	2	0.899	5	0.651	155	0.320	62.9	50.8	2013 D

Source: UNDP (2019) ^[16]. Human Development: Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century, New York, NY 10017 USA

Since 2000, several statistical data or figures released, especially by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) are often conflicting and enmeshed in computational disparities, having been released to justify some level of increase in the nations HDI, yet, what is actually on ground, and could be seen, in terms of poverty, unemployment, disease and bad governance show vividly that the actualisation of the MDGs were at stake. This calls for a sober reflection and a deliberate executive will on the part of government to improve its investment in human capital development towards likely attainment of the MDGs and SDGs.

9. Millennium development goals (MDGs)

The background to MDGs could be traced to the late 20th century, that is, in 1996 to be precise. It has to do with the birth of "The International Development Targets (IDTs),

which were formulated in 1996 to improve the level of economic, social and human development and also to ensure environmental sustainability and regeneration" (National Economic Planning, 2004, p. 21). In September 2000, 189 member countries of the United Nations at that time adopted Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declaration. The document lists a series of Millennium Development Goals; and commits the UN member States to achieving the MDGs by 2015. The goals include: to 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. To achieve the goals of the MDGs, specific targets were set in the following areas as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2: The MDGs Targets 2000

Goals	Targets
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1 per day Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
4. Reduce child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under 5
5. Improved Maternal Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources. Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020
8. Develop a global partnership for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop further an open, rule based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system; includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction- both nationally and internationally Address the special needs of the least developed countries; includes tariff and quota free access for least

	<p>debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (PIPCs) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance (ODA) for countries committed to poverty reduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the special needs of landlocked countries small island developing states • Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term • In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth • In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries • In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication
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Source: UN MDGs, cited in National Planning Commission (2005). The National Economic Empowerment

And Development Strategy (NEEDS)

The MDGs were specifically framed to help the so called third world countries brake-off from the monstrous circle of poverty which for long eclipsed the concrete effort of these countries towards sustainable development. Nigeria, either by fate or design, incidentally falls among the so called third-world countries. Inevitably, Nigeria happened to be one of the 189 countries of the UN that adopted the MDGs declaration in September, 2000. Again, the country has one of the worst statistics of human development index in Africa and the world at large. Since the past decade and half, the country was unable to achieve half of the targets of MDGs. Although the country has made a considerable strides in some of the targeted areas, yet a lot others are begging for urgent attention. For example, goal number four (4) of the MDGs emphasises a reduction in child mortality by two-third among children under five years of age; however, a report by the Developments Magazine (issue 40, 2008:9), a publication of the British Department for International Development (DFID) indicates that "Nigeria's under-five mortality rates at 200 for every thousand live births are high compared with the top three (110 and 120 per thousand). But Nigeria is one of the five African countries making the greatest strides in reducing deaths of under-five". Right at the time this paper is being written, no official report or statistics have claimed of a two-third reduction of child mortality for those under-five years of age in Nigeria.

10. Why Nigeria could not get the MDGs implementation right

Since 2000 when the MDGs target were drawn, the country's leadership has made frantic effort to make Nigeria one of the most developed countries or economies by the year 20:2020. In response to the above ambition, the national government initiated a policy thrust called National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), a domestic policy instrument designed to stir up and accelerate Nigeria's socio-economic development by 2015. In spite of government effort to move the country forward, the score-line remains unimpressive. The evidence on ground is not commensurate with the advocacy, propaganda and wide publicity that the policy enjoyed. The question is, where and why has the country derailed?

First of all, let us consider the question where? That is, where has the government failed? To give an accurate answer to this question, we must have to take a cursory look at the superstructure of Nigeria; and for factual analysis, we could as well examine the level or pace of achievement of each of the MDG goals. Although Nigeria is a country that is enormously endowed with natural resources, including human capital, yet its economy is monolithic, depending largely on oil revenue. Its agricultural heritage has since been

bastardised. Although the countries oil revenue and outputs have been on a steady rise over the years recent glut in the financial value of the foils has produced devastating consequences on the national economy. Furthermore, inequity characterising the distribution of the oil wealth has further accentuated the poverty level of the haves not in the country, thereby widening the gap of inequality between the haves and the haves not. Relatedly, the level of poverty grew high...Our people have been failing deeper into poverty. In 1980, an estimated 27 percent of Nigerians lived in poverty. By 1999, about 70 percent of the population had income of less than \$ 1 a day and the proportion has risen since then" (National Planning Commission, 2004, p. 20).

Poverty has many causes (and all of these affect human capital); and all of which reinforce one another. One source of poverty is the lack of basic services such as clean water, education and health care. Another is lack of assets, such as land, tools, credit and supportive networks of friends and family. A third is the lack of income, including food, shelter, clothing and empowerment-political power, confidence and dignity." (National Planning Commission, 2004).

The high level of poverty is due to the staggering unemployment situation in the country. The 2011 population pyramid by the national population commission and the World Bank Growth shows that young Nigerians between ages 20 to 40 make up 47 percent of the nation's population. Ideally, such a figure should be a sort of good news but the lack of employment opportunity has rendered these abundant human resources useless. Thus, "for this opportunity to result in accelerated growth government, need to invest more in human capital development of young Nigerians" (World Bank, 2011) ^[17].

"In 2004, the UN found that Nigeria was making progress achieving several goals but falling short on others. Specifically, Nigeria has advanced efforts to provide universal primary education, protect the environment, and develop a global development partnership. However, the country lagged behind on the goal of eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child and maternal mortality, and combating diseases such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and malaria" (World Bank, 2011) ^[18].

The second question we may ask ourselves is the why? That is, why is Nigeria not getting it well; what possible reason could have been accounting for the abysmal success recorded so far?

A major factor is "the endemic corruption, which stymies development and tainted Nigeria's "business environment" (World Bank, 2011) ^[17]. Corruption affects the economy in many ways: it encourages wastage of resources including public funds and other assets. Secondly, corruption fosters mistrust in the allocation of public funds and other resources.

These certainly create a gap in the developmental effort of the nation; especially as it borders on human development. The government can achieve better result, if the menacing spate of corruption in the system is deliberately halted.

Besides the above listed factors, responsible for poor human development index in Nigeria is the huge poverty level and its multifaceted consequences: low per-capita income, high unemployment rate, high rate of child and maternal mortality, low level of domestic investment, high rate of crime and criminality, and low level of the standard of living of the people etc.

A sincere effort towards achieving the desirable level of human development in the country must begin with a proactive effort in tackling poverty, which is the very monster terrorising the country's development efforts all these years. We as a nation can make poverty history through our collective and individual resolves to combat corruption. The government and corporate organisations have enormous roles to play in the fight against corruption. They can help to formulate good policies and provide the needed funds to finance development projects. The government also needs to reinvigorate or, if possible and necessary, synergises the existing development institutions for them to become stronger, and thereby making them function effectively, and towards make poverty history. Infrastructure must be provided in order to kick-start and sustain developmental activities and pace. The availability of needed infrastructure is a sure bet in revolutionising small and medium scale enterprises for job creation, income generation and investment development.

Another important factor is the lack of the "executive will" to tackle poverty and development issues with more zest. Those at the corridor of power are not objectively committed to fighting poverty and underdevelopment. They are choked-up by the thorns of self-aggrandisement; and have thus constituted themselves as prebendal elements. The desire to sustain their elitism has inescapably enmeshed them in a highly syndicated conspiracy against the ordinary citizens. And until we are able

to nip this executive indiscipline at the bud, we cannot but wallow in corruption, poverty and underdevelopment.

Indiscipline and the lack of maintenance culture remains one of Nigeria's biggest problems. Nigerian's of all works and lives are known for indulging in all manner of sharp practices: impropriety, dishonesty, corruption, favouritism and the likes. Due to corruption, public funds are misappropriated and un-prioritised; infrastructure are neither maintained nor improved upon. The lack of basics facilities has thus engendered poverty and diseases. Obviously, human capital cannot thrive in the atmosphere of obvious failure of the social milieu. A significant number of Nigerians lack maintenance culture. They utter neglect or misuse of public properties and assets is largely responsible for the decaying infrastructure the country has witnessed all these years. This attitude needs to be urgently reversed so that the country can make the desired progress. Nigeria can make it along with the rest of the world, if her citizens can make deliberate and purposive contributions towards improving the socio-economic and political spheres of the people. The country would need to harness her vast human resource potential, through a well-tailored human resource development programme; and by developing and building enabling institutions - social, economic and political – that can support human capital development; and ultimately aid the realisation of the millennium development goals (MDGs).

11. The Sustainable development goals

The SDGs was adopted on the January 1st, 2016 as a successor global development blueprint for the developing economies, including Nigeria. Its purpose is to consolidate on the achievements of the MDGs which was later phased out having exhausted its life span on the 30th December, 2015. About 193 countries, under the umbrella of the United Nations, met and adopted the SDGs with overarching but obviously ambitious development targets as highlighted in figure-1 below.



Source: UNDP (2016) [16]. Sustainable development goals. www.undp.org

Figure 1. UN SDGs

As could be gleaned from figure above, 17 ambitious development targets were set by the member countries. Although not much has changed between MDGs and the SDGs, in terms of the targets, however, the intention of the makers of this global development blueprint was to consolidate on the progress, so far made, when the MDGs were implemented. The 17 points development agenda illustrated in the figure above are further highlighted below:

1. Complete eradication of poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goal.

Our argument is based on the observation that should the implementers of the SDGs in Nigeria repeat past mistakes, which negatively impeded the implementation of the MDGs, the nation may head to another round of economic waste and underdevelopment. Though it is now over four years since the SDGs took off, however the results on the ground in the country evidently showed that not much has been accomplished. The apprehension then is, would Nigeria succeed this time around? This question should serve as a research proposal for those who may wish to conduct further investigation into the success or otherwise of the SDGs implementation in Nigeria.

12. Conclusion

Working along the path of development is a huge but fascinating endeavour. Obviously, Nigeria is faced with daunting challenges on her development path. A major factor inhibiting her development is the underdevelopment of her human capital. With a low rating of her human development index, she is considered as one of the poorest countries of the world. This is against the background that the country is one of the resources endowed countries in the world.

The questions many Nigerians and external observers are asking include: why or where is the country not getting her developmental efforts well. The answers many try to give include the following:

Several Nigerians and international analysts have contended that corruption is the major problem that must be tackled; they also identified the lack of executive will, decay infrastructures, high rate of poverty, weak institutions, bad leadership and a unidirectional elitism, bad governance culture, indiscipline occasioned by poor maintenance culture, and other factors amongst the root causes the country's underdevelopment.

Consequently, our hope of attaining the MDGs was dashed, while expectation about the SDGs may turn out to be a fluke, if we fail to implement our proposed pillars for a successful implementation national and international development agenda.

14. Recommendation

In cognisance of the problems associated with human capital development and the millennium development goals in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proffered as solutions to achieving the desirable development in human capital and the SDGs in Nigeria.

First, no development can thrive or succeed in any system, which is marred by corruption. Corruption is the greatest undoing of the Nigeria's economy. For the country to move forward, corruption must be dealt with in all its ramifications. Perpetrators of corrupt acts should be identified, prosecuted and punished accordingly. This requires sincerity of purpose and commitment on the side of the law enforcement agencies and the average Nigerians. Corruption accounts for more than half of Nigerian developmental challenges; we must fight it vigorously until we succeed in the fight.

Secondly, the country needs institutional building and synergy to be able to deal with the challenges of human capital development and the effective implementation of SDGs. There is the need to establish a specialised agency that would focus on human capital development tracking, policy formulation and allied matters. This agency, if established could work in alliance with those institutions with similar objectives to harness available and necessary resources for the development of the nation's human capital.

Thirdly, no development can take place in an atmosphere of wanton poverty. Nigeria can do better if she reduces poverty to the least level. There is poverty because basic social amenities are lacking. Unemployment rate is high, consequently poverty looms large amidst abundant and rising national revenue. No doubt, development cannot occur in an atmosphere of rising unemployment and its attendant poverty, disease and insecurity. To combat poverty and unemployment, government must provide basic facilities such as electricity, good road networks, portable drinking water, good and affordable housing facility, achieve sustainable security of life and properties.

Fourthly, the recent nation-wide strike and mass protests across the various states and the FCT in Nigeria, proved that over-dependence on oil resources alone is no longer beneficial for the future of the country. There is serious need to diversify the economy and make it more robust for growth and development to take place. This calls for a total commitment to investments in agriculture, small or medium scale enterprises, job creation and security.

Finally, a peace and progressive political system is needed for development to take place under-hindered. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the present political situation, characterised by violence and terrorism must give way for a more peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation, bargaining, and dialogue. Foreign investors need to be encouraged through the peace business climate we create.

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