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## Implementation of the Universal Basic Education for Achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria

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By

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### Abstract

*Two years to the target time fixed for the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Nigeria stands the risk of not meeting the targets of almost all the developmental indices. This paper makes a case for effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria as the panacea to achieving the MDGs in a later date. The paper examines the aims and baseline target of MDGs from 1990-2015 in Nigeria. The paper again highlighted with empirical evidences the status quo and identified the existing gaps and shortcomings. Finally, the paper discussed how effective implementation of UBE programme can assist in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in a later date. The paper recommended amongst others the reformation of the curriculum to accommodate the acquisition of daily living skills that will take care of the nutrition healthy living, maternal health and environmental education.*

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aims at encouraging development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. The MDGs focus on three major areas of Human Development (humanity), namely:

- (i) Bolstering human capital
- (ii) Improving infrastructure, and
- (iii) Increasing basic standards of living.

The objectives chosen within the human capital focus include improving nutrition, health care and education. For the infrastructure focus, the objectives include improving infrastructure through increasing access to safe drinking water, energy, modern information and communication technology amplifying farm outputs through sustainable practices, improving transportation infrastructure and preserving the environment. Lastly, for the social economic and political rights focus, the objectives include empowering women, reducing violence, increasing political force, ensuring equal access to public services and increasing security of property rights. The goals chosen were intended to increase on individuals, human capabilities and advance the means to a productive life.

The laudable goals are meant to be achieved through a well planned and functional educational system or programme in the nation. The question remains how planned and functional is the system of education in Nigeria and Universal Basic Education (UBE) in particular to be able to meet up with the challenges inherent in the achievement of these Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria?

This paper "x-rayed" the extent the Millennium Development Goals have been achieved in Nigeria so far and how it could be achieved further through effective implementation of Universal Basic Education.

According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (2004), Universal Basic Education has been broadly defined to include early childhood care and education, the nine years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills, acquisition programme and the education of special group such as nomads and migrants, girl-child and women almajiri, street children and disabled groups.

### **Millennium Development Goals and Their Targets in Nigeria Using the 1990 Baseline**

For the purpose of analytical utility, it may surface here to outline the Millennium Development Goals and target.

### **Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

*Target 1:* Have between 1990-2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than 1US dollar a day.

*Target 2:* Have between 1990 and 2015 reduce the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

### **Achieve Universal Primary Education**

*Target 3:* Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere – boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education.

### **Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

*Target 4:* Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education not later than 2015.

### **Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality**

*Target 5:* Reduce by three quarter between 1990 and 2015 under 5% mortality rate.

### **Improve Material Health**

*Target 6:* Reduce by three quarter between 1990 and 2015, the material mortality rate per 100,000 births.

### **Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**

*Target 7:* Have reduced the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

*Target 8:* Have by 2015 begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

### **Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

*Target 9:* Integrate the principles of sustainable development into the country's policies and programmes.

*Target 10:* Have by 2015 reduced the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

*Target 11:* By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least one hundred million slum dwellers.

### **Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

*Target 12:* Deal comprehensively with debt problem of developing countries through national and international measure in order to make debt sustainable in the long-term.

*Target 13:* Incorporation with the private sector makes available the benefits of new technology especially information and communication.

### **Baseline Assessment of the Status Quo and Identification of Existing Gap**

Two years to the deadline fixed for the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals, Abayuwana (2011) opined that many African countries including Nigeria, stand the risk of not meeting the targets of almost all the developmental indices. Daouda Toure, the coordinator of the United Nations (UN) system in Nigeria and head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during the launching of the MDGs report on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 maintained that to achieve the MDGs, a country like Nigeria must achieve what he called “the right political and programmatic environment”.

### **Let Us Examine the Journey So Far**

Results from National Bureau of Statistics 2005 -2007, African Development Bank 2006, World Bank 2005-2007, Central Bank of Nigeria 2005 are very demoralizing and unimpressing as it is better than imagined than described (Nwiyi, 2012).

Onye (2010) noted that there was imbalance and inequality of income distribution, hence hunger was prevalent as the number of under-weight babies remained at 29%. According to Human Development Report (2004), Nigeria has the third largest number of poor people after China and India with two third of its citizens living below 1US dollar per day. If rate of \$2 dollars is used to measure the poverty level, the percentage of those living below poverty line will jump to 90.8 percent. The average annual percentage growth of GDP in Nigeria from 1990-2000 is 2.4 percent. This is very poor compared to Ghana (4.3%) and Egypt (4.6%). The gross national per capita income is put at \$260. Nigeria is also among the 20 countries of the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor.

### **Mortality and Maternal Rate Eradication**

Mohammed (2011) reported that Nigeria has the second highest rate of maternal death in the world. One (1) out of every 8 women dies during child birth as compared to 1 out of every 4,800 women in America. This implies that reasonable percentage of the women still patronize native or local medical practitioners who are also ignorant of the modern medical practice to save women during child birth.

In supporting this view, Obinna (2007) maintained that Nigeria is marked second highest in maternal mortality with just 2% of the world’s population but accounting for 55,000 out of 500,000 maternal mortalities.

### **Gender Equity and Women Empowerment**

Gender imbalance at all levels of education is evidently clear as it is also in other spheres of national life like in politics, where only 10.67% members of the

National Assembly are women. This is an indication that women are not yet politically empowered in Nigeria, hence attainment of Millennium Development Goals is yet to be achieved in this area.

Below are the few examples

<b>Positions</b>	<b>Total No.</b>	<b>No. of Male</b>	<b>No. of Female</b>	<b>% of Male</b>	<b>% of Female</b>
Governorship	36	36	-	100	0
Senatorial seat	109	101	8	92.66	7.34
House of Representatives	360	335	25	96.67	3.33
Presidential Advisers	18	14	4	77.8	22.2
Heads of Federal Agencies	51	46	5	90	10

The table above shows that women are yet to occupy the statutory percentage of positions earmarked for them in public offices in Nigeria.

### **Universal Basic Education**

The Universal Basic Education in Nigeria involves a comprehensive nine years education. A country whose 90% of its citizens have basic education has laid the foundation for developments. In spite of all the efforts to institutionalize basic education in Nigeria, only 1 out of 3 school aged children finds a place in primary school, 1 out of 16 school-aged children in secondary school, less than 35 percent of successful primary school pupils proceed to junior secondary school (Idowu, 2007).

Olori (2011) pointed out in statistical terms the level of wastages recorded in the Universal Basic Education level. Of the total number that finished JSS III in 2008, less than 35% transited to the senior secondary school.

### **Achieving Millennium Development Goals through Effective Implementation of the UBE Programme**

From the analysis above, the achievement of the universalization of basic education in Nigeria is far from being a reality. To achieve universal education and Other Millennium Development Goals therefore, the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria should be effectively implemented through the following:

1. **Provision of adequate Human Resources:** In other to implement the Universal basic Education programme, the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) notes “No educational system can rise above the level of its teachers. Ongoing efforts to raise the level of general education of teachers as well as efforts to raise the level

of their initial professional preparation will be pursued, broadened and intensified. Added to these is the very initial issue of career long professional development of serving teachers”. Sadly enough, the UNESCO’s education for all global monitory report that about 23 percent of the over 400,000 teachers employed in the nations UBE schools do not possess teaching qualification. To achieve Millennium Development Goals, efforts should be made to train and retrain teachers even in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for effective teaching and learning as to achieve the goals at a later date.

The quality of the teachers engaged in the UBE scheme also made the realization of its objectives elusive, acute shortage of qualified ill-equipped and unskilled teaching force and insufficient instructional materials remain obstacles to the progress of MDGs programme.

2. **Material Resources:** These include classrooms, libraries, laboratories workshop, play field etc. They have to be of the appropriate quantity, size and quality to meet the minimum standards for promoting meaningful teaching and learning (FGN, 2004). Report have described UBE schools as a disaster as most of the school buildings are turning into dilapidated structures and students learn under trees. This is not good enough of a country desirous of achieving Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It is therefore, imperative for the government to adequately provide these infrastructures and maintain the existing ones for us to set a standard towards achieving the goals at a later date, because the country is already behind schedule based on the time target.
3. **Financial Resources:** According to Maduagwu and Nwogu (2006), financial resources is another gateway to achieving Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria by adequately proving fund for UBE programme. This can be done by prioritizing the use of available funds, ensuring equitable distribution of funds among various levels and eliminating wasteful spending as much as possible. The Nation Newspaper of July 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 reported that the Federal Government of Nigeria is yet to release the counterpart funding for UBE among the 36 states of the nation including Federal Capital, Abuja to the tune of 34 billion Naira. Is this befitting of a country desirous of achieving Millennium Development Goals in 2015? This is a mirage as a later date is suggested by the researcher “if all things being equal”.
4. **Curricular Reforms:** Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) on November, 2007 launched a new curriculum know as the new basic education curriculum for primary and junior secondary schools. The new curriculum was to address amongst others, the issue of value re-orientation, poverty eradication, critical thinking, entrepreneurial and life skills. The question is, how far has this

curriculum been implemented in UBE schools in Nigeria? There is still the need to reform the curriculum further to accommodate the acquisition of daily living skills. This will take care of nutrition, health living, maternal health, and environmental education in other to develop the nation called Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Education has been used as an instrument per excellent to providing solutions to problems that have bedeviled mankind including the development of the nation. Therefore, a well packaged and implemented Universal Basic Education is the tonic needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. While everyone may not attend senior secondary or University education, the Universal Basic Education remains the level of education to equip its citizens with the basic skills, values and attitudes needed to launch Nigeria into the orbit of global development in 2015 and beyond.

### **Recommendations**

The paper made the following recommendations:

- (1) The curriculum should be reformed to accommodate the acquisition of daily living skills that will take care of nutrition healthy living, maternal health and environmental education.
- (2) There should be adequate provision of educational facilities, including information and communication technology to equip both the students and teachers alike for the actualization of the set goals.
- (3) Government should try to upgrade the budgetary allocation to education to 26% of the annual budget as recommended by UNESCO.

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