

## **Dynamics of Islamic Economic Principles on Selected Components of the Millennium Development Goals towards Human and National Development**

By

<sup>c</sup>Abdus-Sami<sup>c</sup>i Imam Arikewuyo, PhD

Department of Islamic, Christian and Comparative Religious Studies  
Kwara State University, Malete  
asimamarikewuyo@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitutes the international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, upon the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Essentially, the MDGs is aimed at creating a developed, peaceful and enabling environment to live in. The target period to accomplish the set goals is scheduled for 2015. What happens after 2015 is yet to be declared; though concerns are being raised presently in high-level thematic debates on Post- 2015 development process. It is striking that the declaration of the United Nations at the commencement of the twenty first century had always been the central nerve of Islam since its inception in the early seventh century; that is, over one thousand and three hundred years before the United Nations declaration on its MDGs. Islam as an encompassing religion does not only embrace peace in all ramifications, it evolves mechanism for an all-inclusive integration of its adherents and over all development of the *'ummah*(Muslim community). It, therefore, regulates both the spiritual and mundane affairs of its adherents; yet, without time bound. Thus, Islam is replete of injunctions that withstand the test of time on the principles and practice of all aspects of life including the religious, political, economic and social spheres with due recognition to gender requirements. It is laudable that the MDGs envision the well-being of man and his environment. However, it is mind-boggling that the duration envisaged by its proponents is almost expiring; yet, at the first quarter of its final year (i.e. 2015), the target is yet to be realized. A consideration of this failure prompts the need to study in this paper the dynamism of the Islamic economic principles in relation to the components of the MDGs with economic bias. Hence, the paper focuses on components 1 and 3 with a view to examine the efficacy of the provisions of Islam on the stipulated agenda vis-à-vis the United Nations Millennium Declaration towards fostering national development. Both descriptive and analytical approaches were employed in carrying out the study.

### **Introduction**

There had been multi-dimensional efforts made in the recent years to evolve human and infrastructural developments globally. This vision prompted the postulation of various theories and policy decisions that emanated from a number of international

conferences and world summits since the 1990s till date. Prominent examples were the United Nations Conference on Human Development held in Sweden in 1972; United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Brazil, 1992; Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 and 2014; and United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Brazil, 2012 among several others. So much human and material resources were committed by the United Nations, international agencies and Governments at various levels for the realization of the desired vision. Yet, the objectives of the colossal investments remain totally or substantially unaccomplished. Invariably, at the turn of the millennium, the United Nations Organization (See <http://www.un.org> & <http://aiic.net>) expressed its deep concern on the unceasing gross poverty, deprivation, social and economic degradation around the world. It thus came up with its Millennium Declaration in year 2000 encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The focus of the MDGs is to provide a universal framework for development and means for developing countries and their partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future for all. The MDGs revolved around human needs and basic rights that every individual around the world should be able to enjoy; though the goals are time bound, its target being 2015.

On the face value, the MDGs align considerably with the provisions of Islam theoretically, though its approach and time frame constitute essential variations. Islam, which is an age-long and an encompassing religion, does not only embrace peace in all ramifications, it evolves mechanism for an all-inclusive integration of its adherents and over all development of the society regardless the religious composition of its dwellers. It therefore regulates both the spiritual and mundane affairs of its adherents; yet, without time bound. Thus, unlike the prescription of the MDGs, Islam is replete of injunctions that withstand the test of time on the well-being of man in all aspects of life with due recognition to gender requirements. Therefore, considering the fact that the MDGs scheme is presently in its final year and that our studies through observation, MDGs records and the assessment reports reveal that the goals are yet to be attained as envisaged makes it imperative to examine the dynamism of the Islamic economic principles and values in relation to the components of the MDGs with economic bias. Hence, this paper focuses on Goals 1 and 3 with a view to examine the efficacy of the provisions of Islam on the stipulated agenda vis-à-vis the United Nations Declaration towards fostering human and national development.

### **Perspectives on Millennium Development Goals**

The MDGs are eight international development goals formulated in year 2000 under the aegis of the United Nations Organization. A consensus of the 189 member states and at least 23 international organizations endorsed the task of achieving the MDGs by year 2015 ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium\\_Development\\_Goals](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium_Development_Goals)). The

*Dynamics of Islamic Economic Principles on Selected Components of the Millennium Development Goals towards Human and National Development*

goals, which are considered as actionable instruments of development management, are further categorized into 18 targets with 14 indicators that can be used as the paradigm to monitor the progress of human and national development across the world. Pertinently, the targets of the MDGs constitutes a global road map to development among the nations that had subscribed to the scheme. The main objective of the MDGs is to create an environment that is conducive, at the national and global.

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Targets</b>
MDG 1; Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty	Target 1. Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day. Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
MDG 2; Achieve universal primary education	Target 3. Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
MDG 3; Promote gender equality and empower women	Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015
MDG 4; Reduce child mortality	Target 5. Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.
MDG 5; Improve maternal health	Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases	Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and began to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and began to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
MDG 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability	Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
MDC 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development	Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction both nationally and internationally)

	<p>Target 13: Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff-and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries? Exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HPCs) and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction).</p> <p>Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for the sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)</p> <p>Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth</p> <p>Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.</p> <p>Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information communication technologies</p>
--	---

level, to the elimination of poverty and the promotion of sustainable human development. That is, the MDGs are meant to improve the living condition of the poor and vulnerable individuals in the society where they live. Hence, the MDGs are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its various dimensions – income poverty, hunger, disease, inadequate housing – while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability (*Nigeria Millennium Development Goals Report, 2010*; P.11). The values envisaged by the MDGs include freedom, equality, right to dignity, basic standard of living free from hunger and violence, respect for nature, share of responsibility, tolerance and solidarity (<http://www.opinionnigeria.com>).

Studies have shown that the MDGs are capital intensive and most countries require considerable more development assistance, improved policies and stronger institutions to guarantee desired achievement (Ladipo, 2013, P.5). Cost estimates by UNICEF, World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that meeting most MDGs by 2015 will require an additional \$50 billion per year in development assistance (Ladipo, 2013, P.5). Hence, poor countries are likely to run

into problems in attaining the goals without international support. Consequently, the developed nations of the world committed themselves to give 0.7% of their Gross National Product (GNP) as Official Development Assistance to the developing nations to boost attainment of the MDGs (Ladipo, 2013, P.5). By this gesture, the MDGs are the most broadly supported, interdependent and time-bound specific poverty reduction scheme that the world has ever established. Thus, to accelerate progress the G8 Finance Ministers agreed in June, 2005 to provide enough funds to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank (ADB) to influence debt relief to the heavily indebted poor countries to enable them key into the MDGs initiatives (<http://www.opinionnigeria.com>).

However, for purpose of this study, we rely on the 2014 edition being the most current. The report indicates that “there has been important progress across all goals, with some targets already been met ahead of the 2015 deadline ... but much more effort is needed to reach the set target” (The Millennium Goals Report, 2015). According to the report, those targets that have been met were analyzed thus:

- extreme poverty had reduced by half in 1990, almost half of the population in developing regions lived on less than \$1.25 a day. Number of people in extreme poverty reduced by 700 million;
- substantial expansion on malaria interventions and tuberculosis arrest;
- access to an improved drinking water source was achieved in 2010 i.e. five years ahead of schedule;
- substantial gains towards gender disparity in school enrolment at all levels;
- political participation of women continued to increase; and
- development assistance rebounded and debt burden remained low.

Other areas where substantial progress were claimed to have been made but which require much more efforts to reach the set target include:

- hunger continues to decline but immediate additional efforts are needed to reach the MDGs target;
- chronic under nutrition among young children declined but one in four children is still affected;
- access to improved sanitation since 1990, yet a billion people still resort to open defecation.

Yet, an evaluation of the MDGs performance from the perspective of those they were intended to benefit portrayed that “programmes based on the MDGs have not reached the most impoverished populations and have ignored the connection between inequality, poverty and climate justice” (Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World: *Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Developments that Leaves no One Behind*). This, being a reflection of what people in poverty think of the MDGs, was a

major finding of years of participatory research between 2011 and 2013 with over 2000 participants from over 22 countries, majority of whom came from a background of poverty or extreme poverty. The countries include Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Peru, the Philippines and Poland (Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World: *Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Developments that Leaves no One Behind*). The inclusion of some developed countries in this study suggests that poverty exists around the world but not exclusive to the countries being targeted by the MDGs.

Similar progress report on the MDGs as at 2013 indicated uneven accomplishment. Some countries achieved many goals while others were not on track to realize any. For instance, Brazil and Benin are examples in each category respectively. The major successful countries were identified to be China, India and parts of East Asia ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium)). In Nigeria, the MDGs report in 2010 revealed that the MDGs was on course though challenges revolved round many of its targets. Hence:

many families still do not have access to safe water and sanitation. Although children start primary school, many of them do not complete their primary education. Even though more mothers and children are surviving, avoidable deaths are still unacceptably common. And, whilst the supportive environment has improved substantially since the return to democracy in 1999, rebuilding the legacy of a highly-deficient state is a work in progress. None of the MDGs are certain to be achieved and more needs to be done on each (The Federal Republic of Nigeria: *Nigeria Millennium Development Goals Report, 2010:7*).

The performance appraisal of Nigeria's thirteenth year journey into the MDGs is ambivalent. As at 2013, progress towards achieving five of the MDGs has been below average but, progress has been less satisfactory towards three others ([www.opinionnigeria.com/millennium-development-goals](http://www.opinionnigeria.com/millennium-development-goals)). Moreover, academic research findings presumed the MDGs as placing human well-being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development objectives; yet, all is not well with the MDGs because global programme towards the MDGs has been slow and uneven (Gafare *et al*, 2011:33). Thus, "it may be difficult for some countries in developing societies to attain the MDGs because most of them share socio-economic and religious template" (Kolawole, *et al*, 2010:53).

Given the fore-going, it is discernible that the MDGs is quite a laudable developmental programme; but for several challenges facing its execution the goals remain unattainable at least within its target date. The militating factors against the

prospect of the MDGs revolved round global developments which have potentially critical implications on the various targets of the MDGs. They include global financial crises, climate change and food price inflation none of which was envisaged at the inauguration of the MDGs. Moreover, lack of good Governance, corruption, insincerity, selfishness and some other vices deter the success of the MDGs in several countries if not all. Considering the varied status of attaining the MDGs, the pendulum of thought in the United Nations is presently shifting focus to discourse on Post-2015 Development Agenda tagged: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Invariably, the MDGs remain a mirage.

### **An Over-view of the Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3**

Without prejudice to the preceding discussions on the MDGs, it is germane to make an over-view of components 1 and 3 of the MDGs being the thrust of this paper. These read as follows:

Goal 1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; and

Goal 3 – Empower Women and Promote Gender Equality.

The targets of Goal 1 are:(i) to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar per day in 1990 and (ii) to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. These targets are scheduled to be fulfilled by 2015. This is quite a laudable ambition but there is yet to be a record that confirms that the goal had been achieved by the end of the first quarter of the target year nor is there any that indicates the reality of accomplishing it by the end of the year.

A run down through the list of the MDGs presumes that poverty eradication is not only top most, it is central and inextricably linked with most of the other goals. However, a continuous deterioration in the growth rate, as is the case in most developing countries, is rather a manifestation of the fall in the standard of living of the people which signifies poverty (Gafare *tal*, 2011:154). It is thus far discernible that poverty is a perennial problem that defies a time-bound therapy. Hence, poverty has ever attracted a myriad of definitions. According to Encyclopedia Americana, poverty can be conceived from two different perspectives viz money-less-ness and powerlessness. “Money-less-ness” means both an insufficiency of cash and chronic inadequacy of resources of all types to satisfy basic human needs, such as, nutrition, rest, warmth and body care; and “powerlessness” means lack of opportunities and choices for people whose lives seem to be governed by forces and persons outside their control (Gafare *tal*, 2011:154).

Poverty is multi-dimensional such that could encompass a whole lot of issues of human deprivations. Thus, *Aku et al*/conceives poverty from five dimensions namely: physical, economic, social, cultural, and political (*Aku et al*, 1997:41). Invariably, poverty could be classified as material or non-material deprivations. Material

deprivation relates to lack of physical necessities, assets and income as well as lack of access to productive resources and basic social services. In a more operational sense, material deprivation can be categorized into income poverty and human poverty. The former is understood as living with low income, low consumption, poor nutrition and poor living conditions. Human poverty, on the other hand, describes the conditions of low health and low education. Poverty could therefore be expressed in absolute or relative terms.

The absolute poverty refers to people falling below fixed minimum income or consumption level while relative poverty applies to inability to afford what average people have. These conceptions form the bedrock of the anticipated targets of Goal 1. Poverty in the sense of non-material deprivation relates more to the spiritual aspect of man rather than the physical being. For instance, poverty in the form of spiritual deprivation is a reflection of the debased human nature and the corruption of the human heart. The case of spiritual poverty manifests itself in greed, slavery and general powerlessness over the grip of sins. As a frame work for the present discourse and from the view-point of the targets of Goal 1 of the MDGs, suffice it to observe that poverty is conceived from the perception of money-less-ness, economic and social deprivations and materialism all of which are expressible in absolute and relative terms. The spiritual deprivation is obviously outside the purview of the MDGs; even though to us it is quite vital for human and national development.

It is apparent from empirical researches hitherto, available records and physical observations that the targets of Goal 1 have actually not been met. Hence, in a collaborative assessment research, participants (majority of whom were people living in poverty or in extreme poverty) expressed their concern about the violence of extreme poverty to include:

violation of dignity and of all human rights worsened by processes of stigmatization, discrimination and humiliation. Top-down attempts at fighting poverty often end up fighting against low-income communities which, as a result, remain entrenched in extreme poverty because their long history of persecution and exploitation is not taken into account... Programmes based on the MDGs have not reached the most impoverished populations and have ignored the connection between inequality, poverty and climate justice (All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World, 2015:14-16).

This submission is an indication that the MDGs propositions are more of conceptions and theorization rather than practical and realistic. Moreover, the participatory research made it clear that, very often, development projects work

against people living in extreme poverty, not for them. Ill-adapted development projects harm them, and, sometimes, international aid acts to silence the most impoverished (All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World, 2015:14-16).

Therefore, there is the need for more adequate and participatory ways to avert poverty and extreme poverty in order to debunk the impression created by misleading global statistics. Aside, the \$1.25 a day criterion should no longer be considered as a reliable global measure of extreme poverty given the trends of inflation and global financial crises. Invariably, Human Poverty Index (HPI) which describes the poverty level across the globe statistically indicated that most parts of the African continent recorded greater than 111.0 in rank while most parts of Europe and the Middle East recorded between 39.00 and 21.00 as at 2014 ([www.deagostinigeografia.com](http://www.deagostinigeografia.com)).

Furthermore, adopting both the head count poverty index and poverty gap index, we observed that poverty is deeply entrenched in most of the house-holds in the developing countries despite the MDGs. For instance, the Nigeria's experience of poverty in the recent times is pathetic having fallen in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from an annual average rate of 10.5 percent in 1985 to 3.2 percent in 2007 (African Development Bank (ADB): Economic and Social Statistics on Africa. African Development Report, 2008). Hence, with Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.453 the country was ranked 158 out of 177 countries (Gafare *et al*, 2011:33). The poverty rate in Nigeria continues to increase so much that more than 70% of its citizens were claimed to live below poverty line; hence, the current rate of poverty reduction is too slow to meet the MDGs target (Kolawole, *et al*, 2010:48). The presence of poverty phenomenon is manifest by prevalence of beggary of all sorts (Beggary can be classified nowadays into three; namely: professional, crude and executive.), massive youth unemployment, countless number of needy and impoverished people and above all unimaginable wide gap between the rich and the poor.

Goal 3 aspires to promote gender equality and women empowerment. Women occupy pivot position in all realms of societal development. Thus, this goal is quite significant for the uplift of the developing nations; though, its targets are restricted to elimination of gender disparity in education and political participation. The United Nations report revealed a milestonesuccess of the MDGs in accomplishing these targets across the developing countries (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2014:40). Yet, it is apt to observe that these targets do not necessarily embrace the totality of women empowerment indices for both the human and national development. Moreover, the reckless participation of women in politics in various parts of the world encourages gender abuse and conflict in sex role. Hence, the need to examine more viable options in this regard.

### Islamic Economic Principles and the MDGs 1 and 3

It is understood thus far that the targets of the MDGs on elimination of extreme poverty focused mainly on physical deprivations whereas spiritual poverty goes a long way to underscore complete well-being of a man. Hence, the proverbial saying which is though derived from the Bible (Luke 9:25) thus: "of what benefit is it for a man who gains the whole world but loss his soul" is pertinent. On that note, Islam attends profoundly to purification of the soul and freedom of man from spiritual poverty. The human soul, as reflected in the Qur'an (12:53), is not free from illness through evil inclinations, mischief and selfishness all of which provoke spiritual poverty. Invariably, the Qur'an upholds spiritual purification as the foundation of human prosperity (Q. 91:9 and 10). The spiritual purification virtually concretizes belief in Allah and His Apostle. Secondly, it inspires righteousness in all ramifications especially selflessness and consideration for fellow human beings; which forms the bedrock for elimination of poverty and hunger in the society out of passion.

Islam conceives that wealth is bestowed on man by Allah as a matter of providence in specific proportions; be it bounteously or scarcely (Q. 13:26). Ownership of wealth is simply an act of trust and the trustee is enjoined by Allah on its usage thus:

Do they not see that Allah enlarges the provision for whom He wills and straitens (it for whom He wills). Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who believe. So give to the kindred his due, and to the poor and to the way farer. That is best for those who seek Allah's countenance; and it is they who will be successful (Q. 30:37-38).

This signifies that the rich is not expected to colonize the poor; rather, he is obliged to share out

from the wealth to benefit the less privileged. The latter certainly has a right to enjoy from the former (Q. 51:19). Considering individual differences, Islam recognizes that some of the less privileged people may be bold to seek from the rich while others may be reserved despite their need; hence, the rich is informed that "in their wealth there is the right of the *sa'il* (the beggar who asks) and the *mahrum* (the poor who does not ask others)" (Q. 51:19). Caring for the less privileged in this form is classified as *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) in Islam which is considered as a pious offering to win the favour of Allah (Ambali, 1998:300). Hence, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) acknowledged: "He who gives an equivalent of date as *sadaqah* out of the property he obtains through a legitimate earning (because Allah accepts only what is lawful) Allah will accept it and nourish it for the owner in the manner each of you takes care of his young one until that equivalent of date becomes as big as a mountain" (Ahmad *et al.*:154).

These provisions laid the premise solidly for means of caring for the less privileged people to relief them from poverty and hunger without any time limit. Furthermore, Islam averts stigmatization of the beneficiaries of this scheme by enjoining the rich not to follow up his acts of charity by injury; otherwise the reward is forfeited (Q. 2:262-264). The poor, the needy and the destitute are vulnerable and are all due for consideration in this case. They may be kith and kin, neighbours or even distant people.

Moreover, as part of its scheme to eliminate poverty and hunger, Islam institutes *nafaqah* (maintenance) which is the provision of basic needs especially food, lodging and clothing (Q. 2: 233; 65:6) to one's dependants i.e. wife, children, impoverished parents and the impecunious relatives. Given the fact that women and children are often the most vulnerable in the event of socio-economic menace of the society, it is apt to observe that where the rules of *nafaqah* are religiously fulfilled the problem of poverty and hunger are quite surmountable. Similarly, Islam makes adequate provisions for the care of orphans who otherwise are more exposed to the risk of poverty and hunger. Maintenance of an orphan could be sourced from his property if he inherits any or be undertaken by his guardian. Whichever the case, care of the orphan is to be with passion and kindness else it is reproachable to repulse him (the orphan) or refrain from feeding the poor (Q. 107:2-3). The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged compassion to the orphans when he said: "he who takes care of an orphan and me will be like this in paradise; and he raise his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration"(Muhyid-dine *tal*, 109).

In its ardent attempt to avert poverty and hunger, Islam advocates circulation of wealth among the people (Q. 59:7) rather than its concentration in the hands of few ones who constitute the capitalists. Suffice it to say that in resource control management there should be a just distribution of resources in order to promote human and national development. Furthermore, to portray the opposition of Islam against capitalism, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was commanded thus: "take *sadaqah* (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them..." (Q. 9:103). Complimentarily, Islam establishes the institution of *zakat* (legal alms tax) as a regulated scheme to provide adequate care for those in abject poverty. The *zakat* is ordained to be paid by the rich annually on his net possessions. The *zakat* taxable properties include money, livestock, farm produce and land treasures like gold and silver. The tax rates on the properties differ from one to the other within the ranges of 2<sup>1/2</sup>% and 20%.

The rate of 2<sup>1/2</sup> % is paid on cash and bank deposits; approximately 2<sup>1/2</sup> % on livestock; 5% on produce by artificial irrigation; 10% on produce by natural irrigation and 20% on land treasures (Mannan, 1985, P.257). Upon its collection, Islam regulates the utilization of *zakat* to avail welfare provision for the poor, needy, those employed to collect the funds, new converts, captives, debtors, way farers and in the way of Allah (Q.9: 60). Considering the fact that the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as at March, 2015 stands at \$81,544.49 billion dollars (The 2015 Economic Statistics and Indicators" -<http://www.selfgrowth.com>) and that there are only 1,826 billionaires in the world whose total worth is \$7.05 trillion dollars from among

whom the richest 500 hold equivalent of two-thirds of the wealth, it is unscrupulous that majority of the world population is wallowing in abject poverty and hunger regardless the millennium declaration of the United Nations to uproot the menace.

Assuming the principle of Islam on the collection and distribution of *zakat* is imbibed, the world could boast of 2<sup>1/2</sup>% of the current GDP, which could improve the living quality of the indigents and people living in extreme poverty. The focus of MDG 3 is the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. The targets of this goal are the elimination of gender disparity in education and promotion of women participation in politics. So far, the advocates of the goals feel fulfilled particularly in respect of incessant increase in the percentage of women in active politics and holding of public offices. Interestingly, Islam accords women a prime place in the scheme of things.

The question of gender disparity is not applicable in Islam because there is no discrimination between the male and female sex in all spheres of life be it religious, social, economic, or political except for some restrictions where applicable for safe guarding the weak nature and primary responsibility of the feminine gender. Therefore, right from the advent of Islam in the seventh century in Arabia, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had clamoured for acquisition of education by his followers. Hence, the Prophetic traditions exhorted thus: "seek education even be it as far as China"; "to seek education is compulsory on the Muslim male and female"; "education is the lost property of a Muslim (male or female), wherever you find it grasp it" (Uthman, 102-110).

These exhortations actually spurred the Muslims to action both during the life of the Prophet and even after his demise. The home of A'ishat, the Prophet's wife, was a learning center for the Muslim women in the same way as the Muslim men studied under several leading companions such as Abu Hurayrah, Abdullah b. 'Abbas, Ali b. Abi Talib etc. There was no limit to the scope and period of acquiring education; thus, the Prophet further directed: "seek education from the cradle to the grave" (Uthman, 102-110). Suffice it to say that Knowledge is the foundation of Islam and that there is no gender disparity from the time immemorial for acquisition of knowledge at all levels; rather an individual ought to be guided by his/her intellectual capability and natural composition (Ibraheem, 4).

It is germane to note that the target of the MDGs limits women empowerment to political participation and holding of public office, whereas empowerment has a broader perspective. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities; having decision-making power of their own; having positive thinking on the ability to make change; ability to learn skills for improving one's self or group; involvement in the growth process and changes that is never ending; and increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma (<http://www.selfgrowth.com>). Considering empowerment within this frame-work, Islam is favourably disposed to women empowerment to allow for a realization of one's potentials, dignity and independence. In the foremost, Islam recognizes the human nature of a woman and it acknowledges that both in essence

and attributes, she is equal but not necessarily the same with man. They are created equal with similar characteristics of living organism but differ in sex and responsibilities (Q.4:1).

Spiritually, Islam enjoins on the woman, like man the observation of all religious obligations and she is therefore entitled to reward (Q. 33:35) or punishment (Q.3: 195) in the same way as her male counterpart. Islam removed the stigma of wickedness and impurity which were attributed to a woman in the pre-Islamic religions and culture. Socially, Islam restored to the woman her dignity and rights. It advocates her social independence and recognition. She obtains her natural freedom and security as essential birth right; thus, placing her on a perfect footing of equality with man even in the exercise of all legal powers and functions. Invariably, Islam upholds the independence of a woman to decision-making and execution of same in as far as she is full-grown, free-born and intelligent.

This freedom of thought and action is extended to her social and economic life. Thus, she has a right to seek education, engage in marriage by her own choice, and venture into economic transactions as she desires so long she complies with the Islamic legal provisions and her femininity is not jeopardized in doing so. Economically, a woman reserves the right to acquire, possess, utilize and dispose her wealth as she desires. Although, for her infirmity she is to be advised or guided by her father or male relations in the case of a spinster and by her husband in the case of a married woman; yet her independence cannot be altered. Be that as it may, Islam provides opportunities for a woman to participate in the economic development of the nation.

Politically, Islam encourages the contribution of everybody to the development of his society. Women, like men, have a right in decision-making in the affairs that affect the well-being of the community religiously, socially, economically and politically. Islam does not discriminate on gender basis in its call: "seek with that which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the hereafter, and forget not your portion in this world" (Q. 28:77). There were instances on record in respect of contributions of early Muslim women to the growth and development of the *umma* (Muhammad, 2003:521). Pertinently, it is appropriate for the women to participate in the political development of the nation. However, the extent of such a participation remains very controversial among the jurists. There were opinions which forbid leadership of the state by women while other opinions permitted it.

The first view relied on the interpretation of Q. 4: 34 that "men are the protectors and maintainers of women" and some of the *ahadith* which condemned leadership of the state by women. For example, the Prophet said: "that nation will never prosper which put a woman in command of its affairs" (Muhammad, 508). The second opinion relied on criticism of the authenticity of the *ahadith*, which condemned women leadership of the state vis-a-vis contemporary issues (Yahya, 74). In our own opinion, there is no any contention on the participation of women in politics bearing in mind the multi-various roles they play in the society. Two, the provision of Q.4: 34 which address issue of men's superiority to women as protector and maintainer should be safe-guarded. Besides, Allah further declared thus: "It is not fitting for a

believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path" (Q. 33: 36).

In addition, leadership responsibility is enormous which are not compatible with the fragile nature, biological changes and psychological composition of a woman. On this premises, we wish to posit that it is sufficient that women should participate in the electoral processes (to elect male leaders of their choice), legislative (as law makers) and consultative (as advisors on women affairs). Yet, their participation in all these should not be at the expense of their natural endowments and primary home management responsibilities. What rather happens by the invocation of the MDG 3 on women participation in politics is an outright throw off of the nobility and sacredness with which the women are endowed.

### **Conclusion**

The paper had examined the dynamics of Islamic Economic Principles on the Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3 towards human and national development. It was recalled that the MDGs was initiated by the United Nations subsequent to its millennium declaration in 2000. The MDGs are eight in number with eighteen targets set towards improving the living conditions of the vulnerable people around the world and enhancing environmental sustainability by 2015. The paper however focused on MDGs 1 and 3 (i.e. elimination of poverty and hunger; and promotion of gender equality and women empowerment respectively). The MDGs involved huge financial involvement such that the goals are difficult to attain by the poor developing countries without the support of the developed nations of the world. Yet, its accomplishment within its time limit had evolved varieties of discourse and evaluation reports. The United Nations report on the MDGs performance indicated that there has been important progress across all goals but much more effort is needed to reach the set target while other reports portrayed that the MDG programmes have not reached the impoverished populations and have ignored the connection between inequality, poverty and climate justice. Thus, there is yet a wide gap between the MDGs on paper and MDGs achievements. Although, the goals were presumed as placing human well-being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development objectives, all is not well with the MDGs because the target beneficiaries are yet to receive the its dividends. So, it was observed that the MDGs is quite a laudable developmental programme, but for several challenges facing its execution the goals remain unattainable. Hence, the clamour is presently on Post-2015 development agenda which is Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). Moreover, the MDGs focused on material poverty to the exclusion of non-material poverty which to us is significant for over-all development of man and the society.

Interestingly, Islam had established its welfare scheme several years ahead of the MDGs. The provisions of Islam were not only divinely originated, it had been faithfully and honestly executed by the divine messenger and his companions and it had remain a viable legacy that withstands the test of time in all generations. Spiritual purification was identified as the first essential approach to attaining freedom from spiritual poverty. The material poverty reduction scheme initiated in Islam include the care of the impoverished and vulnerable people by the rich

through *sadaqah* (voluntary charity), provision of *nafaqah* (maintenance of dependants), advocating circulation of wealth and just distribution of resources in order to promote human and national development, collection and distribution of *zakat* (legal alms tax) and so on. Furthermore, Islam upholds empowerment of women though its approach differs to the advocacy contained in MDG 3. Seeking education is considered an obligation in Islam without gender discrimination of any form. Thus, Islam desires that Muslims, male and female should continue to acquire knowledge in all possible place from cradle to grave; whereas the MDGs targets the promotion of education especially at the primary and secondary level. The women empowerment scheme in Islam is all embracing covering the spiritual, social, economic and political spheres of life with a view to inducing human and national development yet not compromising gender peculiarities. Considering the dynamics of the Islamic values in relation to The MDGs 1 and 3, we advocate it as a more viable option that could be explored by the concerned development organizations or agencies for optimal benefit of the target groups.

### References

- African Development Bank (ADB): Economic and Social Statistics on Africa. African Development Report.(2008). New York, Oxford University Press. See also African Development Bank(ADB): Gender, Poverty and Environmental Indicators on African Countries, 2010 Abidjan.
- Aku, P.S, Ibrahim, M. J. & Bulus, Y. D. (1997). Perspective on Poverty Alleviation Strategies in Nigeria” in Proceedings of the Nigeria Economic Society Annual Conference on Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria. Ibadan, NES.
- All Together in Dignity (ATD) Fourth World: *Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Developments that Leaves no One Behind*. (2014). Paris, Editions Quart Monde.
- Beggary can be classified nowadays into three; namely: professional, crude and executive. Professional beggars are the group of people who take beggary as major occupation. The crude beggars are the miscreants who constitute public nuisance and extort money from people while the executive are those who dress up decently and appear like gentlemen but virtually approach others to beg for livelihood.
- <sup>6</sup>Uthman b. Abi Bakr. *Bughyatul Muslim in wakif ayatulwa<sup>6</sup>i zinwal Mutā<sup>6</sup>zin*. Np. Human Poverty Index HPI – I:rank” retrieved from [www.deagostinigeografia.com](http://www.deagostinigeografia.com)
- Millennium Development Goals: A Performance Review for Nigeria” accessed from <http://www.opinionnigeria.com/millennium-development-goals>
- Gafar T. Ijaiya, Mukaila A. Ijaiya, Raji A. Bello & Michael Ajayi. (2011). Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria. In *International Journal of Business and Social Science* Vol. 2 No 15.
- The Federal Republic of Nigeria: *Nigeria Millennium Development Goals Report, 2010*
- Ibraheem Sulaiman: *Women and Society*. Np: Bureau for Islamic Education. Nd.
- [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium)

<http://www.opinionnigeria.com>

<http://www.opinionnigeria.com>

Kolawole Taiwo Olabode *et al.* (2010). Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria: Issues and Problems. In *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: Sociology & Culture*. Vol. 14 Issue 5. USA: Global Journals Inc Ladipo Samuel. (2013). *The Race for Development – A Hand Book on MDGs*. Ilorin: Hamson Communications, 2013;

Ambali, M. A.. (1998). *The Practice of Muslim Family Law in Nigeria*. Zaria, Tamaza Publishing `Company Ltd.

Mannan, M.A. (1986). *Islamic Economics: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: The Islamic Academy Muhammad Isma'il Al-Bukhari: *Sahih'ul Bukhari* Vol,V, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, p. 508.

Muhammad Mustafa Gemeiah and Abdel-Hamid Eliwa (Trans.): *Men and Women Around the Messenger* Vol.I. Egypt: Dar Al-Manar, 1423/2003; p. 521ff  
Muhyid-din Abi Zakariya' Yahya b. Sharaf An-Nawawi: *Riyad'usSalihin min KalamSayyid al Mursalin*. Beirut (Lebanon): Dar al-Fikr, nd; p. 109

"2015 Economic Statistics and Indicators" accessed from <http://www.selfgrowth.com> on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2015

See- Ahmad b. Ghunaym b. Salim an-Nafrawi. 2000. *Al-Fawakihid-Dawani' alaRisala b. Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani* Vol. II. Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr, 1420AH/2000

The organization was founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries, committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. It is currently made up of 193 member states with its headquarters in New York. For further information see <http://www.un.org>; <http://aiic.net>.

The reports for 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2014 were obtained on-line from "The Millennium Goals Report" accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2015.

United Nations, (2014).: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*. New York: np; 2014

United Nations: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*. New York: np; 2014; p. 20.

Women Empowerment: Definition" accessed from <http://www.selfgrowth.com>

Yahya Oyewole Imam: "Women Leadership in Islam: A Critique of Some Scholars and Medical Evidences" presented at NATAIS national conference p.4. See also – Sulaiman Muhammad Jamiu: "Women and Leadership in Islam: An Appraisal of the Contemporary Nigerian Muslim Women's Quest for Political Participation" in *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. XXVI No 1, p. 73