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Abimbola OWOLABI
Center for Sustainable Development
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
owolabisnr@gmail.com
Tel. 2348038450585

Fostering Equity and Social Inclusion in Cities as a strategic policy for poverty reduction and sustainable development: The Sub-Saharan Africa Region's Experience

Abstract

The positive association of cities development, citizen's participation and economic growth is well known. In fact, cities provide concentrations of population from which industrial labor is drawn; they also contain a greater variety of skills and resources than do rural areas. More importantly, cities promote values favorable to participation, entrepreneurship and industrial growth which also tend to favor a propensity to analyze traditional institutions and innovations (Adelman, Morris 1973) Similarly, the twin concept of equity and social inclusion in governance, especially city governance is conceptualized by the contemporary social scholars in terms of the processes, that is policies and conditions that contribute to observed inequities, and a normative, values-based concept (O'Hara et al., 2006) characterized by a widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for all citizens (Sen 2001:74).

A nexus therefore exists between these two conceptualizations, cities development and social inclusion policy and that is the people that participate in the economic growth of their societies. Therefore, fostering Equity and Social inclusion in cities is an essential economic tool for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Meanwhile, the concept of equity and social inclusion was a product of the formal concept of social exclusion policy which originated and gained prominence in France in the 1970s when large segments of the population were excluded from the labor market which led to homelessness, alarming increases in child poverty, and elevated rates of family breakdown as the outcomes (Shields et al., 2006).

This differentiation of social inclusion in terms of processes and social exclusion in terms of outcomes is consistent with the emerging consensus in recent literature that the analysis of social exclusion should include not only the outcomes but the processes that produce inequities (Patyckuk & Hyman, 2009). Thus, it is important to consider "how policies/actions address the complex and dynamic relational processes that generate social exclusion and ultimately impact on individual and general population well-being" (Popay et al., 2006).

It should be noted however, that social exclusion policy in the past was majorly based on the notion of economic participation. But in the new globalization era, social inclusion frameworks have been expanded to adopt eight elements or dimensions: cultural, economic, functional, participatory, physical, political, relational and structural with elements of exclusion

encompassing constructs such as disadvantage, poverty, disability, marginalization, barriers, denial of human rights, isolation and discrimination (Shookner 2000), (Health Canada 2002)

The objective of this paper is to examine the validity of the equity and inclusion policy of social inclusion in cities governance as an economic tool for poverty reduction and sustainable development in sub-Africa region vis-a-vis her peculiar characteristics as a region comprising of developing nations. Whether to be or not to be and addressing the issues and challenges confronting the region citizen's participation in cities governance with a view to finding solutions to them to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Keywords: Equity and Social Inclusion, Cities development, Poverty Reduction, Sustainable Development, Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Social Inclusion is considered by many to be a normative, values-based concept identifying the type of society we want to live in and the changes needed to build that society (O'Hara et al., 2006).

Most often, people perceived cities primarily as capital cities and administrative headquarters of states or nations in which the seat of power resides or metropolitan cities where economic activities such as commerce, industry, production, banking and finance, education, organized transportation, communication, political activities and other businesses are carried out. In other words, cities are seen as an economic entity and engine of growth and development in which trading activities are carried out that generate employment opportunities for the people as well as places of residence for those engaged in those activities. This is the major belief of the people when we talk of modern cities. Examples of this in the Sub-Saharan Africa region include the city of Lagos in Nigeria, Accra in Ghana, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Kampala in Uganda, Johannesburg in South Africa.

Sometimes, a few contemporary cities are also sites of social, cultural and religious cities such as Cairo in Egypt for culture, Sokoto in Nigeria for religion and tourist attracting city like Pretoria in South Africa. However, no matter the way we look at it, cities are homes to the world's almost seven billion people and contribute to about three quarter global economic output.

City governance is based on how we can increase urban productivity and reduce urban poverty and inequality. It also includes the actions needed for financing the key institutions and agent to achieve sustainable development. Recognizing this, in September 2015, member nations of the United Nations adopted a historic decision goal on Sustainable Cities to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030, leaving no person, place and ecosystem behind especially in consideration of the developing nations like the sub-Saharan Africa.

In view of this new globalization era, social inclusion frameworks have been expanded to adopt eight elements or dimensions: cultural, economic, functional, participatory, physical, political, relational and structural.

The objective of this paper as earlier mentioned is to examine the validity of social inclusion concept in cities governance as an economic tool for poverty reduction and sustainable development in sub-Africa region; explores how cities are unique with their own set of

economic, political, historical and cultural systems and discusses the urgency to achieve the SDGs Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable. It goes further to highlights the challenges confronting the region citizen's participation in cities governance with a view to finding solutions to them to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Conceptual Framework:

Concept of Social Inclusion

Sen (2001:74) defines an inclusive society as one that is “characterized by a widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for all citizens”. The removal of barriers is critical for full participation.

Social inclusion may also be conceptualized in terms of the processes (i.e., policies and conditions) that contribute to observed inequities. This differentiation of social inclusion in terms of processes and social exclusion in terms of outcomes is consistent with the emerging consensus in recent literature that the analysis of social exclusion should include not only the outcomes but the processes that produce inequities (Galabuzi, 2008; Patychuk & Hyman, 2009; Saloojee, 2001). Thus, it is important, for example, in a country perspective, to consider “how policies/actions address the complex and dynamic relational processes that generate social exclusion and ultimately impact on individual and population health and well-being” (Popay et al., 2006 Building on the work of Shookner (2000).

Health Canada (2002) proposed that social inclusion frameworks adopt eight elements or dimensions: cultural, economic, functional, participatory, physical, political, relational and structural with elements of exclusion encompassing constructs such as disadvantage, poverty, disability, marginalization, barriers, denial of human rights, isolation and discrimination. Non-government organizations such as the Laidlaw Foundation and the Roeher Institute had also carried out research in five of these social inclusion elements. In the end there is a general recognition that the responsibility for social inclusion rests with public and private institutions and individuals.

Concept of City Governance

City governance is conceptualized by the contemporary social scholars in terms of the processes, that is policies and conditions that contribute to observed inequities, and a normative, values-based concept (O'Hara et al., 2006) characterized by a widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals and by the achievement of a basic level of well-being for all citizens (Sen 2001:74).

Concept of Sustainable Development

According to Jeffrey D. Sachs, a world-renowned professor of economics, leader in sustainable development, senior UN advisor, “the concept of sustainable development is an economic development that is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable”. This is in line with Daily's conceptualization of sustainable development as a process or condition that can be maintained indefinitely without progressive diminution of; valued qualities inside or outside the system. It is in this wise that the United Nations-World Commission on Environment and

Development (WCED's) definition of sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' is very germane to the understanding of the issue of sustainable development.

Sustainable development can therefore be defined as a deliberate and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a State in such conditions that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life and ensuring the greatest good for the greatest numbers are available now without this constituting a denial of the capacity of being able to enjoy the same benefits to generations yet unborn in the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, there is a nexus and a common factor among these enumerated concepts which can be seen from the fact that they are all targeted at the people, that is, improving the welfare and quality of life of the people.

The validity of social inclusion concept in cities governance in Sub-Saharan Africa

Cities are unique with their own set of economic, political, historical and cultural systems. The subject of sustainable development and its effects on the concept of social inclusion and equity is clearly characterized by little prior information on studying the interrelations among the expanded social inclusion framework elements of especially economic, socio-cultural and political indicator Oxoby (2009).

Economic Indicators-is about providing access to basic services, promoting resource and energy efficiency for sustainable infrastructure and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. It involves different stakeholders, including business, consumers, policy makers, researchers, scientists, retailers, market women, media, and development cooperation agencies, among others Oxoby (2009)..

Its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty Oxoby (2009)..

It aims at "doing more and better with less, "increasing net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole lifecycle, while increasing quality of life. It also requires a systemic approach and cooperation among actors operating in the supply chain, from producer to final consumer. It involves engaging consumers through awareness-raising and education on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, providing consumers with adequate information through standards and labels and engaging in sustainable public procurement, among others. All these are inadequately implemented in the nations that make up the Sub-Saharan Africa region Oxoby (2009)..

Socio-cultural Indicators—involve taking cognizance of the extent of urbanization, importance of the indigenous middle class, extent of social mobility, extent of literacy, extent of mass communication, degree of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, degree of social tension, degree of modernization of outlook, predominant type of religion and level of socioeconomic development, all aims at improving the living standard of the people. Most sub-Saharan African countries recently experience unprecedented rise in rural-urban migration with high level of social mobility. Besides, there is a very high level of illiteracy which is responsible for the rise in crime

rate that leads to insecurity and insurgency with its attendant socio-economic crisis all over the region and consequently the challenge of sustainable development Oxoby (2009)..

Political Indicators—This includes degree of national integration and sense of national unity, degree of centralization of political power, extent of political participation, degree of freedom of political opposition and the press, degree of competitiveness of political parties, predominant basis of the political party system, strength of the labor movement, political strength of the traditional elite, political strength of the military, political and social influence of religious organization, degree of administrative efficiency, extent of leadership commitment to economic development, extent of direct government economic activity, length of colonial experience, type of colonial experience, recency of self-government and extent of political stability. In most of the sub-Saharan Africa countries, there is no sense of national unity as there is less devolution of power with little or no political freedom for the political opposition and the press. There is high level of political upheaval all over the region as a result of poor leadership and lack of commitment to economic development of the various countries by their leaders Oxoby (2009)..

Invariably, it could be concluded that the level of social inclusion in the scheme of governance in Sub-Saharan African nations is abysmally low and non-existing in some cases which make the innocent majority poor in the cities vulnerable to extreme poverty, hunger and poor standard of living Oxoby (2009).

SDGs Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable with the following targets SDGs (2015):

11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning

11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

Challenges confronting cities governance in achieving SDGS goals in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sustainable cities build on the extraordinary potential of urban areas to enable change due to concentration of economic activity, innovation and job creation; the potential for social transformation, high levels of concentration of culture, people, infrastructure and buildings and the ability to redefine the relationship between rural and urban, and thereby enable rural prosperity Oxoby (2009).

However, cities all over the world face major challenges of which Sub-Saharan Africa region has its own peculiarities which ranges from poverty, unemployment, poor housing and lack of basic services for over 400 million slum dwellers Oxoby (2009). Other challenges are constraints on productivity due to lack of basic infrastructure, finance and a concentration risk due to natural disasters and climate change. Above all, lack of conducive environments such as insecurity and insurgency, rule of law and inadequate legal system, all have combined to inhibit interest and investment in them as sites of opportunity and change by the investors Oxoby (2009)

Solutions to achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa

Recognizing the enormity of the challenges facing the developing nations especially the sub-Saharan Africa countries, the member-countries of the United Nations in September 2015 adopted a historic stand-alone goal on Sustainable Cities “to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” by 2030, leaving no person, place and ecosystem behind SDGs (2015).

This is known as the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs which explores what Sustainable cities are all about and examines how urban sustainability can be delivered; how cities function as systems of systems; how we can increase urban productivity and reduce urban poverty and inequality, enable urban inclusion and safety; provide universal basic services, housing and infrastructure; protect the urban environment, reduce risk and vulnerability. It further explores what actions needed to be taken to improve urban governance and financing for sustainable development and key institutions and agents that can make this possible SDGs (2015)

Some of the actions to be taken according to the SDGs goals 2030 include enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement, planning and management in all countries of the region. For instance, there should be a deliberate support to positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning SDGs (2015)

In the area of housing, the various governments in the region should ensure between now and 2030 access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums. It is interesting to note that this policy is ongoing in some countries already such as the city of Lagos in Nigeria, Accra city in Ghana etc. where slums are being upgraded in the interest of all the inhabitants SDGs (2015)

In transportation, between now and 2030 the governments should provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transportation systems for all, improving road safety,

notably by expanding public transport with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women and children, persons with disabilities and older persons SDGs (2015)

For cultural participation, efforts should be strengthened to protect and safeguard the region's cultural and natural heritage SDGs (2015)

Above all, the various governments of the region should substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters and develop an holistic disaster risk management at all levels SDGs (2015)

It should be noted that at the member-countries of the United Nations in September 2015 the goal of Sustainable Cities was adopted for achievement by 2030, the challenge of financial capability was recognized for nations like the sub-Saharan African countries, hence there was a deliberate policy agenda by the World and Global Financial Institutions that there should be support for the least developed countries for financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing their local materials if the goal of sustainable cities policies would be achieved by 2030. All these are inclusive in the Sustainable Goal 11 of the 2015 September adopted by the United Nations for achievement by 2030 SDGs (2015)

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