



**NIGERIA**  
MILLENNIUM  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

REPORT  
2010



Millennium  
Development  
Goals [NIGERIA]



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Nigeria and the MDGs: better than you might expect and likely to speed up

Nigeria is making real progress. Recently implemented policies are accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These gains are based on sustained economic growth, improvements in planning and policy, and growing government investment in the social sector.

For every MDG there is a positive story to be told. Although there are large variations from state to state, more children are surviving to their fifth birthday. More of them are starting school, and more are sufficiently nourished to be able to pay attention and learn. Their mothers have far less to fear about giving birth, and can be almost certain their children will not succumb to polio. Parents can be increasingly ambitious for their girls as well as their boys. They have ever-increasing access to the technologies and opportunities that they need to earn an income to support those they love. And, as a nation, Nigeria has turned the tide on HIV/AIDS, malaria and international debt.

Challenges remain. Many families still do not have access to safe water and sanitation. Although children start primary school, many of them do not complete their primary education. Even though more mothers and children are surviving, avoidable deaths are still unacceptably common. And, whilst the supportive environment has improved substantially since the return to democracy in 1999, rebuilding the legacy of a highly-deficient state is a work in progress. None of the MDGs are certain to be achieved and more needs to be done on each.

Governments at every level – federal, state and local – must step up their reform efforts. Reform has started well. The nation fully integrates the MDGs into each of its national development strategies. Nigeria has developed pioneering schemes to reach development targets: the tagging and tracking of funds allocated to poverty reduction from debt relief, compulsory free basic education, conditional cash transfers to the vulnerable for social protection, and federal grants

to support investment by state and local governments. More is required. More in terms of innovative governance reforms, more financing, and more coordination.

The range and number of recent activities on the MDGs have yet to be fully captured in the data recorded in this report. Adequate, reliable and timely data is a prerequisite for accurately measuring and tracking progress on the MDGs. Historical gaps in baseline data continue to pose challenges in assessing the rate of progress on each goal. Particularly for MDG1 and MDG7, it has not been possible to adequately evaluate progress because of large gaps in the data. Substantial improvements in data gathering in recent years, led by the National Bureau of Statistics, need to be reinforced. Sustained implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, 2010-2014 will provide the disaggregated data required to show the large local variations.

### Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Recent economic growth, particularly in agriculture, has markedly reduced the proportion of underweight children, from 35.7 per cent in 1990 to 23.1 per cent in 2008.

However, growth has not generated enough jobs and its effect on poverty is not yet clear (the most recent data is from 2004). The available data and the current policy environment suggest that the target will be difficult to meet.

Growth needs to be more equitable and broad-based. Developing agriculture and creating jobs will require the public sector to create an enabling environment for business, including building critical infrastructure, making regulatory services transparent and providing sustainable access to enterprise finance. Social protection and poverty eradication programmes need to be scaled-up and better coordinated.

### Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education

In a major step forward, nearly nine out of ten children, 88.8 per cent, are now enrolled in school. Nevertheless, regional differences are

stark. State primary completion rates range from 2 per cent to 99 per cent. In particular, progress needs to be accelerated in the north of the country if the target is to be met.

Low completion rates reflect poor learning environments and point to the urgent need to raise teaching standards. The rapid improvement in youth literacy, from 64.1 per cent to 80 per cent between 2000 and 2008, appears to have reached a plateau.

The Universal Basic Education Scheme is a promising initiative that needs to be reformed and strengthened. The Federal Teachers' Scheme and in-service training by the National Teachers' Institute have begun to address the urgent need to improve the quality of teaching. To accelerate progress and reduce regional disparities, these initiatives need to be rapidly expanded and improved.

### Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women

A gradual improvement in the proportion of girls enrolled in primary school, though noteworthy, is not yet enough to meet the target. There are still fewer girls than boys in school. There are signs of backsliding in the number of girls in tertiary education.

Measures to encourage girls to attend school, particularly by addressing cultural barriers in the north of the country, and to provide the economic incentives for boys to attend school in the south-east, are urgently required.

Although few women currently hold political office, the new policy framework is encouraging. However, gradual gains in parliamentary representation for women need to be greatly expanded in forthcoming elections.

Confronting regional variations in the determinants of gender inequality requires policies based on an understanding of the underlying socioeconomic, social and cultural factors. State and local government efforts will thus be critical to the achievement of this goal.

### Goal 4 Reduce child mortality

Progress in reducing child mortality has been rapid. With sustained effort and improvement in related and lagging sectors, such as water and

sanitation, there is a strong possibility of achieving Goal 4 by 2015.

Under-five mortality has fallen by over a fifth in five years, from 201 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003, to 157 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2008.

In the same period, the infant mortality rate fell even faster, from 100 to 75 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Recent interventions – including Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses – that reflect the underlying causes of child deaths, have contributed to these successes.

However, these need to be rapidly expanded and accelerated if Nigeria is to achieve Goal 4. Access to primary health care needs to be improved by more investment in infrastructure, human resources, equipment and consumables, and better management. Implementation arrangements must target local needs, which vary hugely from community to community and state to state. Routine immunisation is unsatisfactory but can be rapidly improved by building on the successes of the near-eradication of polio.

### Goal 5 Improve maternal health

Recent progress towards this Goal is promising and, if the latest improvements can be sustained at the same rate, Nigeria will reach the target by 2015.

Maternal mortality fell by 32 per cent, from 800 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2003 (at the time one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world) to 545 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008.

However, the proportion of births attended by a skilled health worker has remained low and threatens to hold back further progress.

Government commitment is not in doubt. An innovative Midwives Service Scheme is expected to contribute substantially to ongoing shortfalls but its impact has yet to be reflected in the data. If the scheme is expanded in proportion to the national gap in the number of midwives, this will further accelerate progress.

In addition, more mothers will be covered by antenatal care as access to quality primary healthcare improves and incentives attract health workers to rural areas, indicating that Nigeria will

turn progress to date on this goal into a MDG success story.

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

Nigeria has had striking success in almost eradicating polio, reducing the number of cases by 98 per cent between 2009 and 2010.

Another marked success was the fall in the prevalence of HIV among pregnant young women aged 15-24 from 5.8 per cent in 2001 to 4.2 per cent in 2008. Thus, nationally, Nigeria has already achieved this target. However, some states still have high prevalence rates that require urgent policy attention. Successes have been buoyed by better awareness and use of contraceptives.

There has been a sharp decrease in malaria prevalence rates. Nationwide distribution of 72 million long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets, although only in its initial stages, protected twice as many children (10.9 per cent) in 2009, compared to 2008 (5.5 per cent).

Similar progress has been made with tuberculosis. With sustained attention, tuberculosis is expected to be a limited public health burden by 2015.

To consolidate and extend progress on Goal 6, challenges that need to be addressed include improving knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS, improving access to antiretroviral therapies, and effective implementation of the national strategic frameworks for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis control.

## Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

Nigeria's natural resources, some of its most valuable national assets, are still seriously threatened. For example, between 2000 and 2010 the area of forest shrank by a third, from 14.4 per cent to 9.9 per cent of the land area.

Similarly, access to safe water and sanitation is a serious challenge for Nigeria. Little progress was made up to 2005 but improvements since then have brought the proportion of the population accessing safe water to 58.9 per cent and the proportion accessing improved sanitation to 51.6 per cent.

The major challenge lies in translating substantial public investments in water into effective access. This requires more involvement by communities to identify local needs, and better planning to deliver holistic and sustainable solutions.

In sanitation, efforts are falling short of the target. Rural-urban migration will add to the pressure on sanitation infrastructure throughout the country. It is doubtful that town planning authorities have made adequate preparations for sustainable housing and sanitation.

There is an urgent need for managerial, technical and financial resources to deal with these challenges to be established at state and local government levels. Given the risks of over-exploitation of groundwater in the North and the influx of saline water in the South, innovative solutions are required across the country.

## Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

Debt relief negotiated by Nigeria in 2005 provided new opportunities for investment in the social sector. Debt servicing fell from 15.2 per cent of exports in 2005 to 0.5 per cent in 2008.

To build on these positive developments there is a need to take action to forestall a relapse into unsustainable levels of debt that could prevent the country from achieving the MDGs.

The outlook for the broader partnership for development is not as bright. Trade agreements continue to be inequitable and constrain exports and economic growth. Development assistance has grown although, when debt relief is excluded, it is still very low on a per capita basis.

Improving the quality of human and capital resources available is critical to attracting the foreign direct investment that is needed to contribute to development.

As a result of the deregulation of the telecommunications sector in 2001, the proportion of the population with access to mobile telephones increased from 2 per cent to 42 per cent between 2000 and 2008. However, this has yet to bridge the digital divide and only 15.8 per cent of the population currently has access to the internet.

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## Global developments and prospects for achieving the MDGs

Three global developments have potentially critical implications for Nigeria's prospects for achieving the MDGs.

The global financial crisis has had an effect on Nigeria, mainly through lower oil revenues, the drying-up of credit and weaker flows of private capital. The crisis has underlined the need to accelerate diversification of the economy and strengthen fiscal management.

Nigeria is acutely vulnerable to climate change. The impacts in each ecological zone will be different. The effects of climate change threaten progress on all the MDGs. However, if well managed, measures to deal with the effects of climate change provide important opportunities for ensuring more sustainable progress.

At its peak in 2008, food price inflation was over 20 per cent creating difficulties for many Nigerians. However, this was not the first such episode and a number of factors cushioned the impact, such as the diversity of staple crops grown in the country. Agricultural development remains the best protection against future food price crises.

## The bottom line

Nigeria is making real progress. Whilst no goal is certain to be achieved, there is good news on each. If the supportive environment continues to improve, as it has over the last ten years, the nation has a real chance of achieving the MDGs.