



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: C
SOCIOLOGY & CULTURE
Volume 14 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2014
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

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

By Dr. Eze Wosu

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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% deliverables. The scenario analysis method was deployed in line with MDG assessment indicator framework which provided information and reference items to measure specific goals and progress in terms of poverty alleviation – (A 3 days training workshop held in Port Harcourt). The workshop dovetailed into syndicate groups were critical analysis and inputs were made by participants. The finding is that goal 1 and 2 achieved up to 70% success in alleviating poverty in the state through Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), Rivers Microfinance Agency (RIMA) etc. The government has projected a more comprehensive reduction package come 2015.

Keywords: MDGs; poverty; alleviation; rssda, new response approach (NRA); rima.

GJHSS-C Classification : FOR Code: 160899



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2014. Dr. Eze Wosu. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

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

Dr. Eze Wosu

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% deliverables. The scenario analysis method was deployed in line with MDG assessment indicator framework which provided information and reference items to measure specific goals and progress in terms of poverty alleviation – (A 3 days training workshop held in Port Harcourt). The workshop dovetailed into syndicate groups were critical analysis and inputs were made by participants. The finding is that goal 1 and 2 achieved up to 70% success in alleviating poverty in the state through Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA), Rivers Microfinance Agency (RIMA) etc. The government has projected a more comprehensive reduction package come 2015.

Keywords: MDGs; poverty; alleviation; rssda, new response approach (NRA); rima.

I. INTRODUCTION

The 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 re-examine 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:

Table 1 : shows MDGs, Targets and Indicators and Rivers Scenario

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 b) Halve b/w 1990 & 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	i) Proportion of population below US \$1 per day ii) Poverty gap ration iii) Share of poorest quartile in national consumption iv) Prevalence of underweight children under five yrs., of age v) Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption	Acquisition of land or mechanized farming (Songhai farm) Access to credit – RIMA
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 ii) Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 iii) Literacy rate of 15-24 years old	Built model primary and secondary schools in all LGAs Mass employment of teachers
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	

			national parliament	
4	Reduce child mortality	Reduce under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015	i) Under five mortality rate infant mortality rate % of one year olds fully immunised against measles	
5	Improve maternal health	Reduce the maternal mortality ration by three-quarters b/w 1990 & 2015	ii) Maternal mortality ration proportion of births attended to by skilled health personnel	
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other factors	Halve halted by 2015 & began to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS Halve halted by 2015 & began to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major disease	i) HIV prevalence among 15-24 yr. old pregnant women ii) Contraceptive prevalence rate number of children orphaned by AIDS iii) Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria iv) Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis	
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and program and reverse the loss of environmental resources Halve by 2015 the proportion of people with our sustainable access to safe drinking water & sanitation By 2020 achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100m slum dwellers	i) Proportion of land area covered by forest ii) Ration of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area iii) Energy use kg of oil equivalent per US\$ GDP PPP carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons iv) Proportion of population using solid fuels v) Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban/rural vi) Proportion of households with access to secure tenure	
8	Develop a global partnership for development	Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term Address the special needs of the least developed countries, including through more generous ODA official development aid for countries committed to poverty reduction In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies especially for information and communication	i) Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services ii) Proportion of ODA provided as debt relief iii) Share of ODA in GDP iv) Telephone lines per 1,000 people v) Personal computers per 1,000 people	

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.

II. 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). Poverty is the most prevalent social phenomena in

human history and it generates endless controversy or debate among scholars. So eradicating poverty is a problematic and frustrating enterprise. The common questions that come to mind are: what actually is poverty? What are their parameters? How does it manifest among individuals, groups and nations? Can it be eradicated or reduced? These are fundamental questions in connection with poverty that has taken diverse methodological approach to address.

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.

Table 2 : shows incidence of Poverty in Rivers State from 1980 – 2004

1980	1985	1992	1996	2004
7.2	44.4	43.4	77.3	29.09

UNDP Report - 2006

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. 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.

IV. FINDINGS

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

Goal 1:

To eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty.

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. 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:

Project in Agriculture	Male	Female	Total
Enterprise Development Project	230	165	395
Education Program	1321	688	2009
Widows Empowerment program	0	200	200

Similarly, Rivers State Government embarked on some Agro based Raw materials – Selected materials.

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, Eleme, 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, Degema, Ogbia, Egbema, Omuma, Etche, Eleme, Tai
8	Pineapples	Abua/Odual, Oyigbo, Ikwerre, Omuma, Etche, Khana, Gokana, Eleme

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 Finance Agency) an agency by the government has provided 7,000 micro entrepreneurs with micro credits (over 65% of beneficiaries are women).

GOAL 2:

Achieve Universal Primary Education.

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.

s/n	Names of L.G.A	No. of Schools	Male	Female	Total
1	ABUAL/ODUAL	11	3879	3750	7629
2	AHOADA-EAST	12	8247	7747	15994
3	AHOADA WEST	13	6084	5737	11821
4	ANDONI	10	5214	3891	9105
5	AKUKU-TORU	6	1535	2104	3639
6	ASARI-TORU	11	2963	3672	6635
7	BONNY	4	1134	1970	3104
8	DEGEMA	12	3886	4207	8093
9	ELEME	6	3313	3229	6542
10	ETCHE	19	10511	10264	20775
11	EMOHUA	19	10395	11330	21725
12	GOKANA	12	21710	6944	28654
13	IKWERRE	13	10097	8489	18586
14	KHANA	22	13672	13592	27265
15	OBIO/AKPOR	16	14540	29765	44305
16	OGBA/EGBEMA/NDONI	15	1046	1278	2324
17	OGU/BOLO	3	1367	1359	2726
18	OKIRIKA	6	3667	2886	6553
19	OMUMA	3	4542	3144	7686
20	OPOBO/NKORO	3	6036	6124	12160
21	OYIGBO	4	7218	7036	14254
22	PORT HARCOURT	15	70694	72039	142733
23	TAI	10	12688	11996	24634
	TOTAL	245	224438	222553	446991

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

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 addition, RSSDA enrolled 1,916 undergraduate and post graduates students between 2008 and 2013. Out of this number, 521 students have graduated, while 1140 are currently in school. 210 students are expected to travel overseas by September 2013. 45 students have withdrawn, based on health ground according to an interview with RSSDA staff.

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.

VI. 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 bottlenecks – infrastructure 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

its part and be fully engaged in the process of designing and adopting the SDGs initiative, Kamau, 2013 cited in New African magazine.

REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Anikpo, M. (1995) Poverty and The Democratic Process: The new face of mass poverty in Nigeria, University of Port Harcourt Press.
2. Gbarabe, G. (2009), Path to Sustainable Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria: A practical Approach, Rivers State Newspaper Corporation, Port Harcourt.
3. Needs Response Approach (NRA) To the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Implementation and Acceleration Report 2013 held at Claridon Hotel and Suits Port Harcourt, sponsored by Office of SSA to Rivers State Governor on International Donor Agencies (RIVSIDA) in compliance to FGN-UNDP 7th Country program on Economic Governance program (EPG); with the following team of consultants Dr. Steve Wordu – lead consultant, Dr. Eze Wosu, and Mrs. Minabo Austin Okoroafor.
4. New African Magazine – August/Sept 2013.
5. Niger Delta Human Development Report – 2006.



This page is intentionally left blank