

# Management of Human Resources and Millennium Development Goals in Africa: The Nigerian Experience

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## Abstract

This study is a critical examination and discussion of the Management of Human Resources and Millennium Development Goals in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria Experience. It highlights the importance of Human Resource in Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria, and exhibits the link between human resources management and development objectives. The study reveals that Nigeria is blessed with abundant human resources that can foster development. It also shows that the central objective of Human Resource Management (HRM) policy in an organization, such as attracting the right caliber of personnel through recruitment and selection, based on merit and enhanced with good welfare packages, training and development, utilizing the employees effectively by putting the right personnel in appropriate positions seem not adequately pursued in the Nigeria civil service, which is the executive arm of government. Conclusively, the human resources approach has been identified as a cardinal one in the pursuit of the development issue. It is undisputable that every form of development is human driven. The need to formulate and implement policies aimed at promoting human development is sine-qua-non for Nigeria to meet the MDGs.

**Key Words:** Human Resources, Millennium Development Goals, Human Resources Management

## Introduction

One of the most significant developments in the field of organization in recent times is the increasing importance given to human resources. More and more attention is being paid to motivational aspects of human personality, particularly the need for self-esteem, group belonging and self-actualization. This new awakening of humanism and humanisation all over the world has infact enlarged the scope of applying principles of human resources management in organizations. The development of people, their

competences, and the process development of the total organization are the main concerns of human resource management (Pareek & Rao 1992)

Africa is a continent in despair. Despite its enormous natural and human resources endowments, the continent has not been doing well in most in socio-economic indices of development when compare with other third world regions. Despite considerable progress made by some countries in Asia and Latin America between 1970 and 2002, Africa as a whole suffered immensely, recorded the slowest progress overall and in some vital areas, it suffered reverses.

The situation in Nigeria does not fare better as the continents most populous country has been confronting with development challenges and crisis of governance especially with the foray of military on its political scene Nigeria, Africa's crippled giant, was among the world's 50 richest countries in the early 1970s but shipped to find itself among the 25 poorest countries in the world at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite its natural resource endowments and being the 6<sup>th</sup> largest oil exporter and 8<sup>th</sup> largest deposit of natural gas in the world (Soludo, 2006). It has the majority of poor population after China and India.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations (UN) Millennium submit in September 2000 was hailed as it provides the third World Countries, especially Africa, the new opportunity and drive to alleviative poverty and reverse the deterioration in human development. The MDGs also represents the international community's commitment to provide an accountability framework and global partnership for progressively eradicating poverty in all its dimensions.

For proper explication, the study proposes the following basic assumptions.

- One, there is a significant relationship between human resources management and the prospects of attaining the Millenium Development Goals in Nigeria.
- Two, the attainment of the Millenium Development Goals in Nigeria will remain a mirage if adequate attention is not directed by all stakeholders towards the efficient management of the nations abundant human resources.

The broad objective of this paper is to examine the management of human resources and millennium development goals in Africa with particular reference to Nigerian experience. The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. Section one examines the review of relevant literature. Section two deals with the human resource management in the Nigerian civil service Section three, discusses the Millennium Development Goals in Nigerian context; an Assessment. Section four deals with Human Resources Management Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. The final section is the concluding remarks.

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

### **Human Resources Management**

The management of human resources is a specialized kind of management, which is critical to the survival of all human organizations. It has been identified as one of the cardinal element of all aspects of management. In Africa today, human socio-political organizations are becoming more complex in nature and the leaders in these organizations are expected to have greater technical experience and a better understanding of human behavior.

Human Resources Management according to Onah (2003) is a series of activities which the job, the individual and the organization all interact as each develops and changes. He went further to identify two major activities within the realm of human resources. This includes recruitment, selection, placement, compensation and appraisal of the human resources. This group of functions is usually referred to as personnel or human resources utilization. The other group of functions comprises those directed at working with the existing human resources in order to improve their efficacy and effectiveness. The activities are designed to enable the existing members of the organization to assume new roles and functions, they are concerned with human resources development.

It has become apparent that all forms of human development in the world today are facilitated within the context of organizations, such as, civil services, the NGOs, CBOs, the national and transitional corporations, and private enterprises. All these play important role in national and international development objectives.

Human resources management is primarily concerned with the process of obtaining the best possible staff of an organization with adequate welfare packages. It is not just sufficient to get the right quality of people through the process of recruitment to meet the organization needs, favourable conditions have to be created which would make them happy, cope with the demands of the job and stay on the job. The goal of human resources management is mainly to develop the workers in the organization to contribute to goal achievement in the organization by management, improved productivity, quality and services. Human resources management plays significant roles in organizations.

There is no doubt, that human resources are inevitably the required catalyst for the production of goods and services which is the key to rapid socio-economic development and efficient services delivery. Organizational human resources is becoming of strategic interest to upper management and political leaders as the effective use of people can provide a socio-political and economic advantage. Human resources refer to all the expenses, skills, judgement abilities, knowledge of risks taking and wisdom of individuals and associates, which are galvanized towards achieving organizational goals both public and private. In the view of Robert (2000) Human Resource is the single resource that processes other resources in order to obtain results that would constitute the goals of the organization. It is considered as the most important, most valuable, most complicated, and least predictable.

It has been observed that without an adequate, skilled and well-motivated workforce operating within a sound human resources management programme, it will be pretty difficult to achieve any form of meaningful development especially in the less developed countries. Leaders and organizational managers whether in the private or public sector, who underrate the critical role of human resources or underplay the importance of people in goals attainment, can hardly make any meaningful impact.

Nigeria has a lot of potentials, which are enough for it to compete favourably with the countries of the G. 7, such as France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States and Canada. This view has been strongly supported by reports of the Goldman Sachs (2007a), Soludo (2007), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, (NEEDS) (2004), Vision Report (1997) and a host of others. In a study, NEEDS (2004) observed that, Nigeria has the potential to become Africa's largest economy and a major player in the global economy by virtue of its rich human and material resources. Yet, Nigeria is having the least performance in terms of human and social indicators.

Putting the statistics straight, Egypt had reduced poverty rate from 4.5% in 1991 to 2% in 2005 and underweight children from 10.4% in 1990 to 7.5% in 2008 while Nigeria's poverty rate (head count) increased from 49.2% in 1993 to 64.4% in 2004 and underweight children reduced from 35.7% in 1998 to 28.7% in 2003 (United Nations 2009).

Human and capital resources have become the core on which to build strategies for future economic growth. Therefore, the basis of any strategic development plan rest on social, health, environment, human and technological indicators which the new development paradigm contain – MDGs.

### **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a UN initiative launched in 2000 and adopted by UN member states in 2001 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to improve the lot of humanity by 2015. Nigeria is a member of that international effort and so much money and personnel at state and federal levels have been deployed to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It constituted an unprecedented promise by world leaders to address as a single programme package of the intractable issues of peace, security, development, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The declaration of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the world leaders in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium summit pave the way for the creation of MDG office in Nigeria. It was established as a secretariat charge with the responsibility of executing MDGs affairs in the country, headed by Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs (SSAP-MDGs). The MDG office with branches in all the 36 states functions as secretariat to the presidential committee, which guides the nation towards the achievement of MDGs. The structure of presidential committee consists of, the president, vice president, secretary to the government, head of civil service, representatives from ministries and agencies, six governors, one member each from upper and lower house of assembly, private sector, civil society, international partners, SSAP-MDGs and special adviser to the president on project and programmes.

Millennium Development Goals refer to series of eight time bound development goals consisting of eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators that seek to address issues of poverty and hunger, education, gender equality and women empowerment, health environmental sustainability, and global partnership for development, endorsed by the international community to be achieved by the year 2015. In an attempt to demonstrate government commitment to MDG, Virtual Poverty Fund (VPE) was established to house debt relief gains. In the year 2007 Conditional Grants Scheme (CGS) to states and subsequently to local government to execute projects and programmes were put in place. Social safety nets scheme was also put in place.

Millennium Development Goals according to Socialist International (2005) is part of the social democratic approach to governance in a global society. It represents an unparalleled global commitment to free human beings especially those in the Third World regions from the bondage of absolute poverty and wretchedness.

According to Kofi Annah (2000) wherever, we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights. And wherever we fail in this mission, we are falling human right. The epigraph above by the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, aptly captures the essence of the MDGs, which is to give meanings to human life. The Millennium Declaration, is one of the most vital UN documents in recent time, offers the

international society, both rich and poor the golden opportunity to have a common position and integrated vision on the best ways to address and solve the multidimensional problem facing humanity and promote sustainable development.

### **Human Resources Management in the Nigerian Civil Service**

The development of human capital is very crucial to the attainment of any results in an organization. For instance, while other factors of production like technology, financial and material resources may be in abundant supply, they have to be coordinated by a human being, who because he has a will, personal desires and preferences, can direct them to accomplish desired objectives. Thus, the need to have the right quantity and quality of staff with the right knowledge, techniques and skills and the right frame of mind and attitude to contribute optimally to national goals and objectives should be the prime desire of any administration.

The commitment of the Nigerian civil service to embark on a vigorous and systematic, as well as an efficient and effective human resource management is anchored on the belief that the ability of the government to meet the yearnings and aspirations of its entire citizenry and the international community both now and in future depends largely on the ability, competence, loyalty, dedication and the capability of its workforce. According to Dessler (2008) human resource management refers to the practices and policies needed to carry out the people or personnel aspect of management job. These include;

- Conducting job analysis (determining the nature of each employee's job)
- Planning labour needs and recruiting job candidates
- Selecting jobs candidates
- Orienting and training new employees
- Managing wages and salaries (determining how to compensate employees)
- Providing incentives and benefits
- Appraising performance
- Communicating (interviewing, counseling, disciplining)
- Training and developing
- Building employees commitment

There is no doubt Nigeria is endowed with adequate human resource. The breakdown of the staff strength of the public service as recorded by the Service News (2006) buttress this point. Federal Core Civil Servants 160,000 staff strength; Public Officers in defence and Security 170,000; paramilitary services 60, 000; police 400,000; Public Officers in Agencies and Corporations 370,000; Higher Education Institutions 300,000; Public Officers at the state level 540,000; primary school teachers 590,000; Public Officers at the Local Government level 320,000; overall total 2, 922,000 staff strength.

It is quite disturbing that Nigeria which was among the 189 countries that signed the Millennium Development Goals in September 2000 is yet to achieve the end of implementing in full, the goals. The Nigerian government has not been able to provide adequate water and nutrition for the citizenry. The annual budgetary allocation to the health sector is still not sufficient. Despite the richness of our land and abundant human resource, people are still suffering from hunger, poverty and unemployment. The reason for this is not far fetched. For instance, recruitment and selection into the public service expected to be on merit is often not so. Adequate attention is not given to training and

development, as training and development votes, are often diverted by the management of some organizations. Salaries and wages are nothing to take home. However, the recent approval of N18,000.00 for the least pay worker in Nigeria by president Jonathan is however expected to be a succor in the labour sector. There are evidences of poor welfare packages for maintaining and retaining workers as well as under utilization of human resource in the Nigerian public sector. The issue of brain-drain syndrome is also not a left out. Professionals like doctors, nurses, engineers and the likes keep on leaving the country for another ones in search for better pay job leaving our hospitals in particular virtually with less and few qualified personnel. All the above constitute fundamental problems for the attainment of MDGs by 2015. The question now is can Nigeria achieve most of the MDGs by 2015?

Despite all the problems Nigeria can still achieve most of the MDGs by 2015 if adequate attention is accorded her HRM particularly, in the below areas; such as, improving performance and productivity, monitoring and evaluation in the public service, application of the merit system in recruitment and promotion, improvement in motivation, salaries and wages, the use of information technology (computerization) in the public service, the modernization conduct. In addition, the youth need to be encouraged to support and mobilize for MDGs through advocacy, promoting and monitoring the policy performance of the nation towards MDGs to suit the local needs, circumstances and realities. The aspect of the MDGs which is concerned with the achievement of the universal primary education for all by 2015 does not cater for the Nigerian youths. Hence, there is need to expand the scope beyond primary education. The education required of a youth to acquire necessary skills in order to be gainfully employed in either the public service or private sector is obviously more than the advocated primary school education.

The central objective of HRM policy is to ensure that an organization is run by people whose training, experience, motivation and mental state of mind are positively aligned to the needs and aspirations of the government and the people they serve.

In this regard attracting the right caliber of personnel through recruitment and selection based on merit, and enhanced with good salary, fringe benefits, good working conditions, training and retraining, utilizing them through the right usage, knowing the individual skill of the employee and utilizing it effectively.

There is need to formulate and implement policies that will promote transparency and accountability; overcome institutional constraints, and promote pro-proper growth.

There is need to change the structure of the economy in such a way that the economy is not dependent on only one product but diversified economy and expanding the industrial sector. So also deliberate efforts and policies must be put in place to redistribute income. Political transformation as well as social and cultural re-orientation is also advocated for in the bid to meet some of the goals.

The issue of urban development also deserves attention as its growth definitely increasing and there will probably be more people in urban areas than rural areas by 2015. There must be urban development process that is inclusive and not based on dislocation of slum dwellers without alternatives. In addition to the above, there is need to formulate and implement policies that will generate employment since this is the surest way of achieving the MDGs because individuals will receive income and will contribute to the economy.

Transformation of power is also called for. If power is concentrated in the hands of few, there is the tendency to utilize such powers to accumulate wealth. All the enumerated points if well managed and monitored will assist in no small measures in meeting most of the MDGs in Nigeria by 2015.

### **Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria Context: An Assessment**

The need to commit all countries around the world both rich and poor to do all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality and achieve peace, democracy and environmental sustainability necessitated the United Nations Millennium Development Goals which was adopted in September 2000. Specifically, the MDG's has eight main targets such as:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve Universal Basic Education.
3. Promote Gender Equality.
4. Reduce Child Mortality.
5. Improve Maternal Health.
6. Combat AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases.
7. Ensure Environmental (Sustainability) and
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

The situation of the MDG in Nigeria can be assessed from two major sources. These are; the Nigeria MDG report of 2004 and that of 2005. The situation can also be assessed from MDG office especially the Debt Relief Gains as provided in the 2006 annual budget. The 2004 report on the MDG is of the view that it is unlikely that the country will be able to meet most of the goals by 2015 particularly those related to reducing child and maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The issue of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is also not left out.

Constitutionally, implementation of MDGs activities is the duty of all tiers of government, so significant progress cannot be made unless states and local governments are committed to implementing the related activities. There should be effective monitoring at all levels to ensure that Nigerians benefit from this laudable initiative of the UN. No doubt, the success of the initiative is a direct function of commitment to the concerns of the poor and good governance.

The Nigeria MDGs 2005 report highlight the current status and trends of each of the MDGs, the challenges and opportunities in attaining the goals, the promising initiative that are creating a supportive environment and priorities for development assistance. The report concluded that there is also a likelihood of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in Nigeria. The report further identified some problems as obstacles in attaining the goals in Nigeria. Among these problems are; challenge of accurate, reliable, credible and believable statistics. In addition to this, the MDG in Nigeria is assistance focused and the report did not indicate the policies and practices that need to change to attain the goals.

The situation in Nigeria as captured in the 2005 MDG report with regard to the performance of each of the target of the Millennium Development Goals are illustrated thus;

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

About 50% of the proportion of people in Nigeria are living on less than \$1 a day, and those suffering from hunger. The current rate of reduction in poverty is too slow to meet the targets set for 2015. Given the current rate of poverty reduction, poverty incidence would reduce to 43 percent as opposed to 21.4 percent by 2015.

- Universal Basic Education

There is a remarkable improvement on the efficiency of primary education. Primary six turn out rate increased steadily from 65 percent in 1998 to 83 percent in 2001. There was a decline in 2002 only to shoot up to 94 percent in 2003. According to Olive (2006) literacy level has deteriorated in the country especially within the 15-24 years. By 1999, the overall literacy rate had declined to 64.1 percent from 71.9 percent in 1991. The trend was in the same direction for male and female members of the 15-24 years age bracket. The rate declined from 81.35 percent in 1991 to 69.8 percent in 1999 among the male. Among the female, the decline was from 62.49 percent to 59.3 percent during the same period.

- Gender Equality:

This goal is targeted towards eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education enrolment by 2005, and achieve equity at all levels by 2015. The observation here shows that at the primary school level, enrolment has been consistently higher for boys 56 percent than for girls 44 percent.

Reduce Child Mortality: The expectation here is a reduction by two thirds the child mortality rate by 2015. However, infant mortality rate was 91 per 1000 live births in 1990 and later declined to 75 in 1999 but became worse in 2003. In 2003, rose to 100 per 1000 live births.

Improve Maternal Health: In respect of this goal the proportion of women dying in childbirth is to reduce by three quarter by 2005. However, the 1999 multiple indicator duster survey reported a maternal rate of 704 per 100,000 live births. The maternal mortality is more than twice as high in the rural areas, while the report did not give comparative statistics.

- Combat AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

In the Mid 1980s, the HIV prevalence rate has continually been on the increase from 1.8 to 5.8 percent in the period between 1991 and 2001. In 2003 decreased to 5.0 percent and 4.4 percent in 2005.

- Ensure Environmental Sustainability

The expectation here is to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. The environmental situation is challenged by myriad of problems, which impact negatively on the utilization of the resources for development and poverty alleviation.

- Develop a Global Partnership for Development

The level of Official Development Assistance is increasing but still very low. The problem of market access for products of developing countries including Nigeria still persists.

It is imperative to note that there are limitations of using the MDGs as a framework for measuring development as some of the goals are very modest while some do not address the problems holistically. These limitations notwithstanding the MDGs in

Nigeria are special because they draw together in a single agenda issues that requires priority to address the development question. So also, the MDGs have received blessings by worlds government particularly Nigeria. Added to this the MDGs have added urgency and transparency to international development and have galvanized explicit resource commitment to issues of development.

### **Human Resources Management Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria**

The MDGs in Nigeria can be achieved using human resources management strategies. It is undisputable fact that Nigeria has sufficient resources at her disposal to meet the MDGs and the important of all these is her human resources. If Nigeria is to use her human resources to achieve the MDGs there must be a change of course in the conceptualization and implementation of policies and programmes relating to human resources management.

The World Bank Report (2001) titled attacking poverty points out that physical capital was not enough and that at least as important were health and education, but most important is the development of the human capital. The proposed strategies of the reports in relation to human capital development are; promoting opportunities, encouraging effective private investment, expanding into international markets, building the assets of poor people, addressing inequalities across gender, ethnic and racial divides, getting knowledge and infrastructure to the rural poor, facilitating empowerment, laying the political and legal basis for inclusive development. So also creating public administration that foster growth and equity, promoting inclusive decentralization and community development, as well as enhancing security, investment in early education, provision of employment and overall human development.

Since the civilian administration came to power in May 1999 it inherited a civil service which was a mere shadow of an effective and results oriented, politically neutral, loyal, professional and customer-friendly civil service that had existed before the advent of the military intervention in politics. As a vital chain in the conduct and effective discharge of government business, the government, right from its inauguration on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 had given human resource management in the civil service a high priority. This is being done through the series of training programmes especially designed for the entire strata of the public service. These have taken the form of Retreat for Political office holders, top echelon of the civil service and administrative heads of Ministries/Extra-Ministerial Departments and Parastatals; Seminars and Conferences, Re-orientation Workshops for directorate level staff, in-house training courses, enlightenment programmes, public service lectures, specialized professional seminars and the likes.

The factors that have shaped Nigerian Human Resource Management Strategies in the adoption of resource oriented policy in the civil service since the advent of the present democratic dispensation among others include the followings:

- ❖ The orientation of the civil service in impacting the knowledge, techniques and skills for performing those functions, which hitherto were either deemphasized or not relevant under the military. So also the orientation of the civil service as to their primary role as the arm of the executive under a civilian dispensation.
- ❖ Exposure of the civil service to the machinery of government under a democratic presidential system of governance.

- ❖ Application of new management techniques and skills in the running of a bureaucracy in consonance with globalization and information technology and for the service to be cost effective.
- ❖ Familiarization of officers with the systems and procedures for the conduct of government business as enshrined in the reviewed and updated manuals, handbooks and guidelines for operating the service.
- ❖ Acquainting civil servants with the key policy direction of the government in its quest to meet the peoples' mandate and the needs of the international community in areas like management of the economy, national ethical orientation, customer service orientation e.t.c.

It is a general consensus the world over that development will lead to good change manifested in increased capacity of people to have control over material assets; intellectual resources and ideology, as well as sustainable development and peace. It is therefore imperative to posit that for any development effort in Nigeria to be successful, it has to be human resources based. It is quite embarrassing that Nigeria has not been managing her human resources as expected. It is ironic that Nigeria is the sixth largest exporter of oil and at the same time host the largest poor number of people after China and India. Nigeria used to be one of the richest 50 countries in the early 1970's, but has retrogressed to become one of the poorest countries at the threshold of the twenty first century.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The MDGs provide platform to discuss and pursue the development process. The human resources approach has been identified as a veritable strategy to the pursuit of the development question. This is because every form of development is human centered and human driven.

The problem of development is a global challenge and the MDGs is a response by world leaders. There are limitations to utilizing the MDGs as a framework for delivering or measuring development. But they provide a platform to engage the development process. The situation in Nigeria indicates that there are challenges in meeting the goals by 2015, as Nigeria has not been managing her human resource effectively. For Nigeria to meet the goals in 2015, there is the need to formulate and implement policies aimed at promoting human development.

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