



ACTUALIZATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) IN AFRICA BY 2015: A STUDY OF THE IMPEDIMENTS

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Abstract

The study examined the impediments to the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was adopted by the global governance body as a blueprint for a better world in the 21st century, as its target year 2015 come to a close. The significance of the study was twofold, first the goals were laudable for when achieved they could liberate Africa from scourge of all forms of underdevelopment. Secondly, the study was conducted to identify the obstacles, which militate against the realization of the MDGs, with the view of overcoming, future global development agenda in Africa. The study had adopted the descriptive perspective in its analysis of the secondary data obtained for the study. The data obtained indicated that most of the African states since the year 2000 had made very little progress in attaining the goals of the MDGs agenda. Indices such as; good governance, investing in human capital accumulation in spite of extensive global aids, debt relief and fair trading opportunities offered by the developed nations of the world have had little impact in this regard. The study concluded that the attainment of the MDGs is subject the exhibition of political will, human capital development, infrastructural and growth in science and technology education among others. Given the nature of African economies, and the political crises, the study finally concluded that the prospects of attaining about 70 per cent of the MDGs of 2015 are less probable, unless African states would generate political will, minimize corruption, invest in physical and human capital accumulation for the development of the continent.

Introduction

The discourse on this topic is very fundamental for it goes to the heart of African political economy, which is a determinant for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The paper is divided into three major parts. Section one, deals with the introduction and the theoretical framework of analysis and conceptual clarifications. Section two treats the MDGs and the UN approaches to their achievements as well as the expectations, while section three analyses the roadblocks to MDGs against the African conditions. It also evaluated the prospects for their

actualization and conclusion. MDGs were adopted in the year 2000 by the entire world Governments as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century (Annan, 2007: 3).

Millennium Development Goals set the international public policy agenda for the nation-states in the global system, to mobilize and include these goals in their national development processes, which were hitherto left out. The UN –MDGs represent attempts at global partnership against the critical challenges of development identified at the World summit in the 1990s, which slows down development of all human species especially in the third World. This paper does not intend to give a historical account of each sector of the MDGs. It is only concerned with general reflections on the impediments, which may impede African states from actualizing the goals of MDGs by the year 2015, given the nature of interactions between politics and the economy in African states.

The MDGs are outcomes of the World summit held in September 2005 under the auspices of the UN to fast track development in the world. The summit reviewed the unbalanced nature of global development and came out with the MDGs to address the imbalance. These goals constitute the eight minimum targets required as the first steps; (i) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, (ii) Achieve universal primary education, (iii) Promote gender equality and empowerment of women (iv) Reduce child mortality, (v) Improve maternal Health, (vi) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (vii) Ensure environmental sustainability (viii) Develop a global partnership for Development, critical challenges retarding development in developing nations, particularly in Africa. This is in cognizance of the fact that the enlargement of every citizen's ability to live a useful and purposive life is an expansion of the welfare of the global community rite-large. This is so because poverty has the potential to cause social upheaval of inestimable dimension.

The antecedents of the MDGs were made much more urgent following the failures of all the past development fads. This led to the UN Development decade in 70s-80s. Before now, Africa had practiced the expansion in 'export crops 1948-55, import substitution industrialization (ISI) then 'Population control' and all the IMF/World Bank prescribed modes of economic management, all to no avail. These colossal failures of all attempts at development in the third world led to the call for New International Economic order (NIEO). The failure of this laid the foundation for the MDGs. This set the pace for the UN to fix year 2015, and

agree on a set of goals that were achievable if all the participants would work in a concerted manner.

Theoretical Framework

The analytical paradigm of this work is Ernest Haast's, Functionalist thesis that posits, in the main, that there are certain social needs that cut across national boundaries in their utility. Since these needs know no boundaries, the solutions should not be culture specific. These solutions are better provided by supra agencies such as the UN. Similarly, man is the same everywhere; his problems are the same, and tenable solutions should be applied across national boundaries with minor variations. A functional solution should be applied irrespective of national boundaries. It is a supra imposition of workable solutions. Ernest Haast's preposition overlap with the view of Jean Jacques Rousseau that "man is the same in all ranks that being so, the ranks which is most numerous deserved most respect" (Sabine and Thorson, 1973:435). Since man is the same everywhere as per Rousseau, whatever solution is advanced in the resolution of his difficulties in any rank, should apply in this case to all ranks across international boundaries, since man is the same in needs and development. This is the point of convergence between Haast and Rousseau. This is the point at which the UN postulated the MDGs for all 3rd world nations in conformity with the views of both political theorists. In the context of this paper, this framework is the most appropriate analytical paradigm because the substance of the MDGs are common to all polities especially, in the third world, and specifically Africa. The solutions should cut across nation-states.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals are those elements of national progress, which all the previous development fads did not encompass as strategic objectives, which were defined in the summit hosted by the UN in 2005 as incidental development. They are to;

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

The Approaches: an evaluation

In its definition of the goals, the UN defined the approaches 'for the rest of us' to include; the reduction by half of the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day. The pertinent question to ask is, does African States really know their number and how to reach the various classes in their societies? This is a function of the headcount and the segregation of the population into various social classes. Nigeria's most recently conducted census cannot guarantee such database, because of the infusion of political consideration into the exercise. This is true of most African states. How then can this be done in Africa? Africa does not know her poverty gap ratio; hence, it would be difficult to reduce by half the population in the poverty bracket. This is a matter of knowing each country's database and social segregation. It is difficult in Nigeria and most African states.

On universal primary education, the UN enjoined the African States to ensure that the boys and girls complete a full course of primary education. However, in Nigeria, school-feeding program has started in some states to keep the children in school towards this, the question is; can Nigeria sustain this throughout the Country? Time will certainly tell. This goal is wrought with problems. As the parents of the boys and girls are retrenched from employment through downsizing and rightsizing, the children are likely to drop out of schools. The schools, it would be recalled are not completely free. It has revealed that Nigeria is home of 10.5 million out-of-school children and home to 63 million illiterate adults (Sunday, 2014:16).

On gender equality and empowerment of women, this is certainly problematic because certain cultures in Nigeria, frown at girl-child education, with emphasis on early marriages, which fetches the parents economic values. Some of the girls also provide another economic worth in hawking goods for sale; in this way, they supplement the family income.

On child mortality, the low level of research and development in science and technology, medicine and human engineering have worsened the situation. Poor funding of universities and allied research institutions further complicates this. The low funding of universities result in low research funds. As long as this continues, high child mortality rate would continue to be with Africans and specifically Nigerians.

In terms of maternal health, the bulk of women in Africa are rural dwellers, guarded on all sides by customs, traditions and ignorance. They are not aware of modern methods of reproductive health rights. Customs and traditions would not allow the embrace of reproductive health right; where this service is acceptable however, it may not be available,

accessible, and affordable. This is compounded by poverty. The end result of all these would that maternal dead would remain high.

In the case of HIV/AIDS, the effort Nigerian Government in this regard is commendable. So far, almost everyone is now aware of the implications of the epidemic. Data are not in the public domain of the number of people using precautionary measures (secondary data were relied on this study). Malaria is with us in the tropics. More advances in medicine are needed to address this situation. However, low funding of universities and allied researches hamper this. Public health practices are poor, avalanche of garbage is contesting for public space and malaria would continue to flourish. Its reduction in both the cities and rural areas seem a mirage.

The case of Global partnership is a tall order in global competitive world of unequal partnership. Regional partnership is herein advocated rather than a global one. In recent time, Davos (G8 meeting of the eight most industrial nations) came on, we have had Cancun (Mexico) conference and Lagos Plan of Action before now all of which attempted to set economic direction for the global communities, with no effect on Africa. Africa can have only very little effect on this scenarios, because of low level of economic development.

MDG'S Expectations

The available evidence indicated in the NEPAD document shows that African governments have promised to ensure the realization of the MDGs (NEPAD). Consequently, they have pledged responsible governance, and to invest in their people through improved health care and education. While the industrialized nations on their own parts, have promised aids that are more international, debt-relief and fairer trade with Africa, it is instructive to ask, what constitute fairer trade? In furtherance of this, AGOA, (the US, African Growth Opportunity Act) and various agreements with the EU were signed.

This rising expectation that African states would be responsible in governance has been supplanted by the rising frustration in Africa as emerging evidence points in this direction, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Rwanda are sad reminders of the failures of these promises. This is a paradox in Africa, where legion of governments, repress its citizens. Africa has become the global trouble spot in both natural and 'man-made disasters'. Droughts and floods compound the problems arising from poor governance in Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sudan, etc. Extensive refugee's populations are created out of these social cleavages.

Do these have terminal dates? How would Africa meet the target date of the MDGs in these circumstances? This promise cannot be guaranteed. Again given that all the participants in the MDGs are sovereign nation-states, who is going to benchmark the progress, policies and institutional capacity development needed to achieve the MDGs? These are questions which the designers of the MDGs needed to clarify towards the actualization of the set goals.

General Principles of Development and Roadblocks to Actualization

The social and institutional elements, which impede the actualization of the MDGs which would continue to do so in Africa, would be analyzed in this section of the paper. These impediments are common to all African states. All the African countries practice the 'free-market' principles as a road map to development. These are market, economies that recognize two participants, the owners of organizations and laborers. Everyone in the market economy wears a 'commodity mask', you either sell your labor power or you are a hirer of labor (Ake, 1988:11). Given the poor state of the development of the market, where funds are deposited abroad while industrial production deals mainly with the extraction of raw materials, which are processed overseas, a state of disequilibrium evolved. This is compounded on the one hand by the poor educational system, which cannot present qualitative labor force to feed the organizations. Where there are, many of the organizations cannot absorb them because of low productive capacity. There arises a state of disarticulation in the socio-economic system. This ensures that extreme poverty and hunger live side by side with the people. This is because the African social formation creates a situation in which everyone has a dependent kith and kin in the social relationship. So as long as one is unemployed, many dependants down the line are affected. Perhaps it was in recognition of this, that the United Nations defined the first Millennium Development Goal cautiously, recognizing the endemic nature of poverty in the market system, and asking for the avoidance of it extremity, hence eradication of extreme poverty.

It is instructive to note that the adoption of the 'free market economy' principles fundamentally altered the rule of economic organization in traditional African society where the distribution of wealth produced was such that there was hardly any room for parasitism. The society cared about its individual and as such no individual in traditional African society was worried about what would happen to his tomorrow. The society looked after him Nyerere, (2006: 3) in what Mwalimu Julius Nyerere

termed African Socialism, a system of collectivization based on the extended kinship system in Africa. The 'free-market though guarantees the freedom of the individual, but does not provide the means of his livelihood. This explicates the persistence of extreme hunger and poverty. The situations as presented herein persuasively applies to the entire African continent. What happens between now and the year 2015 would be instructive in the actualization of the MDGs.

African leaders have not come to the realization that the 'free-market economy', which they practice, strive on 'investment and production' as two cardinal principles of the system. Sub-cardinal to these is the upgrading or creation of tools for production. The intellects for creation of tools come from education, because it is only an educated person that can think critically, follow complex logical processes to invent tools needed to exploit the environment. Regrettably, however, the budgetary provision of African states for education has been very low since independence. This has left the population with a large social aggregate of uneducated persons, which does not only impede development, but provides an army of uneducated people with extensive anomic social participation in the system. Secondly, where education ever make the priority list of the government of African States, corruption and poor implementation, which characterize public policy in Africa, disabled it. Thus, primary education as a result cannot become an input to the secondary, university/tertiary education. There is therefore a vicious cycle of educational tardiness and slow contribution to development.

Public Policy

The public administrative system in African states is organized into the Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government. A bureaucracy with functional specialization and with responsibility for public service delivery. The organization and its procedures are generally referred to as the 'civil service' or 'public service'. It is characterized by gross ineffectiveness in the delivery of 'public goods'. This is theoretically and empirically because of the absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the programming, to ascertain the social impact of the public programs. Consequent upon this, resources are spent, programmes are designed and executed without adjustment of the processes, redesigning, or even outright cancellation where necessary. The absence of these micro policies framework, that would have strengthened public policies in African states, culminates in large budgetary allocations, without corresponding socio-economic development. The results are

poverty, inequality, high maternal and child mortality rate, as well as the prevalence of diseases, which have made nonsense of the several interventions by multilateral institutions. These are the fundamental issues, which push further the terminal date for the actualization of the MDGs in Africa.

Dependent economy

The structure of African economies is a dependent one which evokes unequal structural relationship. Africa is still largely producers and exporters of raw-crude products, minerals and agricultural produce, such as crude petroleum, gold, tin columbite, coffee, uranium, cobalt, sisal, etc. The prices the sale and purchase of these products are decided at the World Trade Center (the twin towers that were bombed in 9/11), where no African sits on the board. Ironically, African States import finished products, goods and services from those who buy her raw products. The raw products are processed into finished goods and Africans then import at prices determined by the manufacturers far above the prices at which the raw materials were purchased. Consequently, almost all the income earned from the sale of the raw materials is depleted in the importation of the finished goods and services to a deficit level. According to the ECA, African exports for the period 1970-75 (in millions of US dollars) showed that manufactured products made up 12.3% of all exports of independent Africa in 1974, and 10.9% in 1975. Africa remains the weakest region in the developing world in terms of manufacturing output in 1972 its share of manufacturing of the developing world was a mere 8.1% compared to 54.6% for Latin America and 37.3% for Asia (Ake, 1981:150). The indication here is that Africa is not developing its productive forces. The implication of this situation is that between 1968-74 the indices of total African agricultural imports and exports were: Africa's total imports amounted to 229 million dollars, while the total export out of Africa was 102 million dollars (Ake, 1981:101). The deficit was 127 million dollars. The inference was that Africa spent more than she earned. How would she meet the need of the continent in the circumstance?

A critical impediment to the MDGs is that African economies are 'donor driven' in human and material resources. The donors have always proposed and supervised the sector in which their resources are to be invested. This is often excluded the social sector in which the MDGs belong. The dependence of African economies on donated inputs from the west and Europe constitute a serious impediment to the realization of the goals of MDGs for the reasons highlighted above. This is because all the

MDGs belong to the social sector of the economy. During economic difficulties, it is the social sector, which always has its annual budgetary allocation slashed. Secondly, the sector is always lacking strong lobbyists to retain the budgetary allocation and even increase same. The attainment of the MDGs in African by the year 2015 remains problematic.

Domestic Mismanagement of the Economy

African leaders have been in the habit of mismanaging the economy so much that the state often cannot provide for the people anymore. This has led to consistent crisis in most African states with considerable consequences. Some of the wars fought in African states have been a product of mismanagement of the state. The recent 'Arab Spring' with its dire consequences, was essentially because of the lack of good governance and prudent economic management of the economies of these states as was the case in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Algeria to the north. In Africa south of the Sahara, is Zimbabwe, failed state of Somalia, war in Eritrea, conflict in Ethiopia and Xenophobic attack in South Africa. The West African sub-region has not fared better. The east African states of Kenya and the rest are not exempted. All these point in one direction, that poverty arising from poor governance, could pose much more serious upheaval of unimaginable proportion to downgrade the feasibility of the MDGs in African states. Today Africa has the greatest number of wars in the global system, it contains the greatest number of failed states, which cannot provide for the people and it contains the highest number of refugees. States under these conditions certainly cannot actualize the MDGs by 2015.

Denial of the people's Rights

The rights of the people in Africa are hardly appreciated. The right-based approach is a participatory development approach that recognizes the rights of the poor and excluded people as well as the duty of government to meet these rights. Right-based approach recognizes that the poor and excluded people are entitled to fundamental human rights solely by reason of being human. These rights are not privileges. They are not dependent on grace or benevolence of rulers. These rights are fundamental, inalienable, universal, interdependent and indivisible (Igbuzor, 2006:6). Gender equality, universal basic education and many other MDGs could be met if right base approach is applied in the African states under this condition. Nevertheless, the poor and the excluded, which are in the majority in African states, have no means of intervention in the polity. Consequent upon this, they are not provided for in states

matters such as elections (polling booths are not made friendly to people living with disabilities -PLWD) and in many other functions).

Debt Burden

Earlier in this work, the nature of the African economies were outlined and shown that they are dependent in nature. This led to considerable debt crisis. The debt crisis amounts to a two-person zero-sum game, in which one party's gain is the other party's loss. What the debtor countries have been losing, the creditor countries have been gaining. The debt crisis has thus benefited the creditors through a net transfer of capital (Onimode, 2000:111) from Africa. The implication of this includes drastic cheapening of exports of raw materials through massive and persistent currency devaluations imposed by the creditors on the debtor countries, and through external debt overhang to impose harsh conditionalities. This amounts to perverse trade, with considerable balance of payment problems. Can MDGs be met under these conditions? These conditions militate against the realization of the MDGs given that the initiator of the programme have no legal status to intervene in any state to enforce or make obligatory the conditions for the realization of the MDGs.

Nature of Leadership

The nature of political leadership in African states presents the greatest obstacle to the realization of the MDGs in Africa. They are mostly surrogates to international political capital. Consequently, they pursue economic policies which are dictated by the profit motives of Multinational corporations, which often are not directed to the benefits of the indigenous people. By this approach, the economic activities benefits are freighted away as repatriated gains while poverty is left behind. This is the only way in which they could secure external support to remain in power against all odds. It is a known fact, that most brutal dictators in governance in African had been sustained by European powers and remove from power by the dictates of the Western European states. In Nigeria, the refusal of Goodluck Jonathan to embrace the 'same sex marriage' as the American had done, earned him negative campaigns, example, refusal to buy arms to crush the insurgents 'Boko Haram' in Nigeria. This applies to several other African leaders.

African States and MDGs: An Analysis

The study in this section of the paper, deals with the evaluation of the ability of the individual African states to achieve the MDGs. This analysis takes cognizance of the fact, the eight MDGs would certainly entail;

- (a) considerable political will to manage the economy in the national interest
- (b) embark on the economic empowerment of all the social classes in the society and make good governance the guide to state policy. These call for enormous redistribution of income. Is this possible given the current class configuration and its hold on Governance? It is here argued that from the data presented on the state of the economy of African States, even as they were years back, the situation has not change significantly. This explicates the alertness induced when the then Nigerian Women Affairs Minister (Mrs. Anini) recently claimed that about 92 percent of the MDGs targets in respect of her Ministry had been achieved. One wondered how these were done when the numbers of women in the legislature were negligible; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), women unemployment, trafficking in women were going on unabated, though the girl-child education has been receiving enormous enlightenment campaign.

Prospects

Admirable as the MDGs are, efforts must be made to earn them. To do this Africa must undergo surgery in broad socio-economic areas. The discourse, which follows, analyses the prospects.

- a) The leadership of African states should be bold enough to have the political will to be independent of external capital(s) thereby exerting influence on the way to go. This is the only way to be able to take socio-economic decisions that would be in the interest of the citizens of African states. It is also fundamental to the actualization of the MDGs in Africa. Hugo Chavez, Fidel Castro, Pedro Moralez and many other Latin American leaders are good examples of this. The postulations of the World Bank and the Bretton woods institutions may be commonplace, but the paramount element remains, the political will to confront poverty frontally in all its ramifications.
- b) Strengthening African Economies: Achieving the MDGs across its themes presupposes strengthening of African economies. This is a tall order in the global imperialistic space. What happen now and the end of 2015 would be instructive in this regard. Consequently, it is herein posited that given the problems encountered in dealing with Bretton Woods institutions, Africa should develop collective infrastructure which are essential to socio-economic development especially those African states or institutions which are too poor to

develop individually. Such institutions as the African Development Bank (ADB) and other institutions such as Union of African Central Banks, African Poverty Eradication Institute (which should study the social formation of each state) to focus on the eradication programme and avoid public policies which inadvertently engender poverty should be created. NEPAD is in this fold but should be reformed to include to above postulations.

- c) Counter-Penetration: On the issue of economic dependency, African states should jointly come up with a Multi-National Corporations (MNC) such as Transcorp (Transnational Corporation) in Nigeria, which would invest in the critical areas of advanced economies. The extent of the investment would wield power of economic counter-penetration of the western economies. This would be used in halting certain decisions/policies, which would have been foisted on African-states to obtain certain concessions.
- d) Empowerment of women: It is an admissible fact that women are imbued with developmental intellect. This is because a correlation exists between the nations that discriminate consciously or unconsciously on gender equality and underdevelopment. How else would one explicate the fact that all developed nations are those that empower women and uphold gender equality? Consequently, the steps that should be taken in African states to solve the problems of gender should be a holistic rather than marginal one, and must be articulated into the heuristic socio-economic framework of development. All African states should begin with the establishment of the Ministry of Women Affairs, which should work out the detailed programme for the empowerment of the female gender and do much to downgrade cultures which stand in opposition of this.
- e) Science and technology: In this work, the goal of reducing child, maternal, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, mortality are bound-up, not only on socio-economic development programme but in science and technology development and application. These objectives require a massive injection of funds in science and technology development over a considerable period. Africa states should ensure the development of an adequate science and technology base and the application of science and technology in agriculture and all other spheres of life. Africa's share of research and development is considerably low. The extensive application social crisis levels. The reliance on interventions from foreign donors in these areas is counterproductive.

would include research and development on the adoption of novel approaches to the reduction of these problems, which have assumed social crisis levels. The reliance on interventions from foreign donors in these areas is counterproductive.

It is not out of place to advocate that all African states should set up a department solely to pursue the MDGs. Correspondently; all the legislatures in Africa should have legislative committees on MDGs to perform oversight functions on the implementation of relevant MDGs programmes. The legislative committees should ensure that adequate budgetary allocations are made and released to those identified as capable to execute MDGs programmes to specifications.

Lastly, the development of science and technology should include the development of appropriate technology for the exploitation of the environment, with the aim of ensuring environmental sustainability. This would further ensure that, we exploit the environment for our benefit now, but still leave it better for future generations. It is only on these bases that Africa can develop meaningful global partnership on almost equal terms.

Conclusions

The Millennium Development Goals are lofty ideals, but there are landmines on the path of Africa's march towards their realization by the year 2015. The most critical of these as already enunciated is, the operating philosophy of development across Africa, which is anti-thetical to the actualization of these laudable objectives. The current development fad being propagated by the international financial, Bretton wood institutions, (BWIs), which seek small government and a central place for private capital, find solace in profitable sector of the economy for investment. It is instructive to note that all the MDGs, are in the social sector which require massive governmental interventions. As pointed out, this is the greatest impediment. The states should rise to the occasion and exhibit patriotic will by reducing corruption, pursuing real sustainable development agenda. After all, the Asian States achieved much within the same international economic order. This paper has analyzed other elements that are germane to the actualization of the MDGs. The analysis indicated that it would require a first of first the political will by the state to pursue nationalistic public policy. African states do not require to say like Professor Danik Rodnik say 'Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello

Washington Confusion' to be able to achieve the MDGs. The attainment of the MDGs would be a step in the pursuit of the anticipated Sustainable Development Goals the post-2015 development agenda. This is a tall and tortuous order, but it is feasible through a nationalistic and patriotic government far from the current elite's conspiracy to misgovern Africa.

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