Journal of Economics and Development Studies
September 2014, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 125-135
ISSN: 2334-2382 (Print), 2334-2390 (Online)

Published by American Research Institute for Policy Development
DOI: 10.15640/jeds.v2n3a9
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/jeds.v2n3a9

The Millennium Development Goals in Central Africa: Are they all Achievable?

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Abstract

In September 2000, world leaders met in New York to adopt the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs embody a set of purposes with quantified targets and deadlines, which aim to alleviate extreme poverty in the world. MDGs are considered as global public goods because of their "cross-borderliness", their indivisibility as well as their distributive effects. Of the eight MDGs, the reduction of extreme poverty is the goal with the greatest multiplier effect on the others as its analytical framework is based on both an absolute approach and a human development component. In Central Africa, an evaluation of the progress achieved on the MDGs shows that although there is significant progress with increasing primary and secondary education for both genders, considerable effort must be made to improve the public health sector, food self-sufficiency, and poverty reduction. Proposals made to speed up the degree of achievement of the MDGs in Central Africa are targeted towards improving the global framework of economic governance and strengthening of macroeconomic stability. The establishment in Central African countries of the “crony capitalism" economic model could favor the development of the private sector considered as the mainstay of economic growth in these countries.

JEL Classifications: H4; I3; O5; D6.

Keywords: Well-being, global public good, CEMAC, PRSP, MDGs, poverty, crony capitalism

Introduction

In September 2000, 189 world leaders gathered in New York where they decided to set up the necessary political base for international development by adopting the Millennium Declaration, structured around a set of 8 goals, named the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The achievement of the aforementioned goals, it is believed, would contribute to the alleviation of extreme poverty characterized by income insufficiency, low access to educational and sanitary services, social exclusion and other ills. These are global or international public goods that call for concern at the world level. For this reason, during the Monterrey Conference in March 2002, over fifty Heads of States and Governments and two hundred Ministers, established a world partnership from which an effective and operational plan would be implemented to finance the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Beyond the important deal concluded in 2000 for the alleviation of extreme poverty and other forms of hardship and destitution in the world, the MDGs initiative is also a road map for the development of poor countries. Besides, it offers elements of comparability to the countries committed to it and provides, for the first time, fixed quantitative goals to be achieved in a given period of time.

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However, lessons learned from more than forty years of promoting development through prevailing models that endorse aid reveal, on the one hand, that the results of this approach are mitigated, and commend, on the other hand, the reformulation of policies and development strategies to better utilize home-grown and organic opportunities.

This paper seeks to assess the achievements of the MDGs in Central Africa by first demonstrating why these goals are important for the region and secondly, by presenting an elaborate framework for comparing progress in achieving the MDGs to the poverty ratio. After a review of the achievement of these goals in each Central African country, the paper will delve into the factors that mark progress on MDGs in the region and will finally recommend action plans that may help countries in the region attain the Millennium Development Goals**.**

1. Why are the MDGs important for Central Africa?

If the MDGs are achieved by 2015, living condition in Central African countries will be better than they are today. Indeed, at least 15 million people are going to be taken out of extreme poverty, a million more will be shielded from famine, remarkable strides will be made in maternal and neonatal health, thousands of children, girls in particular, will no longer be deprived of education, and more livelihood enhancements will be achieved.

The first part of this section is a brief presentation to better understand the theoretical and empirical stakes of the MDGs, and the preliminary measures towards achieving them. The assessment of poverty levels in the various countries will provide a human development profile in the aforementioned countries and will equally justify the importance of MDGs.

1.1. What do we understand by MDGs?

The fight against poverty, the preservation of peace, environmental issues, the stability of the international financial system, the fight against terrorism, among other things, are current transnational problems and subjects of debate on global public goods. This is the case both in the scientific realm and among decision-makers. We begin this discussion with a theoretical appraisal of MDGs.

Most economics textbooks demonstrate, by formalizing Adam Smith's fundamental intuition, how the general equilibrium model enables the best possible state of the world, that is, the most efficient. This theory also asserts that equity and efficiency can go in pair (Hayek, quoted by Wolfelsperger, 1986) since it is possible to set up various degrees of social equity without losing efficiency. However, neo-classic theory stipulates that the basic conditions for perfect competition are unrealistic. In other words, an economic system with free markets can yield inefficient results, which economists describe as “market failures”[2]. Among these, we often quote imperfect information, externalities and public goods. The advent of globalization shone more light on market inefficiencies caused by public goods, to the point of mainstreaming the concept of world or global public goods. This concept is derived from the notion of "public good" proposed by Samuelson in 1954; but the paternity of the term «world public goods» arguably goes to Kindleberger (1973), who used it for the first time in the paper “The World in depression, on 1929-1939”. That paper particularly demonstrated how the crisis of 1929 was due to insufficient supply in world public goods (AFD, 2005). Nowadays, most governments produce fewer global public goods than demanded because other countries take advantage of their benefits.

The supply of global public goods remains insufficient and underinvested, not because of problems relative to their pricing, since even a competitive price would not ensure committed fixed costs; but mostly due to the low incentive of national governments to invest in these global goods.

[2]Gabas and Hugon (2001) speak rather about the market and state failures, the double market failure and about States to justify the world public goods production.

Gawronski (2002) argues that the global financial instability, global epidemics, financial crises, international crime, insufficient distribution of knowledge, low internet access, and other physical international infrastructure problems are all consequences of underinvestment in international public goods.

Moreover, and from an empirical point of view, both the recurrence of economic difficulties in developing countries, and the rise of new problems in these countries such as poverty, terrorism, corruption, overflow of globalization, and the drying out of available resources necessary to finance development in poor countries, legitimized the concept of global public goods, even if there is no unanimity amongst researchers on this concept. Indeed, while some people view investment in public goods as a means of reviving global cooperation towards development, others consider it a western notion that conceals a balance of power and conserves the *status quo*. Ordinary public goods produced by States and which obey the double principle of non-rivalry and non-exclusion[3], are administered by a world government[4] that organizes and produces international public goods, namely the United Nations[5]. It is in this light that we understand the «Millennium Declaration" of September 2000 in New York, because, it addresses development challenges by mitigating the insufficiency in the supply of global public goods. Furthermore, this Declaration can be perceived as a mechanism of collective action, set up to reduce the "free rider" behavior which certain States might try to adopt. Also, the 2002 Monterrey Conference was supposed to bring an answer to the question of how to finance world public goods.

Traditionally, economic literature on global public goods distinguishes two categories of such goods: the supranational goods external to national borders, such as common natural heritage; inter-State relations and military security (Gabas and Hugon, 2001; Carbon, 2002). Nowadays, the concept of international public goods has evolved and includes more current elements such as public health or the fight against poverty. As such, it transcends borders and suggests a greater convergence of public policies. Stiglitz (2000) identifies five global public goods, among which international macroeconomic stability, international security, international environment, humanitarian aid and knowledge. IngeKaul (quoted by Gabas and Hugon, 2001) listed more than 60 world public goods. As noted by Siroën (2001), these goods do not necessarily replace national or local public goods.

We qualify the MDGS as international public goods, not because they are produced by a public entity, but because of their "cross-borderliness" and their diffusion effects. If the Congo[6] rainforests are better managed and protected, the environmental benefits from it will be widely and equally shared by the inhabitants of the planet (principle of non-rivalry). Therefore, it would be unwise to exclude a given State because it did not contribute to the financing of its preservation (principle of non-exclusion). Given the distribution venues and benefactors of the MDGs, it is necessary to have a national coordination and cooperation committee.

In all, and inherent with their nature and impact, MDGs can be considered as global public goods because they simultaneously address issues of security, peace, environmental protection, democracy, vulnerability and poverty reduction.

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[3]These two principles make difficult the value of trade that would reflect at the same time the production cost and the utility, which would result from the consumption of the aforementioned goods by users.

[4] A given specific government or a public corporation generally supplies the national or local public goods. Their production is financed through taxes.

[5] Although Constantin (2001) militates in favor of the creation of a «United Nations Global Trusteeship Council» that will include governments, private enterprises and the international civil society.

[6] It is the second lung of the planet after the Amazon.

Hence, MDGs can be classified following 3 basic aspects of public goods, namely (AFD, 2005): (i) to cover the stakes important for the entire community due to externalities that affects all the countries; (ii) the impossibility (or difficulty) for a single country to produce such goods and (iii) to produce on a multilateral basis and reduce the level of externalities to the highest degree.

Pertaining to the "Millennium Declaration", it was adopted by the United Nations in September 2000. It is articulated around eighteen (18) targets grouped under eight(08) goals with forty eight (48) follow-up indicators to measure the progress to be attained by 2015.

The MDGs were adopted to contribute to the definition of priorities in domains considered as the most important determinants of human development. Among the eight MDGs, three of the goals are geared towards the improvement of health and the fight against major pandemics (goals 4, 5 and 6). One goal is for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (goal 3), while the 2nd and 7th goals aim respectively at: universal primary education and sustainable environmental management.

These goals and targets reflect the multitude of forms through which poverty is expressed. These defined purposes and benchmarks also reflect the difficulty in identifying components of the poverty phenomenon, especially given that, as discussed below, poverty is best perceived within a well-defined context – local, regional, national or worldwide.

1.2. The Characterization of Poverty in Central Africa

The methodological approach necessary for the assessment of poverty alleviation generally requires a three-level approach: (i) identification of an index of well-being or living standards; (ii) the choice of a poverty line, in other words, the extent of well-being separating the poor people from the rich people, and (iii) identification of an index that delineates the various forms and dimensions of poverty.

Generally, the study of poverty alleviation is primarily a study of the living conditions of populations in a given context. Above all, the measure of well-being is a monetary measure, which depends on the total expenditure or the total income of households. But the approach based on household spending is, in theory and practice, more reliable than that centered on income. Indeed, spending is a good measure of long-term income, thus long-term standard of living. In addition, expenditures can be measured with greater accuracy than income, especially in Central African countries where a significant proportion of income is derived from the informal sector. The estimation of the well-being can however be made by two other monetary approaches namely: food expenditures and proportion of the total spending dedicated to food expenditures. The Engel Law conceptually supports these approaches[7]. This means that total expenditure is a better index of well-being useful in the measurement of poverty.

With the measure of living standard identified, the next step is to determine the poverty line; that is, a threshold that distinguishes the poor people from the rich. Two main processes are frequently used to measure the poverty line: the absolute approach and the relative approach. The relative poverty line is calculated from the distribution of expenditures. In other words, this approach sets a poverty line based on average expenditures. The absolute poverty line is based on the minimum expenditure destined to meet nutritional needs. This represents the minimum food expenditure to which one can add a basket of non-food expenditures, which are judged to constitute a minimum essential. If the poverty line established on the basis of the relative approach can have several possible values, one built on the basis of the absolute approach has a fixed value and is unanimously accepted. Economic literature on poverty proposes two methods to estimate absolute poverty: the method based on basic needs “Food Energy Intake” (FEI)[8], and the cost of basic needs or "Cost Basic Needs” (CBN)[9].

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[7] This law stipulates that the proportion of total expenditure dedicated to expenditure on food falls when income increases

[8]The first method is to assess the cost necessary to reach a predetermined level of food energy consumption.

[9]This approach, although it is previous to the FEI approach, is conceptually difficult to apply because the definition of basic needs is very imprecise. That is why the FEI approach is the one most used in analysis of poverty.

Several other approaches are also used to measure poverty. These approaches vary depending on the type of poverty we want to grasp. In all cases, the poverty index chosen must provide information on the incidence and extent of poverty. According to Sen (1976), a relevant poverty index must satisfy four main axioms: the focus axiom, the monotonic effect axiom, the transfer axiom and the decomposability axiom. The measure of poverty proposed by Foster, Greer and Thorbecke also called "FGT index" seems to be the most practical. Its formula is:

$$P_\alpha = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{q}\frac{\left(Z - Y_i\right)^\alpha}{Z}$$

Where n = number of persons or individuals in the population; q = number of poor people; Z = poverty line; Yi = expenditure per capita of individual i, and α= headcount level parameter.

This equation takes alternative values 0, 1 and 2. When α = o, then Pα = q/n. This index indicates the proportion of the population below poverty line. When α = 1, the poverty index reflects both the incidence and extent of poverty, whereas α= 2, Pα shows the severity of poverty.

The estimate of poverty profile in Central Africa borrows its analysis from both approaches.

In fact, social and human development indicators have considerably degraded in almost all countries of the region. In this context, and based on data from household surveys available in some countries[10], one out of two individuals live below the poverty line. In the region, it manifests itself in several forms including low access to basic social services, wide disparities between urban and rural settlements, large household sizes, gender disparities between men and women, the precariousness of the socioeconomic status of family heads, etc. However, the recurrence of civil wars and sociopolitical instability in some countries such as Congo, Central African Republic (CAR) or Chad are some of the identities of vulnerability within countries of the region.

In Cameroon, on the basis of the standard of living indicator measured by the Cameroon Household Survey (ECAM 2) namely the annual **f**inal households consumption survey**,** it was found that 30,1 % of households were poor in 2001, 12.3% of whom lived in urban zones and 39,7% dwelled in the rural parts of the country. If these proportions are reported at the individual level, it would mean that 6,217,058 people on an estimated population of 15,472,557 inhabitants lived below the poverty line that year representing an incidence of national average poverty of 40.2%[11]. In 2007, this incidence was 39.9%. An analysis of the poverty dynamic between 1996 and 2001 shows that the incidence of poverty declined by about 10 points[12]. This decline was marginal between 2001 and 2007.

According to the DSRP-I (2005) in Congo, the poverty situation is characterized by an incidence of about 50%[13]. GDP per capita rose from $1100 US in 1990 to $900 US in 2001[14] and $2161 US in 2009 down from $2741USin 2008. This is another indicator that explains the instability of the poverty situation over the last decade.

10This is about the Cameroon Household Survey (ECAM I, II and III) and the Congolese Household Survey (ECOM I) on consumption and the Chad Informal Sector Survey (ECOSIT I and II).

11 In other words, approximately 4 persons on 10 were poor in Cameroon in 2001.

12Comparing poverty rates between 1996 and 2001 is not easy as far as the methods of measuring the phenomenon vary appreciably between two periods. This is both with regards to the sample size, the volume of the reference basket of goods and the data collection and classification methodology. As illustration, in 1996, the basket of goods contained three items: corn flour, groundnuts and fish)!

13 UNDP Congo, National Human Development Report, 2002

14 African Development Bank (2011) Annual Statistics for Africa 2010

In addition, poverty is characterized by weak health services, poor sanitation, low access to basic education and the degradation of the physical environment and outbreak of endemic diseases. This precarious social situation is aggravated by a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Among the determining factors of poverty accentuation in Congo was the devaluation of the CFA F in 1994, the civil wars that destroyed the economic fabric, bad economic policy choices and the lack of good public affairs management. The situation worsened everywhere especially in the Pool administrative division, which was hardest, hit by the war and its collateral effects (cf. DSRP-I).

As concerns Chad, its socio-economic indicators are among the poorest in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the start of the elaboration of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (SNRP) in 2003, 61.9% of the population lived below the poverty line. Between 2001 and 2009, the living conditions of Chadians have improved, probably due to the entrance of this country into the club of petroleum/oil exporting countries. Thus, starting from a $199 US in 2001, the GDP per capita grew exponentially each year, attaining $614 US in 2009, after reaching $780USin 2008. The epidemic and endemic diseases (among which is the HIV/AIDS[15] pandemic) persist. Also, the immunization and vaccination coverage of children varies between16 % and 20 %; a high percentage of the population lives amid chronic food insecurity; the housing environment remains about 90 % sensitive to bad weather; only 1 % of the population has access to electricity; 48 % of the population had access to potable drinking water in 2006, less than 10 % of them benefit from services of basic sanitation; there is 1 telephone line for 1000 inhabitants and the list of scenarios continues.

The above facts demonstrate a high prevalence of poverty in countries where surveys on living conditions of populations have been organized in recent years. The current resources of the countries concerned are not sufficient to eradicate their respective levels of poverty.

Thus, it was important they adhere to this international initiative to transform their economies through ambitious policies, and subsequently mobilize more financial resources to finance their development.

2. What is the state of the MDGs in Central Africa?

Central Africa has made some progress during the past decade, particularly in the field of education. In some countries such as Cameroon, poverty declined by nearly 11 percent between 1996 and 2007. But poverty decline has been at the expense of income distribution since the richer 20 % still consume 8 times more than the poorer 20 %. Besides, the Gini coefficient did not change considerably. It has stayed at the same level between 1996 and 2007 (on average 0,4). These two examples show that the progress witnessed in the specific case of Cameroon occurred in a context where disparities of income remain as acute as in 1996.

This means that the pace of achievement of the MDGs is not uniform across countries in the region and within these countries these goals evolve in an erratic way. The highest disparities are registered between the rural and urban area. In this second section, we first analyze the results achieved by the six countries in Central Africa, in each area covered by the MDG_S. Afterward, we will formulate recommendations to accelerate the progress rate in the implementation of the MDGs in Central Africa.

2.1. An Assessment of MDGs in Central Africa[16]

The review of the MDG_S will be made according to each of the identified goals.

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15 In 2000, AIDS affected an estimated 1,704 persons and the virus caused about 55,000 orphans.

16 Comparing the progress made by countries under review was not still easy in spite of the data choice based on a single source (AfrDB, 2011). Indeed, the observation periods are not still the same.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty

Poverty and hunger are now the most visible manifestations of current processes of socioeconomic progress in Central Africa. They are also a reflection of the shortcomings of adjustment programs applied in the region today. This goal is still not achieved in all the countries of the region, although the incidence of poverty has declined substantially in Cameroon between 1996 and 2007.

Trends in Congo and Chad are poor and they are very disappointing in the Central African Republic where approximately one in two people suffer from malnutrition.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

If the current trends are maintained, Cameroon and, to some extent, Congo, will achieve this goal. In contrast, the progress rates in CAR and Chad are slow in view of the 100 % target to be attained by 2015. The situation in Equatorial Guinea is more worrying. Furthermore, worthy of note is the poor quality of the provision of educational services as well as the weakness of management and performance in these countries. If not for the severe cuts made in the State budget generally reducing public expenditure on social services between the 80s and 90s, Cameroon would, no doubt have attained this goal well before 2015.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

In Central Africa, gender differences in school attendance are less dominant at the primary and secondary levels, except in Congo where significant disparities still exist between boys and girls. The illiteracy elimination ratio among young people aged 15 to 24 is unfavorable to girls, especially in the Central African Republic and Chad. Conversely, it is beyond 100 % in Equatorial Guinea. With regard to women empowerment, the road ahead is still long as the general social status of women still has to be reviewed and improved in these countries. As an illustration, the new Family Code of Chad issued in 2005, is still below the expectations of the MDG on gender equality.

Goal 4: Reduce infant mortality

On average, in the countries of the region, more than 140 children die before the age of 5 years for 1000 live births while the 2015 target varies between 32 and 71 deaths per 1000 live births, or between two and four times less than the current trend observed in these countries.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

More than one in 100 women still die in childbirth in Chad (against one in 2,800 in developed countries). In other countries of the region, the situation is less dramatic but remains a concern in view of 2015 targets. Data on table 6 below show that maternal mortality remains high in the region. It is also not surprising that the number of women who die in childbirth is so large in these countries, as only 63 % and 53,4 % of childbirths were attended by a healthcare professional in 2005 and 2008 respectively in Cameroon and in Central African Republic, against more than 85 % in Congo.

Goal 6: Fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The effects of malaria, AIDS and other pandemics, such as tuberculosis, associated with high prevalence of prenatal and infant mortality, illustrate some disparities still vivid in the region. In Cameroon, for example, the number of women over 15 years living with HIV was 30 % in 2007 against 40 % in 2004. The prevalence of HIV among women in the age group 15-49 years was on average 4 % in the region in 2007. Hence, life expectancy at birth has fallen in these countries. It has declined to 51 years on average in the region (against 78 years in developed countries). The highest life expectancy at birth is in Gabon (52.9 years in 2000), whereas life expectancy at birth is 51.9 years in Congo and 50 years in Cameroon.

In urban areas in 2002, more than 10% of pregnant woman aged 15 to 24yearswere HIV-positive in Cameroon, in Congo and in RCA. In Chad, only 2 % of young people aged 15 to 24 used condoms in 2002, against 48% in Gabon and 31 % in Cameroon.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

In the area of environmental sustainability, the MDGs have specific goals only in terms of access to water and improving living conditions in slums. However, we notice that only a small fraction of forest area is protected in the countries of Central Africa (on average 0.06 % of total surface area), which host a significant proportion of the lungs of humanity (Congo basin forest). In Chad, the surface area polluted by landmines and unexploded ammunitions is still 1081 km^2. The goal is to bring this area to less than 1000 km^2.

In Cameroon, 82 % of the population still uses solid fuels. This proportion is expected to be 42.2 % proof that considerable efforts are necessary in environmental protection. Nevertheless, the proportion of the protected areas increased from 13 % in 2000 to 18.8 % in 2008. As far as access to water is concerned, only about 43 % and 48 % of Chadians and Equato-Guineans had access to water in 2006. Trends are better in Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, and in the Central African Republic.

Four of the six sample countries have completed the development of their action plan on the environment. This statistic contrasts with the state of the protected areas. While there were no protected areas in 2005 in Equatorial Guinea, the situation in the other countries is not better since on average only about 5.5 % of total land is protected.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Trade liberalization continues to progress in countries of the region. Openness to trade increased from 47.5 % in 1985 to almost 61 % in 1994 and 64.8 % in 2000, against only 38 % for rich countries! This was probably due to the debt relief initiatives in Cameroon, Congo and Chad. The reported debt servicing to exports has declined, although it is also a setback for the development of these economies. One of the encouraging effects of the MDGs is undoubtedly the level of Official Development Assistance(ODA) that has recovered even though it may seem low, compared to other developing regions.

In summary, we notice that an overall progress has been made but they are insufficient for the improvement of certain indicators such as reducing the poverty rate, reducing the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, reducing maternal mortality rate and others. There are also wide disparities between countries and within countries, between rural and urban areas. The pace in the achievement of MDGs is in fact relatively faster in cities than in rural areas.

Access to economic opportunities, employment and markets remain an obstacle for the poor. In Chad for example, clear progress is noted in the education sector where enrollment rate reached 61% during period 2003-08, against 51 % in 1999. However, female enrollment remains low at every level of education, depriving the economy and society of the benefits associated with better education of women.

According to the SNRP, the Human Poverty Index (HPI)[17] of Chad was estimated at 57 % in 1999 (approximately 6 Chadians out of 10 showed deficits in longevity, health, education and well-being). Approximately 36 % of Chadians were likely to die before the age of forty; only one-third of individuals had access to basic health services in the country; while about eight out often individuals had no access to drinking water. In Congo, some indicators have deteriorated; like the prevalence of malnutrition between 2002 and 2008.

[17] The methods of calculation are detailed in Chad's sustainable human development report for the year 2000.

How did we get there when for the most part these countries possess huge deposits of minerals in their subsoil[18]? And what can be done to enable them get closer to achieving MDGs by 2015?

2.2. Achieving the MDGs in Central Africa: How?

The slowdown in progress(and even decline in some cases) generally takes into account a number of factors among which are: (i) the overall framework of governance characterized by corruption, lack of accountability, low responsibility of the decision-makers, bad choice of economic policies, weak institutional opposition forces and the shrinking of civil society; (ii) the low budgetary priority granted to key sectors of poverty reduction[19] (social and agricultural sectors);[20](iii) The erosion of State authority in areas considered as sovereign (security, justice, etc.); (iv) the weight of foreign debt (three of six sample countries of the sample are admitted to the HIPC initiative); (v) political instability in some countries (CAR, Chad and Congo), which has not always allowed them to to drive sustainable socio-economic policies; (vi) persistent internal or border conflicts (such as Bakassi), squeezing out the budgetary resources that could be used to finance social development. Moreover, it was demonstrated that MDGs achievement implies growth rates of around 8 % in real terms a year. However, economic development in these countries in recent decades is out of sync, preventing them from maintaining, in the long-term, sustainable growth of GDP and national income necessary for a harmonious development.

Furthermore, since 1999, economic growth in these countries evolves in spasmodic periods of economic downturn with overlapping relatively good years although it is recognized that exceptional economic developments in Equatorial Guinea and Chad in particular, helped mitigate the poor performances of other countries in the region.

As an illustration, the macroeconomic situation of the region member states was characterized by a sharper than expected slowdown in economic growth with a deceleration of GDP in 2008 and 2009 in almost all the sample countries (AfrDB, 2011). In this vein, the growth rate increased from 67.3 % in 2001 to 2.4 % in 2009 in Equatorial Guinea; from 11.5 % to - 0,6 % during the same period in Chad; from 4.5 % to 2.9 % in Cameroon, etc. This resulted in a sharp decline in income per capita from 4.2 % to 1.3 % during the same period.

The following recommendations are intended primarily for countries of Central Africa, as we recognize the marginal contribution of the international community:

- Strengthen the rule of law by (i) promoting a system of democracy based on legal, institutional, impartial and effective devices, (ii) strengthening the framework of accountability and the independence of the legislative and judicial powers, (iii) applying the codes and laws punishing acts of corruption.
- Contribute to the development of civil society by (i) the development of a legal framework favorable to their activities, (ii) the provision of a budget to support credible social organizations that contribute to the implementation of policies and public strategies, (iii) their inclusion in the framework of consultation and dialogue on public policies and, (iv) support to development of technical and operational capacities.
- Promote national dialogue in countries where conflicts are latent by (i) multiplying the avenues for dialogue and (ii) strengthening public expression and civil liberties.
- Strengthen macroeconomic stability by (i) pursuing efforts towards attaining better public finance clearance begun in certain countries; (ii) developing a cautious debt policy, (iii) creating conditions to attract foreign direct investments.

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18 We can cite oil, cocoa, timber, cobalt, coffee, cotton, diamond, gold, and manganese among others.

19 In Congo for example, the proportion of the national budget allocated to education went from 15.89 % in 1999 to 12.36 % in 2000 (PRSP-I).

20 Before the achievement of the HIPC initiative completion point, Cameroon dedicated about a third of these budgetary resources to external debt servicing.

- Improve the business environment by (i) increasing the role of the market in resources allocation, (ii) taking better control of the economy (and therefore more predictable policies), (iii) boosting public investment (iv) increasing the level of basic public investments.
- Revitalize growth by creating leverage effects of upstream industries, by promoting the growth of sectors such as rural development, capable of (i) creating opportunities for the poor, (ii) generating substantial productivity gains and (iii) engaging a virtuous circle in the rest of the economy. Good regulations and effective roadmaps could contribute to revitalizing the rural sector.
- Improve access to markets for the poor. The market (of employment, labor, goods and services) represents an increase of the opportunities for the poor; they can take advantage of markets only if they are capable of reacting to the existing incentive framework. Unfortunately, the embryonic or degrading state of infrastructures, especially in rural zones (land transport, communications, financial services) contribute to their exclusion.
- Strengthen the trend to increase budgetary priority granted to basic social services like education, health, sanitation and access to drinking water. Poverty indicators should be taken into account in the process of budget allocation.
- Finally, establish a social security mechanism that provides a more automatic protection for the poor.

Regarding the flow of ODA received by countries in Central Africa during the past six years, we must recognize that the level of ODA is still low, relative to the poverty rates observed as challenges to achieving the MDGs. Moreover, for countries eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) such as Cameroon, CAR, Congo, Chad, Gabon, the principle of cumulative aid allowed in 1996 at the launch of the initial version of the HIPC initiative has not been met. The flows of ODA were on average lower than those received during the first half of the 1990s.

If there is a development model to be promoted, it is that of “capitalism collusion” or “crony capitalism” which refers to the establishment of close links between the national private entrepreneurs and public authorities. This sort of participation between the State and local private capital is the reason of what has come to be known as “the Asian miracle” and particularly the successes of the economies of Taiwan and South Korea. It has indeed been observed that the State in these two countries helped the national private sector to re-gain control of the sectors by increasing investments in the training and development of human capital in a context where the State authority was established.

The measures recommended above are based on the presence of a State whose role would be renewed to provide the conditions necessary for the proper functioning of the market. It is this fine blend between State and market with clear responsibilities and clear roles in a collaborative framework that can help achieve the MDGs.

Conclusion

The MDGs must be understood as a set of complete and final goals, which developing countries should pursue. They are therefore important for countries in Central Africa given their high prevalence of poverty. Halfway through the implementation of MDGs, the results attained are no match to the ambitions set and the sacrifices made. Yet, the achievement of the MDGs should be seen as an end in itself. The delay in achieving most of these goals depends on several factors including poor governance, corruption and the weight of foreign debt. Considering the MDGs as the purpose of the development process, measures likely to accelerate achievement of MDGs are political, institutional and economic. The experience over the last three decades, during which the development discourse was structured around the ODA, shows that this approach is insufficient to solve the problems of poor countries. Thus, more than the increase of ODA required by the signatories of the Millennium Declaration, it will help if developed countries open their markets to products from poor countries. Also, growth in poor countries will be enhanced if arrangements are made within the World Trade Organization (WTO) to protect the young and fragile economies of developing countrie

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