

FORESTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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CONTRIBUTION OF FORESTRY TOWARDS THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 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. The aim of the MDGs is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. Of the eight goals, goals 1 and 7 are of direct relevance to forestry. Goal 1 is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The set targets are to halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day; achieve decent employment for women, men and young people; and halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. On the other hand, Goal 7 is to ensure environmental sustainability. The first target is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs, and reverse the loss of environmental resources, while the second target is to reduce biodiversity loss. In this paper, the contributions of forestry to the attainment of the goals are highlighted. The paper emphasized the importance of the forestry sector towards achieving the MDGs. Present challenges are also mentioned and recommendations made on how to mitigate them.

Key Words: Millennium Development Goals, Forestry Sector, Food Security, Environmental Sustainability.

Introduction

Within the last two decades, there has been global concern and debates on human development issues such as poverty eradication, environmental protection, human rights and protection of the vulnerable. Several local and international conferences have been held to address these issues with the overall aim of making the world a better place to live in. At the beginning of this Millennium, the United Nations produced the Millennium Declaration which asserts that every individual has the right to dignity, freedom, equality, a basic standard of living that includes freedom from hunger and violence, and encourages tolerance and solidarity (Anonymous, 2010). To operationalise these ideas, targets and indicators for poverty reduction were set on a fifteen-year timeline. These formed the basis for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs 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. The aim of the MDGs is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. They derive from earlier international development targets (OECD, undated), and were officially established following the Millennium Summit in 2000, where all world leaders present adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

The Millennium Declaration was, however, only part of the origins of the MDGs. It came about from not just the UN but also the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The setting came about through a series of UN-led conferences in the 1990s focusing on issues such as children, nutrition, human rights, women and others. On the side of the OECD, there was a criticism of the fall of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) by major donors. With the onset of the UN's 50th anniversary, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan saw the need to address the range of development issues. This led to his report titled, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* which led to the Millennium Declaration. By this time, the OECD had already formed its International Development Goals (IDGs) and it was combined with the UN's efforts in the World Bank's 2001 meeting to form the MDGs (Hulme and Scott, 2010).

The Millennium Development Goals and their Targets

For the MDGs, there are eight goals with 21 targets, and a series of measurable indicators for each target (World Bank, 2008). These are presented as follows:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- **Target 1A: Halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day**
 - *Proportion of population below \$1 per day (PPP values)*
 - *Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty]*
 - *Share of poorest quintile in national consumption*
- **Target 1B: Achieve Decent Employment for Women, Men, and Young People**
 - *GDP Growth per Employed Person*
 - *Employment Rate*
 - *Proportion of employed population below \$1 per day (PPP values)*
 - *Proportion of family-based workers in employed population*
- **Target 1C: Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger**
 - *Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age*
 - *Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption.*

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- **Target 2A: By 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling, girls and boys**
 - *Enrollment in primary education*
 - *Completion of primary education*
 - *Literacy of 15-24 year olds, female and male.*

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- **Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015**
 - *Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education*
 - *Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector*
 - *Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.*

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality rates

- **Target 4A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate**
 - *Under-five mortality rate*
 - *Infant (under 1) mortality rate*
 - *Proportion of 1-year-old children immunized against measles.*

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- **Target 5A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio**
 - *Maternal mortality ratio*
 - *Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel*
- **Target 5B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health**
 - *Contraceptive prevalence rate*
 - *Adolescent birth rate*
 - *Antenatal care coverage*
 - *Unmet need for family planning.*

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

- **Target 6A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS**
 - *HIV prevalence among population aged 15–24 years*
 - *Condom use at last high-risk sex*
 - *Proportion of population aged 15–24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS*
- **Target 6B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it**
 - *Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs*
- **Target 6C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases**
 - *Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria*
 - *Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets*
 - *Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs*
 - *Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis*
 - *Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short Course).*

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- **Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources**

- **Target 7B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss**
 - *Proportion of land area covered by forest*
 - *CO₂ emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP)*
 - *Consumption of ozone-depleting substances*
 - *Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits*
 - *Proportion of total water resources used*
 - *Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected*
 - *Proportion of species threatened with extinction*
- **Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (for more information see the entry on water supply)**
 - *Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural*
 - *Proportion of urban population with access to improved sanitation*
- **Target 7D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers**
 - *Proportion of urban population living in slums.*

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- **Target 8A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system**
 - *Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally*
- **Target 8B: Address the Special Needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDC)**
 - *Includes: tariff and quota free access for LDC exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA (Overseas Development Assistance) for countries committed to poverty reduction*
- **Target 8C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States**
 - *Through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly*
- **Target 8D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term**
 - *Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.*
 - *Official development assistance (ODA):*
 - *Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' GNI*
 - *Proportion of total sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)*

- *Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied*
- *ODA received in landlocked countries as proportion of their GNIs*
- *ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs*
- *Market access:*
 - *Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duty*
 - *Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries*
 - *Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP*
 - *Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity*
- *Debt sustainability:*
 - *Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)*
 - *Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative, US\$*
 - *Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services*
- **Target 8E: In co-operation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries**
 - *Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis*
- **Target 8F: In co-operation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications**
 - *Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population*
 - *Personal computers in use per 100 population*
 - *Internet users per 100 Population.*

Forestry and the MDGs

Of the eight MDGs, forestry relates directly with Goals 1 and 7.

Forestry and Goal 1

The first of the MDGs is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The set targets are to halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day; achieve decent employment for women, men and young people; and halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Forestry plays a very vital role in employment generation and food security. In Nigeria, a vast majority of the rural population depends on forest resources for their livelihoods. They exploit both timber and non-timber forest products to meet their basic needs. In fact, the goods and services provided by the forests constitute a safety net for the rural poor. Through the sale of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), rural households earn income which is used to meet their other basic needs including food, clothing and shelter. In many rural communities, there are people who trade in NTFPs as a secondary occupation to boost their income. This helps to reduce poverty among the rural inhabitants.

The forestry sector provides employment to a great number of people in both urban and rural areas. Several wood-based industries such as sawmills, furniture industries, pulp and paper industry, etc. provide employment to many people. Indeed every forest operation is an

opportunity for providing employment to the teeming population. For instance, nursery establishment requires people who will prepare the site, fill the polypots, sow the seeds, and maintain the nursery throughout its lifespan. Similarly, plantation establishment also requires several people. In timber harvesting, people are needed to operate the available logging equipment and transport the logs to the sawmills for processing. Fuelwood collection and marketing is another thriving wood industry that attracts many people and provide them with employment. In many parts of Nigeria, there is a boost in charcoal production and trade. Most of the people involved in this trade derive their livelihoods from it. With the recent partial resuscitation of the Nigeria Paper Mill, Jebba, several people have been engaged to provide the wood raw materials required for pulping. It is however unfortunate that in spite of the huge contributions of forestry to employment, there are no reliable empirical data to showcase forestry as sector making significant contribution to Nigeria's economic development.

The role of forestry in food security cannot be over-emphasized. Several authors (e.g. Popoola and Oluwalana (1998), Popoola (2002), Agbogidi and Ofuoku (2006), Olufemi and Akinlosotu (2006), and Agbogidi (2010)) have reported that NTFPs play very significant role in the maintenance of food security in Nigeria. There is a wide range of edible products available in wild fruit trees such as *Irvingia gabonensis*, *Dacryodes edulis*, *Treçulia africana*, etc. According to Etukudo (2000), forests constitute important and cheap sources of carbohydrate and fat, minerals, protein, and vitamins.

Forestry and Goal 7

The seventh MDG is to ensure environmental sustainability. The first target is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs, and reverse the loss of environmental resources. In Nigeria, over-exploitation of natural resources and unsustainable land use practices pose serious threats to the maintenance of the natural ecosystems. Over time, deforestation and large scale land clearing for agricultural and urbanisation purposes have resulted in erosion of the valuable top soil and significant siltation of water bodies. Forestry plays very prominent role in reversing this trend and preventing loss of environmental resources. For instance in Northern Nigeria, afforestation programmes have been implemented with a view to mitigating environmental hazards caused by desert encroachment. Shelterbelts and avenue trees have been established in many areas to ameliorate environmental conditions. In the south-eastern part of the country where gully erosion is very prominent, forests help in soil stabilisation by providing litter cover which reduces run-off and curtails soil erosion.

The second target of Goal 7 is to reduce biodiversity loss. This requires some investment in sustainable forest management. Instead of large-scale conversion of natural forests to monocultures of exotic tree species, natural forest management is required to reduce biodiversity loss. Nigeria is rich in biological diversity, many of which are of global significance. As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Nigeria has committed to sustainable natural resource management and use to produce ecosystem services that underpin the existence and welfare of human life. Consequently, in almost all developmental projects and programmes embarked upon by the Nigerian Government, activities that reduce biodiversity loss are being supported. An example of this is the Fadama II Project where the Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided funds to implement the Ecosystem Management component. The component, among other things, supported the adoption of livelihood activities that restore or maintain ecosystem functions as well as promoted the adoption of indigenous sustainable land management practices that enhance the sustainability of fadama productivity.

With regard to the third target of providing access to safe drinking water, forests are indispensable in the preservation of water aquifers and sustainability of watersheds. Apart from preventing excessive evaporation of streams and other water bodies, forests also help to filter surface run-off and prevent siltation. Thus, the source of surface water supply to both urban and rural areas is conserved.

Conclusion

The assessment of our performance as a nation towards achieving the MDGs is made difficult by our lack of reliable data on many of the indicators. Where data exist, they are obsolete, incomplete or incorrect. The absence of reliable data is a major setback to the forestry sector. Without relevant data, we lack the means to convince policy makers on the need for more investment in the forestry sector. Until we are able to collect, process and maintain high quality data, our role in national development will continue to be under-estimated. It is hereby recommended that all practitioners in the forestry sector should support every effort aimed at obtaining reliable data for the sector. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that such data are regularly updated. The MDGs have helped to bring attention to measurements of wellbeing beyond income. The emphasis on environmental sustainability is a tool that has facilitated the funding of forestry-related projects. Unfortunately, parts of such funds are released to non-forestry parastatals to manage. We believe that the Forestry Association of Nigeria should engage Government at all levels in proper advocacy to stop this trend. Foresters should be made to implement forestry projects at all levels. Where there is lack of capacity, training should be carried out to build local capacity in this regard.

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