

Language and the Realization of Millennium Development Goals (Mdgs)

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Abstract—The MDGs set concrete targets and indicators for poverty reduction in order to achieve the rights set forth in the Declaration. Achieving the MDGs does not depend on economic growth alone. UNESCO-Bangkok and LEAD Asia (SIL) produced an abbreviated version (6 pages) of the above. "It is increasingly being recognized that progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is not happening equitably. Many of the low-income communities in which more progress is needed live in complex language situations. Choosing the best language in which to engage with these marginalized communities is key to achieving the remaining MDGs. Throughout the world, communities are discovering that by using their languages in new arenas of their lives, they can begin discovering solutions to the challenges stated in the MDGs. This study tries to investigate (1) the importance of language as it regards the MDGS goals and (2) the level of realization of each goals as it relates to language. it is observed that the actual influence of language on the MDGs goals by respondents will be highest on combating HIV/AIDS and malaria with 73%, followed by improving maternal health with 69%, achieving universal primary education with 60% etc., while the least impact will be on Ensure environmental sustainability, Reduce child mortality with 25% and Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger with 5%.

Keywords—MDGs; Targets; Indicators; Language; UN

I. INTRODUCTION

The MDGs originated from the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Declaration asserted that every individual has dignity; and hence, the right to freedom, equality, a basic standard of living that includes freedom from hunger and violence and encourages tolerance and solidarity. The MDGs set concrete targets and indicators for poverty reduction in order to achieve the rights set forth in the Declaration (1).

The MDG emphasized three areas: human capital, infrastructure and human rights (social, economic and political), with the intent of increasing living standards (2).

The MDGs were developed out of several commitments set forth in the Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000. There are eight goals with

21 targets (3), and a series of measurable health indicators and economic indicators for each target (4,5).

General criticisms include a perceived lack of analytical power and justification behind the chosen objectives (6).

The MDGs lack strong objectives and indicators for within-country equality, despite significant disparities in many developing nations (6,7) .

Kabeer and Heyzer believe that the current MDGs targets do not place enough emphasis on tracking gender inequalities in poverty reduction and employment as there are only gender goals relating to health, education, and political representation (8,9). The effects of increasing drug use were noted by the *International Journal of Drug Policy* as a deterrent to the goal of the MDGs (10).

Achieving the MDGs does not depend on economic growth alone. UNESCO-Bangkok and LEAD Asia (SIL) produced an abbreviated version (6 pages) of the above. "It is increasingly being recognized that progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is not happening equitably. Many of the low-income communities in which more progress is needed live in complex language situations. Choosing the best language in which to engage with these marginalized communities is key to achieving the remaining MDGs." (11,12).

II. THE STUDY

This study is aimed at stressing the importance of language and also to investigate the role in which language will play or play in actualizing the MDGs. The survey was conducted among 115 participants and presenters at the Conference for Engineering Science Technology and Management Research Initiative (CESTMRI) in October 2011 at the Edo State Institute of Technology and Management Usen-Nigeria.

Questionnaires were administered to respondents in which the they were asked to indicate the level of agreement with the role of language in achieving the MDGs and their expectations.

Only 100 questionnaires were returned, the results of the questionnaire were presented in tables and chart for clarity. And the results analyzed.

III. LANGUAGE OVERVIEW

A language is a dialect with an army and with state borders or the dialect of the elites (13). A language is a

particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information. The term “language” has branched by analogy into several meaning. The most obvious manifestations are spoken in language such as English or spoken Chinese. However, there are also written languages and other system of visual symbols such as sign languages.

Each language reflects a unique world-view and culture complex, mirroring the manner in which a speech community has resolved its problems in dealing with the world, and has formulated its thinking, its system of philosophy and understanding of the world around it. In this, each language is the means of expression of the intangible cultural heritage of people, and it remains a reflection of this culture for some time even after the culture which underlies it decays and crumbles, often under the impact of an intrusive, powerful, usually metropolitan, different culture. However, with the death and disappearance of such a language, an irreplaceable unit in our knowledge and understanding of human thought and world-view is lost forever. (14).

Throughout the world, communities are discovering that by using their languages in new arenas of their lives, they can begin discovering solutions to the challenges stated in the MDGs.

The mortality rate for children under five years of age is reduced when information about disease prevention and treatment is presented in local languages. Conversely, poor understanding can lead to dangerous or even fatal misinformation. Ethnolinguistic communities can combat diarrhea, malaria and other common illnesses when they have the resources and capability to obtain essential health knowledge.

A mother is better able to care for herself and her family when she is literate in her mother tongue and has access to health information in a language she understands well. Language-based development facilitates the introduction of new concepts and the accurate translation of new terminology.

Environmental preservation principles are communicated between languages through language-based development programs and literature production. Deforestation is a critical problem worldwide. As local populations learn appropriate technology while drawing on traditional knowledge of flora and fauna, they meet economic needs while protecting the environment.

In order to reduce poverty, the adult education program should be mediated in languages that enable the learners to be confident to participate in the discussions and activities of their education and economy.

Primary education programs that begin in the mother tongue help students gain literacy and numeracy skills more quickly. When taught in their local language, students readily transfer literacy skills

to official languages of education, acquiring essential tools for life-long learning. The results are the growth of self esteem and a community that is better equipped to become literate in languages of wider communication.

Language, knowledge and the environment have been intimately related throughout human history. This relationship is still apparent, especially in indigenous, minority and local societies that maintain close material and spiritual ties with their environments. Over generations, these peoples have accumulated a wealth of wisdom about their environments and its functions, management and sustainable use.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents perception to the effect of the role of language on actualizing MDGs statements

MDGs Goals	SA	A	SD	D
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	13	43	17	27
Achieve universal primary education				
Promote gender equality and empower women	74	26		
Reduce child mortality	36	58		6
Improve maternal health	85	15		
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	83	17		
Ensure environmental sustainability	43	31	20	6
Develop a global partnership for development	28	51		21

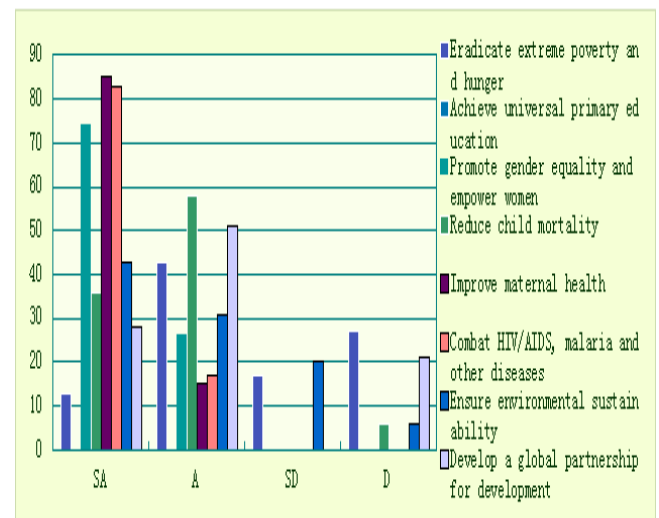


Fig 1: Bar chart showing the effect of language on MDGs

SA-Strongly Agreed

A-Agreed
 SD-Strongly Disagreed
 D-Disagreed

From the table 1 and fig 1 bar chart above it can be observed that strongly agree key language is key to achieving that improve maternal health and it is ranked 85% followed by combating HIV/AIDS and malaria with 83%, Promote gender equality and empower women with 74%. The least to be impacted by language will be Develop a global partnership for development with 28% and Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger with 13%.

Table 2: Showing the perception of respondents of the language factor in actualizing the various MDGs statements

MDGs Goals	SA	A	SD	D
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	5	50	15	30
Achieve universal primary education	60	30		10
Promote gender equality and empower women	35	50		15
Reduce child mortality	25	45	15	15
Improve maternal health	69	30		1
Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	73	25		2
Ensure environmental sustainability	25	35	20	20
Develop a global partnership for development	55	37	8	

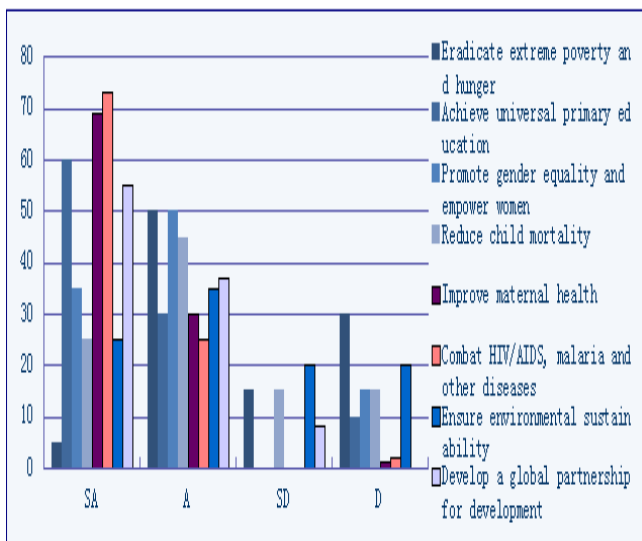


Fig 2: Bar chart showing the effect of language on MDGs

SA-Strongly Agreed
 A-Agreed
 SD-Strongly Disagreed
 D-Disagreed

From table 2 and figure 2 it is observed that the actual influence of language on the MDGs goals by respondents will be highest on combating HIV/AIDS and malaria with 73%, followed by improving maternal health with 69%, achieving universal primary education with 60% etc., while the least impact will be on Ensure environmental sustainability, Reduce child mortality with 25% and Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger with 5%.

V. CONCLUSION

Language, knowledge and the environment have been intimately related throughout human history.

For the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be effective, all people need to be included. Language is the key to inclusion and at the center of human activity, self-expression and identity.

From the result of the findings it can be observed that the three Goals that are likely to be effected by language most are improve maternal health, Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and Promote gender equality and empower women. The actual influence of language will be on the following goals Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, improve maternal health and Achieve universal primary education.

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