

# Review of the Institutional Structures and Processes Related to the MDGs in the Parliament of Nigeria



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*Review undertaken by Dyfan Jones on  
behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary  
Union*

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# 1. Introduction

Following the 2000 Millennium Summit, Nigeria was among the 192 nation states who signed the Millennium Declaration outlining eight goals for global development by 2015. In Nigeria, these Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) along with national plans such as Vision 20:2020 became central to the country's development agenda. When Nigeria gained debt relief from the Paris Club in 2005, significant funds that would have been used to service debt repayments were reallocated directly to projects and programmes related to attaining the MDGs, boosting the country's efforts to achieve the Goals.

In 2010, the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Millennium Campaign (UN MC) published an 'Analytical Study of Parliamentary Mechanism for MDGs'. This study examined the internal mechanisms that seven Parliaments, including Nigeria, had introduced to engage with the MDGs. The 2010 study outlined that the Nigerian National Assembly had led on the issue of the MDGs by creating an MDG Standing Committee in the House of Representatives and an Ad Hoc Committee on the MDGs in the Senate. This research paper builds on the initial research undertaken by the study of 2010 and outlines in greater detail the way in which the Nigerian National Assembly has engaged with the MDGs over recent years and the success of the mechanisms that have been established within the legislature.

This paper examines four main subject areas relating to the MDGs in Nigeria and the role of the legislature.

Firstly, this study examines the way in which the Nigerian state, led by the Government, has developed national structures, programmes and projects aimed at achieving the MDGs. In introducing internal mechanisms to engage with the MDGs, the actions and activities of the Nigerian National Assembly have been closely linked to national developments and the need to provide effective oversight of the Government's MDG related work and expenditure.

Secondly, the paper outlines in detail the internal mechanisms used by the National Assembly to engage with the MDGs. As a bicameral legislature, the Senate and the House of Representatives have adopted separate and specific internal parliamentary mechanisms and processes to engage with the MDGs.

Thirdly, the paper sets out the specific activities undertaken by the Parliament in engaging with the MDGs. The internal mechanisms and structures created by the Parliament have allowed the Parliament to undertake a range of activities to engage with the MDGs, in particular through the work of the respective Parliamentary Committees, during the budget cycle and in terms of providing effective oversight of the implementation of MDG projects.

Finally, the paper concludes by summarising some of the challenges faced by the Nigerian National Assembly in effectively engaging with the MDGs and in coordinating the legislature's activities in this field. Five recommendations are made on options to strengthen and improve the National Assembly's engagements with the MDGs. In recent years, the internal mechanisms used by the National Assembly of Nigeria to engage with the MDGs have evolved and in 2012 new options for improved working were being considered by both Houses to increase engagement with the MDGs. It is within this context that the recommendations are made.

## 2. The MDGs in Nigeria

### National Structures

In Nigeria, between 2000 and 2005 specific programmes and projects aimed towards attaining the goals were limited. In 2005, Nigeria obtained debt relief from the Paris Club on the condition that it would channel the savings made from the debt relief directly into achieving the MDGs. In order to facilitate this, the Nigerian Government created a cabinet level office to coordinate specific expenditure on the MDGs.

The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Millennium Development Goals (OSSAP-MDGs) has received a budget of approximately US\$1 billion per annum since its creation in 2006. OSSAP-MDGs is responsible for identifying key strategic interventions at national, state and local levels to achieve the MDGs. In addition, the OSSAP-MDGs is responsible for designing systems to track and monitor expenditure at all levels relating to the MDGs.<sup>1</sup>

### MDG Progress in Nigeria

The 2010 Nigeria MDG report<sup>2</sup> produced by the Government outlined the progress made in Nigeria with regards to the MDGs and the challenges facing the country in achieving each of the eight goals. The report noted that gains could be seen in many of the MDGs, most notably:

- Almost 9 out of 10 children were enrolled in school in Nigeria;
- Youth literacy had increased from 64% in 2000 to 80% in 2008;
- The infant mortality rate fell from 100 per 1000 live births to 75 per 1000 live births between 2003 and 2008;
- Maternal mortality fell by 32% between 2003 and 2008;
- Incidence of polio, HIV and malaria were all declining.

However, the report also noted that there were still many challenges in achieving the MDGs, for example:

- Economic growth had not generated enough jobs and Nigeria was unlikely to meet Goal 1 of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger;
- Significant progress was still needed in promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls as there were still fewer girls than boys enrolled in school and few women held political office;
- 40% of the population did not have access to safe drinking water and almost half the population did not have access to safe sanitation.

The 2010 MDG report concluded that "*No goal was certain to be reached*" but that progress was being made towards achieving the MDGs.

### National expenditure on the MDGs

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the mandate of OSSAP-MDGs can be found on their website, [www.mdgs.gov.ng](http://www.mdgs.gov.ng) or in the Nigerian Government Publication, 'Tracking the Performance of the Debt Relief Gains – Monitoring and Evaluation report 2009'

<sup>2</sup> The full report can be found at <http://www.ng.undp.org/mdgs/Final-MDG-report-2010.pdf>

As the MDGs are broad and cross cutting, direct and indirect expenditure on the MDGs can be difficult to quantify. Whilst the annual approximately US\$1 billion OSSAP-MDGS budget is specifically for MDGs, this is not the total amount of MDG expenditure in Nigeria by the Government. Much of the expenditure by Ministries and State and Local Governments can also be deemed to be directly or indirectly related to the MDGs as can much of the Overseas Development Aid (ODA) provided to Nigeria<sup>3</sup>.

In 2011, the OSSAP-MDGS budget of approximately US\$1 billion represented around 3% of the total Government budget<sup>4</sup>. The Parliament approved a recurrent and capital budget for the Ministry of Health of approx US\$1.7 billion, for the Ministry of Education approx US\$2.37 billion and for the Ministry of Agriculture approx US\$436 million. Therefore, whilst it is clear that the OSSAP-MDGS budget of approx US\$1 billion per annum is expended on the MDGs, one of the challenges faced by the National Assembly is quantifying how much of the budgets of other National Ministries and Departments, as well as State and Local Governments, are also expended on the MDGs either directly or indirectly.

Since 2006, OSSAP-MDGS has distributed its annual budget of around US\$1 billion through three main programmes:

1. Ministries, Departments and Agencies - Allocations have been made to Ministries, Departments and Agencies responsible for planning, designing and implementing MDG related projects.
2. Conditional Grant Schemes - These schemes are designed by the Federal Government in order to promote the participation of state and local governments in attaining the MDGs. In order for States and Local Governments to access the CGS they must provide 50% matched funding towards MDG related projects in their geographical areas.
3. Quick Wins – In 2008, in order to fast track local MDG projects, the Federal Government introduced special intervention projects. Senators and Members of the House of Representatives were to lead in identifying suitable projects in their constituencies. The 'Quick Wins' initiative aimed to accelerate implementation of infrastructure development especially in the sectors of health, education and sanitation.

The Quick Wins initiative is of particular importance to the National Assembly. In 2009, funding totalling N37.2 billion (33% of the OSSAP-MDGS annual budget) was distributed through the Quick Wins initiative<sup>5</sup>. With the Quick Wins initiative, every Senator and Member of the House of Representatives is responsible for identifying projects in their constituencies eligible for funding through this initiative. In this sense, the initiative can be seen as an extension of the notion of Constituency Development Funds that are common in many countries, especially in Africa. Senators and Members of the House of Representatives are asked to identify projects in their constituencies that fit into pre-determined broad categories or 'lots'. The categories for Quick Wins projects has,

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<sup>3</sup> In 2011, Nigeria received just over US\$2 billion in ODA. More information on ODA to Nigeria can be found at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ALLD.CD>

<sup>4</sup> Details of the Government budget for 2011 can be found at [www.nassnig.org/nass/acts](http://www.nassnig.org/nass/acts). For the purpose of this paper an approximate exchange rate of USD1=NIN150 was used.

<sup>5</sup> More information on the work of OSSAP-MDGS can be found on their website, [www.mdgs.gov.ng](http://www.mdgs.gov.ng) or in the Nigerian Government Publication, 'Tracking the Performance of the Debt Relief Gains – Monitoring and Evaluation report 2009'

amongst others, included construction of classrooms, supply of medical equipment and medicines, supply of classroom equipment and construction of boreholes.

It should be emphasised that, unlike constituency development funds in many countries, no funds are given directly to elected Members for the implementation of these Quick Wins projects. Senators and Members of the House of Representatives are responsible for identifying projects and providing this information to OSSAP-MDGs and the relevant Ministry. Responsibility for implementation lies with the relevant Ministries that are responsible for procurement and contracts relating to all Quick Wins projects. Elected Members are only responsible for providing oversight of progress towards implementation by utilising the usual parliamentary channels, for example the MDG Committees or the relevant Standing Committees.

### 3. Structures for Parliamentary engagement with the MDGs in Nigeria

#### The National Assembly

The Nigerian National Assembly is a bicameral legislature largely based on the US Congress model. The Upper House is the Senate with 109 Members elected every 4 years from 3 single member

**Nigerian National Assembly**

- Bicameral legislature
- Upper House – Senate of 109 Members
- Lower House – House of Representatives of 360 Members
- Bills can originate in either House and must be approved by both Houses
- Annual Appropriation Bill must be approved by both Houses

constituencies in each of the 36 States and 1 from the Federal Capital Territory. The Lower House is the House of Representatives which has 360 Members elected directly every 4 years from single member electoral constituencies based on population. Both Houses have similar powers relating to the legislative and budget processes. Bills can originate in either House and must be approved by both Houses before passing to the President for assent and becoming law. The budget is presented by the Executive to both Houses for discussion and approval with any differences between the two Houses being resolved through a Conference between representatives from both Houses.

Both Houses operate in a similar manner with much of the detailed legislative work being undertaken by Committees. In 2012, the Senate had 56 Committees of which one was the Standing Committee on the Millennium Development Goals. The House of Representatives had 91 Committees of which one was the Standing Committee on the Millennium Development Goals. Due to the high number of Committees, it is the norm that Members serve on a number of different Committees.

#### MDG Committees

Chamber	Committee	Established	Members
House of Representatives	Standing Committee on MDGs	2007	Between 15-32 Currently 27
	Senate	Ad Hoc Committee on MDGs	2007-2010
	Standing Committee on MDGs	2011	12

As the 2010 IPU Analytical Study highlighted, both the House of Representatives and the Senate have created MDG Committees, although their establishment, status, structures and focus have differed slightly.

#### ***Mandates***

The House Committee on the MDGs was created in 2007. Its initial mandate was the agreement and harmonisation of MDG budgets and oversight of the implementation of MDG projects. The mandate was later broadened to cover the implementation of the MDGs and oversight of the MDG activities

of the Agencies responsible for implementation.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the broadening of the formal mandate of the Committee, the work of the MDG Committee has in practice continued to revolve mostly around the issues of agreeing and harmonising the budget allocation to OSSAP-MDGs, providing oversight of the work of OSSAP-MDGs and, to a more limited extent, oversight of programmes and projects implemented by relevant Ministries and State and Local Governments. The continuing focus on these aspects of the mandate rather than an expansion of activities to reflect the new broadened mandate has largely been due to Committee capacity constraints in terms of time and the fact that most Members of the MDG Committee also sit on numerous other Committees.

In 2007, an Ad Hoc Senate Committee on the MDGs was created. The decision to create this Ad Hoc Committee was a direct response to the creation by the Government of the OSSAP-MDGs and the subsequent decision of the House of Representatives to create a House Committee on the MDGs. While the mandate of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee was broad as the MDGs cut across numerous Ministries and subject areas, the Committee focussed on oversight of OSSAP-MDGs as well as coordinating the proposals of Senators for Quick Wins projects. The decision in 2011 to change the status of the Ad Hoc Committee to that of a Standing Committee has not directly changed the work or mandate of the Committee although it has led to increased resources being made available to the Committee.

### ***Committee Membership***

Membership of the House Committee on the MDGs has ranged from 15 to 32 Members. The membership of all Committees is decided by the House of Representatives Committee of Selection taking into account only geographical and political considerations and without explicit consideration for the link between the subject area of the Committees and other Committees. The high turnover of Membership following the 2011 election should also be noted due to its impact on continuity of the work of the Committee.<sup>7</sup>

The Senate Ad Hoc Committee had 13 Members and the current Senate Standing Committee established in 2011 has 12 Members. As with the House of Representatives, the Senate Committee of Selection only considered geo-political zones and party affiliation when choosing the membership of the Committees and no consideration was made for the link between the subject area of the MDG Committee and other Committees.

### ***Committee Resources***

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<sup>6</sup> The initial mandate of the Committee included being responsible for coordinating budget proposals in respect of the MDGs, agreeing and Harmonising MDG budgets, providing oversight of MDG budget implementation, collaborating with State Houses of Assembly to facilitate the MDGs, providing relevant technical support to State Houses of Assembly, creating opportunities to interact with key stakeholders on the MDGs and liaising with national and International Development Partners to monitor the MDGs. This mandate was later amended to (a) *Oversight of the broad implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Agencies responsible for its implementation*; (b) *Consideration and appropriation of Annual budget estimates*.

<sup>7</sup> Only two of the MDG House Committee Members in the Seventh Parliament were also Members of the Committee in the Sixth National Assembly and therefore the Committee started its work programme following the 2011 election by organising a number of induction sessions for Members.



The House Committee has been well resourced in terms of staff<sup>8</sup> and receives similar financial resources to other Standing Committees of the House. The Senate MDG Committee has also been staffed in a similar manner to other Senate Committees both as an Ad Hoc Committee and as a full Standing Committee.<sup>9</sup> Aside from the perception of the importance of the MDGs to the Senate, the only notable difference in the transition to a full Standing Committee relates to the system used to allocate financial resources to the Committee. As an Ad Hoc Committee, direct resource allocations every quarter were not automatically made and requests for funds to undertake activities were made on an ad hoc basis to the Senate. As a Standing Committee, these quarterly allocations are made automatically which should lead to improved work planning.

### **Coordination within and between the Houses**

In both the House of Representatives and the Senate, no formal mechanisms for coordinating Committee activities within each House or between the two Houses exist except for those outlined in the Standing Orders of each House for the passage of Bills during the legislative process.<sup>10</sup> There is no formal 'Committee of Chairs' or similar mechanism for the coordination of Committee oversight activities or work programmes.

Despite the mandate of the MDG Committees in both Houses being relatively broad and the MDGs covering a number of different subject areas and Ministerial responsibilities, the MDG Committees in both Houses play no official coordinating role between other Committees that oversee Ministries that may be closely aligned to MDG related subject fields, such as the Committees for Health, Education, Women Affairs and Social Development, etc.

In practice, coordination between Committees within both Houses and between the two MDG Committees has been through informal channels. In 2012, both MDG Committees were actively considering new mechanisms, such as creating an MDG Parliamentary Caucus to provide improved institutional coordination within Parliament on MDG issues.

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<sup>8</sup> In 2011, the Committee was being served by 12 Parliament staff and 6 National Youth Service Volunteers.

<sup>9</sup> There has been a dedicated Clerk for the Committee and three to four staff assigned to assist the Clerk which in 2012 included a legal officer, secretary, minutes secretary, and a data analyst.

<sup>10</sup> The legislative process within Parliament is outlined in Order XII of the House of Representatives Standing Orders and Chapter XI of the Senate Standing Orders.

## 4. MDG Committees' Activities

Despite the generally broad mandates of both MDG Committees, they have continued to focus their activities on specific areas. The Committees have focussed on providing oversight of OSSAP-MDGs budget allocations, oversight of the implementation of OSSAP-MDGs funded projects, and, specifically for the Senate, coordination of Quick Wins project submissions and follow up on behalf of Senators. No MDG related legislation has come before the Committees for scrutiny and the Committees have not directly inputted into the development or oversight of national development plans.

### MDG Budget Allocations

A central activity of both MDG Committees has been their role in the budget process. After annual budgets are sent to Parliament by the President, the MDG Committees, acting as Sub-Committees of the Appropriations Committees, commence a series of budget defence hearings on the OSSAP-MDGs budget allocation. In addition to calling representatives of OSSAP-MDGs, the MDG Committees also call numerous Ministries that have been allocated funding from the OSSAP-MDGs budget. For example, Ministries such as Health, Education, Women's Affairs, Land and Housing, and Environmental Affairs have been called before the MDG Committees to discuss the budget allocations from the OSSAP-MDGs budget for projects due to be implemented by their Ministries. A number of Parastatals that also receive MDG related allocations such as the Nigeria Education and Planning Association and the Nigeria Research Council have also been called before the Committees.

During the budget defence hearings, the role of the MDG Committees is to analyse the allocations made within the OSSAP-MDGs budget to verify that they are indeed MDG related and that they are likely to positively impact on progress towards achieving the MDGs. Following the budget defence hearings, the MDG Committees write reports proposing amendments to the OSSAP-MDGs budget allocation. These reports are then considered by the Appropriations Committees and the MDG Committees in joint meetings. It should be emphasised that the MDG Committees only analyse the OSSAP-MDGs budget allocated to various Ministries and not all funding within the national budget that could be deemed to be related directly or indirectly to the MDGs. This means that the two MDGs Committees cannot normally check for across-the-board coherence between budgetary allocations. For example, the budget of the Ministry of Health is sent by the Appropriations Committees to the Health Committees for analysis and amendment and the MDG Committees do not formally scrutinise this budget. Similarly, the MDGs Committees are not institutionally in a position to ensure alignment of MDGs appropriations with the national development plan.

Outlined below is the budget process in Nigeria with the role of both of the MDG Committees highlighted:



### Oversight of OSSAP-MDGs funded projects

Both MDG Committees have also focussed on providing oversight of aspects of the work of OSSAP-MDGs and the implementation of projects from the OSSAP-MDGs budget. However, the Senate MDG Committee has mostly focussed on providing oversight of the implementation of Quick Wins projects rather than broader MDG oversight activities.<sup>11</sup>

Especially prior to the 2011 election, the activities of the House Committee on the MDGs indicates that it took a broader view of its oversight mandate in terms of providing oversight of implementation of all OSSAP-MDGs funded activities and not only Quick Wins projects. The Committee has:

- Undertaken a review of the implementation at State level of the Conditional Grant Scheme Projects;<sup>12</sup>
- Undertaken oversight visits to a number of Ministries including the Federal Ministry of Health, the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Education;<sup>13</sup>
- Held public hearings on implementation of Quick Wins projects and the attainment of the MDGs in Nigeria.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In October 2008, the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on the MDGs did undertake an oversight visit to Pampida Millennium Village in Kaduna State, a pilot project that is community led in conjunction with the United Nations Millennium Project. Following the visit, a Committee report containing eight recommendations was tabled in the Senate.

<sup>12</sup> Under the Conditional Grant Scheme, 50% of project funding is provided by OSSAP-MDGs and the other 50% by the state or local government. Following the oversight visits, a Committee report was drafted that concluded that the "implementation of the MDG projects still suffered from problems such as the late release of funds, capacity gaps, and poor job execution to poor monitoring".

<sup>13</sup> The Oversight visits took place 6-10 July 2009.

Since the public hearings in 2010, interaction between the MDG Committees and the public, civil society and the Committees has been limited. During MDG Committee meetings, Government Ministers and Ministry representatives are called before the Committees but there is rarely direct interaction between the Committees and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Despite linkages between the MDGs and national development, both MDG Committees have not been directly involved in providing oversight of national development plans. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have separate National Planning Committees<sup>15</sup> and no formal mechanisms for liaison and interaction between these Committees and the MDG Committees exist.

### **Coordination of Quick Wins projects**

In addition to the budget process, Senate MDG Committee activities have focussed on the Quick Wins projects. The Committee has effectively been utilised as a clearing house for Quick Wins projects proposed by Senators. The Committee considers the project proposals submitted by Senators and raise issues relating to the implementation of Quick Wins projects with OSSAP-MDGs or the Government Ministry responsible for implementation of the Quick Wins project.

### **Liaising with development partners and CSOs**

Both Committees have played key roles in terms of raising awareness of the MDGs within Parliament and by making OSSAP-MDGs and Government Ministries responsible for implementation of MDG-designated projects accountable for their activities. Liaison between the Committee and the Executive has therefore been strong. However, apart from the Public Hearings in 2010 and some oversight visits that included CSOs, liaison between the MDG Committees and CSOs has been limited, and direct and formal liaison between the Committees and International Development Partners has not taken place. In 2012 both Committees were considering activities to strengthen the link between the Committees and CSOs.

### **Capacity building activities**

There have been numerous Committee activities aimed at building the general capacity of Committee Members on the MDGs through information exchanges that have led to an improved understanding of the MDGs and their global context. Numerous study visits have been undertaken and some Committee Members have attended international MDG Conferences.<sup>16</sup> However, activities and events for the MDG Committees to improve their capacity to provide effective budget scrutiny and oversight of MDG policies have been lacking.

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<sup>14</sup> The public hearing was held over a number of days in July 2010 and subsequently the Committee made six key recommendations on the implementation of Quick Wins projects and the attainment of the MDGs in Nigeria. The recommendations included the increase of funding of MDG projects; the need for the Ministry of Finance to release money for MDG projects on time; the need to plough back 'mopped up' funds into MDG projects; the improvement of supervision of contractors by state consultants; the prohibition on OSSAP-MDGs to stop dealing with banks frustrating the implementation of MDG projects; and the quarterly briefing by the Committees on Constituency projects and the MDGs of the House on MDG project implementation.

<sup>15</sup> The House of Representatives has a National Planning and Economic Development Committee and the Senate has a National Planning Committee

<sup>16</sup> The House MDG Committee has undertaken study tours to the USA and India and has attended MDG conferences arranged by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the All Africa Parliamentarians Network on the MDGs. The Senate MDG committee has undertaken study tours to China and Indonesia.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Since the initial creation of the House Committee on the MDGs in 2007 the Nigerian National Assembly has been a pioneer in Parliamentary engagement with the MDGs in Africa. As the 2010 IPU analytical study noted, the creation of MDG Committees in both Houses and the continued focus of the National Assembly on the MDGs can be held up as a model of good practice of parliamentary engagement with the MDGs.

However, despite the strong efforts of the Nigerian National Assembly toward institutionalising the MDGs in Parliament and ensuring sustained engagement with the MDGs, the legislature still faces a number of institutional challenges in improving engagement with the MDGs.

### Coordination between the House and Senate MDG Committees

One of the general challenges faced by bicameral Parliaments is avoiding duplication of work between the two Houses. As the House and Senate MDG Committees have similar mandates and similar legislative, oversight and budget scrutiny powers, duplication of activities in the MDG field has occurred. Both Committees are now turning their attention towards addressing this issue and ensuring that work undertaken by the respective Committees is complementary.

*Recommendation 1 - Consideration should be given to creating institutional mechanisms, such as regular formal joint sessions of the MDG Committees or the creation of a Parliament MDG Caucus, that would provide for improved coordination between the House and Senate MDG Committees in order to avoid duplication of activities.*

### MDG Expenditures

One of the key challenges faced by legislatures in engaging with the MDGs is the breadth of government activities linked to the MDGs and the number of Ministries responsible for MDG related projects and activities. In Nigeria, the creation of OSSAP-MDGs in the Executive branch provided the Government with a clear focal point for the MDGs. This focal point was replicated in both Houses through the creation of MDG Committees. However, the budget of OSSAP-MDGs is only part of the overall funding going towards attaining the MDGs. In addition to the OSSAP-MDGs budget, the budgets of many Ministries are spent on projects and programmes that are directly or indirectly linked to the MDGs. It has been challenging for the MDG Committees to provide oversight of these projects and programmes. The MDG Committees have no mandate to provide oversight of non OSSAP-MDGs funded projects and there are no mechanisms in place to allow them to liaise with the relevant Standing Committees who are responsible for these projects.

*Recommendation 2 – Consideration should be given to developing mechanisms that would allow for improved liaison and coordination between the MDG Committees and other relevant Committees in the House and Senate on the issue of oversight of MDG expenditures in general.*

### MDG Policies, Policy Frameworks and National Planning

Apart from the public hearings in 2009/10, the majority of the activities of both MDG Committees have been related to the funding and implementation of MDG projects within a limited budget envelope rather than assessing the effectiveness of national MDG policies and policy frameworks

under which these projects are implemented and broader national development plans that outline the central focus for national development. However, to date neither of the MDG Committees has been directly involved in oversight of development planning as this issue falls under the remit of other Committees in the House and Senate and no formal mechanisms for liaison with these Committees exist. In addition, there are no formal institutional mechanisms in place within the National Assembly for the MDG Committees to liaise with other Standing Committees, e.g. Health, Education, etc, to review the impact of policies within each MDG related sector.

*Recommendation 3 – Both MDG Committees should consider introducing institutional mechanisms, such as the creation of Sub-Committees charged with MDG policy oversight, to liaise with National Planning Committees and other relevant Standing Committees in order to provide improved oversight of MDG related policies and national policy frameworks. Furthermore, due to the overarching nature of the MDGs, consideration should be given to introducing mechanisms that would allow the MDG Committees to play a stronger coordination role between Committees in order to ensure that overall development policies and plans take into consideration the MDGs and that appropriations should be aligned to such plans.*

#### **Working with Civil Society and State Legislatures and development partners (donors)**

Liaison between the MDG Committees and external stakeholders such as CSOs and International Development Partners has been peripheral to the core work of the MDG Committees. Aside from oversight visits to States in 2008/09 during which CSOs were involved and the public hearing in 2010, the MDG Committees have not engaged with CSOs and other external stakeholders in a sustainable partnership. As the majority of the Committees' activities have been budget related, the Committees' have faced challenges in clearly outlining opportunities for developing a continued and sustained programme of engagement with CSOs. This is equally true of the relationship between the Committees and International Development Partners despite the fact that International Development Partners are funding or implementing projects relating to the MDGs.

A related challenge is that of engaging with State legislatures. The initial Terms of Reference of the House Committee on the MDGs explicitly mentioned the need for the Committee to work with and provide support for state legislatures on the issue of the MDGs. However, activities to date in this area have been minimal.

*Recommendation 4 – The MDG Committees should review their working relationship with external stakeholders and develop Committee workplans that provide additional emphasis on engaging with the public, CSOs and International Development Partners, and should develop a specific strategy for working closely with State Legislatures on MDG related activities. With respect to donors in particular, it would be important for the Committee to institutionalize the practice of participating in government-donor roundtables and the like.*

#### **Committee Capacity**

A challenge faced by both MDG Committees has been the high turnover of Members on MDG Committees following elections and the at times sporadic attendance of Committee Members at Committee Meetings. Low attendance at Committee meetings is a challenge for the National Assembly as a whole and not specific to the MDG Committees. This is largely due to the fact that in

2012 there were 91 Committees in the House of Representatives and 56 in the Senate which means that most Members sit on numerous Committees. The fact that both Committees are relatively well served by staff allows the Committee Secretariat to build up subject expertise that can go some way towards overcoming these challenges although capacity building measures need to be considered by the Committees to ensure that they can effectively fulfil their mandates.

*Recommendation 5 – Both MDG Committees should develop capacity development plans that focus on building the core capacity of Members to provide effective budget scrutiny and oversight of the MDGs, as well as activities to increase the general MDG knowledge and expertise of both Members and Committee staff.*