Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Alleviation in Rivers State: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

The paper examined the eradication and/or reduction of poverty in Rivers State through the targets and indicators of MDGs objectives. The paper posited that through the institutional agencies in the state, MDGs one (1) and two (2) achieved up to 70

Index terms— mdgs; poverty; alleviation; rssda, new response approach (NRA); rima.

1 Introduction

he philosophy underlining the MDGs initiative is to eradicate and/or reduce poverty. Kaman (2013), asserted that 13 years ago the world settled on a set of goals that at first appeared to have no political support and no popular resonance. He said they only appealed to the UN's funds and programmes and, even when they got international endorsement, were thought to address themselves only to poor developing countries. In response to these concerns, government and international development agencies started to reexamine and re-focus the way they operate as to reduce or alleviate poverty.

This brought 189 countries including Nigeria to sign the Millennium Declaration that led to the adoption of the MDGs. Overtime, the MDGs took on a life of their own and a centrality to multilateral development action that was unprecedented. The MDGs is a set of eight goals, 18 numerical targets and over 40 quantifiable indicators. The goals are: The above table shows the general overview of MDGs, targets and indicators. This paper only examined goal 1 and 2, Rivers State scenario. However, other goals were examined, but we decided to focus on the two due to their relevance in basic human life existence.

2 II.

3 The Problem

In conceptualizing poverty, it is imperative to make a clear distinction between that state in which "men are helpless pawns at the mercy of nature itself, and that in which men are reduced to penury or poverty by the actions of men"; Haswell cited in (Anikpo, 1995) There are plethora and generic definition and description of poverty. Some literatures have described poverty in terms of having little money, not having and not being able to get the basic necessities of life.

Poverty as a condition in which income is insufficient to meet subsistence needs (Ibid). The emphasis here is on material deprivation. Similarly, African Leadership Forum -Farm House Dialogue (No 18 of Sept. 1995) identifies three broad types of poverty, namely:Poverty of material well-being, Poverty of Ideas, Poverty of courage.These are distinct but have interconnecting ideas that cuts across them. Thus, poverty is a relationship between the rich and the poor. For the purpose of this paper, poverty is viewed as being sick and not being able to see a Doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read and write. Poverty is not having a job; is fear for its future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is about powerlessness, lack of representation in decision making in the society and lack of freedom to express oneself, UNDP report 2006. Poverty is multi-faceted; changing from place to place and time and season. It means therefore that poverty is a call for action from the poor and the wealthy alike, a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection

from violence and voice in what happens in their communities, Ravallion and Chen 2004 cited in Gbarabe, 2009. It is in the light of the above challenges or problems that created the interventionist scheme of MDGs globally. Especially, the high rate of poverty in Rivers State in 1996 was alarming. So the entire concept of poverty alleviation or reduction to end extreme poverty through a reform package of socio-economic policies comes 2015. Therefore, the paper focussed on the MDGs goals 1 and 2 in Rivers State as that portend the drive to peoples need. What did the government do differently to reduce poverty and achieve MDGs 1 and 2? III.

4   Methodology

The paper was an extract from a 3 days' workshop organised for staff of MDAs, officers of IPs and CSOs in Rivers State. It combined plenary and syndicate session. The plenary took the form of interaction, lectures, questions and answers. Some topics handled covered the following: concept definition and technicalities of Needs Response approach; relevance of MDGs in poverty alleviation, identify strategies and mechanism for achieving MDGs in Rivers State. Participants carried out practical exercise on skill areas like scenario analysis and priority ranking. The workshop had more than 30 participants in various organisations and parastatals. The paper only appraised MDGs 1 and 2. It considered these two goals as the basic to human development and how it affected the poor in the urban and rural areas in the state.

5   IV.

6   Findings

In a critical appraisal of the MDGs number 1 and 2 in poverty alleviation in Rivers State, the paper found the following:

The Rivers State government established effective and efficient agencies, ministries, and parastatals to address or combat the problem of hunger and poverty. Responsibilities were given to Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) and RIMA to address the issues.

V.

7   Agriculture

RSSDA has acquired 314 hectares of land for agriculture in Bunu-Tai for Songhai farm which attracted some number of small scale businesses around the area. This attracted massive employment of able bodied youths (men and women respectively). Also, 50 persons employed for the Songhai farm at Bunu-Tai. 104 Rivers Youths trained in various skills in agriculture in Port -Novo in Benin Republic. 18 persons out of the 104 beneficiaries are already managing their own business.RSSDA supported 130 farmers from Bunu-Tai and Ban-Ogoi with farm inputs. While 66 practicing farmers trained at Ubima; 300 persons trained at Degema, Aluu, and Ebubu Hatcheries. Some of the trained youths have established their own farm e.g. Johnson Nzaorko fish farm at Koroma in Tai and Justice Akawo and 4 others in Egberu in Oyigbo Local Govt. Area. They distributed 5,00 pools of flinted pumpkin to 50 women groups for planting in Gokana, 22,000 seed yams were handed over to 110 yam farmers at Gokana, 500,000 bundles of improved cassava cuttings were distributed to farmers across the state. 10 power tiller machines delivered to Kana L.GA for distribution to farmers. And 34,000 farmers registered -male and female respectively. Below are number of projects carried out:

8   Source: Gbarabe 2009

These are government effort to alleviate poverty in the various local government areas. And there is a process of monitoring and evaluation to ensure sustainability and the provision of markets for the sale of the produce by agency staff.Besides, RIMA (Rivers State Micro FinanceAgency) an agency by the government has provided 7,000 micro entrepreneurs with micro credits (over 65% of beneficiaries are women).

The goal 2 of the MDGs targets is to achieve Universal Primary Education for all children by 2015. The goal strives that children everywhere both boys and girls will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Since the advent of democracy in 1999, successive government of Rivers State have strived to achieve this noble goal which is the hub of development. In Rivers State, the net enrolment ratio in primary education as recommended by UNESCO is well above 80%. The enrolment ration of boys to girls is 1:1, while the pupils to teachers' ratio 1:35. The illiteracy level has tremendously increased based on model facilities and recruitment of teachers. The table below shows the number of LGAs, number of schools and the enrolment of male and female ratio. The above table showed the ratio rate of boys to girl's enrolment in schools in 2007. It revealed that the gap between the boys and the girls has drastically reduced; unlike the era when the girl child was not allowed to go to school by their parents. Furthermore, the 140 model primary and secondary schools built in all the Local Government Areas by the Rivers State Government did not only reduce the gap ratio between the boys to girls, but alleviated poverty in the areas. It created employment at different cadres -cleaners, gardeners, office staffs etc. More so, the employment of 13,000 teachers and posted to various schools reduced poverty and unemployment and the target or ratio of teachers to pupil. Also, the government enacted a policy of free education, free books, sandals etc.at both primary and secondary level. This is to give access to the less privileged ones and avoid the abuse of rights of education to children.

In The above information and data explained the degree to which MDGs goal 1 and 2 have been met in Rivers State. Therefore, the paper affirmed that the MDGs are achieved in the state.

9 VI.

10 Conclusion

The fact that poverty is multi-faceted, poverty alleviation is an action for a change -enough food to eat, access to education, adequate shelter, health, protection from violence etc. means that the MDGs goals 1 and 2 in Rivers State have being achieved to a significant degree. The lives of people in the rural areas have been touched.

However, there are some bottlenecksinfrastructure mainly urban based, communal and political conflict hinders effective service delivery, corruption. Also, there is steady influx of people from Niger Republic into Rivers State who brings in children of school age; these children are used as hawkers, beggars within school period and capturing these groups into the school system pose a serious challenge. Thus, some experts have argued that the MDGs is elite based and have not touched the lives of the rural populace. The paper opined that MDGs is laudable framework for development to strife, but concerted efforts and commitments must be in place to achieve future global development agenda. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will constitute the heart and minds of the global accountability framework that will come into its own after 2015. African countries, like all countries of the world, will need to be responsive to this framework. Africa must therefore play

1

MDGs	Targets	Indicators	Rivers Scenerio
1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	a) Halve b/w 1990 & 2015, the population whose income is less than $1 per day	i) Proportion of population below US $1 per day	Acquisition of land or mech farming (Songhai farm)
		ii) Poverty gap ration	
	b) Halve b/w 1990 & 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	iii) Share of poorest quartile in national consumption	Access to credit - RIMA
		iv) Prevalence of underweight children under five yrs., of age	
		v) Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption	
2 Achieve Universal Education	Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere will be able to compete a full course of primary schooling	i) Net enrolment in primary education	Built model primary and secon schools in all LGAs
		ii) Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5	
		iii) Literacy rate of 15-24 years old of teachers	Mass employ-ment
3 Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparity on primary and secondary education preferably 2005 and at all levels of education not later than 2015	i) Ration of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education	
		ii) Ration of literate females to males for 15-24 yr. old	
		iii) Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	
		iv) Proportion of seat held by women in	

Figure 1: Table 1 :

2

UNDP Report -2006

Figure 2: Table 2 :

s/n	Raw Material	Locations
1	Banana	Abua/Odual Oyigbo, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, PH. Obio/Akpor, Emuoha
2	Poultry	Mainly upland LGAs
3	Fish	Adoni, Akuku-Toru, Asari-Toru, Bonny, Degema,Okirika etc.
4	Cassava	Ahoada East/West, Abua/Odual, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Emuoha, Etche, Khana, Gokana, Oyigbo, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Tai and Omuma
5	Yam	As above, except Abual/Odual
6	Palm Produce	All upland except Degema LGAs
7	Plantain	Ahoada East/West, Abual/Odual, Ikwerre, Oyigbo, Obio/Akpor, Emuoha, Ogbia, Egbema, Omuma, Etche, Eleme, Tai
8	Pineapples	Abua/Odual, Oyigbo, Ikwerre, Omuma, Etche, Khana, Gokana, Eleme

GOAL 2:

Achieve Universal Primary Education.

s/n	Names of L.G.A	No. of Schools	Male	Female
1	ABUAL/ODUAL	11	3879	3750
2	AHOADA-EAST	12	8247	7747
3	AHOADA WEST	13	6084	5737
4	ANDONI	10	5214	3891
5	AKUKU-TORU	6	1535	2104
6	ASARI-TORU	11	2963	3672
7	BONNY	4	1134	1970
8	DEGEMA	12	3886	4207
9	ELEME	6	3313	3229
10	ETCHE	19	10511	10264
11	EMOHUA	19	10395	11330
12	GOKANA	12	21710	6944
13	IKWERRE	13	10097	8489
14	KHANA	22	13672	13592
15	OBIO/AKPOR	16	14540	29765
16	OGBA/EGBEMA/NDONI	15	1046	1278
17	OGU/BOLO	3	1367	1359
18	OKIRIKA	6	3667	2886
19	OMUMA	3	4542	3144
20	OPOBO/NKORO	3	6036	6124
21	OYIGBO	4	7218	7036
22	PORT HARCOURT	15	70694	72039
23	TAI	10	12688	11996
	TOTAL	245	224438	222553

Source: Post Primary Schools Board, Ministry of Education, R/S 2007

Figure 3:

addition,
undergraduate and post graduates students between
2008 and 2013.

RSSDÆnrolled 1,916

Figure 4:

117 [New African Magazine (2013)] , *New African Magazine* August/Sept 2013.

118 [Implementation and Acceleration Report 2013 held at Claridon Hotel and Suits Port Harcourt, sponsored by Office of SSA to Ri
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128 [with the following team of consultants Dr. Steve Wordu -lead consultant, Dr. Eze Wosu, and Mrs] *with the fol-*
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130   Okoroafor.