

The Importance of Gender Budgeting in Attaining the MDG 3 in Africa

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a global concept (shared development objectives) that needs to be localized and effectively implemented in order to attain the desired goals. In the light of this statement, this paper examines an MDG-based planning, pro-poor policies and gender budgeting. The paper focused on MDG number 3 (ensuring gender equality and women empowerment), which is a cross-cutting issue. A comparative analysis of African countries are made and the prospect of achieving MDG 3 evaluated. It also attempts to find out whether the MDG 3 is properly aligned to national development policies and explore the challenges as well as necessary prerequisites for successful implementation of the MDG 3 related budget. The findings indicate that appreciable progress has not been made in two of the three indicators namely; the share of women in the non-agricultural sector and the percentage seats held by women in national parliament. Modest progress was made in the ratio of girls to boys in enrolment ratio but parity is not likely to be achieved by 2015. In conclusion, the paper notes that without aligning the MDG 3 to budgetary process and ensuring active participation of women in national development, achieving MDG 3 shall be an elusive agenda in Africa.

Keywords: MDGs, gender budgeting, women empowerment.

Introduction

A well articulated public policy backed up with realistic budgeting is a practical way of demonstrating genuine commitment on the part of government towards improving the wellbeing of the citizenry. It is also an inspiring way of presenting the vision of government to the people. Indeed, nothing speaks louder than financial commitment and every financial commitment must be strictly monitored to ensure maximum benefit. This is simply referred as Outcome to Input Tracking (OIT). According to John Weeks and Sharati Patel, “Fiscal policy should not be a continuous struggle against deficits and inflation, but a tool for poverty reduction ...and reaching the MDG targets”. Most national

policy documents, example the Nigerian National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004) document explicitly recognized gender (MDGs 3) as cross-cutting issue. IMF (2007) identified MDG3 among the elusive MDGs.

The major objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women in the overall attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Specific objectives includes the following:

- To examine the progress that has been made towards the attainment of MDG 3?
- To highlight the linkage effect between MDG 3 and other MDGs particularly the universal education.
- To find out whether there is any guideline for effective implementation and efficient utilization of MDG's subventions to gender related issues.
- To identify the challenges and necessary prerequisites for successful implementation of the MDG 3 related budget.

Why the focus on MDG 3?

A positive synergic effect exists between MDG 3 and the other MDGs. For instance, MDG 3 has a multiplier effect in achieving other MDGs especially in education and health. Ensuring gender equality and women empowerment opens window of opportunities for women to contribute optimally to development process at both the micro (household) and macro (national) levels. For instance, improved access to productive resources will guarantee women's economic independence which will enable them support their family by providing adequate food and nutrition, school fees for their children, health care and other expenditure aimed at poverty reduction. However, it is important to note that the route to the attainment of MDG 3 is neither straight nor smooth. There are several bottlenecks among which is patriarchal system of suppression embedded in traditional and cultural practices.

The achievement of MDG 3 targets require actual implementation of the commitments by adopting the principles of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). Stotsky (2007), puts up a brilliant argument on why using budget to empower women makes good economic sense. She argued that reducing the disadvantaged status of women can be linked to a higher economic growth and to greater economic stability which yields benefits that private market, when left to itself, may not fully take into account. Similarly, Buvinic and King (2007) asserts that greater gender equality in access to opportunities, rights and voice can lead to more efficient economic functioning and better institutions.

2.0 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Concept of Gender Budgeting

The term "gender budgeting" has become a broad and encompassing phrase for government efforts that seek to address gender issues in the domain of public expenditure and policy. According to (IDRC, 2001) "Gender budget initiatives analyze how

governments raise and spend public money, with the aim of securing gender equality in decision-making about public resource allocation; and gender equality in the distribution of the impact of government budgets, both in their benefits and in their burdens.”

2.2 Strategic Frameworks for Gender Budgeting

Gender budgeting initiatives have been adopted globally. Australia and South Africa are the pioneers. Gender budgeting exercises now take place in more than forty countries all over the world. The United Nations' commitment to gender budgeting in the Beijing Platform for Action popularized the concept such that it has become a regular exercise in over forty countries. Examples include Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Norway, Philippines, Scotland, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa. There are differences and similarities in approach across countries. It is not possible to discuss the various approaches here but a brief highlight of few cases will suffice.

The Australian Approach or the “Three-way Categorization”, distinguishes between: Gender-specific expenditure; Equal opportunity expenditure for civil servants; and General expenditure considered in terms of its gender impact. The South African or the Five Step Approach” include; Analyzing the situation of women, men, girls and boys; Assessing the gender-responsiveness of policies; Assessing budget allocations; Monitoring spending and service delivery and Assessing outcomes. In Indian context, the strategic framework for gender sensitivity in resource allocation has been earmarking a specified minimum quantum of funds/benefits for women in all women related sectors, supplemented by targeted interventions for women in various sectors like health, education, employment, training, micro-credit etc. Another important strategy in India is formal institutionalization of the gender budgeting exercise in the annual budgeting process of the Government of India. This started with the inclusion of a gender budgeting statement in the Union Budget 2005-06. There are important lessons for Sub Saharan Africa from the experiences of Australia and India. The African experience are mainly from Eastern and Southern countries namely Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. From

Relative to other regions of the World, most African States do not have realistic policies about women and they usually do not have strong institutional capacity for coordinating their decisions. For instance, bureaucratic bottlenecks makes the alignment of policies difficult if not impossible and hence poor gender mainstreaming and budgeting. It should be noted that African Women play crucial role in the economy and the key challenge to unleashing their economic potential has been inadequate gender mainstreaming skills and budgeting. From the West African sub region, the situations of Nigeria and Ghana as regards gender budgeting are highlighted below.

2.2.1 The Nigerian Case

Nigeria is yet to formally adopt a gender budgeting initiative although she is a signatory to various global and regional Conventions and instruments on the rights of women. However, she provides periodic reports on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and has made attempt at domesticating the CEDAW and the African Union Women's Protocol. The National Gender Policy of Federal Republic of Nigeria (2006) which replaced the National Policy on Women, the NEEDS II (Nigeria, 2004) and the Vision 2020 Nigeria (2009) development blueprints acknowledged that women empowerment is a viable tool for eradicating poverty and advancing development. Unfortunately, there was no clear roadmap for the strategies and implementation of gender issues in the vision 2020 document.

However, to ensure her commitment to women and gender issues in all aspects of development, the Nigerian government has a ministry responsible for women affairs and social development. The ministry has a division responsible for economic empowerment of women. The division has a primary role to promote, develop and concretize income generation and employment through loan schemes, home, cottage industries and acquisition of skills generally for the improvement of food processing as well as such other vocational training of women in the context of their assessed needs and potentials. Also, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has produced a veritable document on Engendering National and State Budgets: Impacts on Sectoral Plans and Policies. Another effort in Nigeria is by the National Assembly under the UNDP Assisted Budget Implementation programme which organized workshops on gender mainsreaming and inclusive budgeting.

2.2.2 The Ghana Case

In Ghana, gender is being mainstreamed in national policy framework by aligning it to the principles of GRB with the aim of achieving the following objectives;

- advance investment in gender equality and women empowerment.
- aid management system and process.
- robust tracking mechanism for both national and development partner's budget allocations for gender equality and economic empowerment.

A notable effort to demonstrate the value of critical gender analysis and research to policy-making is Gender Training in Ghana: Politics, Issues and Tools, edited by Tsikata (2000). In 2009 there was a technical gender budgeting educational workshop to update the technical knowledge of parliamentarians on the subject of gender budgeting. The workshop explored the possibility of mainstreaming gender budgeting into government's fiscal policy for 2012. From the workshop experience it was obvious that some of the participants see the concept of gender budgeting as ambiguous; hence the need for regular training and continuous update.

2.3 Empirical Literature

Many of the pioneering feminist studies on African States policy, including Tsikata (2000), Tamale (1999), and Tripp (2000) show that it is often the liberal or Women in Development (WID) approaches that inform state policy and funding. Most of the African governments in attempt to satisfy donor agencies and international communities have been quick to embrace ad hoc and uncoordinated gender initiatives. This does not allow for a long-term vision or context for meaningful gender transformation.

According to the literature Sub-Saharan Africa seem not to be making appreciable progress towards the attainment of MDGs. Easterly (2009) argues that the MDGs are poorly and arbitrarily designed to measure progress against poverty and deprivation and that their design makes Africa look worse than it really is. The author cited example with each of the MDG targets, for instance, the completion of primary school is considered more veritable indicator than the primary enrollment ratio. He also noted inadequacy of data as challenges towards making a fair assessment and that a fair assessment should take cognisance of the comparative initial conditions. Similarly, Alvarez et al (2011) noted that robust monitoring methods and comprehensive reporting standards is lacking at the national levels and that evaluation of MDGs is only as good as the data that supports it. Notwithstanding the inadequacy of data, the authors using qualitative and quantitative forecasting made an attempt to assess progress in the individual sub-saharan African countries. They identified only five countries (namely; Malawi, Mauritius, Cape Verde Seychelles and Uganda as close to target while Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Benin and Angola have made absolute progress.

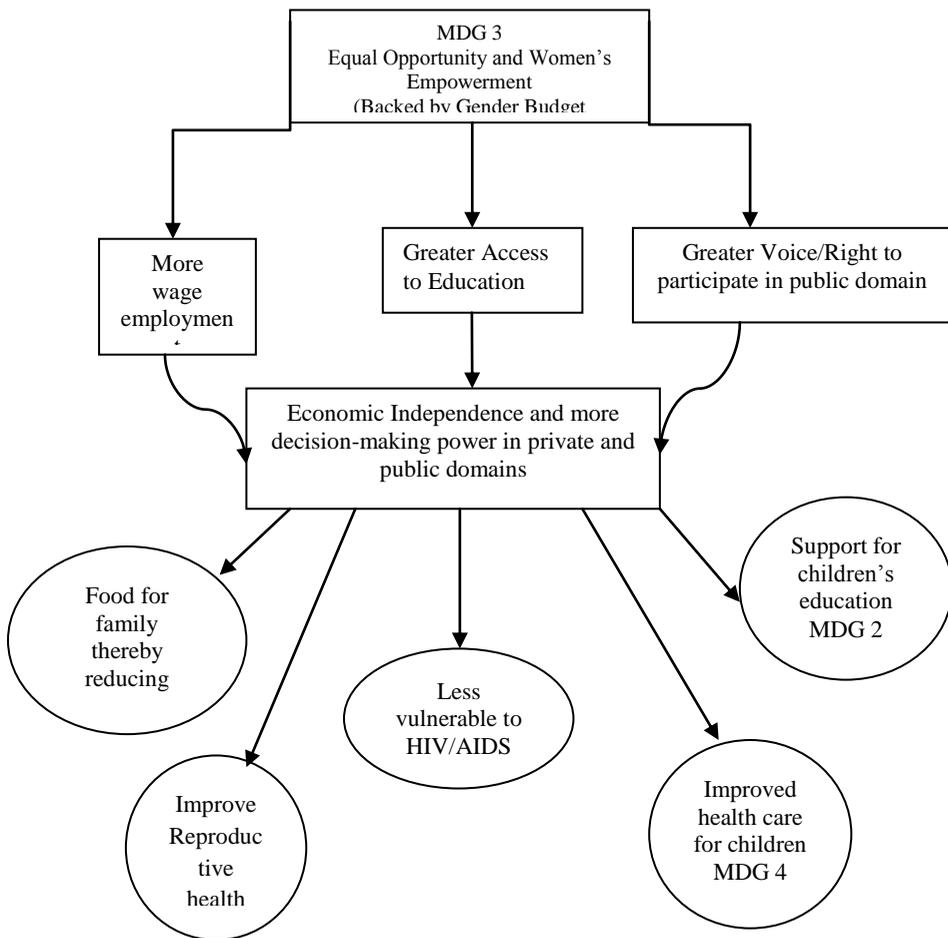
By and large Sub Saharan Africa has a lot of efforts to make in terms of achieving the MDG by 2015. For the gender equality and women empowerment most efforts are by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with weak coordination and monitoring. There is need therefore for African governments to ensure that funding potentially aimed at progressive and state independent gender initiatives is channeled through the state's agendas for development and policy-making.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

As earlier argued a positive synergic effect exists between MDG 3 and the other MDGs. For instance, MDG 3 has a multiplier effect in achieving other MDGs especially in education and health. Ensuring gender equality and women empowerment opens window of opportunities via greater access to education, more wage employment and right to participate in decision-making. These will guarantee women greater access to and control over resources thereby ensuring their economic independence. With more voice and greater decision-making power the women should be able to support their family by providing adequate food and nutrition, school fees for their children, health care and other expenditure aimed at poverty reduction; see figure 1. It is therefore very important

to ensure the attainment of MDG 3 by adopting a gender sensitive policies and budget. In this framework, education is seen as an important component of the MDG3 and a sector where gender mainstreaming should start. But, the emphasis on education should go beyond access and parity to include other important issues.

Figure 1: Multiplier Effect of Attaining MDG 3



Source: Author's Construct**3.0 Data and Methods***3.1 Sources and Nature of Data*

The data for paper was obtained from the following sources; NEPAD MDG progress report (2011), report of United Nations (2010) and other published materials on Africa. The information sourced include the following indicators that are used to monitor progress for MDG 3:

- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.
- Share of women in wage employment in non agricultural sector.
- Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

3.2 Technique of Analysis

Descriptive analysis was applied and the results are presented in charts and tables.

4.0 Discussions**4.1 Progress Report on MDG 3 in Sub-Saharan African Countries**

This section examines the progress towards the attainment of the MDG 3 among the countries in Sub Saharan Africa. In other words, how far has Sub Saharan Africa gone in achieving the desired objectives of MDG 3 given the past efforts? Unfortunately as noted from literature, there are limited statistics to monitor progress. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that a lot still need to be done especially in the MDG 3 if the attainment of the 2015 targets will not be a mirage. The discussion relied mainly on information from NEPAD's assessment. According to the report only few countries have achieved progress and much of the progress was recorded in education relative to other indicators.

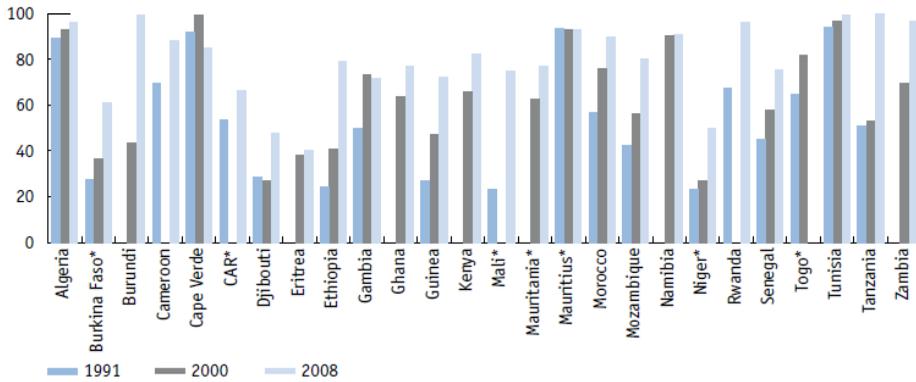
Indicator 1: The Ratio of Girls to Boys in Enrolment Ratio.

The ratio of girls to boys in primary is approaching parity.

- 91 girls in every 100 boys enrolled in primary education.
- 84 girls in every 100 boys enrolled in secondary education.

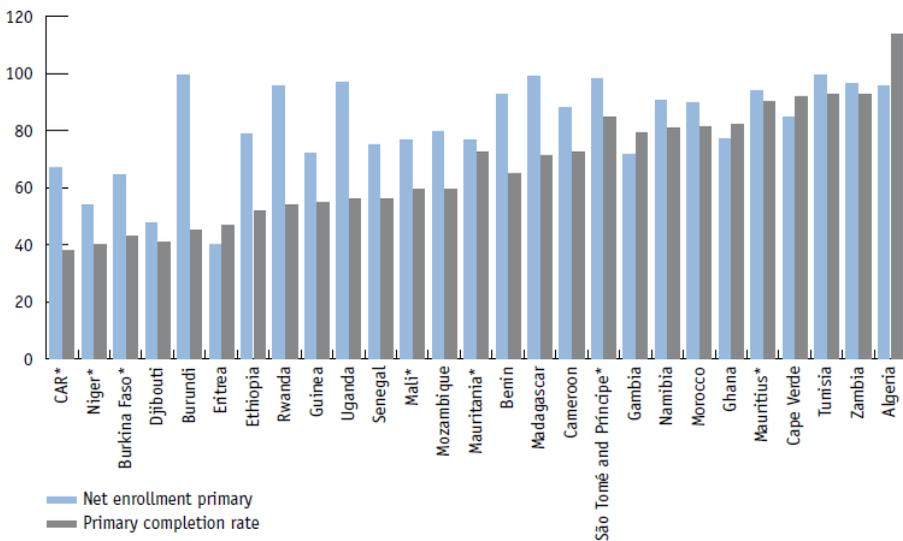
See figures 2 and 3 for country specific ratios.

Figure 2a: Progress in net enrollment in primary education for selected African countries, 1991 and 2008/2009 (%)



Source: NEPAD Africa MDG Progress Report 2011

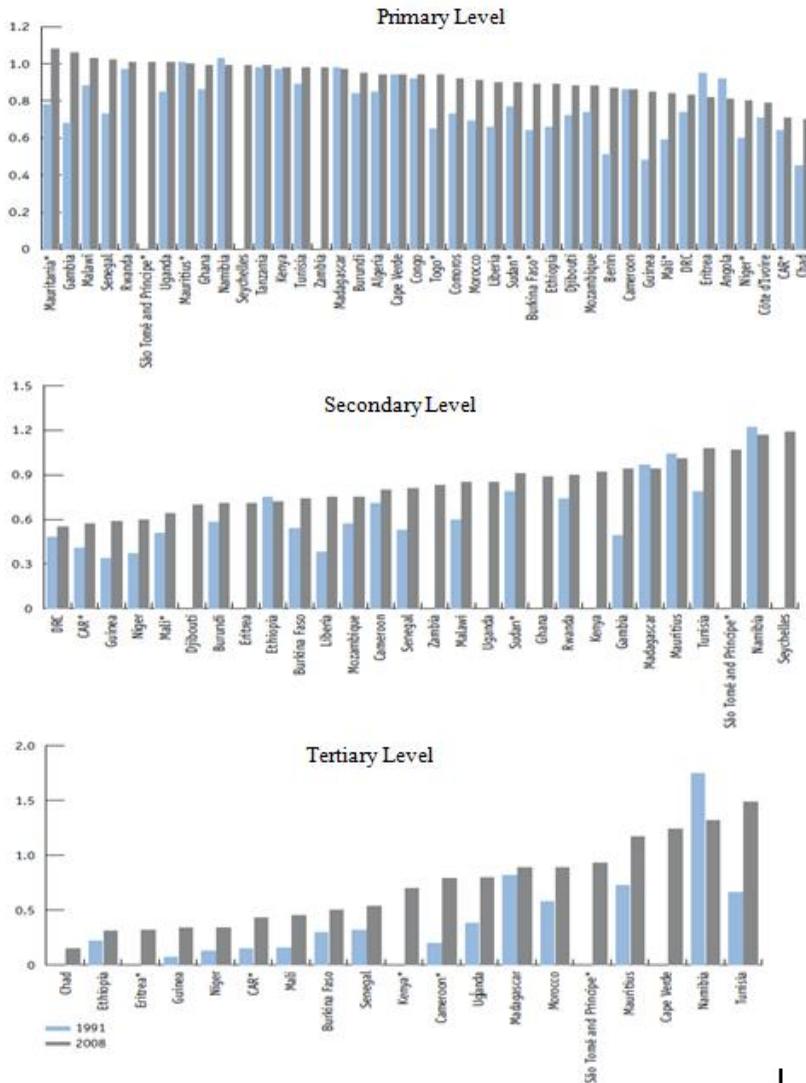
Figure 2b: Primary education enrollment and completion rates for selected African countries, 2008



Source: NEPAD, Africa MDG Progress Report 2011

If this trend is maintained, it may be possible to achieve parity at the primary level, in few years to come. However, 3 years count down to the 2015, the 100 per cent level expected by 2015 seem unlikely to be met. But, hope should not be lost. It is important to note that although the gender gap in education is narrowing, harmful traditional and cultural practices still exist. This appears to negatively rob-off the achievement made. Among other factors, school fees has been identified as a constraint to girl-child access to education. This situation is worst where early marriage is encouraged. The policy implication is the need to invest in girl-child education.

Figure 3: Gender Parity Index in enrollment in selected African countries, 1991 and 2008



Source: NEPAD, Africa MDG Progress Report 2011

Indicator 2: Share of Women in Wage Employment in the Non-Agricultural Sector.

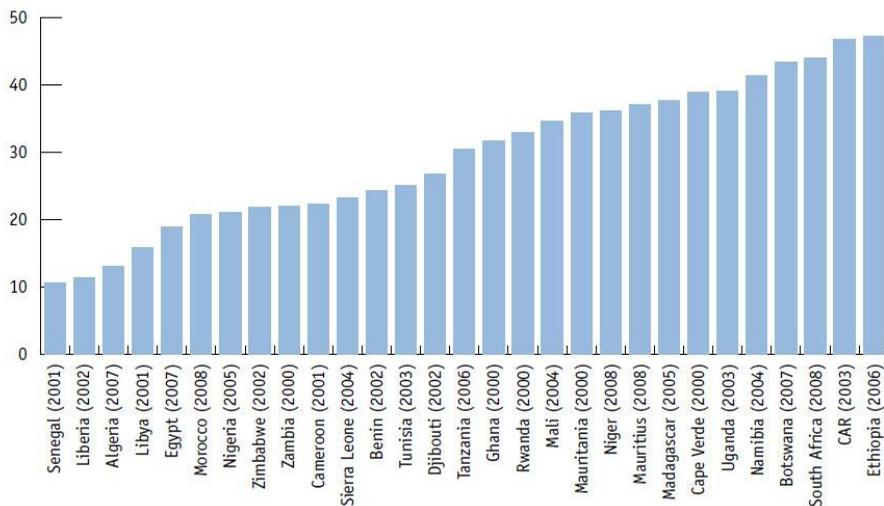
It is pretty difficult to monitor progress with the indicator: share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. This is because the data for the countries

cover different years hence limited basis for comparability. By and large it can be argued that Africa’s overall performance is poor since she has on aggregate less than 50% of wage employment in non-agricultural sector taken by women. See figure 4.

- The closest is Ethiopia with 47.3% in 2006 (progress attributed to focus on SMEs)
- African women are more in the informal sector with no social security benefit (e.g maternity leave, allowance, pension etc)

The non impressive performance of the share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector has far reaching implications for the economic independence of women. This will further compromise the attainment of gender parity in education.

Figure 4: Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector



Source: NEPAD, Africa MDG Progress Report 2011

Indicator 3: Percentage Seats held by Women in National Parliament.

For majority of the Sub-Saharan African countries, the number of seats held by women in national parliament remained low.

The critical issue is coordinating the efforts of all development partners in such a way that duplication of efforts is avoided. Also, there should be adequate information to stakeholders and beneficiaries of the MDG related projects/activities of all development partners. If possible, such fund should be appropriated and the implementation strictly

monitored. The State Legislators should be carried along and their capacity to perform the oversight function developed.

This is a far cry from the 30 per cent affirmative action as enunciated in the policy document. Several reasons account for this, the most stubborn being cultural inertia.

Appreciable progress has not been made on the indicator : percentage seats held by women in national parliament. Using the Beijing +10 conference target of 30%, countries are classified as either surpassed, achieved or not achieved the target. Countries that have achieved or surpassed the target are; Rwanda (188%), Angola (124%), Mozambique (116%), South Africa (110%), Uganda (102%) Burundi (102%) and Tanzania (101). Namibia is close to target with 90%. Others are 83% or less which implies that target is not achieved. Nigeria has 23% and Ghana 26%. See table 1 in the appendix for details.

4.2 Challenges/Bottlenecks to Attainment of MDG 3

From the discussions above the following can be deduced as challenges towards the attainment of MDG 3;

- *Weak policy especially as regards gender budgeting.* Most African countries are yet to mainstream gender in their budget process and this is because MDG 3 is not properly aligned to the national development policies.
- *Over dependence on external aids.* Development assistance is mostly expected from overseas which may not always be guaranteed. Unfortunately, little effort is being made towards domestic resource mobilization that is more sustainable.
- *Poor service delivery /utilization.* This is often due to lack of basic infrastructure (such as electricity, transport and communication) and corruption.
- *Harmful traditional and cultural practices.* Despite modernization and enormous contribution of women to the society, their decision-making power is still limited.

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

Despite the paucity of gender-disaggregated data, this paper has highlighted the importance of gender equality and women empowerment on the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa. The findings reveal that Millennium Development Goal 3 should not be sidelined in the mainstream of national policy agenda to be backed up with financial commitment. Any gap between policy commitment and resource allocation has to be addressed. No matter how valiant Africa struggles, the millennium development goals will not be achieved if gender-budgeting is not used as a tool for ensuring equity in allocation of available resources. To ensure the sustainability of the efforts, the implementation of the budget must be monitored. Also, the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has to be appropriated and monitored to ensure effectiveness. The global financial crisis of recent may negatively affect the financial

commitment of ODA to MDGs hence the need to explore alternative sources of funding as well as be more prudent in resource management. To achieve this, the capacity of the lower tiers of governments to effectively and efficiently utilize MDG related funds at the grass root level should be enhanced. There should be continuous update of the technical knowledge of the parliamentarians and CSOs on gender budgeting.

In Africa, gender budgeting should be introduced into public expenditure and revenues. It should examine government policies and also ensure that resources are allocated to projects in a manner that will benefit both men and women. An important benefit of gender budgeting is that it could improve the valuing of women's works and consequently the wellbeing not just for the women but for the society at large.

Conclusively, the strategies for a successful gender budget initiative in Africa should involve the following:

- conducting a practical gender needs assessment.
- the needs should be prioritized and the cost implications clearly shown.
- seek alternative sources of funding aside the ODA.
- develop credible and robust system of domestic resource mobilization.
- sound implementation procedures to ensure effective service delivery.
- minimization of wastage and corruption.

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Table 1: Percentage of Seats held by women in National Parliament

Close to Target Rank	Close to Target	Country	1990	2009	Absolute Rank	Absolute Progress
1	188%	Rwanda	17.10	56.30	1	39.20
2	124%	Angola	14.50	37.30	7	22.80
3	116%	Mozambique	15.70	34.80	11	19.10