

Local Government and the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: Insights from the Millennium Development Goals

Wada Enejo

Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Idah.

Kogi State, Nigeria

Email: mr.enejowada@gmail.com

Abstract

Given its close proximity to the grassroots and its capacity for timely and effective service delivery, local government is considered a veritable weapon in the implementation of any program aimed at alleviating poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are groups of 17 international targets established by the UN to eradicate poverty and provide global security by 2030. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which likewise sought to alleviate the widespread poverty wreaking havoc on the African Continent, were followed by the global agenda. In order to identify the inherent flaws in their execution that must be avoided if SDGs are to have an impact, this article examines the MDGs alongside SDGs. Hence, this paper is subjected to content analysis. Documentary data from secondary sources on the activities of the MDGs and SDGs, including U.N. working papers and other pertinent materials or sources were considered as veritable source of data evaluation. A global evaluation of the MDGs shows differing levels of achievement. Nigeria's MDG scorecard, in particular, shows extremely poor achievement. Two of the eight targeted goals which includes better maternal health and global partnership-were achieved by the nation. However, significant progress remains to be made toward the major goals of reducing poverty, promoting education, and ensuring environmental sustainability, all of which directly affect the lives of the people. This study found out that local government did not actively participate in the MDG implementation, which was a critical gap. Towards this end, this study suggests amongst others that partnerships with local government and more engagement are essential for the SDGs to have the desired effect.

Keywords: Local government, Sustainable Development Goals, Development, and Millennium Development Goals.

Introduction

The role of the local government in the development agenda of any society cannot be underestimated. This is true in the light of its close proximity and the opportunity it presents for prompt and effective service delivery at the local level, where poverty is most pervasive, particularly in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa (Aransi, 2017; Oyewo, 2003). The goal that nations all over the world always aspire to and strive toward is development. Because of this, it has continued to draw attention from all around the world, particularly after World War II ended and a staggering amount of material and human resources were lost. The destruction forced the United States of America and its allies to implement the widely known "Marshal plan," a development program, in 1948 in order to rebuild the economies of the European States that had been devastated by the catastrophic war. Since then, the United Nations and its specialized organizations have spearheaded coordinated efforts for global development. Among these are the World Health Organization (WHO)-led global goal "Health for all by year 2000," which uses 1975 as its base year. Other organizations involved in this effort are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Olowu (2006).

In 2000, the United Nations' member states launched a new strategy called the "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) to combat poverty, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) rankings. This was due to the alarming rate at which poverty is increasing in the midst of plenty. Year 2015 was the terminal year, by which MDG was anticipated to have brought about the intended worldwide changes in people's living circumstances. A second strategic initiative known as the "SDGs" was introduced in 2015 following a post-assessment of the MDGs. The goal of this article is to evaluate the MDGs' operation and performance in order to identify some lessons that the SDGs, their successor, might take up from them in the pursuit of achieving the global development agenda. In the second section, a conceptual theoretical study is conducted to find a connection between the notions of local government and development. The closing remarks highlight the necessity for Nigeria to intentionally guarantee Local Government's active participation in the realization of SDGs, considering its history of timely and effective service delivery and its proximity to the grassroots, where SDGs should have a lasting influence.

Conceptual Exploration

The Concept of Development

Development is a crucial concept that forms the fulcrum of this paper. Development is basically a measure of how far human endeavours have progressed. Some see the concept via an economic lens, some from a sociopolitical one, while yet others are more interested in the interaction of social and political variables as drivers of progress.

Politics and Socioeconomic Variables

When considering development from an economic perspective, economic growth is expressed as a rise in a nation's gross domestic product. This indicates a rise in the overall production of a nation over time. This limited interpretation of economic determinism is challenged by Oghator & Okubo (2000). They contend that sustainable improvements in the standard of living for the populace—which are ensured by the availability of social and economic infrastructures as well as the creation of gainful employment—are what constitute development rather than increases in per capita income or economic growth. A more comprehensive perspective on development describes it as “a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system,” Todaro (1985). Apart from bringing about enhancements in earnings and productivity, this usually entails significant modifications in the administrative, social, and institutional frameworks, along with specific alterations in the mindset and, frequently, traditions and convictions.

Dudley Seers (1979) provides three philosophical concerns that must be addressed for a nation to be considered developed in order to gain a greater grasp of the topic. These are: What has been the state of unemployment lately? How has inequality been faring lately? What is the current state of poverty? If all of these have decreased from their peak levels, then the nation in question has undoubtedly seen progress during this time. It would be odd to refer to the situation as development even if per capita income doubled if one or more of these major issues have been getting worse, particularly if all three have (Seers, 1979). The long-term goal of development is to improve people's lives through a series of social and economic transformations. From an optimistic perspective, it is therefore perceived as primarily the release of individuals from conditions of exploitation, destitution, and subjugation; this also entails modifications to the fundamental institutions and frameworks of society. According to Otoghile and Edigun (2011), the definition of development has actually changed, moving from an almost exclusive focus on

national income to a more inclusive one that takes into account issues with unemployment, inequality, and poverty. From the standpoint of human values, the United Nations Development Programme (2001) explains development. It underlines that fostering an environment that allows people to live long, healthy, and creative lives is development's primary goal. Additionally, human development is concerned with human growth as a dynamic and interactive process rather than just the satisfying of basic needs. As such, one of its constituent aspects is excellent governance. The fundamental idea behind both the MDGs and SDGs of the United Nations is development in terms of ending poverty and generally raising the standard of living for people everywhere.

The Concept of Sustainable Development

The term "sustainable" conjures up complex ideas of people coexisting peacefully with the environment or of a system that serves the interests of profit, the earth, and people. The broadest definition of sustainability is actions that enable the present generation to achieve their basic requirements without endangering the needs of future generations. Over the past 30 years, the subject of sustainable development has gained widespread attention (Salvia et al., 2019). However, there are still many unanswered questions about how to actually accomplish this aim and whether it is even feasible.

According to O'Neill et al. (2018), there is no single nation that can meet its people's fundamental demands while also producing resources at a sustainable level. Since a sustainable socio-ecological system cannot be achieved by business-as-usual procedures, new approaches are required to encourage a balance between society demands and environmental concerns. Unfortunately, sustainable development is not simple at all, and well-meaning management strategies like conservation and restoration projects can actually make it more difficult for natural systems to recover and even reduce the number and well-being of human populations (Henderson and Loreau, 2018, Kaplan-Hallam and Bennett, 2018) However, the United Nations (UN) works diligently and consistently to address present and future sustainability issues. The 169 goals and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN constitute a significant advancement in the global adoption of sustainable practices. Unfortunately, neither the goals nor the approach for achieving sustainability can be quantified. Despite being related, the goals do not specify the trade-offs and synergies between them and the total well-being of humans and ecosystems (Costanza et al., 2016). The uncertainty surrounding interactions and indicators is a recurring subject in the literature on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Kubiszewski et al., 2022, MacFeely, 2019, Bennich et al., 2020, Horvath et al., 2022, van Noordwijk et al 2018).

The term "development" has recently gained some new lexicon, which should be explained since it also pertains to our topic of study. We refer to this as sustainable development. It can be summed up as progress that occurs now without endangering development in future generations. It gained popularity as a result of widespread worries about environmental contamination after the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was established as a result of the 1972 Stockholm conference on the Human Environment (quoted in Adedipe, 2009). According to the 1992 World Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, sustainable development is defined as: *long-term, ongoing social progress that aims to protect the environment for coming generations while meeting human needs now and in the future through the wise use and replenishment of natural resources.*

The concept of sustainable development involves striking a careful balance between protecting natural resources and ecosystems to ensure that future generations' requirements are met and the human need to improve lifestyle and well-being. By protecting the ecosystem and natural

resources required for future growth, it can be characterized as a type of development that guarantees both the security of future generations and the satisfaction of present needs and aspirations. It suggests that environmental quality protection and economic growth are mutually supportive. Therefore, the goal or focal point of sustainable development is to maintain a steady balance between human activity and the environment without reducing the likelihood that future generations will enjoy a high standard of living comparable to that of the present generation. The vision and goal of sustainable development, as demonstrated later in this paper, are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The Concept of Local Government

The term "local government" can signify different things to different people, depending on the context. According to Eneanya (2010), local government can be thought of as a group of administrative bodies that oversee regions that report to a central authority, which only operates in accordance with the authority granted to it by laws or executive orders from higher government levels. He notes that local government systems differ significantly amongst nations, and even in those where comparable arrangements are present, nomenclature is frequently different. Numerous intricate elements influence the different types of local government that exist. The historical, geographical, sociological, political, and economic aspects are among them. Oyewo (2003) approaches local government from the perspective of development. Therefore, it is important to consider the development that local government creates, the social amenities that it offers, and the degree to which it has effectively promoted the general well-being of the people it was created to serve. General perceptions of local government indicate that it exists everywhere, even if its functions and associated obligations may vary depending on the location. According to this school of thought, Abubakar (quoted in Aransi, 2017) characterizes local government as:

there are certain types of local government in every nation on earth, despite possible differences in their histories, constitutions, constitutional status, organizational structure, and range of statutory, delegated, and devolved duties and functions, among other distinctive characteristics. Local governments, or grassroots governments, are generally understood to be the branches of government or administrative divisions closest to the people. As such, they consistently serve as genuine representatives of local service provision. movers of local initiative in addressing a wide range of local issues and goals, as well as mobilizers of human and material resources based in the community. Additionally, it is significant to note that local governments set up the prerequisites and fundamental framework for popular engagement in democracy.

The view of local government presented above highlights its functional responsibilities, which place more focus on the subject of holistic development, in which it plays a crucial part. It also enumerates the general duties and roles of local government in all political systems, including unitary and federal systems. These duties are so important that lack of local government or a failure to fulfill its obligations foretells a low degree of development. As we will discuss later in this article, local government plays a crucial role in implementing meaningful, people-oriented programs like the MDGs and SDGs due to its inherent character and duties.

Local Government Philosophical Discourse

It is necessary to investigate the philosophical basis for local government. This would expand on our comprehension of its crucial roles in fostering and enabling a country's multifaceted development agenda. Scholars of different ideological and philosophical beliefs have alluded that, the purpose of local government is to facilitate and carry out the political, social, and

economic advancement of a given society. The three main schools of thought on local government in Nigeria and the world over includes the following:

(i) **Democratic school:** This argues that local government is necessary for democracy and that it possesses the fundamental qualities of administrative responsiveness, accountability, and control. J.S. Mill, the main proponent of this school (quoted in Gboyega, 2003), provides three arguments in favour of local government's legitimacy. These includes:

(a) That some issues or interests are primarily and uniquely local, which makes it sensible and practical to leave them to be carried out by members of this community of interest alone.

(b) Local government continues to be one of the free establishments that facilitates and advances political education.

(c) The assurance of public accountability by local government. Being close to the local government makes it easier for citizens to demand responsible behaviour, which always encourages response.

(ii) **The Efficiency Services School:** This espouses the view that local government exists primarily to execute specific functions. Therefore, the ability of the local government to deliver services to a standard determined by a national inspectorate should be the basis for evaluating its relevance. According to Jim Sharp, who was referenced in Adeyemo (2005), these functions are performed so effectively that something else would be established in its place if local government didn't exist. Local governments are thought to be more advantageous than higher levels of government in terms of efficiently and effectively providing specific services due to their close proximity to the grassroots.

(iii) **Development School of Thought:** This third school of thought argues that local government is relevant because it can be demonstrably used to enhance living conditions on both social and economic level as well as to obtain a larger portion of the nation's wealth. As developing nations split along ethnic and religious fault lines, local government is thus seen to be in a better position to bring about the long-desired political unity. The justifications provided align with Nigeria's objectives for instituting local governance.

This was highlighted not just in the Guidelines of the 1976 Local Government Reforms but also in the country's constitutions of 1979, 1989, and 1999. According to the guidelines, the following are the main objectives of Nigeria's third tier of government:

a) make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by delegating them to local representative bodies;

b) facilitate the existence of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our society and to encourage initiative and leadership potential;

c) mobilize human and material resources through local community members' involvement in local development; and

d) offer a means of mobilizing resources.

Given the aforementioned arguments for local government, it is obvious that they are in a unique position to implement the development initiatives included in the MDGs and SDGs. In every nation, local government plays a crucial role in guaranteeing sound governance and long-term growth. This particular government unit is responsible for promoting the development of social services such as primary health care, maternity centers, clinics, community policing, market

provision, portable water, waste disposal, and agricultural extension services. These are essential components of any significant progress. Greater influence is made at the local level by local government, which also encourages good governance. Worldwide attention is focused on ensuring sustainable development and the well-being of the populace through excellent administration (Aransi, 2017).

An Evaluation of Millennium Development Goals

The Third World countries have been engulfed in poverty even in the midst of plenty, prompting the creation of the Millennium Development Goals program. Therefore, in September 2000, 189 nations united under the United Nations banner to confront the problems of starvation, droughts, epidemics, and poverty, and they approved the program known as the "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs). The program established 2015 as the cutoff date by which they must overcome the obstacles they have identified. As a result, the MDGs were regarded as the first comprehensive plan created to accomplish the global development goals with quantifiable objectives and precise indicators. This means that, depending on their national interests, each state must pursue and attain these global goals. This puts responsibility for creating a better world on the individual states. According to the United Nations (2008), it also suggests that individual nations who have accomplished these goals have a responsibility to support those who are still working towards achieving these goals.

Following fifteen years of implementation, the Millennium Development Goals revealed that extreme poverty and hunger can be reduced within a specific time frame (Akinroye 2016). A general assessment of this program presents a mixture of success and failure. It has been described as the most successful anti-poverty movement in history. On the other hand, the UN's 2012 summary report on the MDGs shows differing levels of achievement. While it's true that extreme poverty has decreased internationally, at least 80% of people have been lifted out of it, and extreme poverty has decreased in every region but Sub-Saharan Africa, where several countries are lagging behind despite fast economic progress since year 2000. A significant proportion of children in low- and middle-income nations—roughly one in five—are underweight to a considerable extent, which has an impact on many aspects of their development. Although there has been a significant global rise in the availability of basic education, Sub-Saharan Africa has lagged significantly behind. Over 120 million young people, mostly in Africa, are considered to be illiterate and over a quarter of a million children still do not attend school (U.N., 2012).

The following issues, which are mostly related to local government's low level of participation or under appreciation as partners in progress, are listed in the U.N. report as obstacles that hindered the achievement of the MDGs.

- Limited ownership and consultation: it is acknowledged that the MDGs did not result from widespread agreement on development priorities. Instead of including a more extensive preparation and discussion among member countries, this agenda was quickly established by a small group of experts. It was pointed out that if local government had been included, the budget to meet rapid urban growth and population dynamics might have been framed with more care. According to UCLG (2012), "From the perspective of local government, localizing the MDGs means more than just adjusting global goals to national action plans."
- Another well acknowledged shortcoming of the MDG program is its tendency to leave the poorest behind. Inequality has received significantly more attention in recent years due to growing gaps around the world, especially in areas where there has been economic progress.

It is therefore claimed that it was simpler to overlook the needs of those who are most difficult to reach due to the emphasis on partial targets and the goals of reaching them.

- The primary source of information about the MDGs is the urban environment, which means that the most important source of information—the rural areas, which belong to the local government—is being ignored. This results in problems with data gathering.

As a result, it was determined that local government's active participation may be directly connected to the various MDG success stories listed. This is so because the majority of the MDGs rely on the provision of infrastructure and services, which is primarily the duty of local government (UCLG, 2012). They do so either directly or indirectly. Instances where the involvement of the local government made a significant influence are Bangladesh and Brazil.

Participatory citizen monitoring initiatives have improved local project planning, allocation of monies to MDG priority areas that are important to the community, and increased accountability and transparency in Bangladesh. The autonomous administration of the financial resources by local government entities and their discussions with local populations on budget allocations and planning decisions are among the success factors recognized in Bangladesh (U.N., 2010). Local communities in Brazil have the ability to decide what should be prioritized for a minimum amount of the city budget, thanks to the country's decentralization strategy. This has made transparency necessary, which has decreased corruption and favoritism. It has aided in tying municipal investments to regional goals by increasing financing for social services including healthcare, education, and other essential social services as well as providing greater resources to a city's poorest neighborhoods. Furthermore, the extremely effective "Bolsa familia" program in Brazil, which gives low-income households a small monthly stipend, is designed at the federal level but is primarily carried out by local governments (Cabannes, 2004).

MDGs Score Card in Nigeria.

It is important to note that Nigeria only achieved two of the eight goals it set out to achieve: These includes better maternal health and international cooperation for development. There is still need for significant focus on the four main vital goals of reducing child mortality, poverty, improving education, and maintaining the sustainability of the environment. The Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals noted in its 2015 End Point Report that more work remains to be done in order to accomplish the goals in the future. The report highlights that the nation still faces significant obstacles in combating poverty, hunger, and malnutrition; attaining gender parity in the workforce, education, and political leadership; lowering the number of maternal fatalities; expanding access to sanitation facilities; and maintaining environmental sustainability (FGN, 2015). In conclusion, Nigeria's track record of performance is uneven. The committee emphatically states that overcoming the numerous obstacles is necessary in its proposals for the post-2015 MDGs. As reported in this Endpoint Report, we must go into further detail regarding Nigeria's score card.

The purpose of this is to draw attention to the inherent difficulties that should provide valuable lessons for the Post-2015 Development Goal Agenda, or SDGs. Remarkably, this paper demonstrated that majority of these difficulties are within the purview and duties of local government administration in Nigeria. Hence, the urgent need to incorporate local government into the laudable development agenda like the SDGs.

Assessment of the Eight Point Agenda of MDGs in Nigeria

- **The first Millennium Development Goal is Eradication of extreme poverty:** Nigeria achieved some strides in combating hunger, but fell short of most indicators' targets. Even while it did not create jobs or lessen poverty, the remarkable growth rate of the 2000s was not totally inclusive. According to FGN (2015) and the UN (2015), hunger was also more common in rural than in urban regions.
- **The Second Millennium Development Goal is to attain universal primary education.** As of the mid-point assessment year, there was an increased trend in the net involvement in basic education. The Boko Haram insurgency was blamed for this threat. As a result, the net enrolment dropped from 60% in 1995 to 54% in 2013, which was the end-point. According to the 2015 Nigeria MDG, Nigeria was unable to reach the goal.
- **The Third MDG is to Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:** Gender parity has advanced significantly, but women's empowerment has not kept pace. Altogether, Nigeria did not achieved the set target. The main obstacle to women's entry to elective posts is the patriarchal culture and practices that still exist in Nigeria today.
- **The fourth MDG is to Reduce Child Mortality:** As of 2014, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) was 89 deaths per 1000 lives, an improvement from 2000's 191 deaths per 1000 live births. But Nigeria fell short by 28% of the 2015 objective of 64 deaths per 1000 live births. 2015 MDGs; UN, 2015).
- Nigeria has made progress toward **MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health.** A steady downward trend was observed from a baseline of 1000 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 350 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012 and finally to 243 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014, which was the end-point status. Numerous policy drivers were credited for the accomplishment, including donor cooperation, the Federal Ministry of Health and its parastatals, and midwives programs.
- Nigeria failed to meet **MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases,** particularly in terms of the prevalence of tuberculosis per 100,000 people, where efforts have not yielded significant results. In Nigeria, the final count of tuberculosis cases remained startling at 338 in 2013. According to the World Bank (2016), this is deemed intolerable and necessitates increased resources, initiatives, and a fresh effort.
- **MDG 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability:** Great progress was made but targets not attained. Safe drinking water supply has advanced significantly, yet it is still limited to the metropolitan population. Furthermore, it is still rather disturbing how many people live in slums. (2015) UN.
- The only objective Nigeria received the highest score was **MDG 8: Create a global partnership for development.** The amount of official development assistance per person was on the rise, which could have an effect on infrastructure and human development (MDG, 2015). Nigeria accomplished the two goals of MDG 5 (Maternal Health) and MDG 8 (Develop a Global Partnership for Development), as previously mentioned. There are some lessons that may be learned from the previous assessments that would affect the SDGs' performance.

SDGs and Local Government Administration: Insights from MDGs

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were put forward in year 2000 to combat global poverty in the areas of hunger, health, education, and the environment, were reassessed in 2015 and produced the Goals for Sustainable Development. The focus of the United Nations, is the promotion of these "Sustainable Development Goals," which was adopted in September 2015 in New York as a result of the United Nations member nations coming together with 17 universal and transformative goals, they are viewed as a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and are anticipated to be accomplished in 15 years, (2030) just like its predecessor (MDGs). The following presents a comparison of the two programs' objectives.

SDGs and MDGs Compared

Like its predecessor, the SDGs sought to end hunger for all people, promote healthy lives, and end poverty in all its manifestations. This is no doubt a reflection of a coherent, holistic, comprehensive and balanced framework incorporating the three dimensions of sustainable development- social, economic and environmental- with the recognition of direct linkages between, human well-being, economic development and a healthy environment (World Bank, 2016). The majority of the MDGs and SDGs align with the mission and duties of local government, which is an essential point to make. In fact, addressing problems with poverty, hunger, education, gender equality, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS, and agriculture are important goals and the main reasons why local government exists.

Insights from MDGs

It is appropriate to note Akinroye's (2016) essential point on the implementation of the SDGs: there would undoubtedly be problems at the national, regional, and global levels, necessitating coordinated efforts across the federal, state, and local governments. Lessons that the SDGs should address include those that hampered the achievement of the MDGs, particularly those resulting from the obstacles they faced. These consist of the following

1. **Generating and monitoring data:** Inadequate data was one of Nigeria's intrinsic problems in reaching the MDGs. Half of the 155 nations are lacking sufficient data to track poverty, according to a World Bank analysis. Sixty-one percent of the nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest rates of poverty, including Nigeria, lack sufficient data to track trends in poverty (UN, 2015). The achievement of the SDGs depends on data, which serve as the foundation for accountability and evidence-based decision-making.
2. **Local ownership:** The report also emphasizes the necessity for the government to provide a participative approach in the planning and execution of policies. The governments of Nigeria must acknowledge that the SDGs and MDGs are people-focused initiatives. Therefore, possible recipients and other interested parties, such as nearby communities and citizens. The planning and implementation of the SDGs should engage organizations, youth, and civil society organizations.
3. **Robust cooperation and positive intergovernmental relations between the various levels of government.** The degree to which each level of government participates in the development and execution of the SDGs determines whether or not they are successful. As previously mentioned, a shortcoming in the MDG implementation was the local government's limited involvement. Furthermore, it has been observed that the majority of locations where the global impact of the MDGs was not felt were rural ones. The federal government and other development partners would be well advised to make sure that local government departments and units are working together in an authentic and efficient manner to ensure the realization of SDGs.

4. Another area of concern for the SDGs' achievement would be funding. Although the financial burden for implementing MDG programs was lessened by debt alleviation gains, financing for these programs was insufficient (FGN, 2015, 12). The lesson here is that in order to finance the SDGs, the government would need to look into a variety of funding options, including the private sector.

The involvement of local government is crucial to the successful implementation of the SDGs due to its important duties and obligations as a unit of government. Akinroye's (2016) insightful critique in this regard is helpful.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to evaluate the MDGs program, highlighting both the advancements made and the underlying flaws that prevented the global development agenda from achieving its goals in Nigeria. This study was carried out in an effort to furnish and enrich data that ought to act as policy guidelines for the execution and management of the Sustainable Development Goals. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have improved the worldwide situation by tackling concerns like food, poverty, HIV/AIDS, health, and other things. Along with improving the monitoring of development initiatives, they have also increased political commitment, affected debate, and given targeted advocacy. Nigeria has made significant progress in reducing poverty and addressing health-related challenges, thanks to coordinated efforts towards achieving the goals.

But there have been major obstacles that have hampered the MDGs' performance both internationally and in Nigeria, particularly with regard to its restricted emphasis, low level of ownership, and limited perspective on development. One significant issue that emerged in the MDG implementation process, as noted by foreign observers worldwide and in Nigeria, was the authorities' and multilateral partners' inability to acknowledge the critical roles played by local government. It is important to acknowledge that the MDG implementation process prioritized national-level activities over the crucial link between local administration and residents. As this research also showed, local governments have played a major role in achieving several goals of the MDGs. In Nigeria, for example, low levels of local government involvement in fulfilling their developmental obligations have resulted in numerous instances of restricted progress.

Active and successful cooperation at the national and sub-national levels, particularly the local government, becomes essential for the SDGs to have a significant impact both internationally and particularly in Nigeria. Nigeria would need to work together to achieve the SDGs, which are more difficult to achieve because they have a broader reach than the MDGs.

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