



Learning from Millennium Development Goals for Successful Implementation and Attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

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Abstract

The SDGs is an offshoot of the MDGs. Its declaration was to make up for the MDGs' failures. The non-attainment of the MDGs has been reviewed with pointers. This raises concern on the implementation of the SDGs. This study therefore identifies the pitfalls in the MDGs' implementation to ensure attainment of the SDGs. To achieve this, the study reviews the events leading to the MDGs, issues surrounding its implementation and the potential challenges that threatened its achievement. The study adopted qualitative research method to obtain data. It was discovered that lack of ownership, non-continuity on developmental plans, no clear policy document, political motivated projects, corruption, over-politicisation of programmes and lack of appropriate education on the MDGs occasioned its poor performance. The paper concludes that until development policy frameworks are followed to letter, attainment of SDGs could be dream. The study therefore recommends that government should develop a comprehensive and all-inclusive policy framework for all tiers of government in Nigeria, which will clearly show corporate and individual responsibilities in the SDGs. Also, community education should be employed for awareness and community participation in implementation of the SDGs to guarantee community identification and ownership of project/programmes.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development Goals; Millennium Development Goals; Implementation; Policy framework; Participation*

Introduction

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were eight international goals adopted in year 2000 by United Nations. The MDGs aimed to proffer solution to world problems, especially in the developing nations. Gender inequalities, child death, maternal mortality, poverty and hunger were specifically targeted. It was to improve the well-being of people living in developing countries (Filho, Lovren., Will, Salvia and Frankenberger, 2021). Internationally, Strategies like debt relief, environmental protection, supply of drugs and health equipment were mapped out to assist the developing nations attain the goals

within a period of fifteen years (Diana, 2018). However, at the end of the stipulated time for the MDGs implementation, it was discovered that many of the goals were no attained (Feeny, 2020). Thus the declaration of Sustainable Development Goals to address the problems MDGs could not solved (Arora and Mishra, 2019).

The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 global developmental goals with 169 targets, adopted in 2015 after the MDGs by United Nations, to be achieved by 2030 (Arora and Mishra, 2019; Filho, Tripathi, Guerra, Giné-Garriga, Lovren and Willats, 2019). It is an action moved to end poverty, protect the environment, fight inequality and promote peace and justice for all (Bebbington and Unerman 2018). The SDGs framework is hinged on the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’. Meaning that, it is to be doggedly pursued and implemented alike by all the United Nations membership countries across the world (Carmen, 2021). Government of every nation was expected to pursue programmes to ensure attainment of the goals by 2030.

Building on the successes and achievement made in MDGs, the Nigeria government has been committed to the implementation of the SDGs. By 2017, the government had developed the Private Sector Engagement Strategy which provided for establishment of Private Sector Advisory Group on SDGs for inclusive participation in the implementation (FGN, 2017). Equally, Nigerian government presented her Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the SDGs at High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017, and 2020 (FGN, 2017; Fagbemi, 2021). A policy document and framework was equally developed and code named ‘Nigeria’ road to SDGs’ The framework for the SDGs implementation rest on inter-ministerial partnership and integration, decentralisation and economic recovery. In addition, Economic and Recovery Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017–2020) was developed to give favourable policy atmosphere for the attainment of the goals. The framework proposed an inclusive, people-centered implementation process for the SDGs (Idike, Ukeje, Ogbulu, Aloh, Obasi, Nwachukwu, Osuebi, and Ejem, 2021; Ugwu and Ogunremi, 2019).

Fig 1. SDGs performance ranking Chart

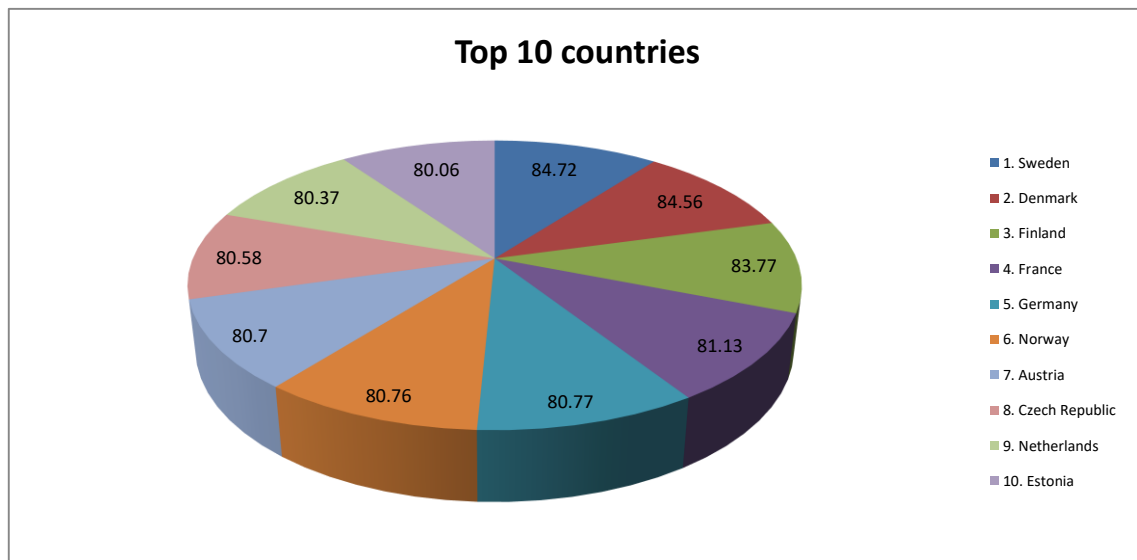
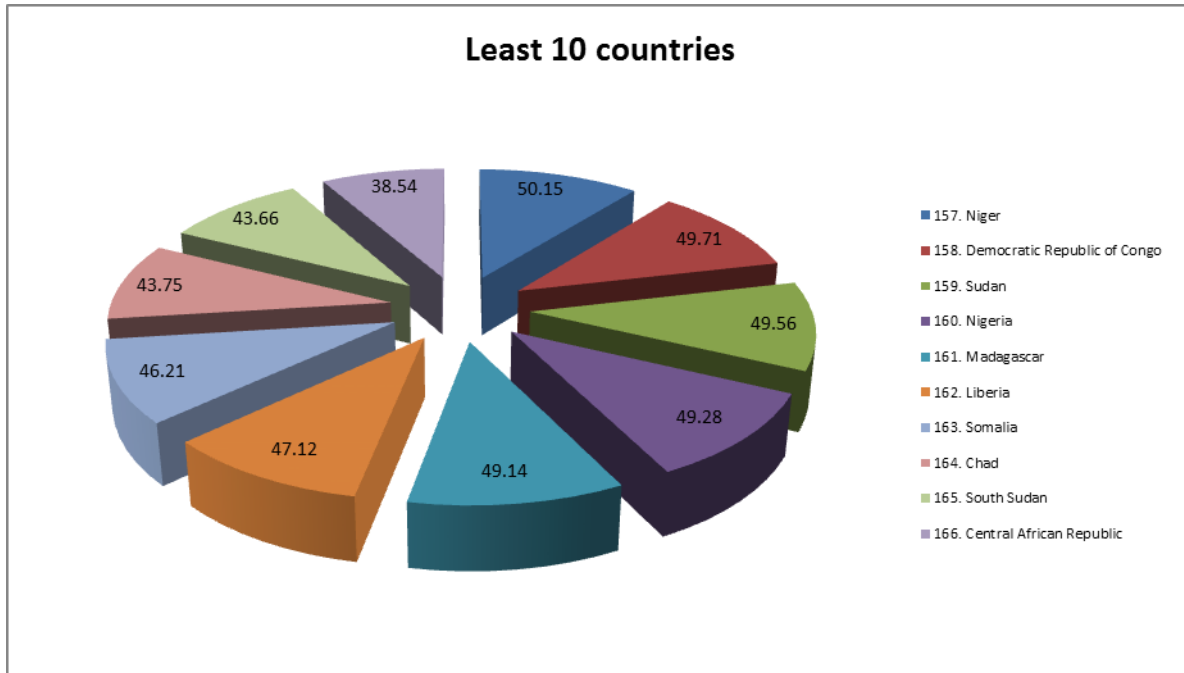


Fig 2. SDGs performance ranking Chart



Source: Adapted from Sachs et al., (2020)

In spite of the Nigerian government commitment and efforts, Sustainable Development Report, 2020 ranked Nigeria 160th on the SDGs performance list with 49.28% performance (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller and Woelm, 2020). This ranking showed that Nigeria is far away from achieving the SDGs. While coping with effect of COVID-19 pandemic, the reasons for the Nigeria poor performance right from the dawn of the SDGs may not be far from the challenges and problems that cause setback in the implementation of the MDGs. Therefore, looking back to learn from the MDGs' flaws could put Nigeria on the right track to achieving the SDGs since it is just mid to execution of the goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Prior to adoption of MDGs, there were several United Nations' summits and conferences where declarations and proclamations on Human Rights and Development plan for decades such as 1960s, 1980s and 1990s were made. Particularly, 1980s witnessed economic policies for structural adjustment. It was meant to enable undeveloped countries attain economic independence. Equally, all the UNDP objectives were incorporated and transformed to International Development Goals (IDGs) which were adopted by OECD (Ojobanikan, 2019).

The MDGs were adopted as a result of the discussions from 1990 summit. The MDGs had eight international development goals with 18 targets and 48 indicators, to measurement its achievement (ITU, 2022). It could be regarded as global blueprint to end inequality, poverty, environmental degradation and attain sustainable development (Ajayi and Ajayi, 2018). It upheld the values for human dignity, environmental protection and sense of responsibility significant to international relationships and hunger reduction among member states in 15 years time frame (Idike, Ukeje, Ogbulu *et al.* 2021).

Fig 3. The MDGs and its Targets



Source: Adapted from ITU, (2022)

The MDGs evolved over decades from the establishment of UN itself to 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt' freedom speech, G7 meetings and other meetings of the world leaders. This ought to have given UN member states the opportunity to achieve the goals. The goals were made clear; the objectives were understandably simple for the nations to work on. 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. However, end point assessment of the MDGs in Nigeria and most developing nations of the world recorded poor performance, hence the transition from MDGs to SDGs for the purpose of attaining world even human development.

Nigeria MDGs Policy Framework

MDGs' implementation policy was not limited to Nigeria and other developing nations alone but to all UN member states and international bodies. The developed nations, international organisations and their bodies granted ease financial and trading zone, debt relief and provision of affordable and essential drugs and equipment to the under-developed nations to achieve the MDGs (Sakanko and David, 2018). The governments of various nations were to promote strategic policies implementation towards the achievement of the MDGs. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria formulated a number of policies towards achievement of the MDGs. These include National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004, The Seven-point Agenda in 2007. and Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) in 2009 (Nwogwugwu., Uzoechina, Chris, and Joan, 2020; Uche, 2019; Quadri, 2018).

NEED was structured in such a way to end poverty, create employment, wealth and promote values (Ike, Mbuba and Nwobi, 2021). The policy was domesticated to states and local government with all MDGs objectives well captured. NEED emphasized partnership and synergy among stakeholders, community participation at the grass root as well as monitoring and evaluation (Nwogwugwu., Uzoechina, Chris and Joan, 2020). This policy was replaced with seven-point Agenda in 2007 after the change of government (Muio and Ariyo, (2018).

The Seven-point Agenda was developed to make Nigeria a fast growing nation in industrialisation. The plan addressed seven areas of importance. These are transport, food security, wealth creation, power and energy, land reforms, education and security. The plan was to see to massive infrastructure development, agricultural and transport reform through finance, research and technology to improve yield and productivity; and to ease goods and human movement. The environment was to be protected through environmental protection strategies while the education sector was to give access to quality education for all in a bid to development science and technology in Nigeria (Ike, Mbuba and Nwobi, 2021). The plan targeted development of Nigerian rural communities and poverty reduction through access to essential needs of life (Ojobanikan, 2019).

Furthermore, another development plan named Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) was formulated. It was a long-term development and transformation plan. It was developed in September 2009 for socio-economic and industrial growth. It was an 11years plan (2009-2020) to be achieved through medium-terms (Nwanmereni and Ochonogor, 2020). All trusts of NEEDS and Seven Point Agenda were entrenched in the NV20:2020. The plan was to cater for all round development in all sectors of the nations' economy. Its development was witness by all stakeholders in both public and private sector. Vision20:2020 focused achievement of MDGs through execution of projects that would give rural access to basic needs of life for improved standard of living.

All the strategies explored by Nigeria government to achieve the MDGs emphasised participation. Especially, at the grass root level (FGN, 2013). However, the actual participation witnessed in the implementation was nothing but what Arnstein in Ojoibanikan (2019) referred to as 'tokenism'. In this sense, people are visited, given half information and manipulated to be participating in the programmes by professionals and policy holders. However, people were to be partnered, hold delegated powers that would provide citizen's control that would guarantee community ownership of the programmes and projects implemented.

Challenges to Achievement of the MDGS

1. Lack of Community Ownership: To a large extent, the executors of MDGs' programmes, lack a clear understanding of the programmes. In most cases, the executors do not know how to make the grassroots people own MDGs' project for sustainability. There was no clear perception and understanding

of government and people's sense of responsibility as initiators and beneficiaries (Aro, Akor., Akpan – Obasi, and Ngene, 2019). Therefore, participation earlier propose were jettisoned and communities standing aloof in the implementation. This resulted to lack of ownership of numerous projects implemented (Onwujekwe, Obi, Ichoku, Ezumah, Okeke, Ezenwaka, Uzochukwu and Wang, 2019; Aro, Akor., Akpan –Obasi, and Ngene, 2019; Onuoha and Onyekineso, 2018).

2. Lack of Continuity in Developmental Plans and Agendas: In Nigeria, the political administrations lack continuity with the existing developmental plans and projects been carried to achieve the MDGs. Projects were implemented to suit individual political aggrandizement than to follow existing laid down projects and plans (Alabi, Raheem, and Bako, (2018). This led to so many uncompleted projects across the nation. Equally, people oriented programme meant to achieve the MDGs were either personalized or stopped while the cost of some programmes were not affordable for the poor living especially in the rural communities.

Fig 4. Abandoned MDGs water project, Oke-Ori Omi, Ado Ekiti.



Source: Field work, 2022.

Fig. 4 and 5 showed an abandoned water point project mean to provide water for the poor populace. It has been turned to hanger for spreading and sun-drying cloths in fig. 1, while in fig. 2, it has been turned to another domestic use by a beans cake seller. Thus, the MDGs project went in the way past projects went (Achanya, 2021; Aro, Akor., Akpan –Obasi, and Ngene, 2019; Olawuyi and Olusegun, 2018).

Fig 5. Abandoned MDGs water project, Oke-Ori Omi, Ado Ekiti.



Source: Field work, 2022.

3. No Clear Policy Document: The policy document meant to guide the implementation of MDGs did not state out in clear terms the line of actions and duties expected of the host communities, organisations and the government itself in process of execution and implementations. The host communities were neither conceived as critical stakeholders nor given specific responsibility in the policy document. Thus, the implementation process was devoid of community participation and subsequently ownership of the projects and its sustainability ((Onwujekwe, Obi, Ichoku, Ezumah, Okeke, Ezenwaka, Uzochukwu and Wang, 2019; Koko, and Osuji, 2018).

4. Political Motivated Projects: The ambitions of political heads of government to spread political tentacles affected location of projects. Projects were sited to suit their political interest and cronies wards at the expense of the real places where the projects were needed. Projects were cited in places where they were not easily accessible by rural dwellers and where they were completely non-functional, used and beneficial to anyone (Alabi, Raheem, and Bako, 2018).

5. Corruption: Corruption has eaten deep into every system in Nigeria. It affected MDGs like other sectors of the country's economy. Nepotism and partiality found its way to the implementation of the MDGs through corrupt means. For instance, insecticide mosquito nets were nepotically distributed. While some people got it in excess and use it for garden and some unconventional use, some did not get because the officials in charge were not their relatives or clan members (Durokifa and Uwizeyimana, 2021; Ogwola and Onu, 2021; Kolawole, Adeigbe, Zaggi and Owonibi, 2014).

Fig 6(a). Insecticide Mosquito nets been used as fence at construction site in Ado Ekiti



Source: Field work, 2022

Fig 6 (b). Insecticide Mosquito nets been used as fence at construction site in Ado Ekiti



Source: Field work, 2022.

6. Over-Politicisation of MDGs Programmes: Programmes under MDGs such as conditional cash transfer scheme were implemented as political party programmes. Only party member of the ruling party benefited in many area at the expense of the poor and real market women targeted for the programme (Okere, 202; Uzoma and Onor, 2020; Adamu, 2019, Agboeze and Nwanko, 2018)). This same feature is currently manifesting in the on-going SDGs as a similar programme called “Market Moni” was over politicised to the extent that only women who are members of the ruling party benefited. Interview conducted with some market women revealed that names were collated at the ruling party secretariat and brought to the programme venue for the distribution. This has made the beneficiaries see the financial empower as mean of compensation for their support and loyalty to their political party.

7. In-Attitude of the Citizens: The empty promises of government to the citizens had created in-attitude and care free mind in larger Nigerian populace towards government developmental projects and programmes. The people believe that those in government are always in the habit of the deceiving and exploiting them. They have lost confidence in government programmes for over two decades. The rural areas are more affected with this phenomenon than urban areas because basic needs and amenities are scanty, epileptic and in most situations lacking. This lack of interest by the grassroots people deprived them understanding of the aims and benefits of programmes of government in their communities as well as the supports and participatory roles they are to lend to programme (Fajobi, Fajobi, Olugbade and Olowookere, 2021; Edo, Nwile, and Okwu, 2020; Ogboghodo, Omuemu, Odijie and Odaman, 2018).

8. Lack of Appropriate Education on the MDGs. Majority of the populace especially in the rural areas, were in total darkness of the MDGs’ implementation. There was no appropriate education and enlightenment such as community education for the people especially women, on where to seek help, benefit from the MDGs and the specific roles expected of them in the implementation process (Ojobnaikan and Omolewa, 2020). This is against the United Nations submission that only the educated mind could handle development cause rightly (UN, 2008 in Ojobnaikan, 2019). Equally education has been opined to play critical roles in the development of the society (Ojobaniaknan and Akilo, 2020; Grosseck, Țiru, and Bran , 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is obvious that Nigeria government committed a lot of efforts and resources to the implementation of the MDGs as billions of naira were expended on the programme. In spite of the energy and resources channelled to the strategic plans, policies and implementation, the end-point report of the MDGs revealed a poor performance. Most targets were not meet and goals not achieved. Though the final report document reveal some achievements, however, in reality, the achievements recorded are countered by poverty, insecurity, poor education, poor sanitation, environmental degradation, un-affordable child and maternal health cost coupled with low life expectation index. The different factors earlier discussed were responsible for the poor outing of the MDGs. These turned critical challenges for the SDGs. Therefore, it is pertinent that precautions are taken to avoid the same pitfall in the implementation of the SDGs,

This study therefore recommends that Nigeria should develop a framework that would address political and institutional issues surrounding interventions. Nigerian government should facilitate functional approach of partnering other nations to achieve the SDGs. The policy framework for the SDGs should be followed to letter without fear or favour. The war and laws against corruption should be severely implemented and extended to all sectors and individuals indulging in it, which could cause set back in the implementation and achievement of the SDGs. The institutions set up against corruption should beam their search light around the SDGs. The government should ensure and allow an all inclusive implementation of the policy framework of the SDGs to ensure its success. Also, community education

through adult and women education should be recognised and given its rightful place in the implementation of the SDGs for awareness and full community participation in the SDGs implementation.

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