MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA:  
A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

A critical look at the African continent in the twenty-first century overwhelmingly produces a picture of a failed attempt at development. The underdevelopment reality reflects the pervasive conditions of misery, disease, economic stagnation, poverty and other forms of negativities that have plagued Africa continent over decades. In both power and historical terms, most countries in the continent of Africa are basically ‘new’ in the contemporary global society, following the auspicious wind of decolonization that swept through the international system from the 1960s. However, the euphoria which followed the end of colonial rule in the African continent, fizzled into thin air, as the fortunes of African countries have dishearteningly declined, more than four decades after the end of colonial rule. The ugly trends of failure and gross under-development of Africa (economically, socially and politically), refute the quaint Hegelian notion that history always moves forward such that in Africa it has been running in the reverse for more than two decades.
In spite of the variety of neo-liberal strategies been adopted in the last part of twentieth century to put Africa on the path of sustainable development, the peculiarity of the African region, structural deficiency, systemic conflict, and the lack of political will to push initiatives to a logical conclusion contributed to the failure of these strategies. The slow pace of development especially in Africa has compelled world leaders to fashion out Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and developed wide range of goals, targets and yardstick to bridge the gap between the Developed North and Under-Developed South. Since 2000 when the idea of MDGs was popularized and to the present time, most of the MDGs progress reports depicts that Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is far from achieving those targets in the stipulated year of 2015. The reality in these reports suggests that MDGs cannot be achieved in Sub-Saharan Africa based on the term in which it is conceived and the underlying principles that guide its implementation. Going through the literature, it was observed that there exists dearth of scholarly inquiry into why MDGs cannot be achieved in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015. This paper seeks to fill this knowledge gap by offering a critical scrutiny of the MDGs itself and provide future direction into where Africa development agenda should focus.

This paper is organised into six sections. The meaning and nature of MDGs will be espoused in section two below. Section three will be devoted to why did MDGs conceived. Section four addresses MDGs and why it cannot be achieved in SSA. Section five looks at the future direction for Africa development. I conclude in section six.

WHAT ARE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

Following the series of United Nations (UN) resolutions and agreements at various World conferences held in the 1990s (Sahn and Stifel, 2003: 23), the UN General Assembly and Head of States of 189 countries in 2000 adopted a myriads of ambitious development goals that was to be reached in 2015. This was termed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs comprises a set of eight goals that represent ‘global’ commitment to reduce
poverty and hunger, to tackle ill-health, gender inequality, lack of education, lack of access to clean water and environmental degradation in the developing countries (Haines and Cassels 2004:1). The UN did not only fashion out the MDGs but also set targets for what developing countries aspire to achieve and the contribution that developed countries can make through fair trade, development assistance, debt relief, access to essential medicines, and technology transfer. So far, the MDGs are eight international development goals that 192 United Nations member states and 23 international organisations have been working to achieve by the year 2015. These goals include:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and women empowerment
Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality Rate
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

In order to accomplish these goals, the UN has outlined a set of 18 targets aimed at tackling the development challenges by 2015, and a range of 48 development quantifiable indicators for monitoring the process. The table 1 below illustrates the goals, targets and indicators articulated in UN Millennium Development Goals.
Table 1: Millennium Development Goals

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<th>Goals and Targets</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and Hunger</strong></td>
<td>1. Proportion of Population below US$1 per day</td>
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<td>Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is</td>
<td>2. Poverty gap ratio (incidence multiplied by depth of poverty)</td>
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<td>less than one dollar a day</td>
<td>3. Share of poorest quintile in national Consumption</td>
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<td>Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from</td>
<td>4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age</td>
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<td>hunger</td>
<td>5. Proportion of population below minimum Level of dietary energy consumption</td>
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<td>Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, Boys and girls alike, will</td>
<td>7. Proportion of pupils starting grade I who reach grade 5</td>
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<td>be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
<td>8. Literacy rate of 15-24 years olds</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</strong></td>
<td>9. Ratio of boys to girls in primary, secondary, tertiary education</td>
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<td>Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably</td>
<td>10. Ratio of literate women and men 15-24 years old</td>
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<td>by 2015, and to all levels of education, preferably by 2015, and to all levels</td>
<td>11. Share of women in wage employment in the non Agricultural sector</td>
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<td>of education no later than 2015</td>
<td>12. Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality</strong></td>
<td>13. Under-five mortality rate</td>
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<td>Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality</td>
<td>14. Infant mortality rate</td>
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<td>rate</td>
<td>15. Proportion of one-year-old children immunized against Measles</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health</strong></td>
<td>16. Maternal Mortality ratio</td>
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<td>Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality</td>
<td>17. Proportion of birth attended by skilled health personnel</td>
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<td>ratio</td>
<td><strong>Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</strong></td>
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<td>Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the Spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>18. HIV prevalence among 15-24 year-old pregnant women</td>
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<td>19. Condom use rate of contraceptive prevalence rate</td>
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<td>A. Condom use at last high-risk sex</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. Contraceptive prevalence rate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 7: Have Ensure Environmental Sustainability</strong></td>
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<td>Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the Incidence of malaria and</td>
<td>21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria</td>
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<td>other major diseases</td>
<td>22. Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective and treatment measures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>23. Prevalence and death rates associated with Tuberculosis</td>
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<td>24. Proportion of Tuberculosis cases detected and cured DOTS (directly observed treatment short course)</td>
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Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable Development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

25. Proportion of land area covered by forest
26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area
27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per $1 GDP (PPP)
28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of Ozone-depleting CFCs
29. Proportion of population using solid fuels

Target 10: Halve by 2015, the proportion of People without sustainable access to safe drinking water

30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved water source, urban and rural
31. Proportion of people with access to improve sanitation
32. Proportion of people with access to secure tenure

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12: 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.

Some of the indicators listed below will be monitored separately for the least developed countries, Africa, landlocked countries and small island developing states.

Target 13: Address the special need of the least developed countries. Includes tariff and quota free access for least developed country export; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC’s) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous Official development Assistance (ODA) for countries committed to poverty reduction.

33. Net ODA as percentage of DAC donors’ gross national income (GNI)—(target of 0.7 percent in total) and 0.15 percent for least developed countries.
34. Proportion of ODA to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water, and sanitation)
35. Proportion of ODA that is untied.

Target 14: Address the special need of landlocked countries And Small Island developing states (through Barbados Programme and Twenty-Second General Assembly provisions)

36. ODA received in landlocked countries as a proportion of their GNI
37. ODA received in Small Island developing states as a proportion of their GNI.

Market Access
38. Proportions of total developed-country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries admitted free of duty.
39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and Textiles and clothing from developing countries.
40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their GDP.
41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity.

Debt Sustainability
42. Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their completion Points (cumulative)
43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative.
44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
45. Unemployment rate of 15-24 years olds, each sex and total
46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis.
To attain these goals, many meetings and conferences has been held under the auspices of the United Nations and the governing bodies of member countries since 2001 to appraise and assess the extent to which progress has been made toward its fulfillment, reiterate the goals and to reaffirm the commitment of countries to them. However, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reflect a global top-down development approach, and one-size-fit-all objectives of poverty reduction and pro-poor growth that is based on the dialectics of global partnership between developed and developing countries in order to achieve these goals.

**MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: WHY WAS IT CONCEIVED AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?**

The dominant discourse of western ideas on development has never been challenged as eloquently as Robert Cox in his paper: *Social forces, States and World order* (1981). Ever since, Cox’s work has inspired scholars to think beyond the boundaries of conventional theorizing and investigate the premises and discourses that underpin global politics and development agenda. The idea of Robert Cox’s problem-solving theory illustrates: how development can never be separated from politics and economics, how theory is always linked to practice, and how material relations and ideas are extrically link to co-produce world orders. Cox in his problem solving approach argued that *theory is always for someone and for some purpose* that is often used in managing smooth functioning of the system (Cox 1981:12). This implies that whenever there is a problem that is likely to affect the overall functioning of the system, a theory is quickly design to address the problem. Cox’s analysis demonstrates that the idea of MDGs was designed as a global solution to the problems of crisis and anarchy in the international system or to maintain neo-liberal peace in the world capitalist system. This stems from the fact that crisis and anarchy are inevitable in a system of unequal social relations. Underdevelopment (poverty, hunger and others) in one place is
not only a threat to development elsewhere but a strain within the international system as a whole. Therefore, there is no theory for itself; it is always for someone and for some purpose.

In this regard, the idea of MDGs did not emerged on its own volition, it was rather a product of the experience of development challenges in the developing countries that warranted its design by the developed countries for the developing countries in bid to bridge development gap in the latter, and sustain a particular representation of global governance norms under the auspices of neo-liberal imperialism. MDGs are designed to cope with living in an ‘unequal global society’. It is not designed or executed for the sake of bringing development to developing countries, but meant to protect the ideological interest of a specific order within the international system whose goal is to resolve poverty and hunger under the dictate of the existing capitalist status quo in the world. The dominant ideological mindset conceives MDGs as a deliberate ploy of serving the hegemony interest of an existing international system. This liberal ideology emanates from a particular global system that is entirely capitalistic or status quo bar that seeks to resolve growing radicalisation of poverty-induce suffering and development challenges (that are anathema to its market interest and resource capitalist accumulation) in crisis-prone zones.

In Africa for instance, the ex-colonists left the continent in crisis prone situation and fragile economic atmosphere that made development impossible—with different local actors are at loggerheads over political power, sharing of political positions and economic interest (Ogunrotifa 2011:96). More than four decades after de-colonization process in Africa, virtually all countries in the sub-continent are still backward and lacking in development—as political independence did not usher much growth and development the developed countries had ‘envisaged’. Despite the plethora of neo-liberal programmes—like the first development decade (1960-1970), Second development decade (1970-1980) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in mid 1980s—that were designed by the western capitalist
states, put forward by the International organisations (the UN, IMF and World Bank) and implemented by the developing countries, none of these: usher expected growth and development, lessen the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries; speed up the processes of modernization; and release the majority of mankind from poverty. Rather, it did more harm than good and serves as poison chalice packaged to foist neo-liberal economic and development policies down the throat of the developing countries. The devastating backlash caused by these neo-liberal policies compelled developing countries to be cautious and suspicious of any western economic baggage. To erase this suspicion on its intention, the imperialist troika (United States, European Union and Japan) carefully designed the MDGs and other neo-liberal economic policies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and subject them through the instrumentality and network of a ‘neutral’ body (like the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and others) so as to have international credibility. By packaging the MDGs as the poverty reduction strategies, they knew the developing countries will not disagree with poverty reduction or health improvement in their domain, thereby induced or forced to accept the dictates of liberalism in the service of the exclusive interests of dominant globalised capital.

Samin Amin in his devastating criticism questioned the rationale behind the MDGs and the credibility of the processes that produced it. Amin (2006) was asking whether the idea that throw MDGs as a global policy decision and campaign to half poverty and hunger in the developing countries, began with open, honest, accountable, democratic debate and discussion with a southern led focus prior to its ratification by the UN General Assembly? Samin Amin further added that the process of drawing up the proposals and drafts for discussion that eventually produced the Millennium Development Goals document was drawn up by Ted Gordon ‘a well known consultant of the CIA’. He thus argued that:

The MDGs are part of a series of discourses that are intended to legitimize the policies and practices implemented by dominant capital and those who support it, i.e., in the first place
the governments of the triad countries, and secondarily governments in the South. The real goals, openly recognized as such, are: extreme privatization, aimed at opening new fields for the expansion of capital; the generalization of the private appropriation of agricultural land; Commercial ‘opening’ within a context of maximum deregulation (This is a way of lifting all obstacles to the expansion of a trade that is as unequal as it can possibly be in conditions characterized by a polarized world development and a growing concentration of power in the hands of the transnationals that control the trade in raw materials and agricultural products); the equally uncontrolled opening up of capital movement (systematic undervaluation of developing countries’ currency in order to purchase local assets in these countries at a ridiculous prices); and States are forbidden in principle from interfering in economic affairs.́

Amin’s analysis is particularly salient in contextualising MDGs as part of the sinister smokescreen for a well articulated process of further exploitation of developing countries by the Imperialist troika of US, EU and Japan under the dictate of economic neo-liberalism. The development goals is more of one size-fit-all extrapolations of global trends and collective targets that draw its strength from the broader liberal consensus and rhetoric of open market, inclusion, participation, partnership and community. By affirming its commitment to implement the MDGs, the imperialist troika (US, EU and Japan) have weakened the ability of the developing countries to resist the expansion of transnational capital at the detriment of their local economies. In this regard, the purpose of designing the MDGs is not aimed at deliberate transformations of socio-politico-economic structures but to extend market to the developing countries that have signed up to UN declaration on the MDGs.

This is akin to the submission of Arturo Escobar that the international discourse on development is not tailored towards achieving real and genuine development but has more
to do with the exercise of power and domination over the third world countries (Escobar 1995). Following the works of Michael Foucault on the dynamics of discourse and power in the representation of social reality, Arturo Escobar tagged development discourse like the MDGs as a system of relations that establishes a discursive practice (discourse of power relations) that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analysed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan. The processes of knowledge production that inform MDGs itself, and the wider power relations which shape its practice was conceived under the western cultural values and dominant pattern of thought disguised as a ploy to develop a global partnership for development on the principles of neo-liberalism. By accepting to implement the MDGs, the developing countries (especially the Sub Sahara Africa) fell into the western construction of power domination and discursive practice that subject them in relation to the standard of wealth of the western capitalist states. The idea behind the MDGs is the idea behind previous neo-liberal development policies put forward by the combining forces of imperialist troika and international organisations (UN, IMF, World Bank and others).

**WHY MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA**

The achievement or otherwise of any global development programme like MDGs depends on nature and origin of its idea itself. Critical understanding of Millennium Development Goals suggests that the idea was developed for the world’s poor nations, but not their own making. It was not a developing countries home grown solutions to their problem, rather, it is the initiatives of troika (the United States, Europe, and Japan), and were co-sponsored by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, who use their global domination and influence to force it
down the throat of the developing countries—as a package of developmental policy reforms to be implemented. First, the MDGs will not be achieved in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries on the basis of the term in which it was conceived, articulated and implemented. MDGs do not take into consideration the histories, geographies, cultural and social values, and specific problems of the SSA. The motive of those who initiated MDGs is to use it to expand global capitalism and extend market for western goods and services. Looking at the Millennium Development Goals in the table 1 above, it is obvious that the goal 8 (Develop a global partnership for development) and its associated target and indicators are the fundamental basis upon which the attainment of all other goals rest. In fact, it is the foundation in which all other goals were built—which will inevitably determine its implementation and attainment.

The real intention behind the MDGs is the goal 8 which require a new global partnership between developed and developing countries in order to achieve other goals. By deliberating incorporating goal 8—partnership between developed and developing countries into the MDGs, the former knew that there is no way the latter would get money and achieve those goals except its reliance on foreign aid and export from the former. The developed countries ensure that the developing countries should open their border to foreign goods, and western business corporations (Multinationals) to make investments that will lead to greater capitalist economic development, in return for economic aid, grant and loans to implement the ‘global’ development agenda (MDGs). MDGs can be best seen as part of ‘third way’ neo-liberal approach that compel governments and agencies of various stripes in both liberal OECD and developing countries to focus on optimizing economic, juridical and social governance in order to create ideal conditions for international market, finance and investment.

By reducing attainment of the MDGs into availability of Oversea Development Aid and access to rich economies, the UN and other international institutions have subject
developing countries at the mercy of the developed countries and ignored ‘rising concern about the pervasiveness of unequal market power, consolidating corporate power, restricted immigration and access to rich economies’ (Craig and Porter, 2003:55). Capitalistic quest of developed countries to use MDGs as a cannon-folder for their greedy quest for market, mineral resources and access to market as the condition for the release of oversea development aid (ODA) is tantamount to dealing with the ‘poor’ on one hand, while ignoring the political economy of poverty and inequality, and real development in the other hand. Therefore, the MDGs therefore cannot be attained on the basis of neo-liberal global capitalism that put more emphasis on market and profit than the people and region suffering from the hemorrhage of poverty and under-development like Sub-Saharan Africa.

Second, the implementation of the MDGs is founded on the basis of Money Throwing Syndrome. Money Throwing Syndrome here means allocating and spending money to achieve the MDGs without addressing the rot and institutional capacity problems that has undermined numerous development programmes and policies. Sub-Saharan Africa is riddled with the problems of weak institutional capacity to execute policies and projects. In Nigeria, for instance, instead of addressing the problem associated with lack of access to universal health care, the Nigerian government is busying providing cheap drugs to patients. This elitist way of tackling health issues has been the greatest undoing of governments in SSA. Furthermore, in attaining goal 7 and target 10 (access to improve safe drinking water), Nigerian government has been throwing money around building and digging more boreholes for some communities experiencing shortage of water, without taking any holistic approach at tackling the fundamental bottleneck associated with inaccessibility or lack of pipe-borne (clean) water to every household in the country.

The crux of the matter is that the political elites in SSA are capitalist ruling class, who because of their ideology, deliberately did not want to address the problems of institutional capacity because of their class interest and position. They benefit from the rot in the
system, and are prepared to use every sphere of power at their disposal to thwart necessary reform of the system. The African political elite and the ruling class are the official local boys that are tied hand and foot to the western imperialism. Due to their capitalist orientation, they prefer to throw money around in the name of implementing MDG projects rather than interested in genuine and real development. The ruling class in SSA prefers to throw money directly to the ‘poor’ than address the root cause of poverty in the sub-continent. For instance, in order to achieve goal 1 of the MDGs, the Nigerian government have embarked on National and State poverty alleviation programme (PAP) in line with World Bank induced-Poverty Reduction Strategies Paper (PRSP) (Ugoh, 2009: 13; Okoye and Onyukwu 2007; Obadan 2002:14). The major thrust of these schemes is to give certain amount of money as loan to ‘poor’ people to start small-scale businesses. This idea of throwing money around to tackle poverty and hunger is not going to achieve anything. This is because most of the beneficiaries are chronically poor that cannot afford daily meal or pay children tuition fees. The physiological needs and other expenses of beneficiaries will first be resolved before thinking of using the rest of the loan for intended purpose (small scale business). In other bizarre development, some state government were even distributing grinding and sewing machines, motor cycles and vehicles to beneficiaries of these poverty reduction strategies. In reality, nothing has really changed in the lives of most beneficiaries two years after.

Sub Sahara Africa cannot achieved the MDGs because its political leadership are capitalist ruling class that are weak and incapable of achieving any real development due to their class position and the nature of their perpetual dependence on the international finance capitalism that intend to transfer wealth from the bottom 57 nations of the sub-continent to the top 20 nations. They will prefer to throw money around the MDG projects because the ideology and rules of international free enterprise economic system (neoliberal globalization) they subscribed to, is a system that will always handicapped them and work
to keep dependent capitalist countries in the SSA from having a strong national economy that caters for real development and internal needs of their respective citizens.

Finally, massive corruption in various government departments and agencies in the Sub-Saharan Africa remain one of the greatest obstacles to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in this region. Official corruption in this sub-continent is endemic as politicians and government officers colluded in siphoning funds meant for the development of the society. In Nigeria, it was report by Premium times, the scale of corruption that trailed the implementation of the MDG projects. According to the Premium Times report, it was reported that ‘between 2006 and 2008, MDAs such as the health ministry, water resources ministry and the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) mismanaged hundreds of billions of naira meant to specifically help Nigeria achieve the MDG targets’. The report identified Health Ministry as the most culpable ministry in the scheme of corruption. The report observes that:

In this first part of our series on the utilisation of the yearly $1billion for Millennium Development Goals' projects, we investigate the monumental corruption in the health ministry. We found that rather than help, the ministry is actually killing the country's hope of achieving the MDGs—as officials continue to steal funds needed for fixing dilapidated hospitals, providing drugs and treat sick people and save more Nigerians from dying from treatable diseases. PREMIUM TIMES found that the health ministry mismanaged most of the N54billion it received between 2006 and 2008 under the MDG scheme. But rather than applying the funds for the purposes they were earmarked, officials of the Ministry and its agencies stole a large portion and then mismanaged what was left, investigations reveal. Several projects including construction of clinics, purchase of drugs and hospital equipment, and capacity building of health staff across the country, suffered as a result. Apart from inflation of prices which characterized the Ministry of Health's purchases, several examples
of how the ministry managed its funds abound. Following complaints, by several (public) hospitals in Nigeria, of lack of injections, the health ministry decided to buy injections in bulk for distribution nationwide. Over N900million was released, through the National Programme on Immunization, but most of the materials purportedly bought were never supplied. “Of the N1bn approved for buying syringes, N901.6mn was spent. A large quantity of syringes paid for had not been delivered. These included 2,854,000 BCG syringes; 24,000,000 1ml disposable syringes; 1,000,000 5ml reconstitution syringes; 52,092,835 0.5ml auto-disposable syringes and 49,261 safety boxes. Another example of money spent without materials delivered was in the purchase of solar freezers meant to store drugs and other materials. While the ministry released N200million for 250 solar freezers in 2006, only 65 were delivered. A senior official of the ministry told PREMIUM TIMES it was normal for contractors to under-deliver goods when they had adequately ‘bribed’ top officials³.

The specter of corruption in the management of MDG projects is not limited to Nigeria alone, but peculiar to other SSA countries. Though, the scale and magnitude of corrupt practices varies from country to country. With the spate of corruption, it is obvious that pouring Oversea Development Aid (ODA) into the SSA to achieve and implement the MDGs is like flushing money down the toilet. The truth is that 40 percent of ODA ends in the pocket of politicians and government officials, who use it to finance their lavish lifestyle and consumption. Despite the failure of government and public service institutions to tackle corruption and enhance performance in relation to the MDGs, most of the developed countries and International development institutions still continue to fund these under-performing institutions and expect different results. The scale of corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency that characterised the implementation of the MDGs at diverse level of governance in the SSA are part of the greatest impediments to achieving
the MDGs. This stems from the leadership deficits and the practice of capitalist system that encourages greed, selfishness and other associated venoms that undermine transparency and strong institutional capacity in the sub-continent.

**FUTURE DIRECTION FOR AFRICA DEVELOPMENT**

The African continent must look beyond the rhetoric of the MDGs in their quest for future development plan. This is because MDGs as a development discourse was constituted not by the array of possible objects (developing countries) under the domain of UN but by the way of the set of relations (between developed and developing countries) that has been unequally framed and orchestrated to fashion out the discursive regime of power relations to which objects (developing countries) have been at the machination of the subject (developed countries). MDGs was not designed and initiated as a result of the benevolence and magnanimity of the developed countries to bring development and reduce poverty in the developing countries especially in the Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) but a product of initiative to deepen market capitalism to a region that is largely considered as resource colony for primary products.

Therefore, Africa must shun neo-liberalism; resist international pressure from the developed countries through the formation of *African Economic Union* (AEU) as a viable continental trading bloc that will speak with one voice and engage in *firm re-engagement* with the developed countries in areas of trade and economic relations, technological transfer, and international politics. By firm re-engagement, I mean, Africa should engage in open, honest and frank discussion about possible win-win benefits in areas of trade, capital transfers, technology, and patents with the developed countries rather than retaining the unfavourable terms of relationship that is largely skewed at the detriment of developing countries. *African Economic Union* should not be affiliated with the African Union and the moribund New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). This is because the objective of NEPAD initiative is no more than neo-liberal agenda spelt out to forcefully integrate of
Africa into globalisation vis-a-vis cooperation with the developed countries and uncontrolled opening that will allow foreign capital to ‘develop’ it. Despite its inauguration in July 2001, NEPAD has not achieved anything as far as Africa development is concerned. It high time, the African governments discard NEPAD and develop a new proposal under the proposed African Economic Union that will look inward, develop home grown approach that hinges on egalitarian society and the extended family system of the African people, and national independence within a negotiated multipolar globalization that might help in pursuing their own path, keeping with their own needs, and less dictated by external pressures, rather than rely on discredited neo-liberal approaches churn out by the developed countries and its international institutions allies such as UN, World Bank, IMF, EU and others.

Previous attempt at addressing socio-economic problems in Africa such as Lagos Plan of action (1980) that affirmed the ‘the need to take urgent action to provide the political support necessary for the success of the measures to achieve the goals of rapid self reliance and self-sustaining development and economic growth’ be revisited in the light of contemporary dynamics of neo-liberal globalisation. African governments under the auspice of proposed AEU must look towards east (China, India, South Korea and others) and developed strategic alliance and partnership with the Latin America and Caribbean nations under the spirit and brotherhood of South-South regional cooperation that puts emphasis on partnerships, mutuality, reciprocity, and common prosperity, not on any form of European and American neo-colonialism and imperialism, which emphasize domination and control (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2007).

Consequently, as a continent whose population is projected to exceed two billion shortly after 2050, the proposed African Economic Union (AEU) must look inward and develop home grown solutions with local economists, development experts, social scientists,
scientists and other professionals in order to tackle the problems of poverty, malnutrition and hunger, health care crisis, shortage of clean water, and other issues confronting the continent as a whole and establish peer review mechanism that will see to the implementation and inspection of the agreed programmes across the participating countries. Africa governments must pull their resources together under the auspices of AEU to engage in Research and Development, Science and Innovation in order to tackle the perennial crisis of food shortage, persistent and chronic food insecurity, famine and desertification caused by climate change, transport regulation reforms, inaccessibility to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), conflict and armed race, rural development, sustainable development, poverty eradication, women empowerment and substantial investment in infrastructure.

Finally, the proposed regional arrangements that were expected to lead to an all-African common market [affiliation of Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in North Africa, Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Southern African Development corporation (SADC)] by the year 2025 should be come under the proposed African Economic Union (AEU) that will not only look at trade and economic relation but be a form of union or nation-state that will collectively response to the socio-economic and environmental problems; develop a common blueprint for development; joint cooperation in the access to technology and technical manpower; Increase agricultural productivity; and exchange of development ideas across the continent.

CONCLUSION

Recent studies and reports about the progress of MDGs in SSA paint an appalling and discouraging picture (Sahn and Stifel 2003; Noor et al. 2009; Farzaneh 2004; Ahmed and Cleeve 2004; Haines and Cassels 2004; Easterly 2007). These reports are unconnected with the nature and origin of the MDGs itself. Like an African proverb says: what you do not own
and design, you cannot control and implement underscores the true state and circumstances surrounding the MDGs and its implementation in SSA. Thus, the MDGs were not merely the creation and introduction of new ideas by the UN nor the product of the ideas to tackle poverty and underdevelopment. It was rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among institutions and practices that tend to enforce imposition of integrative market system under neo-liberal globalisation, and reinforce the contextualization of development as a western all-encompassing ethnocentric domain of thought and action, and the discursive frame of hegemonic power relations that have been the heart of the 21st century global politics.

The so-called collapse of communism in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has reinforced a unipolar capitalist world order which continue to see western model of development as the key to modernization worldwide. Imposing MDGs is akin to the acceptance of modernisation theory that prescribe a unilateral mode of achieving development for developing countries by the developed countries without looking at the historical experiences and local specificities of the former. Rather than formulating and implementing the MDGs as vague one-size-fits-all collective target, one should look at the historical, political and social structures that gave rise to poverty and hunger or that are inimical to development. The fundamentals targets and indicators of the MDGs look deceitful in dealing with the ‘poor’ on one hand, while ignoring the political economy of poverty and inequality, and real development in the other hand. MDGs cannot be achieved on the terms in which it was designed and brought to the developing countries in general and SSA in particular.

Africa political leadership must take a radical break from exploitative capitalist system that has so far brought vast majority of Africans to the brink of destitution through the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and neo-liberal economic models and look beyond the narrow lens of palliated MDGs in their inward looking quest
for home grown economic solutions to the future development agenda, and firmly engage in international and inter-regional trade through the network of proposed African Economic Union, with a view to participating in negotiated multi-polar globalisation.

REFERENCES


