

Millennium Developmental Goals in the Post-2015 Era: Assessing Sustainability through the Younger Generation

Dr. Mbanefo Odum

Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State Nigeria

Abstract: *Most policy initiatives undertaken by the government in Nigeria have failed to address the problems they were meant to solve, basically, due to inadequate planning and poor implementation. By looking at specific indicators, this study adopted the survey research design to assess not only the outputs – in terms of physical infrastructure – but also the impact of the relevant policy initiatives on the target group – in terms of positive attitudinal change. Findings revealed that the measures adopted in tackling the relevant developmental challenge are inadequate, which threatens the sustainability of the goals. Necessary recommendations were made to serve as a guide for subsequent policy actions.*

Keywords: Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development, socialization, environmental cleanliness, improved sanitary habits

1. Introduction/ Literature Survey

The search for a sustainable path to development, especially for the developing societies, has been a continuous one. The search still continues in view of the fact that experts are yet to come up with a workable strategy that could lift the affected societies out of their developmental predicament. Worried by the high level of backwardness, poverty and suffering being faced by the third world countries, the United Nations had embarked on a process aimed at fashioning out strategies for eliminating the menace.

Part of the strategies undertaken, as captured by Manning (2009:12), include “the series of major UN sectorally focused conferences from 1990 [Jomtien Conference on Education] to 1995 [World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen]”. Aside the above mentioned, others include the 1990 Children Summit held in New York; 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro; 1993 Human Rights Conference held in Vienna; and the 1995 World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

By September 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted what came to be known as the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which appeared to be the main framework upon which the Millennium Development Goals were crafted. Hulme and Scott (2010) however pointed out that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had already formed the International Development Goals (IDGs) prior to the MDGs and actually combined efforts with the World Bank during its 2001 meeting to arrive at the MDGs. The MDGs were eventually adopted as a universally accepted development initiative in 2005. Audinet and Haralambous (2005) described the Goals as a set of concrete, quantitative, and time-bound targets for poverty reduction to be reached by the year 2015 through coherent, coordinated and mutually supportive actions. From Ezeani’s (2012) presentation, the Goals are eight in number and covered issues relating to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women,

reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development. Equally, there are specific Targets associated with each goal.

The manner the MDGs were crafted gives one the indication that they were directed at saving the developing countries from the embarrassing threats of extreme poverty, that is, going by the measurable and somewhat quantifiable strategy for attaining the goals. The timeline attached to it equally indicates the sense of urgency and desire to monitor the outcome of the efforts with the aim of determining the level of progress within a specified period. Generally, it can be inferred that the expectation of those that drafted the document was that, once adopted and the roadmap followed, the MDGs would set the affected areas on a steady course towards eliminating the problems that gave rise to the Goals. For instance, it is most unlikely that the planners anticipated a situation of reversal whereupon the proportion of people who suffer from hunger or those whose income is less than one dollar per day would assume an increasing dimension after being reduced by half by 2015. Thus, reducing a particular menace by half by 2015 should be seen as a baseline standard set by those that drafted the document.

Like other countries with a high rate of poverty, Nigeria saw the MDGs as a good roadmap towards attaining human development and thus, adopted it as a working document. State governments keyed into the National plan and several steps aimed at actualizing the stated objectives were taken. The Anambra State government, for example, embarked on several „MDG projects“ that include the rehabilitation of health centres, supply of medical equipments, construction of hostel blocks for medical schools/hospitals, water schemes and sinking of boreholes/hand-dug wells, mounting of overhead tanks, provision of toilets for schools, construction/renovation of classroom blocks, rehabilitation of skill centres, supply of skill equipments, conditional cash transfer, etc. While these are laudable projects, there is the need to assess how they have performed in terms of accomplishing the goals for which they were provided.

The issues discussed in this paper are arranged under different sections that include the Introduction, Methodology, Theoretical Framework, Results of the Study, Discussion of Findings, and Conclusion/Recommendations.

2. Methodology

Nigeria is made up of thirty six States and Anambra State is one of them. Having keyed into the national agenda for the MDGs, the State government embarked on several projects in order to realize the set goals. The area of this study is Anambra State, with special focus on the relevant MDG projects. The topic shows that the research is assessing sustainability through the younger generation. The notion of younger generation, as used in this study, revolve around the young people within the primary and secondary school age that are more prone to be easily socialized into desirable roles that can sustain any developmental agenda. To this extent, the focus is on the relevant *MDG projects* provided for the public primary and secondary schools within the state.

This research has been designed to look into specific areas of the MDGs. As already observed, there are eight Goals and different Targets associated with each goal. Equally, there are various Indicators associated with the different Targets and their respective Goals. In all, there are eight Goals, eighteen Targets, and forty eight Indicators that serve as yardstick for measuring the extent to which the targets have been met. Goal 7, for instance, has three Targets (nos. 9, 10, and 11). While Target 9 has five Indicators, Target 10 has two (nos. 30 and 31), and Target 11 has only one (no. 32). The focus of this study is on Goal 7, Target 10. The Indicators associated with this Goal/Target are: (no. 30) Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved water source, urban and rural, and (no. 31) Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural. In clear terms, the focus is on access to safe drinking water, access to improved sanitary conditions, and the habits/attitudes promoted to ensure the sustainability of the projects and healthy practices. Consequently, the projects being assessed are those provided in line with satisfying these indicators, which include water schemes/boreholes, toilets, as well as other facilities that promote general cleanliness.

Survey design was adopted in generating data. In the course of designing the study, it was found out that there were schools not provided with (or yet to be provided with) any of the facilities, hence, purposive sampling was adopted to ensure that schools under study are those already provided with the relevant facilities. Sixty borehole projects and eighty Toilet projects sited in various schools that cut across ten local governments of the State were purposively selected for sampling. The Local Governments include Aguata, Anaocha, Awka North, Awka South, Dunukofia, Njikoka, Nnewi North, Nnewi South, Orumba North, and Oyi. Questionnaire served as the main instrument for generating and analysing data. One hundred and forty respondents were purposively selected in a manner that corresponded with the spread of the projects being assessed. Frequency count and percentages were used in the analysis of the questionnaire instrument. Also, the interview instrument was employed in

generating more detailed, realistic and less formal responses, especially from pupils that could not cope with the questionnaire. Observation was equally adopted, which helped in validating the responses from the other two instruments. Apart from these primary sources, documentary evidence was also used in generating data/information.

3. Theoretical Framework

Socialization is generally seen as a process through which societal values and cultures are transmitted from one generation to another. It deals with things we learn from the surrounding environment. As new members are born into the society, they are exposed to other members and in the process of interaction, learn and internalize the societal values, norms, and cultures, and in fact, the dos and don'ts of the society. Socialization can take a direct form by way of explicit communication or indirectly through experiences generated inadvertently.

The framework of analysis adopted in this study is hinged on the theory of socialization. The origin of this theory is traceable to the work of Sigmund Freud in his attempt to explain the process of personality development. Other names associated with this theory include George Mead, Charles Cooley, Talcott Parsons, etc. In general terms, the theory tries to explain the process that helps individuals form values and acquire skills necessary for fulfilling their societal roles as they develop within their environment. The key feature of this theory is the centrality of social interaction in the development process for individuals to be functional members of the society. For example, the work of Appelbaum and Chambliss (1997) tries to show how restriction from social interaction can affect the attitude and limit the social skills of affected individuals. Thus, it can be said that the way people are nurtured plays serious role in determining what they do or how they behave.

This theory is relevant to this study in many respects. School is one of agents of socialization. Apart from the fact that it is an arena where socialization can formally take place through explicit communication, it is equally a place with high concentration of peer groups, which can help in conditioning the attitude of those that are in school. Coming from a background where the projects/facilities under study and corresponding behavioural order were lacking, it is expected that the beneficiaries would be *socialized* into using them or [using Schaefer and Lamm's (1992) concept of resocialization] resocialized so as to discard their former behavioural patterns and accept new ones. By implication, the projects are supposed to have enthroned a new behavioural order characteristic of a society with a culture of environmental cleanliness and safe-drinking practice. This is in line with Henslin's (2004:66) view, which indicates that the activities individuals are allowed to participate in go a long way in conditioning their attitude towards how they perform related roles. If this culture of cleanliness is in place, therefore, it becomes possible to sustain the goals since the present generation of school children that have imbibed it will carry on with it and even transmit it to succeeding generations.

4. Results of the Study

Among other questions, including the ones used in testing internal consistency, the questionnaire instrument sought to know whether respondents viewed the projects/facilities provided in their school as a step in the right direction vis-a-vis promoting environmental cleanliness and safe drinking practice. 121 respondents (86%) viewed the facilities provided as ones that could help in realising the objectives whereas 19 respondents (14%) felt otherwise. Responses from the interview instrument corroborated the results of the questionnaire instrument and indicated that the beneficiaries actually lacked the projects/facilities that were provided by the government. On whether existing facilities are in good condition for the actualization of the desired objectives, 48 respondents (34%) agreed while 92 (66%) disagreed. Reacting to whether the existing facilities have led the beneficiaries into a significant positive attitudinal change towards environmental cleanliness, 59 (42%) agreed, 74 (53%) disagreed, while 7 (5%) returned "Dont Know". The interview instrument revealed that the facilities generated enthusiasm and led to the adoption of improved sanitary habits by the beneficiaries, though reversals started occurring under situations some of them (facilities) started breaking down/packing up. On whether the facilities contributed to any improvement in the sanitary condition of the benefitting school, 68 respondents (49%) agreed while 72 (51%) disagreed. The instrument further revealed that whereas 63 respondents (45%) agreed that the facilities are currently in good state for imparting values about hygiene on the beneficiaries, 77 (55%) disagreed. Asked to rate the maintenance culture concerning the facilities, 8 respondents (6%) rated it "High", 27 (19%) deemed it "Moderate" while 105 (75%) rated it "Low". On respondents' perception as to whether the government had been making genuine efforts towards ensuring environmental cleanliness or whether facilities being provided appeared to be politically motivated, 114 respondents (81%) indicated that the projects were politically motivated while 28 (19%) shared the opinion that the government's efforts were borne out of genuine commitment towards actualization of the goals. From the interviews conducted, it was revealed that the preoccupation of the government appeared to be the media coverage about the projects and not necessarily whether the facilities are in good condition. Respondents equally revealed that promises made by government, generally, towards the realization of the MDGs were not met satisfactorily. Cases were cited where the facilities started showing signs of failure at the time of completion, yet nothing was done to fix the noticeable defects. Asked to react whether the current performance of the projects is a good indicator for sustainability, 19 respondents (14) were positive, 45 (32) were doubtful, and 76 (54%) maintained that it was not a good indicator for sustainability.

Observation instrument revealed that there are few cases where both the borehole/hand-dug well and toilets were sited in the same schools. Many of the schools provided with toilets do not have borehole and source of potable water for drinking and for cleaning purposes. Interview instrument revealed that such schools rely either on rain water (during rainy seasons) or streams/ponds for their water needs. In some instances, water appeared to be inaccessible to the

extent that it limits the sanitary condition of the environment and individuals. It was observed also that out of the sixty boreholes under study, twenty three were not functional. Out of the thirty seven that were functional, eleven showed signs of absence of prompt maintenance. For instance, there were incidents of broken/leaking pipes, leaking overhead tanks, and spoilt taps resulting in continuous and uncontrollable flow and wastage of water. Though the cost of effecting repairs did not appear too high (such as some of the cases of spoilt taps and broken pipes), they were still left unattended to. From responses generated through interview, some of the faults had existed for a long time without being attended to. There were indications (from interview) that nine of the non-functional boreholes functioned just for few days/weeks after they were commissioned for use and had remained in that non-functional state since then.

It was observed that the toilet facilities provided by the State government under the MDG scheme were branded VIP toilets, which created the impression to distant observers that they were *luxurious* toilets. However, the VIP toilets (Ventilation-Improved-Pit toilets) are pit latrines constructed with toilet seats that were cut open from below so that waste materials would drop directly into the pit instead of flowing through a pipe to a septic tank. Only 28 of the VIP Toilets under study are in effective use while the rest have been either totally abandoned or not effectively being put to use. With the exception of very few, the structures for the toilets were very poorly constructed with several cases of „sinking“ floors, poor fittings, heavily cracked and dangerously hanging walls. The interview instrument revealed these as the reason most of them were abandoned. Aside this, cases were pointed out where the facilities had to be locked up to prevent beneficiaries from using them due to the offensive odour emanating from the pit-latrines (mostly in cases where the facilities were sited close to the classrooms). In all these, beneficiaries were left with the alternative of open-air defecation/urination (especially in schools with nearby bushes).

The interview instrument also revealed that there is no clear arrangement for maintaining the facilities. Most of the people interviewed were blaming the government, and by implication believed that it is the responsibility of the government to maintain the facilities.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study indicated that the facilities provided by the government are ones that are capable of improving environmental cleanliness and promoting safe-drinking practice. The implication of this is that the government took the right step in terms of the choices of the projects executed. However, there are indications that most of the projects/facilities are in a deplorable condition. Based on the fact that most of the toilet facilities under study are no longer put to use and a good number of the boreholes are not in a functional condition, it stands to reason that the overall aim for providing them is being defeated. In the circumstance, it proves difficult to impart the desired values about environmental cleanliness and engender a positive attitudinal change. This situation is worsened by the finding, which indicated that the maintenance culture is low. Findings also reveal that the government appeared to be

more interested in advertising the number of projects/facilities delivered instead of ensuring that they are in perfect working condition. Again, there are strong indications that, judging from the current performance of the facilities, the drive towards ensuring environmental cleanliness and safe drinking habits cannot be sustained.

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6. Conclusion/Recommendations

The initial response from the government in its bid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (with regard to the Targets and Indicators under study) was encouraging. Aside the high-sounding promises, the projects undertaken showed considerable commitment towards the realization of the set objectives. Corollary, there was a concomitant positive attitudinal change on the part of the beneficiaries. However, this positive change began to witness reversals owing to the poor state of the projects and inability to ensure that they are in good working conditions. Whereas the initial response indicated that the government was gearing towards attaining the goals set for the 2015 timeline, the current assessment revealed that no clear agenda was set for the post-2015 era regarding how to improve on the initial efforts and ensure sustainability. The situation is such that the beneficiaries cannot adequately imbibe the attitude of environmental cleanliness and safe drinking habits and thus, cannot transmit such to succeeding generations in view of the fact that the necessary infrastructure are not performing optimally.

It is recommended that government should strive to provide high quality projects that could stand the test of time. It is necessary for projects being delivered to be functional in order to serve the intended purposes. There is need to have a clear arrangement on how to maintain the existing facilities. Adopting a participatory approach to development is recommended so that communities and benefitting schools would share in the responsibility of maintaining the facilities. In view of the fact that the government is pursuing Free Education, it is necessary to work out how schools can source the funds needed for the prompt maintenance of facilities provided for them.

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