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AN APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG'S) IN THE GAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent the greatest promise in the world: a global agreement to reduce poverty and human deprivation to unprecedented levels through multilateral cooperation. This paper appraises the implementation of the (MDGs) in the Gambia. The work highlights performance, identifies the key challenges encountered and policy interventions that were used to mitigate some of the problems. The (MDGs) are eight international development goals to be achieved by 2015 that address poverty, hunger, maternal and child mortality, infectious diseases, education, food gender inequality, damage to the environment and global partnership. Most of the world's activities have focused on maternal and child health and infectious diseases, while environmental sustainability and the development of a global partnership have received less attention. At the end of 2015, the Gambia was close to meeting goal 2, 3 and 4 however, the other goals remain a challenge to the country.

Keywords: MDGs, Poverty, Performance, Challenges, and Implementation

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the United Nations system, made up of its Member States and the international community as a whole, had focused its efforts on developing strategies and programs designed to help the people of the poorest countries of the world to emerge from poverty and to benefit from globalization. A report on the Millennium Development Goals in the Gambia, (Gambia, 2003) indicates that in September 2000, 147 Heads of State and Government - and a total of 191 States, including The Gambia - met at the United Nations in New York to consider what needs to be done to move towards a more equitable and rapid path to sustainable development for all the inhabitants of the world. With the advent of the new millennium, it became clear that the benefits of peace and development had not affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world, and that growing disparities between rich and poor countries was a threat to all states. The resolution adopted at the summit called on all stakeholders to take action to achieve eight major development goals by 2015. The agreed political criteria were intended to measure progress in global development. The goals were to reduce extreme poverty, improve health, education and environmental sustainability to improve the lives of the world's poorest people. The goals were also an expression of fundamental human rights, which included human values and universally accepted human rights (Gambia, 2003). In 2012, the Government of the Gambia adopted the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) (2012

-2015) as a five-year medium-term plan to accelerate the realization of Vision 2020 and as a framework for cooperation and partnership for development. The plan aimed at addressing key challenges and to contribute to the achievement of "Vision 2020" and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Gambia, 2012-2015).

Prior to this period, the Government of The Gambia had implemented a series of development initiatives focused on poverty reduction and addressing sustainable development issues. These initiatives included the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s, followed by the Sustainable Development Program (SDP) of the 1990s. The Gambia had also successfully implemented the Growth and Poverty Reduction Facility (PRGF) between 2007 and 2011 to qualify for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative in November 2007. In 1996, two Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PSPs) and PAGE, 2012-2015 were adapted as policy frameworks that integrated the MDGs into public policies and were at the forefront of mainstreaming poverty in the country (Gambia, 2014).

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

These were eight goals with measurable targets and deadlines to improve the lives of the world's poorest. To achieve these goals and eradicate poverty, the leaders of 189 countries signed the landmark Millennium Declaration at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. At that time, eight goals were defined, ranging from the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger to the development of a global partnership for development. The goals are thus:

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1: Halve (by 2015) the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar/day

Target 2: Halve (by 2015) the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education

Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Goal 4 Reduce child mortality

Target 5: Reduce by two thirds (by 2015) the under-five mortality rate

Goal 5 Improve maternal health

Target 6: Reduce by three quarters (by 2015) the maternal mortality ratio

Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7: Halt by 2015 the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8: Halt by 2015 the incidence of malaria, other major diseases

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Target 11: By 2020 achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12: open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Target 13: Address needs of least developed countries: tariff and quota-free access for exports; enhanced debt relief; more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction.

Target 14: …needs of landlocked developing countries and small island states

Target 15: …measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

Target 16: …implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Target 17: …provide access to affordable essential drugs…

Target 18: …make available the benefits of new information and communication technologies

The goals were accompanied by 18 objectives, which should be achieved by 2015 and measured using indicators used in 1990 as a baseline (Australian Lutheran World Service, n.d).

Australian Lutheran World Services analyzed Africa's progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. According to the report, Goal 1 - which aimed to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. With the exception of Mauritius, sub-Saharan Africa did not achieve this goal. Extreme poverty continued to affect more than 50% of the population in some of these countries. With regard to hunger, progress in sub-Saharan Africa had been minimal, partly because of increasing population size, low agricultural productivity and conflict. **Goal 2:** Ensure primary education for all. The report confirmed that sub-Saharan Africa had made slow progress towards achieving universal primary education. All North African countries had reached at least 90% of primary school enrollment, as had Seychelles, South Africa, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo. Some other countries had made significant progress and enrollments in primary education and this had increased by more than 60 percentage points. **Goal 3.** Eliminate gender disparities. This goal focused on gender equality and women's empowerment in three areas: education, employment and political decision-making. Gender parity between girls and boys in primary and secondary enrolment was expected to be achieved by 2005, but gender disparities in education remained serious in sub-Saharan Africa. The elimination of gender disparities in education was the most satisfactory objective in primary schools, with over 70% of

satisfactory results. In addition, African countries were still not able to have their women participate economically and politically in nation building. **Goal 4** - Reduce child mortality. In Africa, thousands of children died each day from diseases that could have easily been prevented or treated for example diarrhea, malaria and so on. Infant mortality was expected to be reduced by two-thirds by 2015, but progress slowed in the 1990s.

Most African countries have not achieved **Goal 5** - Improve maternal health. The goal of reducing three-quarters of maternal mortality seems ambitious for Africa. Estimates by 2015 indicated the highest maternal mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa, with an average of 920 deaths per 100,000 live births, and there was no indication that these rates were decreasing at the time. Mothers died during pregnancy and childbirth, mainly because of poor health systems, especially in rural areas. **Goal 6**. Combat HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The goal of ending HIV / AIDS and other major diseases (malaria and tuberculosis) by 2015 had been a bottleneck in Africa, these three diseases being largely concentrated in the poorest countries. AIDS had become the leading cause of premature death in sub-Saharan Africa. Tuberculosis contributed to the development of drug-resistant strains and vulnerabilities caused by HIV and AIDS. No African country had achieved the goal of halving the spread of TB and only five countries had succeeded in reducing it (Comoros, Egypt, Libya, Seychelles and Tunisia). **Goal 7**. Ensure a sustainable environment. Goal 7 is reversing the loss of environmental resources, as well as the provision of safe water, sanitation and quality housing. **Goal 8**. Develop a global partnership. It embodies the partnership between developed and developing countries through aid, debt relief and trade. The framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in July 2004 was the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to African exports, as well as the reduction of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies in industrialized countries. However, much remained to be done to get trade negotiations back on track.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE MDG's

According to Australian Lutheran World Service (n.d), progress made by many African countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 was not on track. The pace of the

continent for each goal was lagging, despite encouraging increases in economic growth and policy strengthening. A number of successes - including scaling up HIV / AIDS treatment, increasing agricultural productivity, dramatically increasing enrollment rates and improving access to water - showed that rapid progress was possible throughout life. In fact in Africa, if appropriate national programs were compatible with adequate development assistance and with the full support of the international system, engaging existing international commitments fully implemented, this would have made a significant contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Although significant progress has been made in many of the Millennium Development Goals around the world, progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps. Millions of people are falling behind, especially the poorest and disadvantaged because of their gender, age, disability, ethnicity or location. Targeted efforts will be needed to reach the most vulnerable. In addition, women continue to be discriminated against in access to work and economic assets and to participate in private and public decision-making. There are large gaps between the poorest and the richest households, and between rural and urban areas, for example in developing regions, the poorest 20% of households are more vulnerable than most households who are rich. Children from the poorest households are four times more likely than those from richer families to be out of school. Millions of poor people continue to live in poverty and hunger without access to basic services. Despite the enormous progress made in 2015, about 800 million people are still living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger. More than 160 million children under five are underweight due to lack of food (United Nations, 2015).

Alarcón (2003) argues that, achieving the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 will require an additional $ 50 billion per year, specifically targeted to the poorest countries - one-sixth of the world's annual income. However, additional external financing and micro-allocations will require the mobilization and improvement of national resources, policies and institutional strengthening at the national level. From the analysis of Parr & Greenstein (2011), the

methodology used to achieve the objectives clearly explains the Millennium Development Goals as difficult planning objectives. In practice, some national governments have partially integrated the MDG targets into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), while others have kept them outside their planning frameworks (Parr & Greenstein, 2008). In addition, despite the efforts made by the United Nations Millennium Project in many countries in mid-2000 to quantify the resources needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to identify PRSPs on that basis, no country implemented the results. In addition, donors were allocating resources to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Parr & Greenstein, 2008). The Millennium Development Goals have been interpreted as planning objectives and have been strongly criticized as raising the question of whether the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are applicable as national planning goals that can be seriously justified as a sound economic strategy. Three sets of problems have been raised. First, the MDGs are poorly designed and selected (Easterly, 2009; Ashwani 2006). For example, these objectives can be identified in different ways: absolute or percentage changes, change of objectives in relation to level objectives, and positive or negative indicators, but the options are not consistent and the logic for reaching each goal is still undetermined (Easterly, 2009; Ashwani, 2006). Some of these arbitrary choices of prejudice against Africa have meant that African countries are less likely to achieve their goals and will therefore be considered failures (Easterly, 2006). Ashwani (2006) found many gaps in the list of objectives, targets and indicators, including problems of identification, lack of adequate data, particularly with regard to HIV / AIDS, malaria and maternal mortality targets, that the undesirable incentives that may arise "Institutionalize the" targets, all of which undermine their potential use as programming tools. Another debate is about the distortions that can be created as a result of the policies needed to achieve the goals. Sanjeev, Robert, & Yongzheng (2006) argued that this would require large inflows of external resources that would destabilize macroeconomic balances because of the Dutch effects of the disease, while other authors would challenge their arguments (McKinley, 2005; Weeks and McKinley, 2007). Others, however, questioned whether the Millennium Development Goals as a strategy would create momentum for growth and development (Roy & Heuty, 2005) and whether the obstacles to faster progress were institutional

or political, rather than based on resource shortages (Renzio, 2005). If development stagnation can be explained by a theory of "poverty traps" or if a "big push" to escape this trap would be effective (Easterly, 2009). Finally, the fundamental question that frequently arises is whether goals should be applied to judge performance at the national level, at least without adaptation. Jean Vandemoortelle, who co-chaired the Millennium Development Goals Group and led the UNDP support team for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, was one of the most critical critics of the Millennium Development Goals. It argues that the goals are based on past, rather than national, global trends, and that goals should not be "adopted" but "adapted" to national contexts and redefined in the form of country-specific objectives (Vandemoortele, 2007).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

According to Holsti, Chimini, Markovic & mondshein (2015), it is necessary to analyze the Millennium Development Goals from a theoretical point of view to explain their successes and failures. This brief analysis is based on theories of International Relations (IR) and Development Economics (DE). Reflection on liberal school terminology, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a tool for cooperation used by states to promote social progress. The objectives are to improve all resources to increase the benefits we derive from them. The School of Realism described the Millennium Development Goals as a tool for States to maintain their security and strength to survive in the best circumstances. This can only be understood when states are seen as part of a globalized economic system in which they need goods and workers moved from other countries to maintain their competitive level of economies. From the Marxist point of view, the Millennium Development Goals can be seen as a tool for countries with the most means of production to maintain a minimum labor force, which is essential for building capital and the increase of its profits. The examination that can be done from the DE approaches is very similar given the history of the evolution of the theories themselves. It produces one of the two strongest schools, an international theory of accreditation, in developing countries, particularly in Latin America and Asia, and uses neo-Marxist methods. Neoliberalism is another powerful school. The theory of the Millennium Development Goals, derived from the theory of international relation,

is a mechanism by which developed countries perpetuate the capitalist system by deliberately promoting policies that benefit them and increase their control. Here the problem is evaluated by the policies proposed by the developed countries through the diplomacy of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, etc., and by the promotion of certain economic, political and social theories to promote the economic growth of countries. Developing countries to help them leave behind the assumption that if developing countries followed the revenues used by developed countries, they would be developed. Consequently, the neoliberal school defends the status of free market, small state with minimal intervention, financial liberalization and industrial privatization. They therefore need the basic needs of the human beings covered to have a sound legal basis to survive, and thus to explain the existence of the Millennium Development Goals. It's the view that prevails. It is so powerful that it transcends science and is the most widely used reference for the implementation of public policies, including foreign affairs.

History shows that the development of theory and practice is a multifaceted process. One of the strengths of development theories is the recognition of the complex interdependence between cultural, economic, political and technological changes. The path of development was not as easy as the theories of modernization foresaw. In the early 1960s, proponents of dependency criticized their expectations as an ideological screen concealing the exploitation of the poorest countries by richer countries. From the point of view of dependency, development has always been a failed and doomed enterprise as long as the economic links between the poorest and richest countries remained unequal. Wade (2004), argues that the gap between the rich, who live mainly in the north and the poor, who live mostly in the south, "is a structural chasm, not just a catch-up problem in the south. This structural explanation for the failure of the development project contrasts with the answer that modernization theory gives for lack of success – the failure of poorer countries to transform their traditional norms and attitudes, institutions, economy and political processes along modern lines (Nhema & Zinyama, 2016).

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR MDG's

The main challenge of the policy framework is to make sure it is pro-poor. The formulation and implementation of pro-poor policies faced many problems. First, traditional macroeconomic policy instruments - be they monetary, financial, commercial - although claimed to be neutral, favor the rich. Further efforts are needed to find an alternative set of pro-poor policy instruments, a term that has unfortunately remained rhetorical in many areas. Second, the power base in the government in most countries remains favorable to the rich, and pro-poor policies mean the sacrifice of the power base. This has often had a deterrent effect on pro-poor policies. Thirdly, many institutions have proposed the idea of optimal economic growth, the magic solution to all problems, as well as the absolute need for short-term stability policies, whatever the cost. But there is no automatic link between growth and poverty reduction, and unconditional growth may not be desirable. There may be no inherent conflict between appropriate short-term stabilization policies and long-term poverty reduction strategies, but the former is sometimes described blindly and, in a narrow perspective, may be detrimental to policy initiatives. With the strength and money of these institutions, countries, especially the poorest, find it impossible to seek an alternative (Jahan, 2003).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The challenges faced by The Gambia in meeting several Millennium Development Goals reflect the lack of an integrated planning framework to effectively monitor progress at the national and local levels in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The absence of such a framework is compounded by insufficient institutional capacity and severe resource constraints. Overall, the country faces serious challenges in its efforts to reliably achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Policymakers and other stakeholders are also increasingly aware that for The Gambia to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the capacity of local administrative, financial and planning structures should be significantly strengthened. Effective provision of these services is essential for the Millennium Development Goals to have a realistic opportunity to achieve them by 2015.

At the highest level, the Government of the Gambia has committed to mainstreaming the Millennium Development Goals into its planning processes. In January 2006, the government decided to integrate the draft PRSP II and the Medium Term Plans (MTP) into a unified country planning framework. To promote the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy, which has been identified as an essential tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the government had set up a national planning committee to coordinate the national poverty reduction strategy through the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The National People's Congress is the main government body responsible for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals.

THE GAMBIA'S PERFORMANCE ON THE MDG'S

The Gambia (2014) provides an overview of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, through Government of the Gambia. In general, significant progress had been made in the implementation of international development goals. The overall poverty rate had steadily decreased by about 10%. The percentage at 48.4% in 2010 for people living below the poverty line in US dollars 1.25 per person per day from 58.0% in 2003-2004. The country did not achieved the MDG target of halving poverty by 2015.
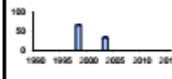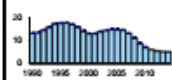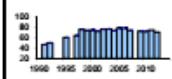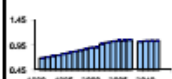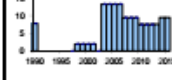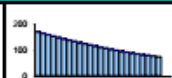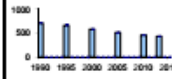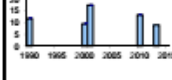
In education and health, a stronger positive performance had been recorded. Progress in Education reflected in all the main indicators. The student population starting grade 1 reached 95.3% in 2010 and the goal should be to reach 100% of the MDGs. The rate of retention improved, even though it required more effort; increased in literacy rates at the national level. On the health front, infant mortality indicators improved satisfactorily. The under-five mortality rate had fallen to 109 per 1,000 live births compared to 131 and the infant mortality rate had fallen to 81 from 93, between 2005 and 2010, respectively. The rate fell to 54 Per 1,000 live births in 2013. Progress in promoting gender equality yielded mixed results. The role of women in the decision-making process in particular and representation in the National Assembly advanced though at a snail pace. Significant progress on gender equality had been made in high-level positions in the civil

service, particularly in government. There is still a gap between the retention rate of boys and girls and the difficulties associated with women's empowerment (Gambia, 2014). With respect to sustainable development, the Government of the Gambia had taken countless steps to protect the environment and enhance sustainable livelihoods, while promoting economic growth. Despite remarkable progress and achievements, the report made reference to outstanding issues for the Gambian Government and the international community, which aim to enable The Gambia to achieve most, if not all, of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, good practices and lessons learned can be drawn from the implementation process.
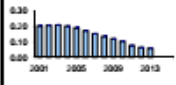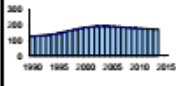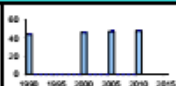
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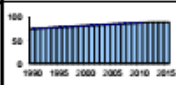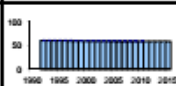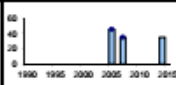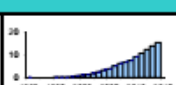
MDG STATUS AT A GLANCE

MDG Country Progress Snapshot:	Gambia						Last update: August. 2015		
Goals and Targets	**Indicators**	**First Year**		**Latest Year**		**Percentage Change**	**Country Progress**		**Region Latest Data: Sub-Saharan Africa**
		Value	Year	Value	Year		Level 1/	Chart	Value	Year
Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger										
Reduce extreme poverty by half	Proportion of population living below $1.25 (PPP) per day (%)	65.6	1998	33.63	2003	-49	very high poverty		46.8	2011
Reduce hunger by half	Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption (%)	13.3	1991	5.3	2015	-60	moderately low hunger		23.2	2014-2016
Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education										
Universal primary schooling	Net enrolment ratio in primary education (enrolees per 100 children)	47.8	1990	69.7	2013	46	low enrolment		79.7	2015
Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women										
Equal girls' enrolment in primary school	Ratio of girls to boys in primary education	0.69	1992	1.04	2013	52	close to parity		0.93	2015
Women's share of paid employment	Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (%)	33.9	1998	31.7	1999	-6	medium share		32.9	2013
Women's equal representation in national parliaments	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (single or lower house only - %)	7.8	1990	9.4	2015	21	very low representation		22.7	2015
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality *(New data will be avilable in late September 2015)*										
Reduce mortality of under-five-year-old by two thirds	Under-five morality rate (deaths of children per 1,000 births)	169.8	1990	73.8	2013	-57	moderate mortality		92	2013
Goal 5: Improve maternal health *(New data will be avilable in late September 2015)*										
Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters	Maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	710.0	1990	430.0	2013	-39	high mortality		510	2013
Access to universal reproductive health	Contraceptive prevalence rate (percentage of women aged 15-49, married or in union, using contraception)	11.8	1990	9.0	2013	-24	low access to reproductive health		26.6	2013
	Unmet need for family planning (percentage of women aged 15-49, married or in union, with unmet need for family planning)	--	--	21.5	2010	-			24.5	2013

(United Nations Statistics Division, 2015

MDG Country Progress Snapshot:	Gambia								Last update: August. 2015	
Goals and Targets	**Indicators**	**First Year**		**Latest Year**		**Percent-age Change**	**Country Progress**		**Region Latest Data: Sub-Saharan Africa**	
		Value	Year	Value	Year		Level [1/]	Chart	Value	Year
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases										
Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	HIV incidence rate (number of new HIV infections per year per 100 people aged 15-49)	0.20	2001	0.06	2013	-71	intermediate incidence		0.29	2013
Halt and reverse spread of tuberculosis	Incidence rate and death rate associated with tuberculosis — Number of new cases per 100,000 population	128.0	1990	173.0	2013	35	moderate mortality		282.0	2013
	Number of deaths per 100,000 population	33.0	1990	20.0	2013	-39			43.0	2015
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability										
Reverse loss of forests	Proportion of land area covered by forest (%)	44.2	1990	48.0	2010	9	high forest cover		28.1	2010
Halve proportion without improved drinking water	Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (%)	75.8	1990	90.2	2015	19	high coverage		68.0	2015
Halve proportion without sanitation	Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility (%)	60.4	1992	58.9	2015	-2	low coverage		30.0	2015
Improve the lives of slum-dwellers	Proportion of urban population living in slums (%)	45.4	2005	34.8	2014	-23	high proportion of slum-dwellers		55.2	2014
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development										
Internet users	Internet users per 100 inhabitants	0.0	1990	15.6	2014	-	moderate usage		16.9	2013

The MDG Country Progress Snapshot provides an overview of the progress achieved at country level since 1990 towards the Millennium Development Goals. The snapshot is intended mainly to provide the international community easy access to the information and are not meant to replace in any way the country profiles produced at the national level in several countries. They are also meant to reflect the contribution of country-level progress to the global and regional trends on progress towards the MDGs.

The data used in the snapshot are from the MDG global database (http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx). The metadata and responsible agencies can be found on http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx. Sources of discrepancies between global and national figures are due to, among others, different methodology and definitions or different choice of data sources. At the global level, the monitoring of the progress aims to ensure better comparability of data among countries. Country can contact the responsible agencies for resolving data discrepancies.

Note: 1) The country progress level indicates the present degree of compliance with the target based on the latest available data. The technical note on the progress level can be found at http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2012/technicalnote.pdf.

(United Nations Statistics Division, 2015)

CHALLENGES TO ATTAINING THE MDG'S

Availability of resources for PAGE funding was limited. Low employment rate, especially among young people. This called for employment creation and appropriate skills development and relevant education outcomes. Low implementation capacity and climate variability negatively impacting objectives. Under funding of monitoring and evaluation systems. Increasing incomes in the agricultural sector remained a challenge. Ability to generate reliable statistics in a timely manner to measure and monitoring poverty in all its dimensions remained a problem. Poverty prevented families from going to school when confronted with unbudgeted basic costs such as uniforms, transport costs and school equipment. Other negative factors such as teenage marriage, doing housework, supporting agriculture and making money activities. These factors affect more girls than boys at high school level. Access to quality health services was more readily available in urban areas than in rural areas. The link between poverty and poor health was highly confirmed in The Gambia. Moreover, budget constraints prevented the supply of essential drugs and equipment in public health facilities. While poor living conditions had discouraged qualified staff from working and staying in rural areas.

CONCLUSIONS

The Gambia had made considerable progress in achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals, but significant efforts were needed to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals. Progress has been made in achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Goal 2 - Ensure inclusive education, Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women. With regard to Goal 1 - Reducing Poverty and Hunger, Goal 6. HIV / AIDS, malaria and other notable progress towards the MDGs have been registered. Goal 4. Improving maternal health, significant achievement has been made. With respect to Goal 8 - Partnership for Development - Gambia reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in

December 2007 and has since benefited from debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. Despite declining poverty, regional disparities remained enormous and place of residence is still a formidable challenge. A key element of the poverty reduction program was the need to increase incomes and reduce incomes existing variations. Such decision in the policies would have gone a long way in attaining Millennium Development Goal 1, elimination of extreme Poverty and hunger. Although the programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) recognized the importance of income and employment in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, funding of this program was a challenge for the country. Moving forward, sustainable global partnerships are needed to maintain the spirit of global development projects such as the MDG, SDG and so on in order to make this world a better place for all its inhabitants.

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