The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provided a set of international goals and targets to drive human development progress between 2000 and 2015. Nigeria was an international leader on the MDGs, encouraging implementation and introducing new policies. Nevertheless, progress was mixed and many goals and targets remain unmet.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), signed by the President of Nigeria in September 2015, provide a more ambitious international framework for driving progress between 2016 and 2030. The jump from the MDGs to the SDGs is not simply a question of extending the timeline. New goals have been added, entirely new sectors have been introduced, and the SDGs now also specify the means by which goals should be achieved, not just outcome goals. An emphasis on rights, justice, social inclusion, sustainability, access to technology and reducing inequality will place new demands on policy at all stages – in planning, implementation and monitoring.

Achieving the SDGs will depend on completing the unfinished business of the MDGs, broadening the focus of the MDGs to new activities and sectors, and deepening these successes to ensure that the achievement of the SDGs is truly universal and no one is left behind (as described, for example, in Goal 1 to eradicate poverty). Luckily, Nigeria does not need to start from scratch. The experience of the MDGs, if properly leveraged, should provide the foundation for achieving the SDGs. Existing institutions, policies and knowledge provide a tried-and-tested platform for coordinating progress.

This transition strategy identifies lessons from the experience of the MDGs and details the new demands of the SDGs. It then suggests which arrangements from the MDGs should be perpetuated and what additional strategies should be introduced in seven thematic areas. Throughout, it balances the risk of too radical a change that might lose the institutional knowledge and learning over the past decade against the risk of business-as-usual and not adapting to the new demands of the SDGs.

The strategy proposes the following priority options for transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs:
1. **Institutional Framework** – Due to its success in coordinating the MDGs, there is an urgent need to **Reconstitute a Presidential Committee on the SDGs**. Existing institutions can be rapidly adapted to the broader scope of the SDGs by adopting **Rolling Committee Membership**. While the OSSAP-MDGs has been effective at driving implementation progress, the broader scope of the SDGs will require a **Strengthened relationship between OSSAP and the National Planning Commission**.

To mobilize private sector activities, there is a need for closer **Coordination with the National Economic Council**. To achieve the millions of local actions to improve healthcare, education, the economy and the environment under the SDGs, there is a need to **Make permanent intergovernmental collaboration and Reposition Local Government as the SDGs delivery tier of government**. Finally, there is an urgent need for a new **Comprehensive institutional platform for monitoring and evaluation**.

2. **Policy and Legal Framework** – Existing policy frameworks are sector-specific so to clarify responsibilities, institutionalize fiscal transfers and formalize citizens’ rights, there is a need for a **Sustainable Development Goals Act**. This may involve **Legislating expenditure floors**, fiscal incentives and new policies. To coordinate investments and motivate state and local governments, it will be crucial to **Sharpen the MDGs Conditional Grants Scheme**, for example to reward states that make rapid progress on the SDGs, and to introduce an **Overarching Conditional Grants Platform** to align UBE, Healthcare, Ecological and CGS funds. This should support the **Cascading of policy frameworks to the local level**. **Legislative oversight can be strengthened by giving New momentum to the National Assembly Committees**.

3. **Partnerships** – MDGs success stories rested on effective partnerships, but many have begun to fray and will need reinvigorating. Particularly, collaboration between MDAs must be strengthened through an **Inter-agency Coordination Compact**, and donors must work towards the government’s strategy through a **Partners Coordination Framework**. To address the new economic goals, **Partnership with the organized private sector is required**. Participatory processes with citizens should also be created through **Community Consultative Partnerships and Citizens’ Public Service Feedback Mechanisms**.

4. **Data, Monitoring and Reporting** – MDGs innovations such as the OPEN M&E and the Nigeria MDGs Information System indicate how new sources of data and accountability can transform performance. Therefore, there is a need to **Realign the Nigerian Statistical System around the SDGs** and to **Create an SDGs-wide monitoring and evaluation platform** that evaluates public service performance rather than just project execution. More reliable data can be generated by **Prioritising administrative data** such as birth records and the Education Management Information System. **Research resources** should be leveraged from local universities and international organizations. Crucially, policymakers should be **Encouraged to utilise data** for planning and monitoring, for example by **making all data open access**.

5. **Human Resources** – The increased scope of the SDGs will demand new professional and technical skills in many organizations. Achieving this will require an **Institutional review and skills capacity assessment** to identify the skills gap, in partnership with the Nigeria Governors’ Forum and the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria. This should be followed by targeted **Training and capacity building**. In some cases, the **Provision of equipment and a conducive working environment** will be essential. Where technical capacity is particularly limited in the short-term, **Innovative funding for technical support** will be important.
To action these transition strategies, the most crucial window of opportunity will be the next six months from November 2015, as new Ministers assume office, learn about their sectors, and new policy frameworks are developed. This is when the opportunities can be grasped and the risks minimized. By implementing these transition strategies based on learning from the MDGs, Nigeria will be positioned to build on and strengthen existing foundations for the 2016-2020 period, scale-up rapidly from 2021-2025 and ensure that we “Leave no Nigerian behind” by 2026-30.

6. **Communications Framework** – Despite successful MDGs branding, to raise awareness, change behaviour and demonstrate progress on the SDGs, the Communications/press unit must be strengthened with new skills and equipment. This will enable new strategic communications blueprints to coordinate MDAs’ messages; SDGs Branding; and Effective use of ICT communications. Clear communication will also activate Strengthened relations with state and local governments and other stakeholders; enable Grassroots advocacy with traditional leaders; and create National and International solidarity to support peer-learning across countries. Communication is a two-way process, so listening to citizens through Civic Engagement Forums and a Citizens’ Feedback Mechanism is also essential.

7. **Financing Framework** – Funds were leveraged from the 2005 debt-relief gains to support the MDGs, but this is a small proportion of the funds needed to meet the SDGs. Hence, there is a need to Increase private sector financing, particularly for the economic investments under the SDGs, Increase internally-generated revenue as a tool for increased accountability, and ultimately to Shift donor support towards direct budget support. To ensure effective budgeting for the SDGs, a Strengthened partnership with the National Assembly Appropriations Committee will be needed to prioritise SDGs funding, and the Budget process will need to be radically improved to ensure timely release of funding for sustainable activities. Finally, the disconnect between capital and recurrent budgets will need to be addressed by Reorienting the budget around public service delivery.

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