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## **Africa and the Millennium Development Goals: Constraints and Possibilities**

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**Abstract:** *One of the strategies to overcome the poverty-prone world and other socio-political decadence was the declaration of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through global partnership for development in the entire world and in particular, the developing countries which Africa region cannot be exempted. Government at different countries has introduced various policies to achieve MDGs in their respective countries. It is however worrisome to note that, progress of attaining the MDGs targets in Africa most especially Sub-Saharan regions, despite different measures still remains in doldrums. It is imperative, therefore, to measure the progress so far in Africa region toward achieving the MDGs project. The paper focuses on the perceived hindrances to the actualization of the MDGs targets in Africa. To accelerate the snail's pace of progress in attaining the MDGs project in Africa come 2015, the paper underscores the need for Africa governments, to intensify more proactive ways of achieving MDGs goals. More so, the paper advocates for Human Rights as the basis for achieving the MDGs. It suggests that people at the grassroots should be adequately informed to secure their support and participation for sustainable development.*

**Key words:** Poverty, MDGs, Sustainable Development, Sub-Saharan Regions, Africa

## **1. Introduction**

The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs came from a series of UN conferences that were organized in the 1990s, from the Earth Summit in 1992 through the Beijing summit on gender, the Cairo Conference on Population and Development and so forth (Culpeper, 2005). What came out of those conferences was first codified by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1995. Subsequently they found expression at the world Summit in the year 2000 with its Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. However, the point is that both these syntheses of the earlier UN conferences represented a substantial retreat from what was discussed and decided on in the 1990s.

The MDGs are of central concern to the international community. Attempt to meet the challenges facing humanity in contemporary times motivated the world leaders in the millennium summit to recommit themselves to launch a concerted attack on poverty, illiteracy, hunger, unsafe water, disease and urban environmental degradation particularly in the less developed societies including Africa. Africa countries recognize that MDGs offer a great opportunity to address human welfare in the world and especially in the developing world. The adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations Assembly in September 2000 was no doubt a laudable initiative by the international community to fight poverty, accelerate human development, and facilitate the gradual, but more effective integration of the developing world, especially Africa into global economy. The re-affirmation of the MDGs in subsequent international conferences was an additional indication of the commitment of the international community to attack poverty and inequality and to end the marginalization and exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged (Culpeper 2002).

In Africa, the challenges of eradicating poverty, of achieving rapid and sustainable socio-economic

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development, and integrating the continent into the mainstream of the world economy have been increasingly taken seriously by the top echelon of the African leadership as evidenced by some of the recent important development initiatives and measures taken, such as the establishment of the African Union and the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the strategic programme of the Union whose effective implementation would bolster Africa's efforts towards meeting the MDGs and hence claiming the 21st Century for its people (North-South Institute, 2003). In recognition of the special needs of Africa for poverty reduction and accelerated human development, the Millennium Declaration called on UN Member States to support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development. These states were to take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced Official Development Assistance (ODA) and increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment, and transfers of technology. Africa was to be assisted in building up capacity to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Further measures were to sustain regional and sub-regional mechanisms for preventing conflict, promoting political stability and ensuring a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent. Indeed, this recognition and the commitment of the international community to the special development needs of Africa, coupled with Africa's own development initiatives, raised hopes of achieving the MDGs on the continent by 2015.

However, studies have revealed that while the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in Africa, excluding North Africa, increased from 44.6 per cent in 1990 to 46.5 per cent in 2001, the world's developing countries as a whole experienced a reduction in extreme poverty from 27.9 per cent to 21.3 per cent over the same period (World Bank, 2000; World Bank, 2008). Just about 3 years into the implementation of the MDGs programme in Africa, available records indicates, that many developing countries in sub-

Saharan Africa have made no appreciable progress in poverty reduction as they face technical capacity problems in formulating, implementing and monitoring the operational MDGs-based Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSPs), (Falade, 2008). Additionally, other issue requires urgent answers includes the institutional constraints that may not permit the realization of the goal of MDGs in Africa most especially sub-Saharan Africa. This is why Ibrahim (2005; Ban Ki-Moon, 2007) argued that Africa is presently off track and very slow in its implementation of the MDGs. This state of affairs should not to continue further (Aribigbola, 2009). Therefore, there is need for better understanding of the existing situation and problems that are associated with development objectives in contemporary developing world context particularly Africa which has been identified as being at the greatest risk of not achieving the MDGs and is struggling to progress on almost every dimension of poverty including hunger, lack of education and prevalence of disease.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have elicited great interest and attracted broad support from the international community. The experience of the last decade has shown that achieving them will be difficult but not impossible. The countries of Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean are on course to fulfill many of the MDGs (North-South Institute, 2005). But few African countries are likely to meet most of them (Global Poverty Report, 2002). There are variations in the prospects of individual African countries. Those that have implemented sound economic policies and improved their systems of governance have seen acceleration in growth and poverty reduction is likely to make significant headway in the future.

## **2. MDGs vis-à-vis the progress in Africa**

In 2000 the 192 member states of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration as a renewed commitment to human development. The Declaration includes eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), each with quantified targets, to motivate the international

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community and provide an accountability mechanism for actions taken to enable millions of poor people to improve their livelihoods. The MDGs are as follows:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), Malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

With the present state of affairs in Africa, the attainments of the MDGs standard for 2015 remains a scary challenge. It is worthy of note that a lot of efforts have been made to achieve the MDGs benchmark for 2015 but the current pace of progress can be said to be in a snail's rate. The analysis of this proposition and situation in Africa is shown below:

### **MDG-1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

The Millennium Development Goals call for reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1 per day in 1990 to half by 2015 (from 29 percent of all people in low- and middle-income economies to 14.5 percent) and also to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. If achieved, this would reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty to 890 million. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty fell to 23 percent in 1999, but progress was uneven and poverty remains deep and widespread. According to Global poverty Report (2002), over 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are living in extreme poverty.

Malnutrition and undernourishment are closely linked to income poverty. Most Africa countries have made dramatic progress in reducing the proportion of underweight children, but progress has slowed. At current rates of improvement

there will still be 140 million underweight children in 2020 if proper and adequate measures are not put in place. As rightly observed by AFPODEV (2006), it is practically impossible for a food unsecured nation to boast of development. Therefore, in attaining the MDG 1 benchmark in Africa by 2015 requires a higher tempo on her socio-economic development as the 2005 MDGs report divulges that the current rate is too slow to meet the target for 2015.

### **MDG-2: Achieve Universal Primary Education**

Deverajan, et al (2002) argues that in 1999, there were still 120 million primary school-age children not in school, three-quarters of them in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Millennium Development Goals set the more realistic but still difficult deadline of 2015 for all children both boys and girls to complete a full course of primary schooling. In many places schools fail to enroll all children or to retain them, and there can be large gap between reported enrollment, attendance, and completion rates.

As part of African efforts to achieve this developmental vision, African countries have built sufficient schools to place all of their primary-age children, but only about few of those countries retain at least 95 percent of the age group through to completion of primary education. According to 2005 MDG report, the efficiency of primary education has improved over the years shored up by the implementation of the Universal Basic Education, improved policy environment for government and private input in the sector. Progress has been greatest in middle-income countries and slowest in the low-income countries of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Averagely however, the prospect of achieving Goal 2 is alluring.

### **MDG-3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

In most low-income countries, like Sub-Saharan Africa, girls are less likely to attend school than boys. And even

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when girls start school at the same rate as boys, they are more likely to drop out—often because parents think boys' schooling is more important while girls' work at home seems more valuable than schooling. Concerns about the safety of girls and Africa traditional biases against educating them can mean that they never start school or do not continue beyond the primary stage. Goal 3 tends to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. That is why more young girls are illiterate than boys. The Millennium Development Goals call for eliminating the enrollment gap between boys and girls in primary and secondary education. There are some Africa regions that are close to achieving this goal. But it is unlikely that the world as a whole will achieve the target date. Going by the United Nations Development Programme (2007), Female youth literacy rates are less than male rates. The ratio of women in national parliament was 5.76% as against 30 % target. On gender inequality, nowhere does MDG-3 mention issues of sexual and reproductive health rights, which has been an issue of real concern and criticism by not only women but people who take gender equality issues seriously.

#### **MDG-4: Reduce Child Mortality**

Reduction by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five remains another major challenge in Africa. Deaths of infants and children decreased rapidly from 15 million a year in 1980 to about 11 million in 1990. But progress slowed almost everywhere in the 1990s, and in some parts of Africa infant and child mortality rates have increased. At the end of the 20th century according to Global Poverty Report (2002), only 37 developing countries were making fast enough progress to reduce under-five child mortality to a third of its 1990 level by 2015. The World Health Organization estimates that more than two-thirds of these deaths from a combination of malnutrition and disease are readily preventable in high-income countries or with more competent public services.

For instance, in some parts of the world most especially Africa's countries, vaccination coverage has begun to decline. The United Nations Development Programme (2007) reports that the percentage of one-year olds fully immunized against measles rose from 31.4 in 2003 to 50.0 in 2004. Lending credence to his report, there is wide disparities that exist between the urban and the rural areas. It is estimated that 45–55 percent of all child deaths are due to malnutrition exacerbating the negative effects of disease on a child's health (Pelletier, et al 1994). As a consequence of poor nutrition security in rural areas, mortality rates for children under five years of age are significantly higher among rural children than their urban counterparts.

### **MDG-5: Improve Maternal Health**

Reduction by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio is another goal agreed on by the world leaders which contributed to a major key point of our discussion. WHO and UNICEF estimate that more than half a million women in developing countries die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, the leading causes of death and disability among women of reproductive age. In 1995 more than half of all maternal deaths occurred in Africa and more than 40 percent in Asia, because maternal mortality rates are difficult to measure. Significant progress was made during the 1990s in Africa countries the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel rose from 42 to 53 percent. But in Sub-Saharan Africa there has been no significant change, and the rates in much of South Asia remain very low.

Many actions are needed to reduce maternal deaths: wider spacing of pregnancies, better nutrition and prenatal care, and greater availability of skilled birth attendants and emergency facilities. As noted, meeting this goal remains a daunting challenge in Africa because the continent has the highest levels of maternal mortality in the world (AFPODEV, 2006). What responsible for the high rate is not unconnected to the fact that many rural and urban dwellers refused, or



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perhaps ignorant, of what antenatal care is. About 44% deliveries were attended to by the skilled health care personnel (see UNICEF, 2010). Factors that might be responsible for this are ranges from teenage pregnancy, child labour, and high cost of treatment resulting from poverty, female genital mutilation which is also one of the dangerous cultural and social practices, lack or insufficient health workers in the rural settlements among other factors.

### **MDG-6: combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**

Another thrust of the MDGs is to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and also, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. With an estimated 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS and 20 million deaths since the disease was identified, AIDS poses an unprecedented public health, economic, and social challenge. By infecting young people disproportionately—half of all new HIV infections are among 15- to 24-year-olds—and killing so many adults in their prime, the epidemic undermines development.

WHO estimates that there were 2.3 million AIDS-related deaths in 2001 in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the adult prevalence rate has reached 8.4 percent, the Caribbean is the second most affected region, at 2.2 percent. Malaria and TB remain public health problem. Pregnant women and their unborn children are at particular risk, because malaria causes prenatal deaths, low birth weight, and maternal anemia. Death rates are highest among children under age five: in 2003 there were 906,000 deaths worldwide, 880,000 in Sub-Saharan Africa (MDG 2005 Report). Prevention and prompt treatment can do much to prevent deaths and relieve the burden of malaria on developing countries. Tuberculosis is the main cause of death from a single infectious agent among adults in Africa countries. It kills 1.7 million people every year, often those in their most productive years, between 15 and 24 (see UNDP, 2007). Over the past decade the incidence of tuberculosis has grown rapidly in Sub-

Saharan Africa. The directly observed treatment short course (DOTS) protocol has proven effective in treating tuberculosis.

### **Mdg-7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

To integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources, reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and to achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020 are the dreams of the world leader enshrined as goal 7 in the MDGs. Africa is endowed with multifarious mineral and environmental resources but high rate of population coupled with the increasing demand for these resources threaten environmental sustainability as opined by the 2005 MDG report. The environment provides goods and services that sustain human development—so we must ensure that development sustains the environment.

This is predominantly true for poor people whose livelihoods rely greatly on environmental services. In addition, they are inexplicably affected by the impacts of degradation. The sustainable use of natural resources can improve the lives of the poor in many ways, including reducing vulnerability, increasing income, and improving health. Progress has been made in many areas, but challenges persist and new ones are emerging. Access to a safe and reliable water supply is a key determinant of health. Over the last decade nearly one billion people all over the world gained access to an improved water source. But 1.1 billion people still lack access. Out of these, according to Global Poverty Report (2010), more than 25 percent are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the achievements of the last decade, 1.5 billion more people must gain access to safe drinking water to reach a global coverage rate of 90 percent by 2015, and the quality of water must be improved for many more. Access to improved sanitation facilities has also increased, but 2.4 billion people still lack sanitary means of disposing of human wastes, including more than half of all

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those living in Asia. About 80 percent of those lacking adequate sanitation live in rural areas, but the problem is also severe in crowded and rapidly growing urban settlements.

### **MDG-8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

Achieving the MDGs will require greater international cooperation and assistance by the industrial countries. While much will depend on the actions of developing countries and on the policy frameworks they have in place, the support of the international community is critical. This is particularly so for low-income countries, most especially Africa that face serious resource constraints and enormous challenges in meeting the MDGs. Assistance is required in increasing official development assistance (ODA), removing trade barriers, and ensuring that debt relief efforts—particularly the HIPC Debt Initiative—meet their goals of debt sustainability. Despite the commitment of the international community to the international development goals that preceded the MDGs (addressing the least developed countries' special need which includes tariff-and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction), the real value of aid to developing countries is down about 8 percent in the past decade. And in 2000 only half of all aid went to low-income economies (with an income per capita of less than \$755), an average of only \$12 a person. Recent studies show that achieving the MDGs would require doubling present ODA flows (MDG 2010 Report). Debt relief under the HIPC Initiative would also need to be enlarged and sustained. And the industrialized countries would need to reduce the agricultural subsidies and remove the remaining protectionist trade barriers that still discourage exports, particularly from the less developed countries (e.g. Africa). Even if tariffs and quotas are greatly reduced, many developing countries will still face difficulties realizing the benefits. Global Poverty Report (2002) suggests that if trade protection were reduced by half, developing countries would

gain about \$200 billion by 2015. But only \$2.4 billion of this would go to Sub-Saharan Africa.

To make trade an effective source of growth, developing countries need to increase the efficiency of their trading sectors. Developed countries can help by providing “aid for trade” and sharing knowledge needed to establish competitive export industries. The donor community has taken new initiatives to support the efforts of developing countries as they seek to meet the MDGs. The U.S. government passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the European Community adopted HIPC Debt Initiative. And in the context of the Monterrey Conference, both the European Community and the United States have pledged to increase substantially their ODA. These are important initiatives that will need to be sustained and deepened to enable the donor community to fulfill its pledge of supporting the MDGs in Africa.

### **3. The Basis of the ‘Snail Pace’: Constraints**

Despite the above progress, how realistic is it for Africa to attain the MDGs by 2015? This is the fundamental question we need to ask ourselves. Put succinctly, Igbuzor (2006:4) opines that it will be impossible to give a direct answer to it because the answer could either be positive or negative. But for sure, there are challenges and frailties. Factors contributing to slow progress toward the MDG targets in Africa, including inequality, structural constraints, and unemployment among other things:

- i. **Inadequate Data Collection:-** Inadequate data collection is a huge constraint. The governments at all levels in Africa are short of adequate data which has hindered the progress of meeting with the MDG targets by 2015 (see Chiedozi, 2010). No doubt, it will be very difficult to access the progress, evaluate the performance and make timely planning without adequate data

ii. **Inequality and Distributional Dynamics:-** Increasing economic inequality and distributional dynamics in African nations has meant that when progress toward the MDG targets has yielded tangible benefits, those benefits have bypassed the poorest citizens who need them most. Devarajan et'al, (2002) pointed out that there is evidence that in a more economically equal society, fewer people live in poverty and there are fewer health and social problems. From the foregoing, countries with less inequality perform better economically and grow faster than countries with high inequality. Another fundamental dimension of inequality in all countries is rooted in gender disparities. A far-reaching strategy for achieving gender equality in health, education, in the distribution of assets, in the productive sectors, and in the political domain could by itself do more than anything else to reduce inequality significantly. But unfortunately enough, from all indications in Africa, gender inequality is at a high rate. An increase in social and gender inequality will thus impede progress toward achieving the MDGs.

iii. **Low level of creativity in poverty eradication:-** If one is genuinely interested in poverty eradication, one has to start from the point that the poor are not disembodied from the rest of society and from the economy. They are very much an integral part of the way the rest of society and the economy works. The poor are neither the problem nor are they the solution to the problem. Rather, it is really important to understand poverty in a much more holistic, whole of society, whole of economy context. This line of thought leads into a serious consideration of distributional issues – income distribution and the distribution of both economic and social assets as well. It leads to a focus on *relative* rather than absolute poverty. And it also leads into a more dynamic consideration of poverty, in other words, its creation and its re-creation through time. One cannot understand poverty unless one understands income distributional dynamics and the historical context of inequality. Of the developing regions, Sub-

Saharan Africa faces the greatest challenge of meeting the MDGs. On present trends, only the five countries of North Africa—with significantly lower poverty levels and better access to education, health, and other social services—are on course to meet the poverty reduction and social development goals. Sub-Saharan countries are unlikely to meet the poverty reduction goal fully, while progress on the social development

goals is more varied, with a number of countries poised to meet them. From a global perspective, the world is on track to achieve the income poverty targets, mainly due to massive poverty reduction in China. However, Devarajan et'al, (2002) opined that, global progress does not mean that Africa is equally on track to achieve the targets.

- iv. **Unemployment:-** This is another missing link between economic growth and poverty reduction which serve as a great constraint to the attainment of MDG target in African most especially the Sub-Saharan region. For a long time, we depended on growth-led employment generation which basically turned out to be jobless growth. Under this permissive situation, it will be difficult to have employment-led growth in Africa thereby lead to a resultant effect of not meeting the MDG targets on eradicating poverty and hunger. However, to sustain the progress made so far on this, it is necessary to address the social, political, and economic constraints that hindering sustained economic growth, increase in trade, and improvement in human development.
- v. **Economic Crisis:-** Africa and the Global Economic Crisis is another constraint militating on the progress of MDGs in Africa. The global economic crisis has slowed down and perhaps even reversed the progress made towards the MDGs. Despite the prompt and appropriate responses of Africa policymakers which have helped dampen the impact and set the stage for the continent to benefit

from a global recovery but still in a very slow pace. Running at an average economic growth rate of about 3.3 percent a year in the recent past, most Sub-Saharan African countries will not achieve the goal, and the number of the poor in the region is likely to increase. But there are some countries with an average growth rate of more than 5 percent during 1995–2008 (see Global Poverty Report, 2002; Akinnawo et al 2008). Although they are unlikely to achieve the poverty goal completely, they can—on present trends—be expected to make substantial progress toward it. At the other extreme are countries, which due to persistent conflicts or severe governance problems are falling away from the MDGs.

- vi. **Weak Institutional planning and Implementation Framework:-** Another constraint that may inhibit the achievement of MDGs target in Africa include Weak Institutional planning and Implementation Framework. One of the most important areas where African states need to act to ensure the attainment of MDGs targets is in the area of formulating MGDS base policies and programmes to promote and enhance its implementation in the region. A number of programmes and projects have been designed and implemented to achieve MDGs at the various levels of government in the region. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria articulated and established National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and also the New Partnership for Africa's Development were established in other to accommodate MDGs targets. However, while it might be too early to assess the progammes, field investigation shows that the various aspects of MDGs have not been integrated or incorporated into these policies. The consequence of this is that MDGs programmes and projects are introduced at the pleasure of those in the helm of affairs. This is major constraint because

any change in government will drastically affect the project being undertaken to meet MDGs targets. In addition, the local people don't understand the purpose of these projects and what should be their responsibilities.

#### **4. Possibilities and Recommendations**

It may seem paradoxical to argue that the MDGs are inadequate when at the same time Aribigbola (2009) predicts that they are not achievable in most of the poorest countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. However, this paradox is easily resolved. If development strategies in the poorest countries were to change in the direction suggested above, the chances of achieving the MDGs would be greatly improved.

In particular, if more emphasis were placed on attacking inequality through a distributional strategy biased toward the poor, there would be a much greater "payoff" in terms of poverty reduction from any given aggregate rate of growth. In other words, with narrower income and asset inequality the poverty reduction impact of a 5 percent growth rate would be similar to the impact of a 7 percent growth rate with wider inequalities. This is particularly important in the case of sub-Saharan Africa where it is widely assumed that the rate of growth needs to be at least 7 percent to achieve significant poverty reduction. Few, if any, countries in sub-Saharan have sustained a growth rate of 7 percent. However, in the past five years some countries have reached growth rates of 5 percent, which itself is quite high compared to averages near zero in the past twenty years. So, there is hope for Africa countries in attaining the MDGs target on development if there is non-discrimination.

More so, development typically fails when its benefits do not reach groups of people who are systematically disempowered, discriminated against, excluded and/or suffer multiple human rights deprivation. Even in countries where economic growth has lifted some people out of poverty, large inequalities still persist, with millions of people



left behind in the process towards achieving the MDGs.

- Governments must take proactive measures to counter discrimination and remove obstacles that prevent the poorest and most marginalized people from accessing basic services, information and remedies.
- Disaggregating global average MDG targets and indicators can help better identify the situation of such groups and enable governments to design appropriate national policies and target budgets accordingly. Without suitable data, such groups remain invisible without priority attention and resources, thus widening the inequality gap.

At the same time, the growth performance of poor countries could be enhanced through a distributional strategy aimed at reducing inequality and favouring agriculture, rural development and urban employment. Policies to enhance gender equality should play a central role in such strategies. In other words, despite the dismal growth record of poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa, it may indeed be possible to achieve hitherto relatively unknown growth rates of 7 percent or higher via development strategies more explicitly oriented toward income and asset redistribution. With higher growth rates and a greater poverty reduction impact at any growth rate, the MDG targets – in particular, the reduction of poverty levels by at least one-half by 2015 – could be more easily achieved.

Be that as it may, governments that pursue development hand-in-hand with human rights stand a better chance of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By incorporating human rights principles into national development strategies and fulfilling their human rights obligations, governments are more likely to be successful in meeting the MDGs (to reduce poverty, hunger and disease and promote gender equality, education, environmental sustainability and global partnerships) and in realizing the UN Charter's vision of a more equal and just world. Summarily put therefore, Human Rights are the basic for

achieving the MDGs targets.

Sequel to the above, the human rights principle of participation can ensure that the people for whom the MDGs are designed become agents of change to take ownership of their development rather than being mere recipients. While having the formal 'space' for participation is a fundamental pre-requisite, it is not enough. Therefore, to enable participation

- Governments must remove laws and regulations and change discriminatory attitudes that prevent people from participating.
- Pertinent information should be made available and easily accessible.
- Public policies should promote education, access to justice as well as freedom of association and expression.

However, the current MDG accountability system will need to be further strengthened to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Human rights offer a framework for strengthened accountability by clarifying the duties and responsibilities of developing states, donor states and non-state actors. This would also ensure more transparency and commitment in national and international efforts. Development strategies should link human rights and MDG accountability systems.

Finally, donor countries can help by supporting countries adopting strategies aimed at reducing inequalities. Moreover, donor countries could also stop advocating policies that widen disparities and inequalities in poor countries. For example, policies of rapid liberalization often widen income disparities by discriminating against the poor. Donor countries could also help developing country partners to develop their systems of taxation and revenue mobilization, ensuring that they are as progressive as possible. In the longer term, if the MDGs are to be sustainable, they cannot be maintained by foreign aid alone. Unless developing

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countries build up their own systems of resource mobilization, the MDGs could simply induce chronic aid dependence, and there would be little guarantee that even if the MDGs are achieved, they would be sustained.

## **Conclusion**

It follows from the discussion above that external and internal constraints on Africa's development can be more usefully analyzed and simultaneously confronted within a holistic framework that underscores their interaction. Individual countries have the primary responsibility for developing long term plans to reduce dependence on foreign assistance and associated policy intervention through increased domestic resource mobilization, retention and efficient allocation, and through attracting productive foreign flows, especially Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Regional integration will help in this direction through expansion of regional markets, facilitation of capital and labour movement and strengthening Africa's negotiating position in international community such as World Trade Organization (WTO).

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