Assessment of The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Primary Education in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The Northern region of Nigeria has always recorded the lowest primary school attendance rate in the country. Goal (2) of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere - boys and girls alike complete a full course of primary schooling. The study seeks to know the extent to which MDG-2 has been achieved at the terminal date of the MDGs. The author utilized the Human Capital theory as a perspective to interrogate the scenario and relied on secondary sources of data collection while analyses of data were done through descriptive statistics, including tables, bar charts and percentages. It discovered that MDG-2 has not been achieved in Northern Nigeria. It recommended among other things that Nigerian government’s war against corruption should be a sincere and holistic war, Nigerian Child Right Acts which is considered mere cosmetics, should be vigorously enforced to keep children in the classrooms rather than streets etc, all of which the paper discovered to have impeded the achievement of MDG-2.

Keywords: United Nations Millennium Development Goal (MDG), Human Capital; Primary Education, Northern Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

It is a truism that the economic rationale for investing in human capital derives from the belief that human capital plays a significant role in economic growth. This explains the national quest for improved educational services as a path to achieving national objectives.

The importance of education to human being cannot be over emphasized. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education has been identified as a key index of development. It has been documented that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour as well as bringing about empowerment (UNESCO, 2002) in Lawal and Ekundayo (2012). Education has a direct consequence on civilization and development. Education is a veritable and most effective panacea for ignorance and diseases. Hence, it is a spring board for every other development agenda.

The MDGs have specifically eight goals: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and women empowerment; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development (Lawal et al 2012 :74).

To make the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria feasible, the past administration of president Olusegun-Obasanjo made concerted effort in the socio-economic and political spheres so that the goals will be a reality rather than mere aspiration. As a result, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDs), a reform programme was designed to consolidate the achievements between 1999 and 2004 to lay a foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value re-orientation (Abubakar 2013: 1). This same programme was replicated at the state level and known as State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDs). To serve as a spring board in the achievement of the laudable goals of the MDGs, Nigeria launched several developmental plans like Vision 2010, NEEDS,7-Points Agenda, Vision 20:2020, SURE P etc.
Though the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which Nigeria is a signatory to, seeks to achieve the well-being of all, its major target is children. Goal (2), target (3) is emphatically to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere - boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. It was perhaps to increase children school enrollment ratio, literacy rate and completion of basic education that motivated Nigeria to sign and pursue the Millennium Development Goal. There has been this healthy rivalry for excellence and success among the Eastern and Western regions of Nigeria. This, in no small measure prompts them to send their children to school to enable them live an independent life as quickly as possible. On the contrary, most Northern children do not have this opportunity. This study, therefore, assesses the impact of the Millennium Development Goal on participation, completion of basic education and general literacy level of pupil in Northern Nigeria, at the terminal date of the MDG-2.

1.1 Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

Schultz (1961) stated that population quality and knowledge constitute the principal determinants of the future welfare of mankind. He analysed that human capital is like any other type of capital. It could be invested in through education, training and enhanced benefits that will lead to an improvement in the quality and level of production. (Investopedia, 2009).

Undoubtedly, an increase in percentage of educated workers in any country, puts the economy of that country in sound perspective because educated workers are more disposed to skills that are literacy warranted. Improvement in economic growth is perhaps the philosophy behind heavy funding of primary and secondary schools by many countries of the world. Thus, it is the human resources of a nation, not its capital nor its material resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Adding to this line of thought, Okoli and Onah (2002:129) also maintained that development goes beyond economics and social indicators to include the improvement of human resources and positive change in their behaviour. For them, development includes increase in the citizens’ access to good education.

In this connection, education undoubtedly becomes the key to societal development. It is pivotal to the development of human resources needed for economic and social transformation of a nation. Third world countries will remain developing in so far as the productive capacity of their population remains unproductive. This is particularly so because a productive population is a direct consequence of an educated population. The provision of education, right from the primary school level is a total investment in human capital which will be more fruitful than physical capital. Previously, physical assets, equipment and labour drove economic strength but modern economists have supported the view that in the 21st century and beyond, education will drive human capital and invariably increase the economic output in a developing country like Nigeria. Primary education is central for the realization of all other goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This will eke out sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world’s time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions – income, poverty, hunger, diseases, inadequate housing – while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability (MDGs Nigeria Report 2010).

Hulme (2009:4) stated that the Millennium Declaration at the Millennium Summit in September 2000 was the world’s biggest promise – a global agreement to reduce poverty and human deprivation at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative action.

In her own observation, Az- Zubair (2013:1) opined that the Countdown Strategy has been designed to identify the gaps and lay out the policy actions, investments, and milestones that will help us further scale up our successes and remedy our weaknesses. However, she was quick to point out that before 2015 approaches, and for MDGs to be achieved on time, massive pro-poor investments will have to be made across all sectors. Without this, lack of investment in one particular area will wipe out the successes recorded through interventions in others, which according to her is the reason why there is a need for a coordinated strategy of accelerated impact as we race towards 2015. In her analysis of
funding of the MDGs programmes in Nigeria, she stated that the annual costs varied from US$19 billion in 2010 to US$38 billion in 2015. A 2010 analysis of public expenditure allocations for achieving the MDGs (Federal Government, state government and local government authority allocations) suggested that the annual gap between the amount allocated and the amount needed may be as high as US$17.7 billion. The Federal Government Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) 2010-2012 indicates that the budget allocated to ministries, departments and agencies (US$17.4 billion) for achieving the MDGs is about 62 per cent of the total estimated annual costs of US$28 billion. The gap of 38 per cent could be closed by better prioritization and rationalization, and improvements in efficiency (Ibid: 9). She concluded by saying that if carefully examined, the financial requirement in order to achieve the MDGs in 2015 is no mean resources. Because Nigeria has other domestic obligations to meet, it might be difficult for all the funds to be sunk into meeting MDGs.

In support of Az- Zubair, Aigbokhan et al (2007) stated that the magnitude and trend of increase in allocation might be misleading in passing judgment on the budgetary performance until they are placed side by side with their percentage allocations. The characteristic pattern of the government’s allocation to education in Nigeria as a percentage of the total budget revealed inconsistency. That is, education expenditure was not considered as policy targets in the overall budgeting, or else, they would have maintained an increasing proportion of the yearly budget of the nation.

Aribigbola (2009:7) studied the institutional constraints to achieving the MDGs in Africa, using the example of Akure Millennium City and Ikaram/Ibaram Millennium Villages both in Ondo state. He observed that although both the Millennium City and Millennium Village projects have taken off as programmed, the effect of the programme has not been widespread especially in Akure, though the effect of the programme seems visible in the millennium village. He discovered that the problems which programmes are designed to solve are still widespread and the lack of adequate conceptualization of the project militate against full implementation of the project. He identified lack of conceptualization and understanding both by the implementers and the will of the beneficiaries (people at the grass root), over politicization by the government, lack of interest on the part of grass root would-be beneficiary/ community and inadequate funding and capacity underutilization as the major problems militating against the success of the project. He recommended collective participation that will carry the community along in project design, and implementation as crucial to achievement of the MDGs cum complete removal of civil service bureaucracy.

In 2000, the MDG Country Progress Report revealed that the net enrolment in primary education in Nigeria was 68 per cent but in 2008 the gross enrolment ratio rose to 88.8 per cent. The number of pupils starting Primary 1 who reach Primary 5, known as the “survival rate” in 2000 was 97 per cent but dropped to 72.3 per cent in 2009. Lagos State had the highest proportion of students that started Primary 1 and reached Primary 5 (98.7 percent), while Akwa Ibom State had the lowest (27.1 per cent). At the regional level, south west had the highest with 91.7 per cent while North central had the lowest with 67.7 per cent in 2009 (NBS Report 2009). The literacy rate of youth’s between the age of 15-24, defined as the percentage of the population that can read and write in any language with understanding was 64.1 per cent in 2000, but declined to 60.4 per cent in 2003 and later rose to 76.2% and 81.4% in 2005 and 2007 respectively. However, the literacy rate dropped to 80 per cent in 2008 with a significantly higher rate in the urban than in rural areas. The MDG Report 2010 clearly stated that if the progress rate over the years is sustained, the youth literacy rate should be around 87 percent by 2015.

Azuka (2013) opined that the Northern child grows up with extremely low chances of success. He cannot secure a decent job, he cannot even offer specialized services of an artisan; he is afraid to start off a small-scale business because he virtually has nobody to understudy. The only available job is the most difficult and yet the least remunerated: the work of a labourer. He supplies water in 25-litre kegs to people who live on the fourth floor with no elevators for N50 per keg. He uses a wheel barrow or tub to move sand and concrete at construction sites, he stays around markets to help those who have bought heavy items like tubers of yam and bags of rice to move these from deep inside the market to their vehicles or even homes. And for all this hard labour, he gets paid a pittance.
The Almajiri system of education in Northern Nigeria is founded upon the teaching and learning of Qur’an and Hadith. Mahmud (2003) posits that, “there is no way one can totally exonerate the Almajiri schools from being one of the remote and/or immediate causes of begging largely for their present nature of existence, it is totally wrong to blame them the whole hog. In the present day north, not only the Almajiri (student) begs, but also some households who cannot find food to feed their children send them to far away quarters, where they could not be identified, to beg. Mahmud went further to state that the Fulani nomadic pastoralists of Northern Nigeria are among the most illiterate of Nigeria’s ethnic groups. Civilization and modernity are far from their dwelling and they wander ceaselessly with their cattle in adverse weather conditions. These migrant Fulani are threatened by diseases, droughts, tribal enemies and cattle thieves. He concluded by saying that nomadic education of these groups of Nigerian has been challenging.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess the impact of the Millennium Development Goal on illiteracy among school pupil in Northern Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to know the extent to which Nigeria has achieved MDG-2, which is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere - boys and girls alike - will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the foregoing, the following emerged as research questions to achieve the objective of the study.

1. What is the literacy rate among primary school pupil in Northern Nigeria after the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals’ initiative?

2. What is the net primary school attendance ratio in Northern Nigeria at the end of the Millennium Development Goals initiative?

3. What is the primary school completion rate in Northern Nigeria at the end of the Millennium Development Goals initiative?

2.0 Methodology

The population of this study comprises school children (boys and girls) in the age group of 6-11 years residing in the study areas. All the nineteen (19) Northern states were selected for the study. This study is descriptive and we relied on secondary sources of data collection to describe and interpret prevailing primary education conditions in Northern states at the terminal date of the Millennium Development Goals initiative. For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this study therefore, analyses of data were done through descriptive statistics including tables, bar charts and percentages.

2.1 The Study Areas

Situated in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria is bounded by Chad Republic in the North, Cameroon in the East, and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. With a total land area of 923,768km (356,669 sqm), the country has a population of 140,003,542 (NPC, 2006). Nigeria is a Federation of (36) states divided into six (6) geo-political zones via North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South and South-West, with a capital territory situated in Abuja. All the Northern geo-political zones were covered in the study and the state distribution of the Zones is as follows:
Table 1: Distribution of States in Northern Nigeria by Geo-political Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>States in the Geo-Political Zone</th>
<th>Total no of States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Zamfara.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This study, therefore, is basically a descriptive research, designed to assess the impact of the Millennium Development Goals on primary education in Northern Nigeria by the terminal date of the MDG.

3.0 Findings

Research Question 1:

What is the literacy rate among primary school pupils in Northern Nigeria after the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals’ initiative?

Table 2: Literacy among Male Pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Cannot read at all (%)</th>
<th>Can read part of a sentence (%)</th>
<th>Can read a whole sentence (%)</th>
<th>No card with language required</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8,108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extracted from Nigeria Education Data Survey, 2010

Table 3: Literacy among Female Pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Cannot read at all (%)</th>
<th>Can read part of a sentence (%)</th>
<th>Can read a whole sentence (%)</th>
<th>No card with language required</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extracted from Nigeria Education Data Survey, 2010

Table 2 and 3 above, reveal that in the Northern part of Nigeria, only a total of 43% of male children can read part of a sentence while only a total of 36.7% of female children can read part of a sentence. On the other hand, an average of 68.9% and 73.3% male and female pupils respectively cannot read or write a sentence at all.

Research Question 2:

What is the net primary school attendance ratio in Northern Nigeria at the end of Millennium Development Goals’ initiative?

Figure 1 below shows the net attendance ratio according to their distribution by states. Although Nasarawa and Kogi states recorded appreciable attendance ratio of (80.5%) and (80.1%) respectively, Bauchi state (29.9%), Sokoto state (24.8%), Benue state (68.2%), Niger state (70%), Plateau (70%), Adamawa (68.1%), Borno (38.2%), Gombe (40.1%), Taraba (70.1%), Yobe (20.2%), Kebbi (38.1%), Katsina (40.1%), Jigawa (48.2%), Kano (62.1%), Kaduna (70.2%), Zamfara (38.2%), Kwara (79.1%)
were not appreciable. Deducting from the finding, the following percentage of children in these states, Nasarawa (19.5%), Kogi (19.9%), Bauchi (70.1%), Sokoto (75.2%), Benue (31.8%), Niger (30%), Plateau (30%), Adamawa (39.9%), Borno (61.8%), Gombe (59.9%), Taraba (29.9%), Yobe (79.8%), Kebbi (61.9%), Katsina (59.9%), Jigawa (51.8%), Kano (37.9%), Kaduna (29.8%), Zamfara (61.8%) Kwara (20.9%) are still not in primary school.

Primary School Net Attendance Ratio by State

![Graph showing Primary School Net Attendance Ratio by State](image)


Research Question 3:

What is the primary school completion rate in Northern Nigeria at the end Millennium Development Goals initiative?

Primary School Completion Ratio by State

![Graph showing Primary School Completion Ratio by State](image)


Completion rate is very important in Primary School education as it marks the beginning of transition to secondary school. Children often enroll in primary schools without attending classes due to one challenge or the other. Those of them who eventually attend classes may withdraw or drop out without completing their primary school education. Figure 2 above shows the distribution of completion rate by states. Here, Plateau (98%), Niger state (90.0%), Jigawa (90.0%), Adamawa (87.9%), Nasarawa (80.1%), Kogi states (80.1%) recorded appreciable completion rate, while Kwara state is above 100% but Bauchi state (42.0%), Sokoto state (30.5%), Benue state (48.2%), Borno (30.1%), Gombe
(35.0%), Taraba (79.1), Yobe (28.1%), Kebbi (60%), Katsina (39.0%), Kano (70%), Kaduna (70%), Zamfara (40%), were still not appreciable. This is a revelation that Plateau (2%), Niger state (10%), Jigawa (10%), Adamawa (12.1%), Nasarawa (19.9%), Kogi states (19.9%), Bauchi state (58%), Sokoto state (69.5%), Benue state (51.8%), Borno (69.9%), Gombe (65%), Taraba (20.9%), Yobe (71.9%), Kebbi (40%), Katsina (61%), Kano (30%), Kaduna (30%), Zamfara (60%), Kwara state (0%) of school pupils might have dropped out of primary school.

3.1 Discussion of Findings

Literacy connotes the ability to read and write. In the case of the literacy rate among primary school pupil in Northern Nigeria after the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals’ initiative, the finding suggest that an average of 68.9% and 73.3% male and female pupils respectively cannot still read or write a sentence at all. In Nigeria, formulation of policies has never been a concern rather the bane of development has always been implementation of formulated government policies. The Nigerian government has not been pragmatic and sincere in their approach to the Goals. Achievement of literacy is a capital intensive project but on the part of government, not much has been budgeted for the MDGs projects. This was corroborated by Az- Zubair (2013) when she opined that the Federal Government Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) 2010-2012 indicates that the budget allocated to ministries, departments and agencies (US$17.4 billion) for achieving the MDGs is about 62 per cent of the total estimated annual costs of US$28 billion. She finally concluded by saying that if carefully examined, the financial requirement in order to achieve the MDGs in 2015 is no mean resources. Even when the fund budgeted is not enough, corruption among the political office/policy implementers’ holders further cripple the implementation of MDGs projects. UNICEF, 2015. UNESCO (2013) report also affirmed that in Nigeria, officials routinely steal funds appropriated for building classrooms, buying textbooks and implementing programmes that should bring more children to school. When these funds are embezzled, instructional materials remain grossly inadequate allowing thousands of pupils to struggle for the few available ones, just as lack of conducive classrooms renders teaching and learning ineffective and inefficient.

The second finding shows that in the 19 states of the North, an average of 46% children of school-going age are still not in primary school by the end of 2015 in Northern part of Nigeria. This is a worrisome situation given the fact that knowledge constitute the principal determinants of the future welfare of mankind. This finding is corroborated by EFA Global monitoring Report (2015) that, despite significant progress, the goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015 has not been met and even the limited aspiration of getting all children into schools is unfulfilled. Also, UNICEF study (2015) aligns with these findings, providing that, “many children do not attend school because their labour is needed to either help at home or to bring additional income into the family. Many families cannot afford the associated costs of sending their children to school such as uniforms and textbooks. For others, the distance to the nearest school is a major hindrance. Another cause of low enrolment, especially in the North, is cultural bias. Most parents do not send their children, especially girls, to school and prefer to send them to Qur’anic schools rather than formal school. This situation supported Mahmud (2013) in his submission that there is no way one can totally exonerate the Almajiri schools from being one of the remote and/or immediate causes of begging largely for their present nature of existence. This also found practical expression in Azuka (2013) argument that the Northern child grows up with extremely low chances of success. In Azuka’s contention, instead of enrolling into primary school, Northern children supply water in 25-litre kegs to people, use a wheel barrow or tub to move sand and concrete at construction sites, stay around markets to help those who have bought heavy items like tubers of yam and bags of rice to move these from deep inside the market to their vehicles or even home for money. All these are at the expense of net primary school attendance ratio in Northern Nigeria.

The third finding shows that in the 19 states of the North, an average of 37% of school children dropped out of school by the end of 2015 in the Northern part of Nigeria. UNESCO (2013) Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EAGMR) says Nigeria holds the world record of the highest
number of young people out of school. It also stated that one out of every five Nigerian children is out of school. With approximately 10.5 million children out of school worldwide, Nigeria tops the list of 12 other countries and accounts for 47 per cent of the global out-of-school population. Forty per cent of Nigerian children, aged between six and 11 do not attend any primary school with the Northern region recording the lowest school attendance rate in the country, particularly for girls. Echoing UNESCO, UNICEF (2015) noted the situation in Northern Nigeria and stated that even when children enroll in schools, many do not complete the primary cycle. According to current data, 37% of pupils drop out of primary school and only 63% transit to Junior Secondary Schools. Reasons for this low completion rate include child labour, economic hardship and early marriage for girls.

3.2 Implications of the Study

From the findings above, Goal 2 of the MDGs was not achieved at the terminal date of 2015. The following implications are therefore manifest:

1. According to Azuka (2013), the Northern child grows up with extremely low chances of success. He cannot secure a decent job, he cannot even offer specialized services of an artisan; he is afraid to start off a small-scale business because he virtually has nobody to understudy. The only available job is the most difficult and yet the least remunerated: the work of a labourer. He supplies water in 25-litre kegs to people who live on the fourth floor with no elevators for N50 per keg. He uses a wheelbarrow or tub to move sand and concrete at construction sites, he stays around markets to help those who have bought heavy items like tubers of yam and bags of rice to move these from deep inside the market to their vehicles or even home. And for all this hard labour, he gets paid pittance. Bearing Azuka’s submission in mind, it should also be noted that education is a reliable vehicle that drive human capital development. Zanden (2004) measure the human capital as the relative wage of skilled labour compared to the unskilled. By implication, the Northern children will continue to provide unskilled labour and be feeding on crumb as noted by Azuka above since he/she cannot offer skilled labour to better his or her lots.

2. It is said that children are the leaders of tomorrow. Part of the problems of Africa and indeed Nigeria is that many practitioners in politics are either uneducated or ill educated. They are seen in all the political corridors, be it in Local Government, States Government and National Government. These children in the Northern part of Nigeria are not prepared to lead but they will definitely lead either by hook or crook of African/Nigerian politics regardless of their education backgrounds. This implies that the political future is not secured for the North since the leaders are not informed in politics as to embrace ideals, just as the provision of the dividends of democracy will be a mirage. This also explains the near war inherent in our transition to political power. Invariably, it will continue to keep our politics and democracy undeveloped in comparison to the developed politics and democracies of the Western world.

3. The importance of education to human being cannot be over emphasized. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education has been identified as a key index of development. It has been documented that schooling improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour as well as bringing about empowerment (UNESCO, 2002) in Lawal and Ekundayo (2012). The female children who are not literate enough quickly get married from the age of ten years and above thereby exacerbating child mortality, diminishing economic potentials while child labour continuing in a vicious circle. Trans human pastoral nomadism will continue and the male children pastoralists will continue to wander ceaselessly with their cattle and die due to adverse weather conditions, diseases, droughts, tribal enemies and cattle thieves.
4. The MDGs have specifically eight goals: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and women empowerment; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development (Lawal et al 2012 :74). I argue that all the goals are achievable through sound education as a bedrock. Since the goal of universal primary education has not been achieved, this implies that all other goals are not achievable.

4.0 Conclusion

Nigeria delved into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) initiative partly to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere - boys and girls alike - will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. In the light of above, the study assessed the impact of the Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) initiative on primary education in Northern Nigeria. In view of the theoretical perspectives, findings and mathematical expressions of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, by the end of 2015 which is the terminal date of the MDGs in Nigeria, a significant number of children in Northern Nigeria cannot still read or write. Secondly, by the same period, majority of pupil in the Northern Nigeria are still not attending primary school. Thirdly, even the few pupil that enrolled in primary schools in the Northern part of Nigeria could not complete their primary schooling.

These ugly scenarios are leveraged by lack of government pragmatic approach to the implementations of the MDG programmes. Also corruption poses a great challenge, government official/MDG implementers steal funds meant for this programme and make the realization of this goal a mirage. Obnoxious cultural practices such as early marriage in which for instance, a child of ten years is culturally ripe for marriage also keeps this goal at arm’s length. When such a marriage is consummated, education becomes a forgotten issue because of the enormous domestic responsibilities of motherhood. Pastoralism also poses its own threat. Fulani nomadic pastoralists of Northern Nigeria wander ceaselessly with their cattle in adverse weather conditions. These migrant Fulanis are threatened by diseases, droughts, tribal enemies and cattle thieves. The Almajiri system of education in the Northern Nigeria is another cause for concern. This system of education is founded upon the teaching and learning of Qur’an and Hadith. This system forbids formal western education, it is believed to be responsible for street begging in every nooks and crannies of Northern Nigeria. All these have militated against the achievement of Goal (2) of the Millennium Development Goal in Northern Nigeria.

5.0 Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the author recommends as follow:

1. There is an urgent need for Nigerian government to carry out reforms in the education sector to ensure sound education policies. This should include making the pseudo-free and compulsory education actually free and compulsory in its entirety. A situation where Nigeria operates free and compulsory education, yet, pupil are intermittently tasked by teachers to make donations for one thing or the other is not acceptable. As a corollary, government should take over the responsibilities of providing school uniform and exercise books. These are currently being provided by parents but the government claims ownership of these responsibilities in the media. This so recommended because many parents cannot afford all these.

2. Presently, the Nigerian government has declared war against corruption but its strategy leaves much to be desired. Many Nigerians who argue that government is not sincere in the fight claim that it is used as a vendetta against opposition party members while corrupt members of the ruling party are not asked to give account of their misdeeds. In this connection, the Nigerian government should muster the political will to prosecute corrupt government officials no matter
how highly placed. This will curb embezzlements inherent among the MDG operator. Ignorance and obnoxious cultural practices of early marriage and pastoralism. All these anomalies exacerbate low enrollment rates in Northern Nigeria.

3. According to section 34(c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: “……. no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.” This law and other Child Right Acts are mere cosmetics as many Nigerian children particularly in the Northern Nigeria suffer child labour to bring income to the family. These laws should therefore be vigorously enforced to keep children in the classrooms rather than streets.

4. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should not be terminated by 2015 as initially planned. The Nigerian government should as a matter of policy continue to pursue the initiative to meet the stated target of getting every child of school going-age into schools.

5. Government should establish more schools to ensure that schools are at a close range to different family settlements. This will encourage the enrollment of children whose parents cannot afford the cost of transporting their children to schools far from their homes.

6. Obnoxious cultural practices like early marriage among the female children of the Northern Nigeria should be legislated against to enable these teenage girls acquire basic education which will invariably be useful to them as mothers.

6.0 References


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