
Problems and Prospects of Achieving Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the increasing threats to environmental sustainability, the intervention of the Sustainable Development Goals and Nigeria's efforts in the global campaign to address the problems. Efforts made to address the challenges facing the country and the constraints militating against the attainment of the goals of the SDGs are also discussed. The prospects for meeting the SDG goal 7 are also enumerated. Recommendation and the way forward have been put across.

INTRODUCTION

In September, 2000, many Heads of State adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Inherent to this was a global agenda to ensure environmental sustainability, with time bound targets. The inclusion of environmental sustainability was informed by the recognition of the damage being done to the environment. This is captured in the following quotations:

“By avarice and selfishness, and a groveling habit, from which none of us is free of, regarding the soil as property..... the landscape is deformed” (Harry, 2008).

“Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he has been given. But up till now, he has not been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wildlife become extinct, the climate ruined and the land grows poorer

and uglier everyday” (Anton, 2008).

In view of the above, the concern for ensuring environmental sustainability is not out of place. Although, several measures have been devised to ensure that the environment is sustained, the ineffectiveness of such measures and the increasing threats to environmental sustainability led to the global concern which resulted to the Millennium Development Goals declaration. The MDGs are people-centered, time-bound, and measurable (Tibaijuka, 2005).

Although the goals are universal, each country was expected to set targets considering local priority problems and resource capacity in recognition of each country's peculiarities.

Nigeria is part of the global campaign to address all the social and economic crises that are devastating in the well being of people and this is the target of the MDGs.

The situation in Nigeria, especially with respect to the problems addressed by the MDGs parlous, for instance, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP,

2009) observes that the country's natural resources are seriously threatening. This is illustrated in the following statements:

1. The State of the Nigerian Environment.

Nigerian Natural Resources, some of its most valuable national assets, are still seriously threaten. For example, within 2000 and 2010, the total square area forest shrank by a third, from 14.4% to 9.9%. Similarly, access to safe water and sanitation is a serious challenge to Nigeria. Little progress was made up to 2005 but improvement since then have brought the proportion of the population accessing safe water to 58.9% and the proportion accessing improved sanitation to 51.6%.

The major challenge lies in translating substantial public investments in water, into effective access. This requires more involvement by communities to identify local roads, and better planning to deliver holistic and sustainable solutions. Sanitation efforts are falling short of the target. Rural urban migration – will add to the pressure in sanitation infrastructure throughout the country. It is doubtful that Town Planning Authorities have made adequate preparations for sustainable housing and sanitation.

There is an urgent need for managerial, technical, and financial resources to deal with these challenges, to be established at State and Local Government levels. Given the risk of over-exploitation of ground water in the North and the influx of saline water in the South, innovative solutions are required across the country (www.ng.unde.org/mdgrngprogress.shtml).

The Nigeria government is not oblivious of the magnitude of the problem and the need to address the challenges. Thus, in line with global thinking in making

life better by striving to attain the goals and targets of MDGs, Nigeria set in motion, the machinery for achieving the MDG's by 2015. A policy brief by UNDP (2009) catalogues the various efforts of the government. As stated in the policy brief, two of the steps taken by the Government relate to the adoption of MDGs – based planning and the commissioning of an MDG Needs Assessment study with the broad objective of providing a solid foundation for policy, budgeting, planning and financing strategy on the MDG. The study was conducted and its findings provided inputs into the policy brief prepared by the UNDP. Further efforts made to address the various challenges facing the country and which are part of the constraints militating against attaining the MDG's includes:

1. Economic reforms with the launch, in 2004, of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) at the Federal level; State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) at the state level and the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) at the local level.
2. The envisioning of placing the country among the top 20 leading economies in the world by 2020 leading to the preparation of the vision 20:2020 document in 2009 and the preparation of the consequent preparation of the First National Implementation plan for NV20:2020 (2010-2013).

The introduction of the 7-Point Agenda, focusing on:

- a. Sustainable growth in realization of the economy;
2. Improvement of infrastructure (power, energy and transportation);

3. Agriculture and agro-industry development;
4. Human capital development (education and health);
5. Security, law and order (including electoral reform);
6. Combating corruption; and
 - a. Conflict resolution through promoting equitable and sustainable regional development
7. Adoption of MDG-related development planning in 2006 to channel investments quickly for meeting the MDGs.
8. The establishment of Virtual Poverty Fund (VPF) into which fortuitous gains from the debt relief are pools and from which MDG activities are financed.
9. Inauguration of the Presidential Committee for assessment and Monitoring of the MDGs (PEN) for tagging and tracking MDG expenditures;
10. Establishment of the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals (ASSS-MDGs).

The foregoing is a pointer to the seriousness of the Federal Government about the intention to ensure that all the social,

economic, physical and environmental challenges set to be addressed by introduction of MDGs are solved with a view to attaining the goals and targets by 2015.

In this paper efforts are made to examine the goal and targets set for the country in achieving the targets, the prospects for achieving the goal as well as the problems and steps taken to ensure that there is remarkable progress.

Goals and Targets of MDG7

The goal of MDG 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability and it is expected to be achieved by meeting three targets – targets 9, 10 and 11 in the overall MDG framework. These targets respectively are: integrating the principles of sustainable development into the country policies, reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Each of these three targets has a set of indicators for monitoring progress made towards achieving them as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: MDG 7 – Targets and Indicators

S/NO	TARGET	INDICATOR
9	Integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes	Preparation of land area covered by forest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion of gas flared - Energy use (kg of oil equivalent per SIGSP - Carbon dioxide emissions
10	Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable safe drinking water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion of total population with access to safe drinking water (%) - Proportion of total population with access to basic sanitation (%)
11	Achieve significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion of people with access to secure

S/NO	TARGET	INDICATOR
	improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	tenure (%). - Residential housing construction index

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007): Millennium Development Goals 2006 Report. The National Planning Commission, Abuja.

The Progress so far

The level of attainment of targets of MDGs is indicated in table 1 above as contained in the country’s 2007 MDG Report (FRN, 2007). According to Ademola (2013), the proportion of land area covered by forest which is targeted to be 15% by 2015 dropped from 18.9% in 1990 to 14.4% in 2006. Since then there is piracy of data to update the trend of progress made. However, there have been mounting cases of deforestation, oil spillage, erosion, and desertification. All these aggregate to loss of environmental resources and threaten attainment of targets.

With respect to the target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, the performance of sanitation indicator is a bitter one than that of water (Table 2). The fluctuation in the level of trend of progress is a source of concern. As at 1990, the proportion of population using for improved drinking water source was 54% which increased to 66.25% in 2003 and drastically dropped to 49.1% in 2007 but increased to 58.9% in 2009. In essence, the country was able to improve access to improved drinking water source by 4.9% between 1990 and 2009. This indicates an

annual increase of 0.26%, whereas the country is expected to increase access to this source by 18.1% in order to meet the 2015 target of 77% indicating an annual increase of about 6%.

With respect to sanitation, the proportion with access to improved sanitation was 39% in 1990. This increased steadily to 49.8% in 2003, dropped to 33% between 2005 and 2006, increased to 53.8% in 2008 and dropped to 51.8% in 2009 (Table 2). The country was able to increase access to improved sanitation by 12.6% between 1990 and 2009, indicating an annual increase of less than 1%.

With respect to achieving significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, the country’s 2010 MDG report does not contain level of progress as it does for other targets for MDG 7. However, the report indicates that one of the country’s greatest challenges is providing adequate housing for the rapidly growing population. The country had an estimated deficit of about 16 million housing units in 2007, requiring the construction of about 2 million annually to meet the shortfall. We are now in the middle of 2015 and no progress has been made in respect of this particular MDG.

Table 2: Progress in the level of attainment of MDG7 to Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Indicator	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2015 Target

Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Proportion of land area covered by forest (%)	18.9	14.4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	15
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Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (%)	54	54	62.11	64.21	66.25	57	60	50.9	49.1	55.8	58.9	0.4	77
Proportion of population using an improved sanitation	39	42.9	42.9	49.4	49.8	38	33	33	42.9	53.8	51.6	n.a.	70

Source: Nigeria Millennium Development Goals (MGs) Report 2010, Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs (OSSAP-DG), Abuja.

Problems Militating Against Achievement of Environmental Sustainability

Some of the problems that have limited the achievements of MDG's are highlighted below:

1. **Population Explosion:** The country's population is increasing steadily and there is no visible sign of any measure aimed at controlling the upsurge. There is a direct link between environmental resource exhaustion and population pressure. Uncontrolled increasing population growth will render any well intended policies and programmes aimed at achieving MDG 7 ineffective.
2. **High Poverty Level:** People are getting worse off and the situation is being compounded by the collapse of infrastructure. There is also a direct link between poverty and environmental resource depletion, thus with increasing impoverishment of people, achieving MDG7 will become an enigma.
3. **Policy inconsistency:** There have been cases of policy inconsistency with respect to national economic policies. Between 1986 and 2013, the country has experimented with:
4. **Structural Adjustment Programmes;**

5. National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy;
6. Vision 20:2020
7. Transformation Agenda.

The implementation of the highlighted economic blueprints and strategies has not had any significant impact on poverty reduction. For example, with respect to the energy sector, while there is campaign against forest depletion, kerosene, a popular cooking fuel is made hard to get and very expensive. Thus, many people resort to using forest products as cooking fuels. This negates the objective of the campaign against forest depletion. This again makes it difficult to address MDG (target 7A for Nigeria) which is; *“Integrating the principles of sustainable development into the country’s policies and programmes”*, with particular reference to the proportion of land covered by forest, energy used and carbon dioxide emission.

Prospects

In spite of the problems enumerated above, there are prospects for meeting the MDGs and particularly MDG 7. These are discussed as follows:

Policy on Environment

With respect to availability of policy documents and guidelines, the situation is impressive. For instance, in the area of environment, there is the National Environmental Policy, National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Environment Agency (NESREA), and there are policy guidelines on solid waste management, amongst others. What is

required is full implementation of the provisions of these policy documents and guidelines and full enforcement of the various Millennium Development Agencies (MDAs) particularly NESREA. With all these the problem of forest depletion and poor sanitation could be effectively addressed.

With respect to the housing sector, there are now approved National Housing and National Urban Development policies. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Housing Authority and the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) are making efforts to increase the housing stock. For example, the mass housing initiations of the Federal Ministry in collaboration with the State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory, among others. There are also various efforts of the State governments that could transform the housing – enhancing housing provision and improve the quality of housing in slum areas.

Resource Availability

The country is blessed with abundant resources. With respect to forestry resources, the land is enormous and rich in nutrients and many plant genetic resources. The Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) has conducted researches on forest production which could be useful, but political will is required to in a forestation programme.

With respect to water resources, Nigeria has a total water resource estimate of 2,673 billion cubic meters. The surface water resources estimate is 26.7 billion cubic meters, while water resources estimate is 51.9 billion cubic meters, (Ademola (2013)). The water supply Master Plan prepared in 1995

puts water requirement for the country by 2015 at 16.7 billion cubic meters with irrigation requiring 13.5 billion cubic meters and water supply requiring 3.4 billion cubic meters. This means the country has more than enough water resources to meet the needs of the population if well managed. In 1997, the Federal Government through the FMWR commenced the process of reforming the water resources sector in order to establish effective, sufficient, functional and implementable policy, legislation, institutional arrangements and development strategies for integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). This is expected to enable the water resources to be developed, utilized and protected to the benefit of all in order to support economic growth, achievement of development goals, equity and eradication of poverty. These are projects on paper, which can only be implemented if corruption is curbed and there is fairness and equity in projects allocation.

With respect to the sanitation, there are various development partners and international NGOs assisting the country in improving the state of sanitation, some of these are Water Aid Nigeria and Nations International Children Fund (UNICEF). Various demands driven sanitation projects have been developed, one of which is the community had Total Sanitation (CLTS) which was introduced in 2007, and which as at November, 2010 was being implemented in 30 States of the Federation and FCT (Ademola, 2013). What is required is increased commitment by the State and Local Governments.

The Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS) Channel

This channel was put in place by the Federal Government in order to improve the capacity of State and Local Governments to deliver services as well as better coordinate MDG-related programmes across the three tiers of government. The role of the Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS) is to demand funds, technical assistance, and best practice from the Federal Government to State and Local Governments. One of objectives of CGS is to reduce fiscal constraints that the States and Local Governments face in the process of improving their capacity and demand for effective service delivery.

Objectives of the Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS)

As stated in the CGS document, and cited by Ademola (2013), the origins of the CGs were rooted in the desire for a more inclusive an effective approach to public investment and service delivery. Specifically, the objectives include:

1. Investing in MDGs at the State and Local Governments levels;
2. Empowering State and Local Governments to carry out their constitutional responsibilities;
3. Promoting equipments in public service delivery;
4. Encouraging improvement in public expenditure management;
5. Strengthening the partnership between the three tiers of Government for National planning;
6. Involving communities in local development and generating field back in performance.

The Way Forward

In an attempt to suggest measures to strengthen efforts at achieving MDG 7, it is imperative to know that through developmental activities and the use of natural resources man exerts pressure on the environment. Information about changes to the state of environment as well as associated environment pressures may be conveyed to the society through the pressure – state – Response Model (UNDP, 2005) which indicates the direct and indirect pressures from human activities, state of the environment and natural resources as well as the resources through economic environmental and social agents. It also indicates that efforts aimed at forest depletion, gas flaring, energy use, carbon dioxide emission, water utilization, sanitary practices, housing need and production should not be superficial. In the light of the above, the following recommendations are proffered for a way forward.

1. A framework should be put in place that will enhance understanding, monitoring and controlling the operation of human activities exerting of pressures on the environment and natural resources.
2. A strong machinery for observing and monitoring charges with condition and state of the environment and natural resources should be put in places.
3. The National bureau of Statistics should be saddled with the responsibility of coordinating data gathering from agencies monitoring the state of the environment, processing and managing the data.
4. Existing fora for information dissemination such as ministerial briefing and Nigeria Broadcasting Services (NGS) should be strengthened

and made accessible to all economic environment and social agents.

5. Activities of MDG 7 should be decentralized and roles should be ascribed to different agents. This calls for massive awareness and enlightenment campaigns, especially for non-governmental agents.
6. There should be aggressive drive towards effective pollution control, poverty alleviation, infrastructural development, access to affordable energy, among others.
7. MDGs should be incorporated into relevant policies since they are expected to be part of national policies.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing is an overview of the problems and the prospects of achieving environmental sustainability in Nigeria. It depicts the importance of MDG 7 to environmental sustainability, the progress made so in the process of trying to meet the goal and the targets set. Though the time bound for the attainment of the MDGs is at the corner (a few months away), all hope is not lost if we are able to right the wrongs in the policy formulation and implementation processes.

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