

DRAFT NATIONAL YOUTH DOCUMENT ON THE MDGs POST 2015 AGENDA

Background

The United Nations General Assembly in September 2000 made a Declaration to reduce extreme poverty and its various manifestations. 189 countries agreed to pursue a set of 8 internationally enlisted development goals referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDGs are set minimum development benchmarks: they are time-bound and quantified targets for addressing income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion—while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability to be achieved by countries by 2015. Nigeria is a signatory to the Millennium Declaration and therefore is expected to report back to the International Community on progress made to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

Consequently, the Nigerian Government developed policy and institutional frameworks for the MDGs. The policy framework had sector specific and State Development Strategies .e.g. NEEDS I & II, 7-Point Agenda and Vision 20:2020, National HIV/AIDS Policy, National Youth Policy and the Transformation Agenda among others. The key institutions include Federal, State, Local Government and Community institutions that have mandate to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the developmental plans and strategies.

Nigeria's MDGs Progress

Since inception of the MDGs in 2000, Nigeria has made remarkable progress in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; the achievement of universal primary education; the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and the achievement of a global partnership for development.

Key Challenges

Incidentally, with less than five years to the 2015 MDG deadline, Nigeria is yet to achieve the MDGs as a result of the following challenges: Systemic (Data, global economic crisis and declining inflow of Aid and own resources for intervention, time, dealing with wide Regional disparities on outcomes); Goal specific challenges (Poverty reduction: Improving the quality of growth – recent growth not sufficiently pro-poor, accompanied by high inequality (NHDR 2009). Health related goals present the greatest challenges to Nigeria (Infant Mortality and Maternal Morbidity; Cultural barriers - cultural beliefs that limit health seeking practices; Personnel; Weak health-systems management across all three tiers of government, etc). Another key challenge is localizing and translating the MDGs into operational objectives for all stakeholders to bear primary responsibility for their achievement.

Post-2015 Development Agenda (Nigeria's Countdown Strategy)

As a way of facilitating and fast-tracking the achievement of the MDGs in Nigeria, the Nigerian Government developed the Countdown Strategy to consider such factors as funding, coordination of efforts and alignment with the global agenda within five years scheduled into shorter terms with measurable milestones.

The Countdown Strategy is closely linked with Nigeria's 7-Point Agenda for the country's development and Nigeria's vision for becoming one of the World's top 20 economies by 2020 (Vision 20:2020). It outlines the country's roadmap for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, identifies the mechanisms and interventions that have been most effective to date, and emphasizes the need for stronger partnerships with key stakeholders. It also underlines the constitutional roles and responsibilities of state and local governments in achieving the MDGs. In addition, the Strategy provides a guide for the institutional improvements, policy reforms and human resources required for progress on the MDGs, while charting the trajectory of MDG financing and investment to 2015. Finally, it spells out focused strategies for scaling up the implementation of interventions that will accelerate progress on the eight MDGs, and stresses the need to nurture a combination of public and private investments to ensure faster progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015.

The Countdown Strategy highlighted four strategic imperatives that are critical to accelerating Nigeria's achievement of the MDGs by 2015:

- (i) improving the governance and accountability environment
- (ii) strengthening coordination and cooperation among the three tiers and arms of government
- (iii) mobilizing and committing all communities and key stakeholders to the MDGs
- (iv) ensuring effective mainstreaming of MDGs into overall national and sub-national development visions and plans.

Making the Case for Youth Mainstreaming

Nigeria has 100 million people under 30, the rough equivalent of the populations of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya combined. Young people constitute over 60 percent of the total population of Nigeria. Young people face many challenges that affect their development and social integration. Many youth are involved in acts of terrorism, kidnapping and other crimes. Unfortunately, the Countdown Strategy makes no provision for youth mainstreaming, thereby making it imperative to seek ways to address emerging issues for youth: Green Entrepreneurship; Capacity Building & Technological Development; ICT and Social Media; Finance, Mentoring & Volunteerism; Agriculture & Food Security; Education; Informal Sector; Youth in Policy & Decision Making; Peer Review Mechanisms; and Security.

Youth Employment

With the recent 2011 unemployment rate in the formal sector put at 23.9% (source - NBS), Nigeria is obviously yet to combat fully this menace in spite of several interventions and programmes of Government. Out of 6 million employable young people that enter the job market, only 10% get a job.

The issue therefore is to identify not only the challenges but sustainable solutions to combat unemployment adequately. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to:

- Develop policies that will encourage public works programs in partnership with states and local governments to mop up a high number of unskilled-unemployed youth.
- Promote investments by Governments in non-oil sectors especially concentrating on agriculture, Innovation, technology and the creative industries.
- Unbundle bureaucratic procedures that complicate business registration processes.
- Develop systems to ensure greater ease of doing business and improve the process of enforcing agreements.

- Reduction of age into elective offices to encourage qualified youth contest for positions
- Government, development partners and CSOs' role in re-orienting Nigerian youth on their civic responsibility
- Youth Empowerment centres: Government should work with stakeholders to deploy youth innovation and skills centre across the country to provide a platform for young people to learn, build critical skills, and attract resources and opportunities
- Embark on a National Public Works Program that will mop up a large number of unskilled unemployed youth. These public works program will provide a platform for youth engagements, skills acquisition and income for youth.

Green Entrepreneurship:

In the 15-24 year age bracket, unemployment is estimated to be 37.7%. If young people are provided with employment opportunities they can become productive assets and take their part in mainstream society offering the best of their skills and talents. If this opportunity is not forthcoming, there is a chance that disaffected youth will quickly turn to crime and violence in order to survive. We note the urgent need to recognize child

and youth led initiatives aimed to improve the informal sector to generate employment. We therefore recommend that the Government:

1. establishes the Sustainable Development Fund for young entrepreneurs to have access to financial, technical and material support especially in the areas of mentoring, volunteerism, internship and entrepreneurial development;
2. Create more scholarship and funding opportunities for young people interested in pursuing research and academic work in the field of sustainable development and Green Jobs;
3. Undertake a Technology Needs Assessment (TNA), and press for market development strategies in utilizing youth Green Jobs.
4. invest in Renewable Energy, Carbon market and Green Industry to guide Nigeria's response to rising unemployment among the youth. We also call on our Government to establish a fully equipped renewable energy resource and development centre in schools and communities where we can be trained to develop renewable energy sources to reduce green house gas emission and create Green Jobs;
5. promote agricultural policies and practices that are eco –friendly and sustainable.

Policy & Decision Making Process

We **reiterate** the need to involve children and youth in policy decision and implementation of any critical infrastructure because we are the heirs to such facilities and be encouraged to make inputs.

Education:

With only three years to 2015, the deadline for Education for All (EFA) goals, MDGs and the African Union second decade of Education for Africa (2006 – 2015), Nigeria is one of 22 African countries that will miss key education goals. There is therefore an urgent need to:

- Place special emphasis on early child education by harmonising policy, developing standards and advocating for early child education nationwide.
- Prioritise inclusive education at all levels of education to achieve equitable access, especially for girls, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- Identify educational priorities that focus on the manpower needs of the nation

- Cost and quality of education needs to be well managed in order not to create inequality especially between rural and urban areas.
- Facilitate the provision of capacity building (training and retraining) as well as improved welfare conditions for teachers

Realizing the importance of Education and its role in promoting sustainable development, we hereby affirm our resolve to work with our Government and partners to;

1. improve the quality of Education in Nigeria through volunteerism, mentoring, and the use of ICT in school and community based education;
2. integrate Green Entrepreneurship into educational curricula while Green Entrepreneurship be introduced into pre-existing Clubs in our Schools;
3. encourage proper monitoring and evaluation in reviewing performance in our education system;
4. Mainstream children and youth into educational initiatives developed by Governments and other non-governmental organizations for young people. The importance of for-youth-by-youth education must be recognized by all stakeholders working on education for sustainable development.

Peace and Security

- High rate of unemployment, high youthful population and increasing poverty all lead to insecurity.
- Regional violence especially in the south (Niger Delta Militants) and the North (Boko Haram) leading to threats on security
- A regime of violence will push back some of the gains already made with the MDGs as it will discourage infrastructural development, investments and deployment of professionals especially in the health and education sectors to violence-prone areas
- Adopt best global practices in accelerating development in conflict prone areas
- Work with development partners to develop a holistic and multi-sectoral plan to deal with emerging security challenges.
- The Role of CSOs and the Media should be strengthened to provide robust monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, we pledge our commitment to work with our Government and partners to effectively mainstream youth into the Post MDGs 2015 Development Agenda.