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**PERSPECTIVES OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG's): EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INITIATIVES IN AFRICAN COMMUNITIES.**

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***Abstract.***

*In September 2000 at the United Nations Organization headquarters in New York City, during the United Nations Millennium Summit, 147 world leaders gathered to chart a new course of action to improve the welfare and well being of mankind. The goals were spelt out in eight clear terms each addressing the survival and sustainable development of mankind. In summary, all the goals specifically target education, health and poverty issues. In line with the goals, the target date according to the charter will be 2015. The goals were adopted by 189 nations. The downward trend of quality education, health care delivery and the rising poverty levels in most African, Latin American and some Asian nations have been a source of worry to the various organs of United Nations having the primary responsibilities in line with development issues aforementioned. Since independence of majority of African Nations since 1960, there had not been significant leaps in relation to the overall human and infrastructural development in most countries. Over the last few years even with appreciable income from the sale of crude oil, solid minerals and agricultural driven economies in some of the leading countries in the continent, the status of each of the eight goals are still much below average.*

*This paper takes a perspective into Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), implementation strategies, countries'-wide initiatives, strategies for wider scale implementation, inherent values within the local societies, spiraling effects at national and continental levels, and, educational implications of MDG's initiatives for an enduring life-long learning in communities. Recommendations on strengthening the action plans considering countries'-wide challenges are included.*

**Key words:** Millennium, summit, MDG's, sustainable development, initiatives, interventions, implementation, strategies, action plans, challenges etc.

## **Introduction**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) are an internationally agreed set of goals for human development drawn from the Millennium Declaration, signed by all United Nations member states in 2000. Acknowledging the value of equity for development, the Declaration stresses the importance of equality, where no individual or Nation is denied the chance to benefit from development, and solidarity, and where global challenges are managed in a way that distributes the costs and benefits fairly (UNGA, 2000).

The eight goals were officially established following the Millennium summit attended by 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 International organizations in 2000. The goals in summary aim at;

- (1) Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- (2) Achieving Universal primary education
- (3) Promoting gender equality and empowering women

- (4) Reducing Child mortality rates
- (5) Improving maternal health
- (6) Combating HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases
- (7) Ensuring environmental sustainability, and
- (8) Developing a global partnership for development

MDG's in essence capture a more complete understanding of development which includes indicators for health, gender inequality, education and the environment.

Specifically, all the eight goals are geared towards alleviation of poverty from the society. Statistical figures on poverty from the underdeveloped and developing countries are enormous and the concept gets a mention regularly from the World Bank, IMF, and ADB etc on daily basis.

There is growing recognition that poverty is not only about income, but about social risks such as discrimination unequal distribution of resources and power in household and limited citizenship (CPRC, 2008).



Agriculture which is a major source of income for the rural poor farmers, food processors and marketers was technically omitted from the goals. The role of agriculture in overall poverty reduction and growth of a nation cannot be overemphasized. One then wonders **how growth and development can be sustained and maintained without adequate and regular food supplies.**

Despite the review summit in 2010 in New York, there were renewed battles against poverty, hunger and diseases but no initiative on how to completely eradicate these through increased food production.

The idea on development has been over trumpeted by the United Nations with little emphasis on growth. It is important to note here that development as used here is an intent which when appropriately translated can now be measured in quantitative terms and then becomes growth. The question that reality comes to mind is; how can there be development without growth? Paul Collier an enthusiastic – and highly influential – advocate of growth as the key route out of poverty argued in his book, *The Bottom Billion*; “Nowadays the talk is about poverty reduction and the other Millennium Development Goals, not about growth rates.... Yet the central problem of the bottom is that they have not grown”

Poverty is multi-dimensional. Its causes are diverse, its manifestations and definitions are contextual, and it is not only a state of deprivation but also a set of

processes (Carney, 1999; World Bank, 1999; Ravnborg, 1996).

According to Farrington and Gill (2002) majority of rural poor are located in “difficult” areas which have been diversely described as locus of civil strife. The characteristic features of such “difficult” areas that are poverty stricken according to them are having

- Low agricultural potentials (owing to combinations of climatic, hydrological, soils, topographic or pest and disease problems).
- Fragile ecology
- Weak infrastructure
- Highly fragmented and weakly functioning markets
- Poor connectivity to national, regional and global markets
- Unstable policy and poor government.

Farrington and Gill (2002) went further to describe the features of the rural poor thus; “some of the rural poor are small own-account producers in the agricultural or rural non-farm economy (RNFE), some are laborers (whether seasonal, casual or permanent), all are (generally undernourished) consumers. But the poor are not fully defined simply as low income-earners or consumers; they are also characterized by low ownership and weak access to assets (natural, physical, financial, social and political), high levels of vulnerability to risk and uncertainty, and exclusion by social, administrative and political processes. They went further to indicate



that “Households headed by orphaned children, the elderly or women with high numbers of dependants are disproportionately represented among the poor. The inability of these to engage fully in production is problematic for growth – based strategies; existing mechanism of resource transfer must be strengthened or new ones introduced, if they are to share the benefits of growth”.

The features aptly described above capture the true nature of poverty which the Eight MDG's hope to address in addition to various interventions by the respective governments at all tiers. There is no doubt that there is widening disparities in the development processes across the globe and such impacts are significantly felt in immediate communities of the African continent. According to Vandemoortele (2010) “such widening disparities has undermined sustained improvement across the economic, social and political spectrum, and that hinders progress on the MDG's. unequal progress means that the rich see diminishing returns as they reach the natural limits of human development e.g life expectancy or primary school enrolment ratios), while the poor see little progress. This brings national averages down”. This clearly explains why significant changes are hardly recognized in development interventions despite huge investment by donor agencies across the continent.

#### **Concept of sustainable livelihoods and development**

The concept of Sustainable Livelihood (SL) is an attempt to go beyond the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty eradication. In a nutshell, it refers to a balance between conservation and the utilization or depletion of natural resources.

In 1992 Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway proposed the following composite definition of a sustainable rural livelihood, which is applied most commonly at the household level: *A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.*

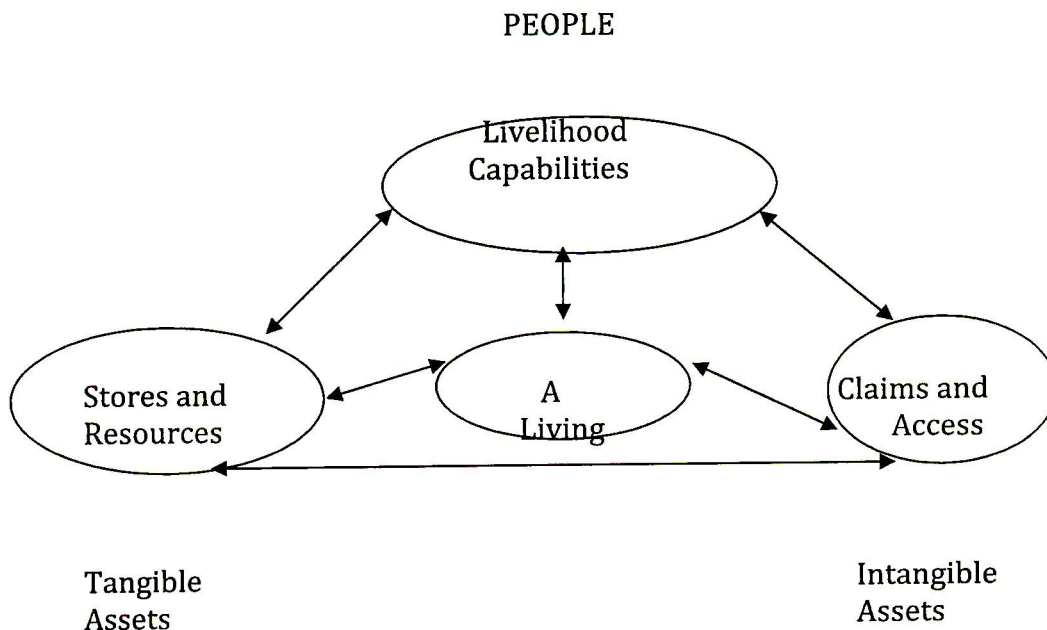
Leading proponent Scoones (1998) proposed a modified definition of SL: A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base. According to him, four types of capital are identified in the IDS framework (which does not pretend to be an exhaustive list):

- Natural capital – the natural resource stocks (soil, water, air,

genetic resources, etc.) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks, etc.) from which resource flows and services useful for livelihoods are derived.

- Economic or financial capital – the capital base (cash, credit/debt, savings, and other economic assets, including basic infrastructure and production equipment and technologies) which are essential for the pursuit of any livelihood strategy.

- Human capital – the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health and physical capability important for the successful pursuit of different livelihood strategies,
- Social capital – the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations) upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies requiring co-ordinate actions.



**Fig: 1. UNDP'S approach to promoting sustainable livelihoods**  
**Source:** Krantz (2001).

The sustainability of livelihoods becomes a function of how men and women use asset portfolios on both a short- and long-

term basis. One then wonders how the widening gaps in respect of production on the farms and in all other sectors vis-à-vis



The sustainability of livelihoods becomes a function of how men and women use asset portfolios on both a short- and long-term basis. One then wonders how the widening gaps in respect of production on the farms and in all other sectors vis-à-vis overall environmental sustainability can be bridged in the continent. The widening gaps create unstable economy, poor development and concomitant increase in the level of poverty at household and National levels..

#### **Defining chronic conflict, political instability and effects on growth and development**

Significant and appreciable developments from interventions of donor agencies are often not impactful due to recurring conflicts in the crises prone areas of the continent. On the average, countries on the continent have not known peace than any other continent in the last 20-25 years. One may ask how growth and

development will prosper in such a situation. The main characteristics of situations of chronic conflict and political instability according to Longley and Maxwell (2003) include

- Seriously weakened or non-existent public institution's (executive, judicial, legislative) within the state in question.
- External legitimacy of the state withheld or contested.
- Strong parallel or extra – legend economy
- Existence of, or high susceptibility to, violence
- Forced displacement refugees and internally – displaced people.
- Sections of the population deliberately excluded from enjoying basic rights.
- Livelihoods highly vulnerable to external shocks.
- Existence of serious poverty.

Further classification by Longley and Maxwell (2003) reveals some features of livelihood relevant to chronic conflict situations thus;

<b>Household Level</b>	<b>Broader Livelihood and Political Economy Content</b>
Displacement, forced migration or relocation in relation to social, legal and economic ties	Spatial pattern's of political tension and physical insecurity
Changing household composition (due to death abduction, displacement or migration) and impact on income generation, labour and	Disruption to travel and transport and local markets for both consumption and production – and wider economy.



income generation, labour and productivity	
Asset levels – loss, depletion and maintenance of all asset types, natural, financial, physical, human and social.	Changing governance structures, control over markets labour and resources through formal and informal Institution, services provision.
Way's in which the above point's in combination with the broader content, affect livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes and different groups.	Changing power relation's within and between groups and communities, underlying causes of conflict, strategies used by insurgent's

### **Livelihood approaches in chronic situations**

Operates at different and often multiple levels

- Involved in range of activities, requiring different types of capacity within implementing agencies
- Must be based on sound analytical understanding and predictive assessment on livelihood and the broader political economy
- Adopt a participatory approach and empower programme participants.
- Are flexible and responsive, with the capacity to incorporate both 'developmental' and 'relief' modes of operation
- Promote capacity – building at local, agency and / or broader levels
- Lead to long – lasting impacts
- Should undertake long – term impact assessments and act on assessment findings

Sustained and equitable growth based on dynamic structural economic changes is necessary for making substantial progress towards the other millennium development goals. While economic growth is necessary, it is not sufficient for progress on reducing poverty (UN, 2010).

Poverty-focused development activity like the MDG's as a form of grassroots support and intervention in Africa should be:

- **People-centred:** sustainable poverty elimination will be achieved only if external support focuses on what matters to people, understands the difference between groups of people, and works with them in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environment, and ability to adapt.
- **Responsive and participatory:** poor people themselves must be key actors in identifying and addressing livelihood priorities. Outsiders need processes that

enable them to listen and respond to the poor.

- **Multi-level:** poverty elimination is an enormous challenge that will only be overcome by working at multiple levels, ensuring that micro-level activity informs the development of policy and an effective enabling environment, and that macro-level structures and processes support people to build upon their own strengths.
- **Conducted in partnership:** with both the public and the private sector.
- **Sustainable:** there are four key dimensions to sustainability – economic, institutional, social and environmental sustainability. All are important – a balance must be found between them.
- **Dynamic:** external support must recognize the dynamic nature of livelihood strategies, respond flexibly to changes in people's situation, and develop longer term commitments (adapted from Ashley and Carney, 1999)

### **Current situations of MDG's in the continent**

Of the developing regions, Sub-Saharan Africa faces the greatest challenge of meeting the MDGs. On present trends, only the five countries of North Africa—with significantly lower poverty levels and better access to education, health, and other social services—are on course to meet the poverty reduction and social

development goals. Sub-Saharan countries are unlikely to meet the poverty reduction goal fully, while progress on the social development goals is more varied, with a number of countries poised to meet them.

Running at an average economic growth rate of about 3.3 percent a year in the recent past, most Sub-Saharan African countries will not achieve the goal, and the number of the poor in the region is likely to increase. But 14 countries registered average growth rates of more than 5 percent during 1995–2001. Although they are unlikely to achieve the poverty goal completely, they can—on present trends—be expected to make substantial progress toward it. At the other extreme are countries, which due to persistent conflicts or severe governance problems, are falling away from the MDGs

### **Health**

The MDGs on health cover a broad range of topics, such as reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds and the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters and halting and having begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other major diseases. The report estimates that per capita investments of US\$13.00–25.00 in 2005, \$19.00–33.00 in 2010, and \$30.00–48.00 in 2015 will be sufficient to achieve these goals.

### **Transport Infrastructure**

Poor infrastructure is often mentioned as one of the most important bottlenecks



inhibiting growth and development in Africa. Although the UN Millennium Project refers to several such items, there is no separate entry for investment in telecommunications.

For roads, the estimated per capita investment needs are in the range of US\$11.00–13.00 in 2006, US\$10.00–21.00 in 2010, and US\$10.00–31.00 in 2015 for the cost of maintaining and expanding road networks only.

### **Education**

The MDG on education is to achieve universal primary education for boys and girls by 2015. The estimated per capita requirements mentioned in the report also include secondary education: “Our education estimates build upon the Education for All estimates by also including secondary school education” (243). The estimated annual per capita investments needed to achieve this goal are US\$11.00–17.00 in 2005, \$13.00–19.00 in 2010, and \$17.00–25.00 in 2015.

### **Strategies for wider scale implementation**

Africa’s innate capacity to develop has not been appropriately utilised because of some political considerations that are by default using growth and development as appendages. A clear reference point is the soya beans project which was aborted prematurely in Nigeria by the foreign donor agency because of conflict of interest in the project. Some other projects have recorded tremendous successes at the

continental level. A vivid example below explains this type of intervention on the continent

As population growth rates continue to exceed the productive capacity of Africa’s current food reserves, agricultural transformation remains a fundamental development challenge, impeding the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The emergence of alternative users for agricultural products has resulted in additional pressure on Africa’s capacity to feed itself; resulting in many millions of Africans

living on the brink of starvation. In response to concerns over food security and low-performance agricultural indicators, African countries and their development partners are stepping-up their efforts to strategically harness the best science and technology available to increase the continent’s agricultural productivity. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is a major outcome of these efforts. AGRA is a coordinated initiative to ensure agricultural development and to promote the importance of indigenous science and technology innovation to sustain the Green Revolution within Africa. Since its establishment in 2006, with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, AGRA has provided local distributors with adaptable, manageable solutions to develop an efficient, competitive working environment in rural agriculture, effectively improving output. Targeting small-scale farming, AGRA’s programs



support rural infrastructure, water management systems, and agro-dealer enterprises, as well as facilitating training in efficient farming techniques and the impact of agricultural development on the process of climate change. As women are responsible for the majority of food production in Africa, they maintain a particular focus in AGRA's policy framework. Investment in innovative agricultural research and development (R&D) to further the capacity of small-scale farming in Africa is critical for achieving sustainable growth in agricultural output. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture's (IITA) Research for Development (R4D) has made important contributions in this regard. Its research has brought about a series of agricultural innovations in high-yielding and disease-resistant seedlings in many areas such as banana and plantain plantations, cereals and legumes, horticulture and tree plantations. It has also introduced a systemic program of integrated pest management with wide applications in many African countries. Similarly, the Africa Rice Centre has introduced new rice varieties to many African countries, including Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Uganda. The diffusion of this innovation in Guinea resulted in that country producing a record 1.4 million tonnes of rice in 2007, 5 percent higher than its 2006 output. As a consequence, Guinea's domestic rice production was able to cover 70 percent of domestic consumption. Due to investment in

indigenous science and technology, the capacity of local seed varieties and crop outputs has considerably improved. Malian sorghum breeders have released three new hybrids sorghum crops with the capacity to quadruple the harvests of Mali's staple food crop. The grain is drought-resistant and essential to food security.

<http://www.agra-alliance.org>

<http://www.iita.org>

and

<http://www.panapress.com>

In the context of a composite measure of hunger across regions, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) introduced the Global Hunger Index (GHI) by combining three indicators: (i) the proportion of undernourished as a percentage of the total population, (ii) the prevalence of underweight children under the age of five, and (iii) the under-five mortality rate.

Overall, the GHI shows a declining trend in the developing world. However, the reduction in GHI was uneven across regions. Africa, excluding North Africa, registered the lowest reduction in the hunger index at 13 percent, compared to Latin America and the Caribbean where GHI fell by over 40 percent. Furthermore, nine out of the ten countries worldwide which saw the greatest rise in the GHI over the period 1990–2009 were in Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, and Zambia). On a more positive note, some African countries

improved their GHI by more than ten percentage points (Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, and Mozambique).: *Grebmer et al. (2009).*

<http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Full%20Report-MDG-WEB.pdf>

### **Educational implications of MDG's and initiatives**

In mobilizing for development initiatives, concerted efforts must be made to appropriately educate the masses so that they can appreciate the inherent benefits of such initiatives. To educate the masses is to sensitize them for a positive change to improve their lives and standard of living. The MDG's were introduced to complement existing government initiatives in the development programmes and make lives more bearable and meaning to the ordinary people in the developing world. All the eight goals are educative in nature as they are meant to pass information and enlighten the public on the common good that will be beneficial to all. All the goals are aimed at alleviating poverty and building a sustainable environment in all ramifications.

The women are well targeted in all the goals and this is an indication of government seriousness about the initiatives particularly in ensuring life-long learning and creating independence of life. In every society of the world, women are treated with utmost care because of their nature. The successes of

any family in terms of discipline, moral uprightness, good upbringing of the children depends on women at the home front. The home is the watershed for discipline and this gradually reflects on the society.

A combination of educative and enlightenment processes in areas of skills acquisition and work culture have helped a great deal in areas of increased income and wealth, development of physical motor skills and mental therapy (intelligence), technological breakthrough with respect to civilization and convenience of life satisfying social services, curbing of societal vices, and moral uprightness etc. Since the creation of man, the two concepts of vocation and work have positively affected orientation and mobilization efforts of the government at the grassroots in areas of democracy, good governance, human rights and rural development. The impacts have been felt at the home, family, community, village/town, local government area, state at the national and regional levels. The multiplier effects of these are the areas that the governments want to maximize. This is clearly the case of rapid technological advancement in all spheres of human endeavors in the South East Asian Nations since 1970's which the World Bank have commented on.

Orientation and mobilization efforts at the grassroots on the African continent by various National governments are not new. The most



laudable of all the efforts of the past governments in Nigeria is the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of the Major Gen. Buhari/Idiagbon government of the Mid 80's. It was aimed at giving positive direction to the Nigeria masses, ensure overall development and also, assure us of enduring social protection. The WAI was to be launched into ten phases but was short-lived as the government was swept out of power having only launched four phases – orderliness in public places (queuing culture), attitude to work, Nationalism and patriotism and War against economic sabotage. The second phase of attitude to work was aimed at re-orientating Nigerian on the values and ethics of work culture to nation. Being engaged in a functional work will influence every part of our lives, provides us with identity as a person, and, help to satisfy basic human need which invariably will all guarantee our social protection in our immediate communities and beyond.

Acquisition of any form of vocational skill to earn a living or get a regular income is a normative enterprise

Conclusion

From available indicators all over the continent, it is very evident that the MDG's have fallen far below the minimum achievable levels as the 2015 target date fast approaches. Local national data are often not available or at most when available are very unreliable because of some contradictory information therein. Africa is often portrayed as lagging

which grows out of the social values and expectations of the society. It is for those who need it, want it and can profit by it – work culture. The primary work roles of man has helped a great deal to improve his primitive lifestyles in areas of voluntary services, working for one self, working for others, working for government community etc.

It is believed that the vulnerable groups in most African communities who lack economic (including livelihoods), social and political power should be exposed to some educational and enlightenment programmes as ways out of their present situations so as to have a transformative social change which this paper addresses. On the long term, Africans irrespective of status should have greater economic independence and play a more meaningful role in decision-making in the societies. To be actors in this development processes, people must be exposed to functional education and enlightenment programmes which should benefit individuals and the societies they live in.

behind on the attainment of the MDGs relative to other global continents. According to the report titled "Assessing progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals", available information indicate that

MDG data have not always been available on time at the national level. If they exist, they have been subject to problems of



inconsistency with international standards. Moreover, data transmission to and estimates made by international agencies – together with the fact that countries do not produce data on MDGs annually – constitute another layer of problems contributing to the observed data gaps. Over the last few years, there have been commendable steps taken by African countries, with the support of international organizations, to obtain data for tracking progress on the MDGs. However, a number of challenges persist relating to the production of data in Africa. The low profile of statistics on the continent is due to a number of obstacles, including: inadequate resources allocated to statistical activities; the lack of institutional capacity; inadequate coordination of statistical activities; and minimal consideration of African specificities in setting up international (The MDG Report 2009).

It is therefore a difficult task to get reliable data from various countries from which researchers and policy makers in governments particularly in Nigeria can draw conclusions from. A close analysis from observable indicators of the MDG's reveals little or no progress at all over the past few years in relation to growth and development in most communities in Nigeria and on the continent. It is recognized that MDG's are to complement National initiatives on development, but available data (though not too reliable) are not encouraging on the achievements so far. In view of these glaring shortcomings, the Post 2015 agenda are

carefully studying and taking care of inherent lapses of the MDG's.

### **Suggestions and ways forward**

The imminent failure of the MDG's is making most International organizations and African governments to think of alternatives, frameworks and new directions after 2015. This will enable them to chart a new course of action to tackle poverty, corruption, good governance and other anti- growth concepts plaguing the continent.

The purpose of the framework is to achieve the change needed to secure progress towards our broad Vision. It will do this according to HLP Moronvia sessions by:

- **Enabling coherence and prioritization of action** – identifying what needs to be done to achieve sustainable change which benefits ALL, ensuring coherence between different development and environment agendas, and prioritizing those issues with the greatest potential for delivering progress towards our vision.
- **Securing commitment to action** – incentivizing and requiring coordinated, collective action by actors in all countries, at all levels (global, state, private sector, civil society) and focusing economic, natural, political and social

resources to drive a process of meaningful and positive change.

- **Ensuring more functional school curricula** – such include the introduction of core vocational education courses at all tiers of the school system and creating room for entrepreneurial skills development in and out of school situations. This will encourage graduates to be job creators and not job seekers. This will reduce dependence and craze for white collar jobs.
- **Ensuring accountability for action** – holding countries and other actors to account in meeting their commitment and achieving impact against the identified goals through transparent mechanism and processes, including stakeholder participation at all levels, and;
- **Ensuring prerequisites for growth through** governance, business environments, Infrastructure development, Human resource development and regional integration
- Introduction of the concept of integrated village-based development projects. This has coincided with the apparent inability of many countries to make much progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Villages

Projects (MVP), developed by a team of scientist at the Earth Institute, headed by Jeffrey Sachs, is among the most high profile of these village-based projects. It supports an integrated packed of proven interventions in health, agriculture and other sectors to lift inhabitants above the poverty threshold (Buse, Ludi and Vigneri, 2008).

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