

The MVP Approach to Attaining the MDGs: Lessons from the Pampaida MVP, Kaduna State

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Abstract

This paper examines the origin, impact and challenges of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) in Pampaida village cluster of Kaduna State, Nigeria, first executed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and later co-ordinated by Millennium Promise, in conjunction with the Earth Institute at Columbia University in the United States, as a model for ending extreme poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. David Mitrany's functional theory of international relations is the framework of analysis used in the discourse. The UNDP operates at both global and country levels to co-ordinate all United Nations and related development plans, including the MVP, a unique development approach applied in African rural agro-ecological settings for achieving integrated development, as proposed by the MDGs. Using the qualitative research method and, specifically content analysis, the paper reviews existing information on the subject matter to, among other things, concisely describe the performance of the Pampaida MVP. The major finding of the paper is that partnership, beneficiaries' participation, perception problems and perception management are key lessons areas from the intervention that have implications for the post-2015 period of development co-operation. Therefore, the attendant challenges that lie within the structure of the MVP intervention must be addressed thoroughly if its purpose will be realized in the beneficiary community after the period of intervention, especially problems that affect the participation of the beneficiaries, in order to ensure results that validate its claims as a success pathfinder in the field of sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: *Millennium Development Goals, Millennium Villages Project, Development, Sustainability*

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Background to the Study

The historicity of the United Nations in general and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in particular bears some details of continuity and change that formed the international context for the emergence of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. The MDGs were declared by the United Nations' Millennium Declaration as the world's time-bound (2000-2015) targets for addressing basic human needs and solving developmental problems relating to poverty and hunger, education, health, gender equality, the environment, etc. The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) on the other hand was a science-based approach to achieving the MDGs birthed by Millennium Promise within the institutional framework of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) whose chair is provided by the UNDP. This study focuses on one of the MVPs implemented in Nigeria, the Pampaida MVP, as a case study for delineating useful lessons for the post-MDGs period of development co-operation.

Statement of the Problem

The Pampaida MVP was executed between 2006 and 2015 in consonance with the MDGs. This paper concisely examines some specific historical and performance details of the MVP, especially its origin, impact and challenges, in order to derive some important lessons for the post-MDGs period of global development co-operation and activities. The MVP approach was initiated in Pampaida first by the UNDP and later co-ordinated by Millennium Promise to achieving the MDGs in Pampaida Village of Kaduna State, Nigeria from 2006 to 2011. The major aim is to use details about the origin, impact, and challenges of the Pampaida MVP as fundament for some lessons recommendations that are applicable for the post-2015 development agenda.

Theoretical Framework

The discourse is considered within the theoretical framework of functionalism which essentially provides for a nexus between global development agencies and context-specific national or sub national development functions as a means to realizing a more peaceful and prosperous world (Mitrany, 1966; Mitrany, 1948). The proponent of the theory sought to evolve a working peace system in which functional agencies with specialized responsibilities in areas like health, education, governance, industry, technology, etc. take the lead in solving complex world problems in an international context of consensus among sovereign nation states. Through this exercise of functional authority, an integrated international network that ties sub-national, national and international entities in a peacefully working configuration – i.e. a working peace system – will emerge. The envisioned working peace system is one that makes available global resources for local development, and vice versa. The theory explains the working out of a peaceful international system in terms of development administered where it is needed, thereby eliminating actual and potential triggers of conflict and wars.

Methodology

This paper adopts the qualitative research method of content analysis to review existing secondary data relating to the UNDP, MDGs and Pampaida MVP. Sources of data include journal articles, theses and other internet-based materials on the subject matter. These

materials are selected based on their relevance to the Pampaida MVP and with respect to some other themes that emerge out of the discourse on its institutional and operational contexts. Some of these sources of information are based on the empirical investigations of scholars, while others are the actual reports of the MVP team members.

Background to the UNDP, the MDGS and the MVP

History of the UNDP

The emergence of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and all its programmes can be traced to the creation of the United Nations at the close of the Second World War (WW2) in 1945 as an international organization to promote world peace and co-operation. It is thus the most sophisticated diplomatic machinery ever created for the promotion and management of international peace and security (Chinade, n.d.; Howard, 2009). On realising the relationship between peace and development, the creators of the United Nations Charter made provisions for the establishment of specialized agencies in specific technical and functional areas, and provided institutional linkages between each of them and the United Nations proper in the strong belief that an enduring peace and security can only be built on a solid foundation of social and economic development (Chinade, n.d.).

It is in this light that the UNDP was established on 22 November, 1965 to foster sustainable development in impoverished nations, especially the newly independent states. It was a merger of the UN Expanded Fund for Technical Assistance (EFTA), created in 1949 to help the economic and political aspects of underdeveloped countries, and the Special Fund established in 1958 to enlarge the scope of United Nations technical assistance (IAACA, 2011). These two organizations were fully combined into the UNDP in 1971 in order to avoid a duplication of their activities. Hence the UNDP is the United Nation's global development network organization, headquartered in New York and funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations. It is a functional organization in the sense that it uses the principle of specialization based on function or role. The UNDP allows decisions to be decentralized since issues are delegated to specialized persons, units or teams, thereby bestowing on them the responsibility of implementing, evaluating, monitoring or controlling certain procedures or goals.

The UNDP plays a significant role in co-ordinating United Nation's activities in the field of development through its leadership of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and through the Resident Co-ordinator system. The UNDG was created by the Secretary-General in 1997 to improve the effectiveness of UN development programmes at country levels. The UNDG brings together all the operational agencies working on development under the Chair of the Administrator of the UNDP; the Secretariat for the UNDG is also provided by the UNDP.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs were the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions – income, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability.

From another dimension, these goals were expressions of basic human needs and rights, the rights of each person on the planet earth to good nutrition and clean water, health, education, shelter, and security as pledged in the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000) and in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2015):

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and free development of his personality.

The MDGs are a project, strategy, set of goals, and national and international plan for solving developmental problems. They serve as a handy chart for the way out, which nations, governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders with different levels of capacities and resources have pledged and planned to be responsible for in varied ways. Meeting the MDGs became a global pursuit because of the understanding of the relationship between peace and development, and development implies the minimization of the most horrible problems of the world (UNDP, 2005).

The MDGs were a set of eight (8) goals, namely to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development. These goals focus on areas of need that impact most negatively in the developing world, especially sub-Saharan Africa. Since the Millennium Declaration in 2000 the MDGs have also become important tools for monitoring human progress across nations. It must be noted here that UNDP has been given the role of being the Global MDGs Monitor for the UN System, and these goals have been transformed by the organization into an actionable instrument of development management by turning the eight goals into 18 targets and 48 indicators that can be used to monitor human progress across nations. Nigeria, amongst other nations has signed up to these goals, targets and indicators (UNDP Nigeria, 2013).

The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) Approach

The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) was initiated by the UNDP together with the Earth Institute at Columbia University in the United States, and Millennium Promise, an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that is committed to fighting global poverty, meeting the MDGs and realizing global development using the MVP approach. It is one of the recent approaches that have records of immense success and held high hopes for the future of development, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, if properly implemented and sustained. It is a participatory project, that is, a local stakeholder-run, village-by-village based approach to ending extreme poverty and meeting the MDGs in the world's poorest regions, particularly sub-Saharan Africa. The principles underlying the initiation and implementation

of the MVP include to the promotion of sustainable, scalable, community-led progress toward the achievement of the MDGs through the use of scientifically validated interventions – one village at a time; ensuring African ownership of the MDGs, and work in partnership with African governments and regional groups; increasing capacity and community empowerment in Africa through training and knowledge sharing with local African governments, NGOs and village communities; partnering with the public and private sectors, innovative NGOs, universities and leading experts, and the international donor community throughout Africa and the world to continually improve and co-ordinate development strategies; and transforming rural subsistence farming economies into small-scale enterprise development economies, and promote diversified entrepreneurs (MDG-MVP Executive Summary; Boyd *et al.*, 2009).

As a strategy to ending extreme poverty, the MVP model promotes an integrated approach to rural development, using evidence-based technologies and strategies in each sector, with sufficient investment over a sufficient period of time. MVPs are designed to demonstrate how the eight MDGs can be met in rural Africa within five years through community-led development (Millennium Project, 2006a). This approach combines a critical cost-sharing and planning partnership with local and national governments, and rural African communities, while focusing on capacity building and community empowerment. In this way, communities living in extreme poverty have a real, sustainable opportunity to lift themselves out of the poverty trap (UNDP Nigeria, 2013). The MVP offers a scalable model for fighting poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals beginning at the village level. The approach was expanded from the village to district level, and ultimately intended for nation-wide application within countries across Africa.

Importantly, the MVP approach differs from integrated rural development programs of the 1970s and 1980s or traditional “model villages” in several ways: first, the MVP effort is explicitly linked to achieving the MDGs and addresses an integrated and scaled-up set of interventions covering food production, nutrition, education, health services, roads, energy, communications, water, sanitation, enterprise diversification and environmental management. This has never been done before. Second, the model focuses on participatory community decision-making. For example, at each village, specific committees and community members identify and evaluate possible interventions supported by a scientific team and local partners. Together they create a package of village-specific interventions that are deemed most appropriate and cost effective, as well as produce a community action plan for implementing and managing these interventions. Third, the initiative uses improved science-based technologies and techniques that have only recently become available, such as agro-forestry, insecticide-treated bed nets, antiretroviral drugs, the Internet, remote sensing, and geographic information systems. And fourth, the MVP is linked to national-level processes to ensure that the success can be scaled up by governments beyond the original MVPs (Millennium Project, 2006b).

The MVP initiative was supported by Millennium Promise, UNDP, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, and the UN Millennium Project. The set of interventions to bring villages out of extreme poverty are being implemented by the communities themselves. Pan

African bodies like the African Union and NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development) also have roles to play in the implementation of MVPs throughout Africa, especially to determine how best to evolve the project for the continent's multi-faceted needs, to ensure continent-wide participation and encourage even distribution of economic development, rather than pockets of development in seas of poverty in the entire continent.

Impact of the MVP Intervention in Pampaida

MVP Intervention Sectors and Baseline Analysis

The MVP had critical intervention sectors that constituted the hub of field and operational activities in each of the communities (Millennium Project, 2006b). These areas of intervention are categorized into social sectors (i.e. non-income poverty sectors: education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and feeder roads and transportation) and the livelihood sectors (i.e. income poverty sectors: income infrastructure, agriculture, income generation and business development) (Boyd *et al.*, 2009). Prior to the MVP intervention, Pampaida has been subjected to mass desertification and other forms of land degradation, caused and accelerated by a range of interconnected factors: frequent drought, low and high unpredictable rainfall patterns, very high temperature, acute and wide spread poverty, and pressure from human and livestock populations. Low soil nutrient levels and loss of organic matter are some of the critical natural resource management problems facing Pampaida.

In the health sector there was a clinic 10 km away from the village, accessible only by an uneven dirt road; bicycles and motorbikes are the means for transporting patients. The clinic had no drugs, beds or skilled staff; statistics were non-existent and no doctor had visited the clinic in the last five years; there was a nurse and three attendants, but the clinic was rarely visited because of the poor quality of its services. Also, there was acute shortage of water starting from December until the onset of the rains in late April/early May. During this period of shortage, children and women had to travel a distance of 1km in search of water. Even though Pampaida is surrounded by a network of streams and rivers, the runoff is very fast and water dries up immediately after the rains. The geomorphology does not support surface water because of its rocky nature (Millennium Promise, 2010).

The aforementioned was the actual condition of the socioeconomic milieu of the Pampaida village cluster before the MVP intervention that invested an integrated development package based on the participatory principle. The positive impact of the MVP intervention activities in these identifiable sectors have been established by Thomas (2015), Barnabas *et al.* (2014), Barnabas (2011), Boyd, Asiabuka, Medupin and Osunsanya (2009), and the Pampaida Baseline Analysis (2008). What follows is a concise discussion of the most important aspects of the MVP impact in Pampaida.

Impact on Agriculture

After the initiation of the MVP model in Pampaida, investment in agricultural initiatives resulted in a gradual transition from subsistence to commercial farming: crop yields have increased from a baseline average of 1.5 tonnes/ha of maize in 2005 to 4 tonnes/ha at the end of 2008 farming season. The keys to this improvement include the strengthening of 26

agricultural co-operatives through the following: there were various capacity building initiatives and linking them to financial institutions for access to sustained financial services; establishment of the Pampaida weekly market which helped curtail the unfavourable activities of middlemen that had contributed in impoverishing the people of Pampaida for decades; supply of basic inputs such as fertilizer and improved seed (hybrid maize with a high dosage of fertilizer designed to achieve an optimal yield; each household is mandated to identify 1.0 ha of maize farmland and are provided with 11 bags of fertilizer by the project. Other crops introduced for crop diversification and improved household nutrition are cowpeas, soybeans and groundnuts.); a number of youths who are interested in learning forestry, crop production, livestock production, honey bee farming, small-scale processing, home economics and farm management were sponsored to the Leventis Foundation Nigeria Agricultural School (LFNAS) (Millennium Promise, 2010b).

Suffice it to note here again that 10% of each farmer's yield was contributed to the free school feeding programme; part of the excess of what was required for the feeding programme was sold and the proceeds were used to start a micro-credit scheme for women and a fertilizer revolving scheme for the farmers (Boyd *et al.*, 2009)

Impact on Education

In education, school enrolment increased from a baseline of 420 pupils to 1,602 pupils, and every pupil is fed a free daily meal through the project's school feeding programme (based mainly on 10% contribution of each farmer's yield). According to Bala (2012), a total of 284 tonnes of maize, rice and soybeans had been happily contributed by the farmers; due to these interrelated interventions there has been a rapid increase in school performance and pupil enrolment increased, as noted earlier from 420 pupils (298 boys and 122 girls with a teacher ratio of 1:42) to the current total of over 1,600 pupils (over 920 boys and 640 girls with a teacher ratio of 1:80).

This dramatic boost in school attendance has been assisted by a number of key MVP intervention strategies like the use of an education campaign to sensitize parents on the need to educate their children, especially the girl child, and to gain an understanding of the obstacles involved in attending school; the improvement of existing classrooms structures and building new ones so that Pampaida now has a junior secondary school constructed in order to facilitate easy transition from primary to secondary education and help delay the early marriage syndrome; furthermore, there was support for the building of feeder classrooms in outlying settlements as a means of enabling younger children to attend school closer to their homes and thus removing the barrier of distance and the dangers of river crossing during the rains; and the introduction of a school feeding programme supported through household contributions of grain producers and volunteer cooks. However, it has been noted by Boyd *et al.* (2009) that these positive outcomes have resulted in an interesting household trade-off between education and the number of hands available for farm work due to the reduction of the labour previously provided by children.

Impact on Health

In the health care sector, Pampaida now has a basic health clinic and free medical services are provided to the inhabitants of the Pampaida MVP and environs. In order to reverse the malaria prevalence in the community, a total of 4300 insecticide treated bed nets were distributed. Trainings and workshops were being regularly held within the community and this has helped create awareness of the sicknesses and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and others that can be prevented.

Impact on Infrastructural Development

There is also an unprecedented infrastructural transformation within a record time of three years; these include the following: 22 boreholes have been constructed, a local clinic facility has been built, a storage house for grain (cereal bank) has been constructed, a 12 km road has been constructed, electrical poles have been erected to connect the community to the national electricity grid, a village vehicle has been purchased, and a local ICT (resource) centre has been established. Other developments include a school kitchen, market stalls, junior secondary school, Zain GSM base station, and public and school latrines. All these were made possible through effective partnership between the project, Kaduna State Government, Ikara Local Government, the people of Pampaida, and other private sector partners like Sony Ericson, a leading telecom provider, and Zain, a leading mobile operator in the Middle East and Africa (Thomas, 2015; Bala, 2012; Millennium Promise, 2010; Boyd *et al.*, 2009).

Impact on Business and Entrepreneurial Development

Income and business development focused on improving non-agricultural livelihoods, food processing and business development, many of which required access to micro-credit facilities amongst the households in order to commence or improve their productive assets. A number of heads of households and their wives have received training in areas like business management, tie-and-dye, tomato preservation and groundnut oil extraction, among others. It is noted that the MVP baseline survey indicates that some members of the cluster engage in non-agricultural livelihoods like butchery, mechanic work, groundnut oil extraction, cake baking and commodity trading, and some of these households generate a significant proportion of the household incomes through these ventures (Boyd *et al.*, 2009; UNDP, 2008).

The implementation of the Millennium Villages Project in Pampaida, Kaduna State by UNDP in collaboration with other implementing partners, the state and local governments was motivated by the need to transform the lives of rural people as well as provide good pilots for other local governments and states to emulate as good practices (UNAIDS, 2010; UNDP Nigeria, 2005). It is interesting to note that the Kaduna State Government in 2014 has attempted to replicate some principles that were tested in the Pampaida MVP, notable among which is the state free school feeding programme for primary school pupils. Bala (2012) opines that Pampaida has become a model and reference point in rural development experiment, thus attracting visitors from different sections of society and the globe.

Challenges Faced by the Pampaida MVP

A number of challenges facing the MVP have been reported by Thomas (2015), Barnabas *et al.* (2014) and Boyd *et al.* (2009) to include the following: first, across the social sectors of health and nutrition, basic education, and water and sanitation, the MVP has made notable progress. These sectors are where the interventions of the MVP were most visible and have had the greatest impact on the lives of villagers. This visibility can be attributed to the different roles that the State Government, the host Local Government and the MVP have played. However, to-date this matching role between the public agencies and MVP activities had only functioned in a rather ad-hoc and uncoordinated manner. It was not the result of a structured and integrated planning and partnership approach as outlined in the project document. Due to the absence of a formal partnership arrangement, MVP execution has lacked a strong focus on devising an integrated planning and co-ordinated service delivery approach.

Policy, communication and service gaps have emerged with respect to the following: the number, quality and motivation of health and education staff; the sustainability of the current procurement and free-drugs arrangement; the quality of self-help and some contractor executed infrastructure construction; and the problem of fear and uncertainty, unwillingness and refusal to participate, disagreements with MVP staff, outright opposition to some MVP activities and other similar challenges underscored by the people's misperceptions. These concerns could not be addressed up to the terminal period of the project to ensure sustainability beyond the life of the MVP intervention. This problem of perception, according to Thomas (2015), has serious implications for the post-2015 period for the project village, because it affected the level of participation among the beneficiaries of the Pampaida MVP, so much that if nothing was done about it, guaranteeing the commitment of the local stakeholders to its sustainability after the period of intervention may be unpredictable. Subsequent researches will validate this prediction.

Discussion: Lessons from the Pampaida MVP

A number of lessons can be drawn from the aforementioned. These lessons validate the opinion of several authors whose ideas have bearing with some issues related to the Pampaida MVP. First, through partnership different kinds and magnitudes of resources needed as inputs for the project were made available in the course of initiation and implementation activities; this was a very critical factor that assisted the Pampaida MVP in achieving its set goals to an appreciable extent. It is evident from the works of Publow (2010) and Onojaefe and Leaning (2007) that there is hardly any development goal that is impossible to realize if the right partnership is in place. Therefore, an important part of the post-MDGs development agenda must be that of identifying and engaging the right partners with the appropriate technical, financial, material and participatory resources needed.

Second, the participation of beneficiaries was the force behind the MVP intervention in Pampaida; it underscored the nature and extent of results in the village cluster, given that the people were responsible for actual intervention activities in view of the goals (MDGs) of the project. Participation has been shown to be the best way of making beneficiaries to own and sustain programmes and projects that affect their lives (Chesikaw, 2016; Nour, 2011;

Finsterbusch & van Wicklin, 1987). The involvement of people in processes that affect their lives directly results in several benefits including governance capacity building, personal empowerment, collective ontogeny and most importantly livelihood development.

Third, challenges such as fear and uncertainty about project demands and activities, unwillingness and refusal to participate, disagreements with MVP staff, outright opposition to some MVP activities and other similar challenges which affected the Pampaida MVP were underscored by the people's misperceptions. Problems relating to perception are usually difficult to address if one does not understand the mindset of the people involved, because people act based on their thinking, views and opinion about real life phenomena (Wisdom IT Services, 2018; Elnaga, 2012). In other words, perceptions are the realities that people hold in their mind, and these personal realities are what determine their actual behaviours in participatory projects, whether favourable or not.

Finally, perception management is a needful tool that should be integrated for influencing the behaviour of beneficiaries who are required to participate in an externally-initiated participatory project like the Pampaida MVP. Perception management is the deliberate and systematic dissemination of pieces of right information to a target person or persons for the purpose of resetting his mindset suitably for certain desirable behavioural change and attitude (ebruary.net, 2019; CLAWS, 2012; Awang *et al.*, na). Since the mind thrives on information, the process of perception management is the best strategy to arm people with the right information that can set their minds for right actions, with respect to development programmes or projects that require their active participation.

Conclusion

The MVP model is one of tested approaches to eradicating extreme poverty and meeting the MDGs, which has a record of immense success and holds high hopes for the future of development, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, given the nature of its implementation and prospects for sustenance after the period of intervention. Although measurable impact of the project has been observed in the Pampaida village cluster, its attendant challenges must be addressed thoroughly if its purpose will be realized in the beneficiary community, especially after the period of intervention. Problems that lie within the structure of the MVP intervention, and around the participation of the beneficiaries, must be handled skilfully in order to ensure results that validate its claims as a success pathfinder in the field of development in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper therefore recommends that the post-MDGs development agenda must take cognisance of issues of partnership, beneficiaries' participation and beneficiaries' perception as critical areas for strategising in order to maximise the impact of development projects.

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