Analysis of Gender Issues in Relation to the Millennium Development Goals Progress in Uganda

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Abstract

There is a drastic progress reported on MDGs that has been presented by respective countries in Africa in the past years before the new agenda of SDGs. This paper presents the progress reported selected goals with a gender lenses on their success. Focus in this paper is put on goal One; Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; goal two; Achieve universal primary education goal three; Promote gender equality and empower women, goal four; Reduce child mortality rates; goal five; improve maternal health; and a discussion on the analysis by the author is presented on likely cause of low success as reported in the general MDGs implementation process. Possible recommendation for success of SDGs in Uganda are presented from a general perspective of both Men and Women as citizen participations and echoing of the localization of the SDG ideas at local level as one of the key to their success is explained.

Keywords: Gender, Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

The Government of Uganda is committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women to promote socio-economic transformation. Uganda is a signatory to various international commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform of Action, and subscribes fully to the third MDG of promoting gender equality and empowering women. These and other commitments are domesticated through Uganda’s Constitution, which guarantees equality between women and men, and includes affirmative action measures to increase women’s role in decision-making and participation in the development process.

Moreover, the Uganda Gender Policy provides a framework for gender responsive development. These policies and frameworks have resulted in some modest success and the country is on track to achieve some of the key MDG 3 targets.

The NDP defines “gender issues, negative attitudes, mind-set, cultural practices and perception” as a key binding constraint to socio-economic development in Uganda. Through this Plan, the challenge of women’s decision-making at the household level, which is exacerbated by high levels of gender-based violence, is addressed. It is noted that 59% of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence. However, some progress has been made as shown below;

Insight into the Progress and Challenges Faced in the Implementation of MDGs Directly Related to Gender Differences in Uganda

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

In its assessment of Uganda progress, the UNDP report shows that the number of Ugandans living below the poverty line has reduced to 31 percent down from 56 percent in 1992.
Precisely, income-poverty headcount fell from 56 percent in 1992/93 to 34 percent in 1999 and then rose to 38 percent in 2002/03 before declining again to 31 percent in 2005/06. By 2003, Uganda had more than 35 per cent women in non-agriculture wage employment, if the current trend in poverty reduction recorded in 2005/06 continues, the prospects for achieving the income-poverty MDG target remain high given the conducive policy environment, the report reads and further explain that women unequal access to, and control over, important productive resources, notably land, would greatly hinder their ability to raise productivity and even move out of subsistence agriculture to be free from poverty.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Uganda has scored relatively well on MDG 2 which is about achieving Universal Primary Education. The target here is to ensure that by 2015, children will be able to complete full course of primary schooling [1]. Notably, the ratio of girls to boys has reached 1 for primary education and recent increases in the ratio for tertiary education mean that this indicator is on track to reach parity by 2015. Progress has also been made at secondary levels of education, where the ratio stood at 0.84 in 2009 compared to 0.79 in 2000, although this is insufficient if this indicator is to be attained. The affirmative action of additional points to female applicants who wished to gain entry to university resulted in an increase in tertiary enrolment for girls, particularly in 2004.

Although the country is on course with the engendering universal primary education programme, between 1991 and 2010, and its success in increasing gender parity by 25 per cent in primary schools and over 20 percent in secondary schools, however education quality is still poor, Deininger [2] This tremendous success is threatened by challenges of quality of education under UPE in the absence of adequate facilities and teaching resources especially in rural areas.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

The mid-point review report on Uganda efforts towards attaining the MDGs also revealed that the country is on track to ensuring promotion of gender equality and women empowerment by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education levels by 2015. It shows for example that gender enrolment gaps in terms of primary school narrowed tremendously, with the proportion of girls in primary school improving to 49.8 percent in 2006 from 44.2 percent in 1990. Most of these successes have been attributed to the introduction of UPE and the affirmative action programmes, Deininger [2]. According to the 2012 wage equality survey, Uganda has a female to male wage ratio that is higher than 0.7, and further more Uganda is one of the eight countries that have reached the target of at least 30 percent women in national parliament this countries policies on affirmative action has steadily increased the share of women who take part in political decision-making at all levels of society.

However the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector, another key indicator of women’s empowerment, has declined from 39% in 2002/2003 to 28% in 2005/2006. This is an indication of continued gender disparities in the labour market and is exacerbated by other differences confronting women, such as less secure employment, lower skills levels and lower wages. Moreover, although women comprise an estimated 70% of those working in agriculture, women experience unequal access to, and control over, important productive resources, notably land, which limits their ability to raise productivity and even move out of subsistence agriculture.

Through the National Development Plan, government recognizes that critical gender inequalities remain, the outcomes of which contribute towards stalling progress on many MDGs and overall national development. Many of these gender inequalities are magnified in post conflict areas of the north. The Plan also emphasizes that levels of sexual and gender-based violence are unacceptably high in Uganda,
with 40% of women compared to 11% of men having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime [3].

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality Rates

In 2011/12 the most commonly diagnosed causes of under-five mortality included malaria (28%), pneumonia (15%), anaemia (10%), and other respiratory infections (9%) [3]. Basing on the Comparative study between 2006 and 2011, Malnutrition of pregnant women was discovered as another important contributing factor to a large share of child deaths. Children born to better-educated mothers had a greater chance of survival, the government of Uganda conduct free immunisation of children upon birth which support all women to obtain the health services for their children, MOH [4]. Reducing infant and child mortality still remain big challenges that the country has to grapple with. The infant mortality rate (IMR), which measures child deaths before the age of one, declined to 76 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007 from 122 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1991. On the other hand, the under-five mortality rate—which measures child deaths before the age of five—declined from 167 to 137 deaths per 1,000 live births during the same period. The majority of infants die before their first birthday.

The major challenge in this area has been limited human resources, funds to ensure appropriate and timely technical support to districts and inadequate monitoring of women at time of giving birth.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Ten years after the targets were set, maternal mortality has remained high and the contributing factors to high maternal mortality include severe bleeding, unsafe abortions, high fertility rate among Ugandan women and poor access to quality maternal and neonatal care. While Uganda has relentlessly pursued the MDGs during the past decade, more effort is needed to ensure that all of them are met.

In the last 15 years, there has not been any significant decline in maternal deaths. Only a slight reduction of 435 from 505 deaths per 100,000 live births has been registered, according to results of the 2006 Uganda Demographic Health Survey conducted by the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UNBS). In its assessment, the Uganda progress report on achieving MDGs shows the country may not meet its goal of reducing by three quarters, the number of mothers who die during childbirth. To meet this target, the report proposed Uganda to reduce its mortality rate from 435 to 131 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015. However, the Uganda government is financing family planning and antenatal care at all government hospitals to educate women on care during pregnancy through family planning projects, MOH [4].

Discussion on Likely Cause of low Success reported in the General MDGs Implementation Process and Recommendation for Success of SDGs in Uganda

Exclusion of citizen’s that is male and female from participation in governance process at different levels in the realization and implementation of MDGs and Sustainable development Agenda by government in Africa, in this paper is argued to be a result of several reasons among which include absence of instituted citizen participatory governance framework, inadequate structural institutionalization both formal and informal in citizen inclusive governance hence limiting there localization through citizen ownership of the MDGs implementation process. This will continue to be a challenge to the SDGs due to inadequate full support at grassroots for advancement of the sustainable development Agenda as opposed to continued centralization line Ministry’s development plans with a top down approach lacking citizen involvement. In addition the increasing absence of problem prioritization channel for citizens to forward specific concerns towards realization and implementation of the agenda will continue in Africa due to less innovativeness of the public service geared to citizen integration in the governance process for a participatory approach in achieving MDGs activities at grass root hence failing the global agenda in line with the indigenous of the areas
This paper also suggest that furthermore decisions on the implementation of MDGs should be taken transformed from the grass root levels, this is argued in this paper that it could improve the compatibility of all plans to fulfill the desires of the indigenous who would end up deterring from full involvement in the government agenda if not fully engaged in the implementation process.

As a result, if citizens are not engaged in this way, this will continue to undermine quality and efficiency of the achieved MDGs in the new SDG agenda. With a continuous report on the progress of MDGs presented in the past and today, the question of efficiency and sustainability is less considered in the achievement of these goals. The success of MDGs through reports and indicators achievement have been politicized in the past with less impact evident in the citizens standard of living who are the beneficially of all set strategies to meet these goals. Hence, there is a need to reduce the politicization of the goals to counter the vices from its manipulation during implementation.

This is evident in the past reported achievement of some goals or meeting with great success linked to the set targets which are not in correspondence with stagnation in the quality of services. Lastly this is made worse by an increase of citizen lack of responsibility in the sustainability of achievements having not fully been involved in the prioritization of problems at grass root level in realization and implementation of the MDGs resulting to lack of full community support of the projects and agenda that has given rise to inefficient MDG impact to the citizens despite the reported achievement of the targets and hence a need to counteract this for the success of the SDGs in Uganda and globally with proper integration of gender across all goals to ensure equal participation of both men and women. This paper propose more research to understand how grassroots support and citizen participation in their own generated problems and solutions would be more efficient in the realization, implementation and localization of the MDGs for the success of SDGs in Africa in Specific in Uganda [5-6].

**Conclusion**

The realization of Sustainable development goals lies in the proper Understanding of lapses in the Millennium development goals in Uganda and Africa as a whole. More focus as presented in the paper, emphasis is put on the gender relational aspect of the MDG success with a choice of those that are directly linked to gender difference in socialization process. This paper argues that with effective citizen participatory governance framework, inadequate structural institutionalization both formal and informal in citizen inclusive governance would improve the localization of the goals through citizen ownership of the SDGs and its implementation process. This in addition is argued that if done then the implementation process will have full support at grassroots for advancement of the sustainable development Agenda as opposed to continued centralization line Ministry’s development plans with a top down approach lacking citizen involvement and presumed to be one of the factors that hindered efficiency of MDGs.

**References**


3. MOH (2012) Annual Health Sector Performance Report 2011/12’. Kampala Between 2006 and 2011, the under-five mortality rate for children born to mothers with secondary education or higher fell by 23%, compared to 30% for mothers with only primary education.

