

**AN ASSESSMENT OF POVERTY ERADICATION AND
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

The ratification of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 was not only a landmark event but it became effectively the world's most vital development challenges offering the international community, the opportunity to have a common position and integrated vision on the best ways to address and solve the multidimensional problems facing humanity and to promote sustainable development, especially for developing and less developed countries, Nigeria inclusive, where the poverty and hunger, among others, is pervasive. Nigeria though blessed with enormous oil wealth and a large human and physical resources is still found wanting in poverty eradication and in meeting the MDGs targets. Most, if not, all these government intervention programmes and schemes have not really achieved the desired result in poverty reduction and in meeting the MDGs target, thus, this paper, using descriptive analysis, assesses Nigeria's efforts at achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, more especially the eradication of poverty and hunger in the Nigerian economy. An appraisal of these targets indicators shows that Nigeria have not performed well with respect to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality,

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improving maternal health, and ensuring environmental sustainability. In all these MDGs, the progress toward meeting the 2015 target has either been slow or worsening. Consequently the study agreed with the suggestion that for Nigeria to advance significantly towards achieving the MDGs in 2015, there is need to formulate and implement policies that will promote transparency and accountability, conquer institutional constraints, promote pro-poor growth, bring about structural change, enhance distributive equity, engender social and cultural re-orientation, engineer political transformation, promote human development, generate employment and transform power relations.

Keywords: Poverty and Hunger, Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Eradication

JEL: I32, I38

1.0: Introduction:

Nigeria is a country in misery. This is because despite its gargantuan resource endowments (both natural and human), poverty is very pronounced. There are overcrowded settlements in major urban areas without basic social services and remote and isolated rural areas are major concentrations of the poor (Obadan, 1997). The Nigerian situation becomes more pathetic when compared with other less endowed developing countries in Africa and other parts of the third world, (Anger, 2010). Findings by Kayode and Odusola (2001), show, that Nigeria's per capita income of \$240 in 1990 was well below the average of over \$500 for sub-Saharan Africa. The figure for Nigeria was well below those for Botswana (\$3210), Cote d' Ivoire (\$6600), Egypt (\$1,080), South Africa (\$3,500), Mauritius (\$3,710) (Obadan and Odusola (2008), In Edoh (2003), affirm that Nigeria is even rated in terms of percentage of population earning less than one dollar per day for randomly selected years. In fact, available statistics indicate how insecure life has become for the average Nigerian over the years in the face of suffocating levels of poverty.

Poverty profile in Nigeria showed that the incidence of poverty rose from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1985, but dropped to 42.2 percent in 1992 from where it rose sharply to 65.6 percent in 1996. It further rose to 70 percent by 2001 and has since remained there (Federal Office of Statistics, 1999). While the UNDP (2003) estimates put the percentage of the poor at between 66 and 70 percent and it was estimated that the incidence increases by 10 percent every three years. The country ranked as one of the middle-income oil producing countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s but fell in rank to being one of the lowest-income countries in the early 1990s. Prior to 2004, the World Bank rated Nigeria as the 137th in the world while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rated Nigeria as the 10th poorest country in the world. And by 2004, Nigeria ranked 151 on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2004). This ranking seems to be justifiable given the growing intensity of poverty in the country, which is manifest by the rising decline in access to quality health care, sanitation and water services, nutrition, education as well as the prevalence of child labor and child trafficking among others.

Given this persistent poverty problem, various governments in Nigeria have tried to implement some poverty reducing policies and/or programme aimed at improving human well being (the life people live, what they can do or cannot do) in particular that of poor people (Kakwani and Pernia 2000). Government efforts were also backed up by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, in order to help in poverty alleviation and to promote sustainable development, the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000 where countries both rich and poor were committed to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and reduce inequality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. This adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit was hailed as it provides the Third World countries, especially Africa, the new opportunity and drive to alleviate poverty and reverse the deterioration in human developments. It also represents the international community's commitment to provide an accountability framework and global partnership for progressively eradicating poverty in all its dimensions. With this declaration, developing countries are requested to prepare bold.

Following the Millennium Declaration of 2000, Nigeria began the systematic implementation of several policies and programmes to help it attain the different targets set for the MDGs by 2015 but are the targets being met by these government efforts? For instance, the proportion of the

population living in relative poverty was expected to have fallen to 28.78 per cent in 2007, if the MDG target is to be met in 2015. However, among every ten Nigerians in that year, five were still living in poverty. An analysis of poverty incidence by sectors indicated that poverty was more pronounced in the rural areas than in the urban. Similarly, while poverty was more pronounced among farmers and larger households headed by persons with lower levels of education, income inequality was more pronounced in urban centres. Unemployment rate in Nigeria rose from about 12 out of 100 working age people in 1999 to 18 in 2005 with the rate of youth unemployment rising in the urban areas than in the rural, (Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, 2008).

Despite these government efforts, there are still some major challenges as it seems that the incidence of poverty is still plaguing majority of the Nigerian masses as one wonders whether or not much is being done by the government in trying to meet the MDGs? Thus, this paper tries to do an assessment of poverty eradication in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

2.0: A Brief Overview of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

The MDGs has its origin in the September 2000 gathering of 189 Heads of State and Government in New York for the United Nations Millennium Summit where the Millennium Declaration was ratified. It was a landmark event in many ways: First, it represented perhaps the heaviest congregation of world leaders with the sole aim of charting a global development agenda. Second, it crafted a set of interrelated socio-economic and environmental goals (complete with indicators for self evaluation and monitoring of performance) and third, it committed all countries to mainstream these goals into their internal development efforts, (Chete, 2009). Thus, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) became effectively the world's most pressing development challenges as it offers the international society, both rich and poor the golden opportunity to have a common position and integrated vision on the best ways to address and solve the multidimensional problems facing humanity and to promote sustainable development.

Precisely, the MDGs include a 50% reduction in poverty and hunger, universal primary education, reduction of child mortality by two-thirds, cutbacks in maternal mortality by three-quarters, promotion of gender equality, and reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. A UN summit in September 2005 reviewed progress towards the goals and set the development agenda for the next decade.

The Declaration's eight MDGs cover with the following issues:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The target is to halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 daily and those suffering from hunger by 2015, and ensure that there is an increase the amount of food for those who suffer from hunger.
- To achieve Universal Primary (Basic) Education. The target is to achieve universal basic completion by 2015.
- To promote gender equality and women empowerment. The target is to totally overcome gender disparities in both primary and secondary education enrolment by 2005 and achieve equity at all levels by 2015.
- To reduce child mortality. The target is to reduce child mortality rate by 2/3 by 2015.
- To improve maternal health. The basic target is to reduce by 3/4 the proportion of women dying in childbirth by 2015.
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The grand target is to stop and commence to reverse the incidence of HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases by 2015.
- To ensure environmental sustainability. The target is to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation, and lastly,
- To develop a global partnership for development. This goal recognizes the importance of the collaboration between the have and have-nots to eradicate poverty and extreme hunger.

An appraisal of these targets and indicators in Nigeria shows that most if not all of these goals have some elements of poverty related issues, thereby helping to redress the frequently

misconceived idea that poverty is mainly an income agenda. Also, by ratifying and agreeing to achieve these MDGs, world leaders recognised and emphasized their shared responsibilities to eradicate poverty globally. An implication of this is that governments of developing and less developed countries reaffirmed their commitments to strengthen governance, institutions and policies.

3.0: Brief Profile of Poverty in Nigeria:

Poverty is pervasive in Nigeria and in recent times, an average Nigerian has been plagued with a progressively plummeted quality of life. Presently, poverty is now seen as way of life for many people in Nigeria. The UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) of 1998 on Nigeria described Nigeria as “a rich country with a poor population” and “the poorest and most deprived OPEC country” (UNDP 1998) while the HDR for Nigeria in 2003 show a life expectancy at birth (years) for 2001 as 51.8 while the life expectancy index for 2001 was 0.45. Nigeria’s GDP per capita (PPP US\$) in 2001 was 850 while the corresponding Human Development Index (HDI) value was 0.46. Federal Bureau of Statistics (2004) estimates indicate that around 52% of Nigerians live in poverty and around 70 million people are living on less than 1 dollar a day. The National Population Commission (NPC) report in 2007, reveals that almost 52% of the Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day. A further regional decomposition of the population show that poverty is more persistent in the North. For instance, the poverty rate is 67.3% in the North East zone, 62.9% in North West, 62.3% in North Central, 51% in the South South, 42% in the South West, and 34% in the South East. And as the country’s population increases the number of the poor also increases. This was evident given that the number of the poor rose from 39 million in 1992 to 69 million in 2004, (NPC, 2007).

The severity of poverty in Nigeria is equally glaring when other indicators of services and development are considered. The Vision 2010 Committee Report reveals that: 50% of Nigerians live below the poverty line; Only about 40% have access to safe drinking water; About 85% of the urban population lives in single houses with more than 7 occupants on the average; Only about 62% of Nigerians have access to primary health care while Edoh (2003) reported that most Nigerians take less than one-third of the minimum required protein and vitamins. OXFAM,

(2003), thus concluded that given Nigeria's rich endowment with natural resources, its poverty profile presents a dismal picture of a rich nation in decline.

The pervasiveness of poverty is such that Nigerian is not sufficient to provide for minimum requirement of livelihood in terms of food, water, fuel, shelter, medical care and basic education, (Achor, 2001). In fact, according to the UNDP 2007/2008 Human Development Report, Nigeria ranks 80th among 108 developing countries for which the index has been calculated. Table 1 also shows Nigeria's low ranking in selected indicators of human poverty for 2004. The probability of not surviving past age 40 shows that Nigeria ranked 160th among 173 developing countries with 39% of the population not surviving more than the age of 40. Also, 52% of Nigerians in 2004 do not have access to an improved water source, thereby making Nigeria to rank 116 out of 118 developing countries while 29% of children aged between 0 and 5 are underweight in Nigeria in 2004 ranking Nigeria as 110th position out of 112 developing countries. By implication it means that the poverty alleviating programmes are not yielding the desired results as such more efforts are needed if poverty is to be really alleviated in Nigeria nation.

Table 1: Selected indicators (for Selected Countries) of human poverty for Nigeria, 2004

Human Poverty Index (HPI – 1)	Probability of not Surviving Past age 40 (%)	Adult Illiteracy rate (% ages 15 and Older)	People without Access to an Improved Water Source (%)	Children Underweight for age (% ages 0 – 5)
1. Barbados (3.0)	1. Iceland (1.4)	1. Estonia (0.2)	1. Thailand (1)	1. Czech Republic (1)
78. Rwanda (36.5)	158. Uganda (38.5)	127. Algeria (30.1)	114. Mali (50)	108. Philippines (28)
79. Malawi (36.1)	159. Cote d'Ivoire (38.6)	128. Tanzania (united Republic of) (30.6)	115. Guinea (50)	109. Indonesia (28)
80. Nigeria (37.3)	160. Nigeria (39.0)	129. Nigeria (30.9)	116. Nigeria (52)	110. Nigeria (29)

81. Burundi (37.6)	161. Guinea-Bissau (40.5)	130. Guatemala (30.9)	117. Fiji (53)	111. Sri Lanka (29)
82. Yemen (38.0)	162 Congo (Democratic republic of) (41.1)	131. Lao People's Democratic Republic (31.3)	118. Congo (Democratic republic of) (54)	112. Maldives (30)
108 Chad (56.9)	173. Zimbabwe (57.4)	164. Burkina Faso (76.4)	125. Ethiopia (78)	134. Bangladesh (48)

Source: UNDP 2007/2008 Human Development Report

3.1: Government Policies and Poverty Alleviating Policies in Nigeria¹

In Nigeria, as in most less developed countries, the position is not one of low-end poverty but of mass poverty. About 80 percent of the population has annual incomes of less than ₦200.00 (UNDP- Lagos, 1998). This implies that poverty in Nigeria is synonymous with gross underdevelopment. It can therefore be reduced only through the process of rapid and judicious socio-economic development. Successive governments have been battling to stem the incidence of poverty and hunger, and their associated problems in Nigeria.

The Pre MDGs Era

Overall, most of these programmes during the pre-SAP era were designed to take care of such objectives as employment generation, enhancing agricultural output and income, and stemming the tide of rural–urban migration, which no doubt affected poverty reduction. Despite some degree of success made by some of these programmes, most of them could not be sustained. By 1986, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was initiated. It was a package aimed at reviving the economy and putting it on the path of sustainable growth and development. Although SAP was initially designed to last for two years from July, 1986 to June, 1988, it

¹ The table 2 below summarizes some of the poverty reduction programmes put in place by the federal government.

could, in the absence of a development plan, be viewed as a short-term plan whose major objectives could be checked with the macro policies and programmes as it relates to rural development and poverty alleviation. Conscious policy effort by government towards poverty alleviation began in Nigeria during the era of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The severe economic crisis in Nigeria in the early 1980s worsened the quality of life of most Nigerians. However, the implementation of SAP further worsened the living conditions of many Nigerians especially the poor who were the most vulnerable group. This made the government to design and implement many poverty alleviation programmes during this period. These programmes include: the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), The Better Life Programme (BLP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the establishment of the Peoples Bank and Community Banks, The Family Support Programme (FSP), and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP).

The MDGs Era

As an aftermath of the establishment of the MDGs, the government introduced a set of comprehensive policies at the three level of government that targets poverty reduction and the improvement of other important areas that will lead to the attainment of the MDGs by 2015. Among the programmes introduced are:

During 2003 to 2007 Nigeria attempted to implement an economic reform program called the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). The purpose of NEEDS was to raise the country's standard of living through a variety of reforms, including macroeconomic stability, deregulation, liberalization, privatization, transparency, and accountability. NEEDS sought to address basic deficiencies, such as the lack of freshwater for household use and irrigation, unreliable power supplies, decaying infrastructure, impediments to private enterprise, and corruption. The government hoped that NEEDS would create 7 million new jobs, diversify the economy, boost non-energy exports, increase industrial capacity utilization, and improve agricultural productivity. A related initiative on the state level is the State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and at the local government level is called the Local Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS). At the community level, it is the Community Economic Empowerment and

Development Strategy (CEEDS), while at the household level, it is the Personal Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (PEEDS). NEEDS has four pillars; empowering people and improving social service delivery; improving the private sector and focusing on non-oil growth; changing the way government works and improving governance; and value reorientation at all level (World Bank, 2007).

Other programmes include the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and the Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP). These aimed at reducing poverty among the youth by creating gainful employment for the youth through the Youth Employment Scheme (YES), and the development of rural infrastructure and natural resources. UNDP (2004) reports that a “bottom-up approach that is participatory” was adopted by the government in her bid to reduce poverty and create more jobs for the teeming population of unemployed youths. The Government embarked on Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), which aimed at job creation. However, at the end of 2000 budget implementation, many Nigerians were yet to feel the impact of government poverty alleviation programme. This was later replaced with National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP).

In line with the policy thrust of NEEDS, the government set up the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to tackle the challenges of poverty. But since the establishment of NAPEP, it has nothing tangible to show for its existence. NAPEP, an agency established by government to tackle poverty through empowerment, rather than focus on its mandate is today enmeshed in controversy. This led the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to move a motion to probe the activities of the agency since its creation (Guardian, Feb., 24, 2009). The general impression is that NAPEP has failed the country because the poverty rate is still high. It is gathered that the agency has received a total of 11.8 billion Naira but it has nothing to show for it (Guardian Feb., 24, 2009).

Most, if not, all these intervention programmes and schemes have not really achieved the desired result and many reasons have been adduced for these. These includes the conceptualization and packaging of such schemes and programmes; high import content of most of the operations, especially the industrial ones; inappropriate technology; politicization, personalization and non-involvement of the people for whom the programmes are designed; and finally many of these programmes are developed on the rather erroneous assumption that the poor generally constitute

a homogenous group, therefore relatively uniform prescription could be applied across board. But really the poor are heterogeneous, as a result, policies to alleviate poverty should not be the same. In line with this, Ogwumike (1998) suggested that in order to achieve effective poverty reduction in Nigeria, we should first and foremost identify who the poor are and the nature of their poverty. Available evidence shows that the poor are located mainly in rural areas with increasing proportion of them found in the urban areas. The poor are mainly engaged in agriculture, and female-headed households tend to have a high incidence of poverty. Also poverty incidences are not evenly distributed across the states/zones, hence poverty reduction must emphasize these differences in order to be effective and for Nigeria to be able to meet most of the MDGs by 2015.

The Nigerian scenario is a pathetic one. Nigeria is blessed with enormous oil wealth, a large and diverse population, sea and river access, forests and land. Nonetheless it has not been able to translate these advantages into sustainable peaceful development. This is largely the result of poor governance and weak state institutions, deeply embedded in the socio-political nature of society. And whether the national, state, local, community and personal development strategies could contribute to achievement of the MDGs will depend on proper implementation of these goals as well as tackling head in the underlying causes of poverty-discrimination, corruption, patronage politics and the likes. As stated by the World Bank (2005), Nigeria has a growing country, moving towards reducing poverty and achieving of the MDGs would translate into significant giant in social and economic development for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 2: Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria (1986 - 2008)

Programme	Year Est	Target Group	Nature of intervention
Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure(DFRRI)	1986	Rural Area	Responsible for financing construction and rehabilitation of rural infrastructure – roads, water supply, earth dams and rural electrification.
National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	Unemployed	Responsible for vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes designed to combat unemployment. Training, financing and guidance

Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	Rural women	Training finance and guidance. Aimed at alleviating rural poverty, particularly among women.
Peoples' Bank of Nigeria	1989	Underprivileged in the rural areas	Designed to make banking services more accessible and extend credit to the poor. Encouraging saving and credit facilities.
Community Banks	1990	Rural resident and micro enterprises in rural areas	Designed to make banking services more accessible and extend credit to the poor.
Family Support Programme (FSP)	1994	Families in rural areas	Health care delivery, child welfares, youth development etc. Aimed at alleviating rural poverty, particularly among women.
Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)	1997	Rural areas	Established to complement CAPP. Provide credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industries. Credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industries
National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)	2001	Unemployed youth as well as poor masses	Employ generation in rural sector and societal welfare.
National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)	2004	All citizen that are poor	Human and Economic Empowerment
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	2007	Low human development nations. The whole country Nigeria	Human development as a means of nation / national development

Sources: Authors compilation from various publications.

3.2: Nigeria and the Challenge of the Goals of MDG²

The United Nations News, (2009) reported that Nigeria have experienced progress in her growth rate, including rapid increases in non-oil growth, as it rose from 2.5% in the 1990s to 6% during 2004-2007, this notwithstanding, there was no positive impact on Nigerians from this growth given that more than half of Nigerians (54.4% or 76 million people) live in poverty. This represents twice the rate in 1980. Presently, poverty is still noticeable in Nigeria and its eradication is an intimidating task for the government. Poverty is a major indicator and determinant of the progress made in achieving the MDGs and also the eradication of poverty is a significant objective in policy formulation and implementation in the emancipation of human being (UNDP, 2004). It is as a result of this that we try to give an assessment of how Nigeria is faring in meeting the MDGs.

First, we look at the socioeconomic performance in Nigeria. The trend in the socioeconomic indicators between 2000 and 2007 in Nigeria is as seen in table 3. From Table 3, real GDP growth was positive through the entire period, reaching an annual average growth rate of 5.7% while that of the non-oil sector also improved. After an initial decline in the growth of the non-oil sector from 4.4% in 2000 to 2.9% in 2001, the pattern changed as it began to experience a consistent growth between 2001 and 2006. The external balance witnessed remarkable improvements between 2000 and 2007. The overall balance of payments has been in surplus since 2004, leading to a sizeable foreign exchange reserves while Nigeria's external debt ratio thus fell from 64per cent of GDP in 2000 to 1.6% in 2007. Domestic debt has also declined noticeably though still substantially high.

A glance at the social indicators, which tallies more with assessment of Nigeria's progress towards achieving the MDGs, the result is mixed. There were improvements in the adult literacy rate. It rose from 57% in 2000 to 64.5% in 2006. On the incidence of poverty, the table indicates that it rose from 42.4% in 1992 to 65.6% in 1996, and then it declined to 54.4 per cent in 2004. This can be linked to the some government welfare programmes as well as structural transformation in some sectors of the economy, like the telecommunication sector which absorbed many unemployed youths across all states of the federation.

² This section benefits substantially from Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, (2008).

Also, according to the UN's Human Development Report (2006), the incidence of poverty in Nigeria is increasing, and conditions were described as deplorable despite government supposed efforts at meeting the MDGs. Huge disparities in development conditions exist between regions, with extremely low performance levels in the Niger Delta where, ironically, oil is produced and natural resources abound. Revenues from oil, the Niger Delta's main source of income, are not having an impact on persistent poverty in this region as well as the entire nation, due largely to the inequitable allocation of and access to resources. The ascendancy of the oil industry in the Delta also rendered the decline of traditional economies, particularly agriculture, fishery, and forestry. Poverty in the Niger Delta includes issues of discrimination, deprivation, inequality, lack of power and security, and lack of access to education, health care, natural resources, and basic amenities. It is a result of years of poor governance, administrative neglect, and the exclusion of particular social groups, such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities/indigenous peoples, from participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Table 3 implies that the economy has experienced growth over time, nevertheless this has not translated into considerable and momentous welfare improvement for the Nigerian people and this has been traced to the low quality of growth, skewed income distribution and mismanagement of resources, (Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, 2008).

Table 3: Macroeconomic Indicators in Nigeria, 2000–2007

	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Economic Indicators									
GDP Growth Rate (%)	8.2	5.4	4.6	3.5	9.6	6.6	5.8	5.3	5.7
Oil Sector Growth (%)	5.6	11.1	5.2	-5.2	23.9	3.3	-1.7	-3.7	-5.9
Non Oil Sector Growth (%)	8.6	4.4	2.9	4.5	5.2	7.8	8.4	9.5	9.2
Budget Deficit/GDP	-2.9	-2.3	-4.3	-5.5	-2.8	-2.6	-0.2	0.3	0.7
External Reserves (Months of Import Cover)	NA	NA	NA	NA	7.7	11.4	24.4	36.5	42.6

External Debt/GDP	106.5	64.9	57.3	72.1	61.1	84.5	69.2	7.4	4.0
Domestic Debt/GDP	31.3	32.2	36.6	26.1	28.6	25.3	20.8	18.6	19.2
Saving-Investment Gap	9.9	16.4	4.4	6.4	1.5	(0.9)			
Overall BOP/GDP	-2.1	6.9	0.5	-10.3	-2.3	5.2	10.5	12.7	1.4
Inflation Rate	7.5	6.9	18.9	12.9	22.2	15.0	17.9	8.2	5.9
Average Official Exchange Rate	7.9	101.7	111.9	121.0	127.8	132.8	132.9	128.5	127.4
Lending Rate <i>a.b.</i>	25.5	17.9	18.3	24.4	20.5	19.2	17.9	17.0	16.5
Broad Money Growth	44.9	48.1	27.0	21.6	16.9	6.5	18.9	29.1	11.0
Social Indicators									
Population (Million)	88.5	108.0	118.8	122.4	125.6	129.2	133.8	140.0	140.0
Population Growth Rate (%)	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.2
Life Expectancy (years)	NA	NA	54.0	54.0	54.0	54.0	54.0	54.0	54.0
Adult Literacy Rate (%)	NA	57.0	57.0	57.0	57.0	62.0	57.0	64.2	64.5
Incidence of Poverty (%)	42.7a	65.6	65.6	65.6	65.6	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4

Note: a stands for 1992 data, b stands for 1996 data and c is 2004 data.

Sources:

- (i) Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Annual Reports and Statements of Accounts (Various years);
- (ii) CBN Statistical Bulletin, Volume 17, December 2006;
- (iii) National Bureau of Statistics: National Poverty Assessment 2007.

(As cited in Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, 2008).

Table 4 shows Nigeria's performance in achieving selected MDGs so far. The selected MDGs were those that have high and significant link to poverty. The table shows that Nigeria has not performed any better in trying to meet the MDGs as relates to poverty. The population under poverty is still high and stood at 67 million in 2007 while the percentage of underweight under-5 children was also low.

Table 4: Nigeria's Performance in Achieving Selected MDGs so Far

Goal	1990	2000	2007	Target 2015	Progress Towards Target
1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger					
Absolute PPI (US\$/day)%				21.4	Slow
Relative (%)	42.7	66.0	54.4	21.4	Slow
-Population (million)	91.5	91.5	140.0		Slow
-Population under Poverty (Million)	39.07	39.07	67.11		Slow
Percentage of Population below Minimum level of dietary energy consumption	13	13		5.2	Good
Percentage of underweight under-5 children.	35.7	31	25	18	Slow
4. Reduce Child Mortality					
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	91	81.38	110	30.3	Worsening
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	191	183.75	201	63.7	Worsening
Percentage of one-year-olds fully immunized against measles	46	32.8	60	100	Good
5. Improve Maternal Health					
Maternal mortality ratio		704 ^a	800 ^c	100	Worsening
Births attended to by skilled health personnel	45	42 ^a	36.3 ^c	100	Worsening (data problem)
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability					

Land area covered by forest		14.6	12.6	20.0	Worsening
Gas flared	68	53	34	0	Slow
Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per US\$1 GDP (PPP)			1.5		Slow Lack of data
Carbon dioxide emissions (per capita)		4799	2500 ^a		Improving
Total population with access to safe drinking water (%)	54	54	49.1	100	Worsening
Total population with access to basic sanitation (%)	39	42.9	42.9	100	Worsening
People with access to secure tenure (%)		38.4	61.2	100	Improving
Residential housing construction index (ACI) (Proxy)		53	31 ^a		Worsening

Sources: Adapted and Compiled from Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, 2008

In all, Nigeria scored a low mark in her efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. This implies that the current effort to wipe out poverty and hunger in the country is unsatisfactory. There are still wide deviations between actual achievement and 2015 targets. This translates to the fact that the various strategies drawn up and the efforts made have been inadequate to reduce poverty and hunger in the land. In terms of reducing child mortality, which also have some link with poverty and hunger, Nigeria's situation was worse as the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) and under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births) increased to a respective 110 and 201 in 2007 as against the 30.3 and 63.7 respectively which was the target in 2015. The situation was also worsened in the case of improving maternal health. The maternal mortality ratio was extremely high at 800 as against the 2015 target of 100 while the births attended to by skilled health personnel did not perform any better.

With respect to ensuring environmental sustainability, the total population with access to safe drinking water fell from 54% in 2004 to 49.1% in 2007 as against the 2015 target of 100% In fact, between 2000 and 2007, the proportion of people with access to safe drinking water has been falling annually by -0.7 per cent. At this rate, the proportion of people with access to safe drinking water by 2015 will be 43.5 per cent. Thus, the chances of meeting the MDG target are

slim. To meet target, the proportion of people with access to safe drinking water should grow by at least 3.9 per cent per annum. The observed worsening trend is not unconnected with the rising population and the attendant pressure on water resources. Failure and inadequacy of most water provision programmes is also another cause. The total population with access to basic sanitation was 49.9% (a 40.1% short of the 2015 target of 100%). The average rate of increase in the proportion of people with access to basic sanitation between 2000 and 2007 has been nil. At this current zero rate of increase, the baseline scenario is that access to basic sanitation would be 42.9 per cent in 2015, implying that the MDG target runs a huge risk of not being achieved. To correct the situation, there should be an annual increase of at least 7.1 per cent in the proportion of people with access to basic sanitation between 2007 and 2015. Housing is a basic necessity.

The Residential Housing Construction Index (HCI) is a proxy indicator for monitoring the developments in the housing sector. This index also showed a worsening trend.

In all, one can observe that Nigeria have not performed well with respect to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and ensuring environmental sustainability as the progress toward meeting the 2015 target of these MDGs has either been slow or worsening. A possible reason for this as noted by UNDP (2008) is due to the increasing cost of land acquisition and building materials as well as inconsistency in policy formulation and implementation. For instance, the federal government placed a ban on cement importation a few years ago with the aim of encouraging private sector participation only to lift the ban recently. Again, the 1991 Housing Policy was put aside and another one introduced in 2001. The 2001 policy has been revised again and the revised version is yet to be approved. Another serious factor has to do with increasing the rate of slum creation and expansion. The high cost of building materials, poor access to land and poor housing finance have restricted people's access to decent accommodation, thus enhancing the growth of slums. As observed by the UN-Habitat, over 70 million Nigerians are living in urban areas and about 70 per cent of this population lives in slums.

Furthermore, UNDP (2008) in her Human Development Report on Nigeria showed that the Human development Index for Nigeria is 0.470, which gives the country a rank of 158th out of 177 countries. Life expectancy was 46.5%, ranking Nigeria as 165th and adult literacy rate (percentage ages 15 and older) was 69.1, ranking Nigeria as 104th out of 177. Additionally, the

Human Poverty Index value was 37.3% for Nigeria, which ranked the country as 80th among 108 developing countries for which the index were calculated. To give credence to this report, Bello (2007) reported that about one million Nigerian children were given out for forced and exploitative labour, of which 18% work in dangerous environments after school hours while ten million Nigerian children of school age were reported to be out of school as shown by statistics on school enrolment released by UNICEF (2008). An implication of this trend is that eradicating poverty, which is a significant step towards achieving the MDGs in Nigeria thereby enhancing sustainable development appear to be a phenomenal task for the government.

There is also the issue of adequate funding of MDGs-related projects. The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs, Abuja did an MDG costing exercise to determine the cost associated with the various projects required for the attainment of the MDG targets on a timely basis. The most recent estimate for the major sectors is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: MDG Costing in Nigeria: Total Yearly Costs

Sector	2007 (\$'bn)	2011 (\$'bn)	2015 (\$'bn)	2006 – 2015 (\$'bn)	Average Annual Per Capita Cost (\$'bn)
Health	4.55	8.00	14.27	26.83	21.30
Education*	2.82	7.24	9.10	70.58	47.70
Agriculture	3.51	5.72	8.79	53.25	32.00
Energy	1.21	4.13	7.24	38.60	23.60
Water and Sanitation	1.71	2.26	3.03	20.82	13.00
Roads	5.16	6.48	7.42	50.50	33.70
Environment	0.52	0.41	0.34	3.82	2.60
Housing	2.9	4.41	6.43	40.65	4.52
Total	22.38	38.65	56.62	305.05	178.42

Note: *Primary and Non-Formal Education

Source: Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs, Abuja (As cited in Federal Government of Nigeria and UNDP, 2008).

From table 5, the total cost is expected to increase from US\$22.38 billion in 2007 to \$38.65 billion in 2011 and US\$56.62 billion in 2015. This shows that by 2015 the total cost will be more than double the cost in 2007. As a result of this trend in funding and as pointed out by UNDP (2008), government should, make adequate arrangement to determine the source of the funds required and to make proper expenditure programming for effective implementation of the identified projects.

4.0: The Way Forward:

In the light of the escalating nature of poverty in the country, there is an urgent need for a poverty alleviation initiative to reduce the miseries of the vast population of the poor. Such an initiative should be well-articulated and short-term targeted. Thus, it is suggested that the government poverty alleviation programme should be restructured if not re- designed and should be centered on the 'basic needs' approach. This approach emphasizes the importance of separating generalized increases in income from the more significant attainment of the requirement for a permanent reduction of poverty through the provision of health services, education, housing, sanitation water supply and adequate nutrition. The rationale of this approach was that the direct provision of such goods and services is likely to relieve absolute poverty more immediately than alternative strategies, since growth strategies usually fail to benefit the intended target and the productivity and income of the poor depend in the first place on the direct provision of health and education facilities. In the same vein, there is no guarantee that increased income will be spent on essential services, since households vary in their ability to spend wisely and effectively. They may irrationally prefer 'better' consumption goods that contribute less to family welfare than other goods that might serve as inputs to higher productivity.

Efforts to reduce poverty may therefore not likely to succeed in the long run unless there is greater investment in the human capital of the poor. Improvement in education, health, and nutrition directly address the worst consequences of being poor. There is ample evidence that investing in human capital, especially in education, shelter, and social services increases the productivity of the poor and also attacks some of the most important causes of poverty. To

actually break the vicious circle in which the poor finds himself, the government (local, state and federal) must make reaching-the-poor a priority. There is need for the federal government to relinquish most of its responsibility in the social sector to the state and local governments. This will give the state and local councils more autonomy to evolve and execute poverty alleviation programmes/projects that will take their peculiar circumstances into consideration. This also calls for the decentralization of the institutions involved in poverty alleviation. As well as getting the target population, for whom the programmes were designed, involved in implementation of such programme.

Government should make growth pro-poor. In spite of the economic growth recorded in recent years, progress in human development has been quite unimpressive in Nigeria considering various indicators such as poverty incidence, inequality and access to basic social services. Poverty incidence is still very high. Thus, government policies should aim more on pro poor growth. There is the need for safety nets policies for the poor. The importance of such social safety-net policies and programmes cannot be overstated. These may be in the form of consistent government transfers to the health, education, and housing subsidies directly targeted at poor families. It also consists in strengthening the supply of basic infrastructures such as transport and communication networks, electricity and water supply. The collapse of these infrastructural facilities since the mid-1980s seems to have contributed significantly to the intensity of poverty in Nigeria.

Positive correlation between growth and inequality potentially suggests that some kind of trade-off has to be accepted. To reduce poverty, the situation suggests, would entail choosing between promoting growth and accepting higher inequality as a consequence or focusing on reducing inequality at the expense of growth. This would be a poor choice as neither can permanently lead to poverty reduction on a sustainable basis without the other. Therefore growth in Nigeria has to incorporate distributive features and a higher level of inclusiveness. This is given that there is unequal access to basic needs and social infrastructure by sector (urban and rural) and within sector (urban poor versus urban non-poor, and rural poor versus non poor).

Another strategy is for the government to realistically undertake a comprehensive study on the causes of poor implementation of development policies and strategies and develop a plan of action to address this critical and persistent problem. There is also the need to develop long-term

strategic plans that address unemployment, taking into consideration the educational curriculum and the needs of the labour market as well as strengthening the human and financial capacity of poverty alleviation institutions in the country. There is the need to fully integrate the MDGs in the national development strategy and enhance monitoring thereof. There should be periodic and consistent reporting of the MDGs.

Government should develop additional criteria that will consider the impact of those factors that inhibit government performance. Such factors include time lags in budget approvals, delays and mismanagement in capital budget execution, and time lags between graduation and employment of the youths. Also, given that a major problem in Nigeria today is high unemployment particularly of young school leavers. Unemployment tends to perpetuate poverty and hunger as well as reduce self-esteem and confidence. It raises dependency and task disposable household income. Government should thus create gainful employment opportunities. Public works must be created to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed youths in order to dampen poverty and organized crime.

In line with the above, there should be improved budget implementation, as government annual budgets dictate the tone and pace of economic activities. Economic agents, households and businesses tend to pattern their plans around the fiscal policies of government, as reflected in the budgets. Delays in the budget process and actual implementation would mean inability of economic agents to meet their projections and production decisions, resulting in poor performance and deterioration in general welfare. Timely release of funds for requisite development can spread relief and productive activities to more people.

5.0: Conclusion:

In course of this discourse, it was discovered that several regimes had initiated several policy responses in the past to address the poverty scourge in Nigeria. These policies and efforts failed to yield the desired results of alleviating poverty because they were only declarative without concerted effort and lacked the required political will among several other reasons. This has also affect Nigeria's progress in achieving the MDGs. Though the MDGs provide a platform for addressing the poverty issue, the situation from the Nigerian perspective indicates that there are

still glaring constraints and challenges such as corruption, infrastructural inadequacies and others. There is need to shift emphasis to target approach to poverty reduction in Nigeria. This will require several inputs including alternative measures of poverty that are based on minimum standards either in terms of food, income or other basic needs to which minimum standards could be applied. When poverty groups are identified on the basis of such acceptable minimum standards, it makes it easier to address their poverty problems since policies and programmes could be targeted to them based on those aspects of need that constitute the acceptable minimum standards. Therefore, for Nigeria to advance significantly towards achieving the MDGs in 2015, this study agrees with the submissions of Igbuzor (2006) as advocated by Odion (2009) that there is need to formulate and implement policies that will promote transparency and accountability, overcome institutional constraints, promote pro-poor growth, bring about structural change, enhance distributive equity, engender social and cultural re-orientation, engineer political transformation, promote human development, generate employment and transform power relations. It thus becomes obvious that economic growth would have to be combined with some other socio-economic strategies designed to reach the poor and the most vulnerable groups in the society more effectively.

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