

Original Article

Government

Millennium Development Goals and Leadership in Nigeria: An Examination

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ABSTRACT [ENGLISH/ANGLAIS]

In September 2000, the United Nations articulated and set the Millennium Development Goals with the basic objective of enhancing global development, particularly, in the poor nations of the world. Most of the specific development targets of the Millennium Development Goals are envisaged to be achieved by half of 2015. However, barely two (2) years to the 2015, results of various assessment of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by international organization and findings from scholarly researches across regions and nations of the world, indicate that Nigeria is still very far from achieving development as envisaged. This is evidenced by the facts that there are, yet no significant reduction in poverty, unemployment rate, health problems, environment degradation, among others, in the country. This situation is paradoxical and worrisome as Nigeria is adjudged to have substantial resources that can be utilized to achieve development as envisaged by the Millennium Development Goals. It is in the context of these and yet the difficulty in achieving the Millennium Development Goals that we considered it necessary to examine the factors of leadership and governance as major variables in achieving development generally, their character in Nigeria, to analyze and establish the implications for achieving the Millennium Development Goals specifically.

Keywords: Achievement, development, governance, leadership, millennium development goals, policies

RÉSUMÉ [FRANÇAIS/FRENCH]

En Septembre 2000, l'Organisation des Nations Unies articulé et fixé les objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement avec l'objectif fondamental de favoriser le développement global, en particulier, dans les pays pauvres du monde. La plupart des objectifs de développement spécifiques des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement sont envisagées pour être atteint par la moitié de l'année 2015. Cependant, à peine deux (2) ans à l'horizon 2015, les résultats des différents évaluation de la réalisation des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement par l'organisation et les résultats de recherches scientifiques dans les régions et nations du monde international, indiquent que le Nigeria est encore très loin d'atteindre le développement comme prévu. Ceci est démontré par les faits qui y sont, mais pas de réduction significative de la pauvreté, taux de chômage, problèmes de santé, la dégradation de l'environnement, entre autres, dans le pays. Cette situation est paradoxale et inquiétante que le Nigeria est jugé pour avoir des ressources importantes qui peuvent être utilisés pour réaliser le développement, comme prévu par les Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement, il est dans le cadre de ceux-ci et encore la difficulté à atteindre les Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement que nous avons estimé nécessaire d'examiner les facteurs de leadership et de gouvernance comme les principales variables dans la réalisation du développement en général, leur caractère au Nigeria, d'analyser et d'établir les implications pour la réalisation des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement en particulier.

Mots-clés: Réalisation, le développement, la gouvernance, le leadership, les objectifs de développement du millénaire, les politiques

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations, in its Millennium Summit in September, 2000 in New York, United States of America, articulated and set eight development goals known as the Millennium Development Goals. The basic objective of the Millennium Development Goals is to enhance global development, particularly, in the underdeveloped nations of the world [1]. The first seven goals are to

eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and ensure environmental sustainability. Goal eight focuses on creating a global partnership for development [2]. These goals are envisaged to be achieved, at least, by half in 2015. All the 193 member

nations of the United Nations, including Nigeria and at least 23 international organizations, endorsed the Millennium Development Goals [3, 4]. Nigeria, as a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, committed herself to pursue and achieve the set out development goals by 2015.

The expectation is that the Millennium Development Goals would be achieved in Nigeria as envisaged by 2015. However, with barely one (1) year left to the 2015, results of various assessments of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by international organizations such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, all indicate that African countries, particularly the sub-Saharan ones like Nigeria, are not achieving the development goals (Nwuke, 2004[5]). Findings too from scholarly researches like those of Essien [2], Ajike and Akpa [6], and Nwogbo [7] indicate that Nigeria is not significantly achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This is evidenced by the facts that the indices of poverty and underdevelopment have not yet changed in any significant and demonstrable ways as there are still increasing youth unemployment, declining standard of living, poor standard of education, insecurity of lives and property, infant and maternal mortality, disproportionate representation of women in politics and governance, infrastructural decay, environmental degradation and inequitable distribution of income [5, 8]. It is in the light of the above and given the important place of leadership in achieving development goals and given to the endemic leadership problem in Nigeria that we set out here to explain the difficulty in achieving the Millennium Development Goals as a consequence of leadership problem in Nigeria. Beyond this, we shall, on the basis of our discussion and analysis, recommend imperative actions towards enhancing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

Explication of the Major Concepts

1. Leadership

According to Hornby [9], leadership refers to the state or position of being a leader. The term leader itself refers to a person who heads a group of people especially the head of a country, an organization etc. Against this background definitions, leadership in this work is synonymous with holding upper level positions in the formal political or governmental

structures within the three arms and levels of government in Nigeria. Thus, the president of Nigeria, the state governors, the chairmen of the local governments, commissioners, ministers are, for instance, leaders by virtue of the high position of their offices in the public management and governance hierarchy. We, however, use the term leadership here in a collective sense and with emphasis on national government leadership.

The character of leadership, especially government leadership, accounts for a nation's failure or success particularly as it relates to achieving development [10]. This is perhaps why most works on leadership emphasize the role of leadership in bringing about economic and socio-political development of a nation and in influencing others to co-operatively work towards realizing set national development goals and objectives.

Leadership could be good or bad. It is deemed good when it essentially works for the achievement of national development and growth, leads through positive personal examples, encourages the rule of law and ensures institutional checks and balances and good governance generally [11]. On the other hand, a leadership is deemed bad when its concern is how to use its position to promote private and selfish interests and in which case working towards enhancing national development is not taken as a serious and urgent matter.

2. Governance:

This refers to the use of political authority and exercise of political control to manage state resources for social and economic development [12]. It is also described as the process by which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. In this sense, governance entails sound development management [13].

However, governance could be bad or good. It is good when resources are managed and administered efficiently and effectively such that the great majority of the citizens of a nation demonstrably benefit. In this case, good governance entails sound development management as it centres on formulating appropriate development policies and effectively implementing them good governance is again linked to the extent to which government is committed to improving public welfare and

responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to ensure rule of law and order and deliver public services, create an enabling policy environment for productive activities and equitable and democratic in its conducts. UNESCAP [14] specifically, enumerated eight characteristics of good governance which are that it is participatory, consensus oriented, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient and that it emphasizes accountability, ensures equitability and follows the rule of law. On the other hand, governance is bad when it is characterized by corruption, official ineptitude, lack of transparency, abuse of rule of law and lack of proper democratic practice [12].

The concept of governance is related to that of leadership in the sense that exercising power and decision making for a group of people is called governance while the group of people who have the authority to make this decision and exercise power is referred to as the leadership. Given this, one can posit that the quality of leadership invariably determines the quality of governance.

An insight into the Character of Leadership in Nigeria

It is very important to note that at the national level, government leadership in Nigeria has, from 1960 to 2009, changed thirteen (13) times as shown in table I below:

Table 1: National government leadership in Nigeria from 1960 – 2009

S/N	Head of Government Leadership	Period	Government Type
1	Abubakar Tafawa Belewa	1960 – 1966	Civilian
2	Major General Aguiyi Ironsi	1966 – 1966	Military
3	General Yakubu Gowon	1966 – 1975	Military
4	General Murtala Mohammed	1975 – 1976	Military
5	General Olusegun Obasanjo	1976 – 1979	Military
6	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	1979 – 1983	Civilian
7	General Mohammed Buhari	1983 – 1985	Military
8	General Ibrahim Bagangida	1985 – 1993	Military
9	Chief Earnest Shonekan	1993 – 1993	Civilian
10	General Sani Abacha	1993 – 1998	Military
11	General Abdulsalami Abubakar	1998 – 1999	Military
12	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	1999 – 2007	Civilian
13	Alhaji Musa Yaradua	2007 – 2009	Civilian
14	Dr. Good Luck Johnathan	2009 - - -	Civilian

It is important too to note that none of the leaderships, either military or civilian was appreciably good as they were respectively characterized by varying degrees of inefficiency, ineffectiveness, unaccountability, visionless, corruption, prebendalism, gross mismanagement and misappropriation of state resources. Dike [17] in this respect notes thus:

A careful examination of the attitude and behaviour of the leaders of post-colonial Nigeria shows that many of the civilian as well as military leaders were mired in the pursuit of selfish personal goals at the expense of broader national interests or needs.

In essence, since Nigeria's independence 53 years ago, she has not been blessed with good leadership. This entails that Nigeria, over these years, has not had a leadership that is willing and able to formulate appropriate development policies and ensure their effective implementation to enhance national progress. Rather, leadership in Nigeria, as Derin [18] observes, works primarily for the realization or promotion of its corporate selfish interests. Indeed, for him leadership in Nigeria is characterized by selfishness, and display of corrupt tendencies in office and that Nigerian leadership is inextricably linked with corrupt tendencies in the management of state affairs and that the recurring issue

in Nigeria's political formation since the post-colonial period is the monopolization of the political leadership by corrupt and self-conceited individuals. Egeran [19], similarly observes that government leadership in Nigeria has been characterized by non-commitment to judicious mobilization and use of the country's natural resources to address the basic national development needs. Describing the dominant character of Nigerian leadership, Egeran [19] notes that Nigerian leadership since 1960 has not been transformational and have not had radical development vision and deep commitment towards implementing formulated development policies. Dike [17], in his discussion on leadership in Nigeria, contends that what obtains in Nigeria is the instrumental leadership style and noted that the main concern of the instrumental leader is on how to use his or her leadership position to achieve personal goals. Usually, in this circumstance, actions, policies or programs are initiated, considered and adopted primarily for the political or economic advantages that such would afford the leaders and not actually for their appropriateness in addressing or solving national development problems.

The basic inference from the foregoing is that leadership in Nigeria since her independence has been of the bad type.

An Analysis of the Implications of bad Leadership on the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria

Generally, and as Waziri [20] contends, good leadership with its corollary good governance is a very crucial factor for achieving development in any nation. The importance of good leadership, in achieving development generally is also succinctly noted by Emma et al. [21], thus

Fundamentally, every society needs good leadership to move forward and progress. In essence, for the growth and development of any nation to be realized, it must have the best in its leadership positions as such can only bring good governance.

Specifically, the importance of good leadership as a necessary framework for achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been emphasized by some scholars. For instance, Nwogbo [7], notes in his study that achieving the Millennium Development Goals requires good government leadership with focused effort at formulating and effectively implementing relevant policies and programs. Egbuji [22] too contends that it is only good leadership that could create and sustain the

commitment required to properly integrate the Millennium Development Goals into national development agenda and successfully implement them. Further, it is only good leadership that can judiciously harness the domestic resources and other foreign aids, as would be provided in the context of global partnership for development, and provide the necessary co-ordination and cohesion to achieve the Millennium Development Goals [23]. Generally, it is good leadership that can further the realization of the objectives of the Millennium.

Development Goals through initiating relevant programs and projects and ensuring their effective implementation through mobilizing local and private sector support and participation. Such a good leadership too will understand better the peculiarities of the local contents for each and varying areas of the Millennium Development Goals projects and programs and could, as a result, develop new and better processes for achieving the development targets.

It is necessary to note that the general tendency has been to attribute the slow and insignificant achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in poor and developing nations like Nigeria to the inadequacy of resources especially finance [24]. It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that without good leadership that is capable of developing well thought out policies and strategies and that encourages the development of strong institutions and bureaucracies for their implementation, significant achievement cannot be made even when financial resources are available. This is the case in Nigeria where achieving the Millennium Development Goals is almost a mirage as a result of bad leadership with its corollary bad governance [25]. In fact the Millennium Development Goals cannot be meaningfully achieved in Nigeria in the existing circumstance of bad leadership with its resultant bad governance that is characterized by corruption, unnecessary discontinuation of development policies, improper democratic practice and undue political leadership interference in the development administration processes and procedures.

For instance, governance in Nigeria, as has been observed by various scholars such as Emma et al. [21], Mala [26], Lucky and Idowu [27] and Achebe [28] is characterized by corruption. The basic thesis in their respective discourse on leadership is that the corrupt and prebendal character of leadership in Nigeria that explains generally the difficulty in achieving development in the country. No doubt, the Millennium Development Goals

too is difficult to achieve in Nigeria because of deep and pervasive corruption particularly at the leadership level as it is in Nigeria. For one thing, leadership corruption negatively affects the content and quality of development policies or programmes at both the formulation and implementation stages. At the formulation stages, the content of development policies are often such that they reflect more of the selfish and egoistic interests of the political leaders and with less regard to their appropriateness in addressing given problems or the possibility of their effective implementation. At the implementation stage, the bureaucratic leadership, for corrupt reasons too, most often do not feel inclined to approach the implementation of development policies with the enthusiasm and zeal that their effective implementation may require. Often times, if the direct financial effect of policies on the leadership is not positive, their implementation may be resisted, or even sabotaged [29]. Again, in the context of the pervasive leadership corruption, it is often difficult to mobilize grassroots and private sector support and create motivation among the ordinary citizens to support policies and actions adopted towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Again the undue political leadership control of the bureaucracy, which is the organ of government usually saddled with the responsibility of implementing development policies and programmes, most often, result to time and energy wasting in the process of implementing development policies or programmes. A development agenda like the Millennium Development Goals, with a fairly short time frame, in this circumstance, cannot be meaningfully achieved.

Also in the context of unnecessary discontinuation of development policies, as it obtains in Nigeria, laudable and brilliant policies that are even being effectively implemented are abandoned by succeeding regimes. This practice is propelled by the desire of leaders to associate and link their administration or regime with distinct social, economic or political development policies or programs. Such personistic styles of governance is not supportive of achieving and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals. This is because the goals are interconnected or interlinked in nature and so requires an integrated and on-going approach to achieve and sustain.

Finally, the improper democratic practice in Nigeria leads to unaccountability, arbitrariness, rascality and irrationality in decision making and governance activities

by the leaders [19]. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is, no doubt, in this circumstance being seriously constrained. Indeed, it is only in the context of leadership commitment to the basic tenets of democracy that good governance and ultimately the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals can be enhanced.

Finally and in the context of the foregoing, it could be argued that setting Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations and its adoption by Nigeria are, for now, wrong priorities. There is yet the more urgent need to correct the defects in the leadership of the structures and institutions for formulating and implementing development programs and policies. Very apparent is that the Millennium Development Goals was developed without due regards to the internal dynamics of leadership and governance where these goals are to be pursued and achieved and without regard to the implementation capacity as to be determined by the character of state leadership. Even though United Nations places premium on good governance as necessary for attaining the Millennium Development Goals by member states, there is little to suggest that its expression of concern in the basic areas of good governance like accountability, transparency and due process are not mere rhetoric as there are no matching actions towards their realization [3, 8]. And it has turned out that this externally set development goals is not being achieved in Nigeria because of the absence of supportive or conducive internal conditions or factors which, cardinaly, among them is good leadership with its corollary good governance.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria: The Necessary Conditions

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, basically, depends on the evolvement of good leadership at the heads of the various government tiers in Nigeria. Getting this kind of leadership, however, depends on the extent to which elections are democratically conducted. This is because there is the likelihood that leadership that emerges from a truly democratic election would be able and inclined to build strong system of good governance with transparent system of public budget and financial management to ensure efficient use of both available domestic fund and foreign financial aid to achieve development as envisaged by the Millennium Development Goals. It, however, needs to be emphasized further that to effectively urge the government

leadership to conduct real democratic election in Nigeria requires the concerted efforts of the civil society organizations such as women groups, students unions, labour organizations etc. It is expected that at this level of collectivities, more effective demand for democratic election and for accountable leadership and governance could be made and achieved. Indeed, the civil society groups, as forms of social forces, are effective platforms for demanding accountability, effective representation, good governance and for questioning of undemocratic tendencies by the government leadership. The individual citizens too have a major role to play in the effort at evolving and sustaining good leadership in Nigeria. This they can do by voting into power only those who are capable of protecting their rights and aspirations towards good governance. This again requires that the citizens develop participant political culture through which they shall feel inclined at any point in time and under any condition to play active and positive roles in the politics of the nation more particularly in the electoral processes and conducts.

Finally, in view of the fact that bad leadership constitutes a major obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the urgent task before the international community, particularly the United Nations, is to assist the developing nations, more especially those with serious leadership and governance challenges like Nigeria, to institute structures and reforms that will strengthen the rule of law, enhance effective checks and balances of power, enhance proper democratic practice, promote greater accountability and transparency in governance, induce development oriented public administration and stimulate the involvement and sustainability of good leadership. This, more than just setting development goals, as encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals, seems a more realistic and effective basis for achieving and sustaining development in a country like Nigeria with endemic leadership challenge.

CONCLUSION

There is, no doubt, an organic interconnection or nexus between good leadership, good governance and the capacity to drive a meaningful and sustainable development. Similarly the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, depends essentially on the existence of good leadership with its corollary good governance. So given the bad leadership and bad governance system in Nigeria, it has and will remain

difficult to achieve and sustain the Millennium Development Goals.

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