

Achieving The First Millienium Development Goal: Some Considerations In Eradicating Extreme Poverty And Hunger In A Resource Constrained Economy.

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION

The millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. They include eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development.

The aim of the (MGDS) is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries.

The eight Millennium Development Goals are:

The first MDG has the following targets and deciding indices

Target 1A: Halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day

Target 1B: Achieve decent employment for women, Men and Young people

Target 1C: Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

LINKAGE BETWEEN MDG 1 AND THE OTHER MDGS

To allow coordinated action on several fronts and to achieve a strong and lasting impact on poverty, the ways in which income, hunger reduction, education, health, gender and environmental issues interact must be understood. Access to safe drinking-water and basic sanitation (MDG 7) is closely

related to reducing the incidence of poverty (MDG 1) and of major diseases (MDG 6), while hunger reduction (MDG 1) cannot be divorced from the achievement of universal primary education (MDG 2) and the goal regarding major diseases (MDG 6). Progress towards meeting commitments on trade, debt and ODA (MDG 8) is essential to support the national processes to achieve all MDGs.

For achieving MDG 1, recognition of the close relationship between poverty and hunger is critical. It is well understood that extreme poverty is at the root of chronic hunger. Poor people do not possess the means to access and/or produce the food necessary for an active and healthy life and are more vulnerable to destitution, following extreme events.

There is less recognition of hunger as an important cause of poverty. Hunger imposes human and economic costs on individuals and societies by adversely affecting the health and productivity of populations. It causes the loss of millions of productive life years as a result of the disease, disabilities and premature death that it inflicts. The developing world spends at least US\$30 billion a year, for example, treating the problem pregnancies and deliveries of anaemic, underweight mothers and the severe and frequent illnesses of children whose bodies and immune systems have been weakened by hunger. Eradicating hunger and extreme poverty could prevent this drain on scarce financial resources. Investment in hunger reduction is too often seen as "welfare" whereas, in practice, it is an investment with a potential for generating high economic gain.

Delivering the first of these MDGs "eradicating extreme hunger and poverty" would arguably be the greatest

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achievement; not least because it underpins progress on the three further health-care Goals (reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating infectious disease) and would contribute enormously to the improvement in educational attainment targeted by MDG 5.

CHALLENGES

Poverty and hunger go hand in hand. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines poor as "having very little money to buy ones needs", and poverty "as a state of been poor". It also defines hunger as a "state of not having enough to eat; lack of food".

World hunger refers to the want or scarcity of food in a country, aggregated to the world level. Protein Energy Malnutrition is the type of malnutrition being referred to when the world hunger is discussed.

Poverty is a disease transmitted by ignorance. Control of poverty treats ignorance and improves health. Chukwuanugo Ogbuagu.

The statistics most frequently cited is that of United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization which measures under-nutrition. With an estimate of 925 million hungry in the world, 13.11% or almost one in seven people are hungry. Nearly all the under-nutrition are in developing countries (Source-FAO) and children are most vulnerable.

As of 2008 (2005 statistical), the World Bank has estimated that there were an estimated 1,345 million poor people in developing countries who live on \$1.25 a day or less. Why then are many people hungry?

A number of factors affect the achievement of the First Millennium Goal, some of this include:

Climate Change: Change in weather pattern is now a global issue. Climate change is increasingly viewed as a current and future cause of hunger and poverty and is rapidly and badly affecting the world's food growing regions. Increasing drought, unpredictable seasons, flooding, vector borne diseases and changing climate patterns require a shift in crops and farming practices that may not be easily accomplished.

Conflict as a cause of hunger and poverty: Conflicts such as wars, violence etc which often arise from a group dynamics due to the desire to be more vibrant and make more progress than others often lead to hunger and multidimensional

poverty (poverty more than insufficient income or the deprivation of material resources and also encompasses the lack of opportunity to access education, basic health care, clean drinking water or to influence political processes and other factors that matter to people).

Harmful Economic Systems: Hunger notes believe that the principal underlying cause of poverty and hunger in the world. Essentially, control over resources and income is based on military, political and economic power that typically ends up in the hands of a minority who live well, while those at the bottom barely survive, if they do.

Global Recession: The late 200s recession is a severe ongoing global economic problem that began in December 2007 and took a particular sharp downward turn in September 2008. The great recession has affected the entire world economy with higher detriment in some countries than others. This has resulted in a sharp drop in international trade, rising unemployment and slumping commodity prices.

Population Explosion: During the 20th century, the world's population increased almost four fold from 1.6 to 6 billion. Until very recently, there were fears that in the next century, world population would explode to some 12 billion people, leaving little room for wilderness areas to preserve wildlife and putting extreme pressure on food production, water and non renewable resources. As world population grows, more efforts need to be made to bring in new productive areas to feed the unsustainable human populations that are growing forth. By overstressing soils and ecosystems through application of artificial fertilizers and pesticides, many of the best productive areas of the planet are being reduced to marginal lands.

AID architecture: The current AID architecture needs to be modified to better address both immediate needs and the structural causes of protracted crises.

Other challenges from agricultural sector: Broadly defined, agriculture is the production of plants and animals useful to man.

The importance of agriculture to man cannot be over-emphasized and include the following:

Some of the problems facing agricultural development include the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS/WAY FORWARD

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The authors are of the opinion that to ensure and accelerate the achievement of millennium development goal 1, the following needs to be done.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP Ending hunger requires a responsive government that is committed to instituting the right actions in the proper direction. Transparency, good governance and effective administration are strong factors needed to transform this goal to reality. Governments of food-insecure countries need to translate promises to actions by formulating and strengthening policies on poverty alleviation as well as judiciously utilizing donor agencies' and developed countries' funds in order to combat extreme poverty and hunger.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP Bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies, and developing nations are needed to co-operate in order to improve the conditions of the poor and hungry all over the world. Contributions by developed nations and commitment of the developing nations to utilize the resources appropriately are essential to reducing global statistics.

STABILIZATION OF POPULATION Increasing population heightens the problem of unemployment and hunger. Rapid population growth leads to fragmentation of land holdings for agriculture. This could lead to environmental exploitation through loss of nutrients needed for the crops to thrive.

INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY Promoting budgetary allocation for agriculture; investing in agricultural and nutrition research will increase food production, leading to increased consumption. Agricultural infrastructure is needed to improve/secure the small farmers' efforts and in turn ensure a higher crop yield and nourished population. Important specific interventions such as providing interest-free loans to farmers; irrigation; seed and fertilizer subsidy programmes; improved crop preservation techniques, agricultural extension services; rural development, etc will lead to reduced hunger and poverty rates.

CREATION OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION SCHEMES The causes of hunger are rooted in poverty. Employment creation and increasing incomes of the poor and hungry is fundamental to providing a lasting solution. This can be achieved by financing microcredit schemes to help people to become self employed; skill acquisition; improving small scale industries etc. Market opportunities also need to be

created for these businesses to thrive.

IMPROVING NUTRITION FOR THE CHRONICALLY HUNGRY AND VULNERABLE GROUP Local capacity should be geared towards nourishing the chronically hungry and vulnerable groups through nutrition programs. Top on this group are pregnant women; lactating mothers; and children under the age of five. The essence of this cannot be overemphasized as malnutrition during pregnancy, lactation, and early childhood contribute to poor cognitive development and immature immune systems which increase the incidence and severity of illness throughout life.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY Women bear the major responsibility for meeting basic needs. They are responsible for childcare, cooking and other housekeeping duties. They produce more than half of the food all over the world. Empowering them with education and employment will ensure they have better knowledge of nutrition to the benefit of their families.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Well designed national programs will yield maximum results with the involvement of poor food-insecure communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring. The rural participatory approach gives the local people a sense of ownership and motivates them to identify problems, proffer solutions and work assiduously towards helping themselves.

CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES Disaster preparedness, restoration and conservation of natural resources (especially soil and water) are essential to protecting the food security of a nation.

Industrialization Industrialization can as well lead to high economic growth.

Good leadership Good leadership aids in provision of basic standard of living.

CONCLUSION

Reducing poverty starts with children. Improving the health of children is one responsibility in the fight against poverty because healthy children become healthy adults; people who create better lives for themselves, their communities and countries. Finally, no poverty alleviation programme will be successful without controlling corruption and government waste, showing transparency, accountability and effective leadership. Progress is made but it slows especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Sustained

implementation, constant monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes as well as co-ordinate partnership and co-operation of all stakeholders will achieve the goals and targets faster.

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