What is the Strategy?

Nigeria’s Countdown Strategy outlines the country’s roadmap for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. It identifies the mechanisms and interventions that have been most effective to date, and emphasises the need for stronger partnerships with key stakeholders. It also underlines the constitutional roles and responsibilities of state and local governments in achieving the MDGs.

In addition, the Strategy provides a guide for the institutional improvements, policy reforms and human resources required for progress on the MDGs, while charting the trajectory of MDG financing and investment to 2015. Finally, it spells out focused strategies for scaling up the implementation of interventions that will accelerate progress on the eight MDGs.

Links with other key strategies

To ensure effective implementation, the Countdown Strategy is closely linked with Nigeria’s 7-Point Agenda for the country’s development and Nigeria’s vision for becoming one of the World’s top 20 economies by 2020 (Vision 20:2020).

The Strategy’s review of the government’s investment plans, priorities and choices highlights the integration of the MDGs into the first national implementation plan of Nigeria’s Vision 20:2020. It also stresses the need to nurture a combination of public and private investments to ensure faster progress towards achieving the MDGs by 2015.

Re-examining investment

Using a recent study of MDGs investments across the three tiers of government, the Countdown Strategy proposes a new financing strategy that emphasises the need for the three tiers of Nigeria’s government, the three arms of government and other stakeholders, to make solid commitments over the next five years through a national partnership and fiscal compact for the MDGs.

To help with this, the Strategy provides a roadmap of actions and responsibilities, as well as a timeline. It focuses particularly on improving coordination, and monitoring & evaluation (M&E).

This roadmap provides guidance to the new administration expected in 2011, but also makes room for flexibility for any refinements or modifications that may be introduced.

Scaling-up opportunities

The opportunities to scale-up investments and policies provided by debt relief have contributed immensely to the modest progress recorded so far. Many promising and best practice interventions and initiatives have been adopted by the Nigerian government in order to achieve the MDGs.

The OPEN Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (OPEN M&E) makes use of independent civil society. And, the Midwives Service Scheme has deployed thousands of midwives to rural areas. Similarly, the Federal Teachers’ Scheme aims to recruit an additional 80,000 teachers every two years. Social protection has also been expanded, including Conditional Cash Transfers to vulnerable households. The MDGs Conditional Grants Scheme has scaled up investments by state and local governments by over US$800 million (N120 billion).

In addition, the Universal Basic Education fund has helped to increase enrolment rates, while the Community Health Insurance Scheme provides free basic healthcare to pregnant mothers and children. The Rollback Malaria partnership with the
"The Strategy provides a roadmap of actions and responsibilities, as well as a timeline"

Global Fund aims, by the end of 2010, to provide insecticide-treated nets to every Nigerian household. Partnerships with traditional rulers and international partners have also reduced cases of polio by 98 per cent in the past twelve months.

Strategies for achieving the MDGs

Four strategic imperatives are critical to accelerating Nigeria’s achievement of the MDGs by 2015:

(i) improving the governance and accountability environment
(ii) strengthening coordination and cooperation among the three tiers and arms of government
(iii) mobilising and committing all communities and key stakeholders to the MDGs
(iv) ensuring effective mainstreaming of MDGs into overall national and sub-national development visions and plans.

Identifying the funding gap

A recent analysis of public expenditure allocations on the MDGs by federal and state governments and local government authorities (LGAs) has suggested that the annual funding gap may be as high as US$17.7 billion. Therefore, a major challenge remains in scaling-up funding for the MDGs at the local level. The MDGs Needs Assessment and Financing Strategy for Nigeria had projected that local governments would contribute some 17.5 per cent of the total public sector funding of MDGs in the period 2009-2010. Clearly, therefore, there is a need for local government to continue to prioritise spending on the MDGs from 2010 onwards.

Closing the funding gap

Under these circumstances, the Countdown Strategy proposes to:

(i) **Adopt public–private partnerships as a strategy for bridging the funding gap** and leverage all on-going contributions of the private sector towards the attainment of the MDGs

(ii) **Harness new initiatives** such as the National Solidarity Fund mechanism which is designed to generate funds from the federal, state and local governments, communities, private sector, development partners, and others

(iii) **Ensure bottom-heavy future MDG spending** to reflect the objectives and local nature of the MDGs, with approximately 65.5 per cent of total investment at the sub-national level.