Indigenous Traditional Approaches to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

According to the Brundtland Commission, Sustainable Development is defined as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Authors often argue that sustainability is not to be defined but to be declared since it is an ethical guiding principle. Besides, other authors argue that the depth of sustainable development definitions has allowed the concept to succeed politically were restricted and plain concepts such as limits to growth failed. In simpler terms, sustainable development basically means preservation. It could relate to economic preservation which could lead to economic growth and development or environmental preservation, in which various modalities are formulated to create protection for the planet and it could also mean the preservation of wildlife and agricultural products and farmland.

This study focuses on how indigenous approaches can be used in achieving the sustainable development goals. In the context of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Millennium Development Goals lasted fifteen years and failed to achieve most of its objectives in Nigeria; poverty, economic inequality, gender inequality, lack of quality education, etc. persists. Nigeria still experiences extreme hunger and poverty due to unemployment, unfavourable government policies, and under-development. Malaria persists; education is at its all-time low with 69% failure in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) (2014) and 83% failure rate in 2018. Also, environmental sustainability has not been achieved due to the existence of bush burning, poaching and oil spillage which disrupts the aquatic and terrestrial eco-system making both land and fish farming difficult and pollution imminent.

This study revolved on indigenous approaches through synergising the local traditional and religious institutions with the UN sustainable development goals thereby tackling needs on a community by community basis. In the state of Osun in Nigeria, a survey was carried out and out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being, Goal 4 - Quality Education, and Goal 6 – Water and Sanitation was of paramount importance to the populace. With the implementation of the study by the Osun Sustainable Development Goals Agency through the construction, rehabilitation of middle and elementary schools and furnishing them with learning implements as well as the construction and rehabilitation of primary health care facilities with functional equipment's and availability of drugs with the provision of borehole installations towards the provision of clean water. With this, school enrolment increased, and infant mortality rate decreased thereby leading to a healthy and educated population which aids development.

This study was concluded by showcasing a positive correlation using indigenous approaches such as; engaging the traditional and religious institutions through the accommodation of their cultural values and heritage, using that as a link in advocating the sustainable development goals which in turn had a positive effect on economic growth and development.

Overall, this study will further highlight recommendations towards policymakers and key figures who are charged with the implementation of the sustainable development goal (SDGs) in the developing world, most notably Nigeria.

Introduction

Sustainable Development is defined by the Brundtland Commission[1] as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.[2] Authors often argue that sustainability is not to be defined but to be declared since it is an ethical guiding principle. Besides, other authors argue that the depth of sustainable development definitions has allowed the concept to succeed politically were restricted and plain concepts such as limits to growth failed. In simpler terms, sustainable development basically means preservation. It could relate to economic preservation which could lead to economic growth and development or environmental preservation, in which various modalities are formulated to create protection for the planet and it could also mean the preservation of wildlife and agricultural products and farmland.

This study focuses on how indigenous approaches can be used in achieving the sustainable development goals. In the context of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Millennium Development Goals lasted fifteen years and failed to achieve most of its objectives in Nigeria; poverty, economic inequality, gender inequality, lack of quality education, etc. persists. Nigeria still experience extreme hunger and poverty due to unemployment, unfavourable government policies, and under-development. Malaria still persists while education on the other hand is at its all-time low with 69% failure in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) (2014) and 83% failure rate in 2018.[3] Again, environmental sustainability has not been achieved due to the existence of bush burning, poaching and oil spillage which disrupts the aquatic and terrestrial eco-system making both land and fish farming difficult and pollution imminent.

This study revolved on indigenous approaches through synergising the local traditional and religious institutions with the sustainable development goals thereby tackling needs on a community by community basis towards channelling the sustainable development goals framework to the understanding of local institutions (religious, local community and traditional institutions) for proper implementation.

Historical Context

❖ The African Society

The African continent continues to experience low-level development amidst vast abundance of natural resources, foreign aids, and technological advancement and this is often due to unfavourable government policies, corruption, improper utilisation of natural resources, vast amount of inequality, the continuous existence of personal rule, disregard for the rule of law and the lack of good governance.

The popular image of Africa is a continent of immense corrupt heads of government who super-see over fractious populations. The personal rule Paradigm and Patrimonialism can be used in this same context, which refers to a political system that its military and administrative staff are the personal retainers of the head of government. The key features of this kind of

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1. The Brundtland Report: Seizing the Opportunity: IIED Thoughts towards the Follow-up of the WCED Report "Our Common Future." London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1987.
2. Tony Vetter, Don MacLean, and Heather Creech, Sustainable Development - Theme Proposal for IGF, (New Delhi: The Internet Governance Forum 2008) p 1-11
3. Chux Ohai,''83% of candidates fail 2018 WASSCE'' PUNCH, March 13, 2018 https://punchng.com/83-of-candidates-fail-2018-wassce/ (Accessed June 1, 2019)

political systems are that positions are dependent on one's loyalty to superiors and political office are treated as private property and source for private gains.[4]

Most of the world's foreign aids are poured into Africa, millions of dollars are given to African Countries yearly and international organisation such as the World Bank, IMF, DFID, United Nations and various NGOs are charged with the responsibility of international development. Even with all this help, Africa's development is relatively stalled. African countries are engrossed with vast amount of public debts to multinational organisations and foreign countries with little or no prospect for repayment. The Inflow of aids has kept African nations from international bankruptcy, the extreme dependence on aid without proper regulation and sanctions gives rise to misappropriation of foreign aids.

❖ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria

The United Nations designed the Millennium development goals (MDGs) intending to drive international development through eradicating poverty, fostering quality education, fight HIV and AIDS, gender equality and addressing sustainable environment.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria was among the 189 countries that adopted the MDGs in the year 2000. The MDGs commenced in Nigeria in 2005, after the cancellation of the debt relief. The cancellation of the debt enabled the Nigerian government to save US$1 billion annually and this led to the increase and target of pro-poor interventions. The MDGs projects in Nigeria has gulped about N1.4 trillion between 2006 and 2010 (Az-Zubair; 2010). Prodding further, an analysis of the 2012 budget shows that a total of more than N3 trillion was spent on MDGs (PCAMMDGs, 2013). The robust disbursement of funds towards MDGs program initiates commitment to the actualization of the MDG goals and targets. However, assessment reports of the MDGs do not seem to suggest much success. The 2004 report which was Nigeria's first report on MDGs suggests that it was unlikely for the country to realize most of the goals air marked for 2015 especially halving poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality amongst other key goals (MDGs Report, 2004:iv).

The 2005 reports, however, contained some ray of hope with regards to Nigeria actualizing some of the millennium development targets such as; universal primary education, ensuring environmental stability, and developing global partnership. The report also stated that Nigeria could achieve other targets such as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health by 2015 given the current policies set in place and the debts which was exonerated within that year span (Nigeria MDGs Report, 2005).

The 2008 Nigeria MDGs Report which denoted a mid-point of the 15 years millennium journey, however, indicated a slow-paced approach in the realization of the goals on the underlying basis of the 2005 Nigeria MDGs report (Nigeria Mid-Point Assessment, 2008; Igbuzor, 2013:13). The report indicates that the number of people living in poverty was to have declined from 54.7% to 28.7% in 2007 in ascertaining the assurance of the goals, but it has not gotten there. On the other hand, infant mortality rose from 81 per 1000 live births in the year 2000 to 110 per 1000 live births in 2005/2006 against the global target of 30 per 1000 live births in 2015. Under the midway target, maternal mortality rates were expected to fall within 440 per 100,000 live births, however, it was 828 deaths per 100,000 live births and 531 deaths per 100,000 live births in urban areas. The numbers of people with access to safe drinking water rose from 54% in 2000 to 60% in 2005/2006 while the proportion of the population with access to basic sanitation dropped from 42.9% in 2000 to 38% in 2005/2006 (Nigeria midpoint

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4. David K. Leonard and Scott Straus, Africa's Stalled Development: International Causes and Cures, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2003) p. 2 – 3

Assessment, 2008; Lawal, et al, 2012: 77-78; Igbuzor, 2013: 10-12). In view of the poor mid-point performance, some scholars are of the opinion that the country may be unable to achieve the MDGs target in 2015 especially given the lack of transparency and accountability, misuse of funds, poor coordination and corruption facing the implementation of most of the MDGs Programmes (Ibrahim and Igbuzor, 2009; Oshelowo, 2011; Lawal et al, 2012; Ajiye, 2014; Imodu, 2014; Omoh, 2014, Odunyemi, 2015)[5].

The MDGs did not achieve much success due to unfavourable government policies by the host countries, misappropriation of the MDGs fund by inexperienced personnel in-charge of driving the MDGs in the host countries, vast amount of corruption and the absence of sanctions if goals were not achieved to a sizeable extent featured in the Federal Republic of Nigeria[6].

The result of the failures of the MDGs refers to the postulation that countries at the bottom are falling apart and behind. The bottom billion tends to disunite from an increasingly sophisticated world economy which encompasses technological advancement, industrial revolution and vast educational and research-based innovation that drives growth and development. With the factors outlined, integration will become harder due to the vast differences in development.[7]

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development goals were adopted by world leaders on 25th September 2015 at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (UNSDS) held in New York and convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. The Sustainable Development Goals includes 17 sets of agenda or goals which tend to fight inequality and injustice, end poverty as well as tackling climate change by 2020. UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark noted: "This agreement marks an important milestone in putting the world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens' aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet". The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) strategic plans are connected to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals focus areas: sustainable development, democratic governance, and peacebuilding, climate and disaster resilience.[8]

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5. DUROKIFA A. A, ABDUL-WASI B. M. Evaluating Nigeria's Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (South Africa: Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review, 2016) p.663 - 664

6. Ibid.

7. Paul Collier, The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are failing, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 1 - 4

8. UNDP, Sustainable Development Goals http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda.html (Accessed 06 June 2019)

The SDGs are a proposed set of targets relating to future international development. They replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and contain 17 goals with 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues such as ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.

The main aim of the MDGs is to address eight fundamental issues of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal basic primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and others, to ensure environmental sustainability and to develop a global partnership for development. Nigeria experiences extreme hunger and poverty due to unemployment, unfavourable government policies, and under-development. Education is at its all-time low while malaria on the other hand persists and can be said to be the common ailment in almost every household. Also, environmental sustainability has not been achieved due to the existence of land degradation, bush burning, oil spillage in the Niger Delta region, which has disrupted the aquatic eco-system and polluted the area.[9] This indicates the poor implementation process of the MDGs in its 15 years of existence in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, hence the need to postulate alternative approaches towards the implementation of the SDGs.

Traditional and Religious Institutions

Tradition is often a behaviour or belief passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past.[10] Religion and tradition are often intertwined due to the correlation and infusion of a way of life.

In the context of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Traditional institutions are the custodian of the cultures, values, and beliefs of the various ethnic groups. Nigeria has 250 ethnic groups and the most populous and politically influential include: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5% with languages which includes, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani, and over 500 additional indigenous languages. The dominant ethnic group in the northern two-thirds of the country is the Hausa-Fulani, most of whom are Muslim. Other major ethnic groups of the north are the Nupe, Tiv, and Kanuri. The Yoruba people are predominant in the southwest. The Igbo (Ibo) are predominant in the southeast and the population is roughly balanced between Muslims and Christians with a small minority of those who practice indigenous beliefs.[11] People are often influenced by their beliefs due to the nature of the religion and culture they emanate from. In the context of addressing developmental challenges, the need to appeal to one's religion, culture or way of life is crucial in the implementation of a developmental agenda.

Tradition and religion are often not progressive, they are often seen to be backward in the African society context and the need to proper enlighten and work in partnerships with the traditional and religious societies in order to create synergy towards the proper implementation of the SDGs is crucial in the attainment of the SDGs in developing country such as the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

9. Folawiyo Olajoku, ''Moving from MDGs to SDGs,'' The Guardian, October 07, 2015 http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/2015/10/moving-from-mdgs-to-sdgs/ (Accessed 06 June 2019)

10. Green, Thomas A. Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art. Santa Barbara (Calif.): ABC-Clio, 1998.

11. Economic Section, United States Embassy in Nigeria, ''Nigeria Fact Sheet'' January 2012 https://photos.state.gov/libraries/nigeria/487468/pdfs/Nigeria%20overview%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf (Accessed June 1, 2019)

Implementation of the SDGs using Indigenous Traditional and Religious Institution

The developing world is entrenched with poverty, hunger and unfavourable policies towards education, health and the provision of basic social amenities as well as the neglect of caring for the environment. The Federal Republic of Nigeria faces challenges of poverty, hunger, poor education, and health system and the existence of inequality. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) did not achieve its objectives in the 15 years of existence (2000-2015) in Nigeria thereby mandating the existence of new thoughts and framework on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be implemented in the developing world such as Nigeria towards fulfilling the global mandate of the SDGs.

Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country's population living on less than $1.90 a day,[12] thus making the implementation of the development framework of the SDGs crucial.

Culture often could be either tonic or toxic to development. Culture is a subset of tradition which are values and beliefs that people strictly adhere to with little or no compromise. In the administration of the Global Goals (SDGs) in the developing world, the relativism and dynamism of culture must be taken into cognizance. The relativism of culture is based on the postulation that a person beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged on the criteria of another while the dynamism of culture states that culture is fluid and not static, with the ability to evolve or change in subtle and tangible ways. This further reiterates the synchronisation of the global goals to the tradition, religion, and culture of the community, society or nation being impacted upon.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals includes the eradication of poverty, hunger, provision of health and education, promotion of gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean energy, as well as the promotion of decent work and economic growth. The global goals also include the promotion of innovation, reduction of inequality, promotion of sustainable cities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life on land and water, promotion of peace, justice and strong institution as well as partnership in achieving the goals.

The above-mentioned Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be successfully implemented in the developing world most notably Nigeria, through synergy between the implementation institutions with the traditional and religious institutions domiciled in the area of implementation. The implementation institution in the context of Nigeria, is the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, thereby having sub implementation agencies at the State level. Nigeria consists of 36 states, thereby having 36 SDGs implementation agencies charged with the coordination and implementation of the SDGs while the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the Nigerian President on SDGs serves as the coordinating and support agency.

The Osun Sustainable Development Agency, domiciled in the State of Osun, Nigeria, embarked on the SDGs implementation process through the inculcation of religious and traditional institutions through community engagements, town hall meetings and sensitization thereby being able in carrying out surveys and sample opinions on the sustainable development goals framework of paramount importance through aligning the implementation in line with the cultural and religious belief of the people. Out of the 17 Sustainable

12. Bukola Adebayo, ''Nigeria overtakes India in extreme poverty Ranking,'' CNN, June 26, 2018
https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/26/africa/nigeria-overtakes-india-extreme-poverty-intl/index.html
(Accessed July 06, 2019)

Development Goals (SDGs), three of the goals took centre stage, Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being, Goal 4 - Quality Education and Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation.

Osun is an inland state, in the South West of Nigeria, with a population of about 4 million people. The GDP of the state is $7.28 Billion, and the people are mostly known for traditional religion with Osogbo, the state capital housing the Osun-Osogbo Groove which is a sacred forest. The annual festival tagged the Osun-Osogbo festival takes place at the Osun-Osogbo Groove where rites are performed on various deities. Some towns in Osun are popular for the Islamic religion, such as Iwo, and Ilesa is prominent for the Christian religion. A largely secular state which abhors the Yoruba cultural value of ''Omoluabi'' (The Spirit of honour, hard work, respect and resilient) and holds dearly the Yoruba heritage because of the historical significance of ''Ile-Ife,'' a prominent town in Osun, which is said to be the Origin of the Yoruba race.

The Osun sustainable development goals agency, embarked on a series of methodology using surveys, opinion polls and random sampling which includes:

1. Identifying which of the 17 sustainable development goals should take centre stage
2. How the highlighted goals can be implemented in line with the customs and tradition of the Osun people
3. The sustainability methodology towards post-implementation process thereby driving the SDGs longevity.

The three Sustainable Development Goals highlighted after the conduct of the survey in line with the Osun people traditional and religious institutions are:

❖ Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being,
❖ Goal 4 - Quality Education
❖ Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation.

The survey showcased to the Osun Sustainable Development Goals Agency identified local governments of paramount importance. A pilot phase commenced in August of 2017 with the construction of 61 equipped primary health care facilities, distribution of 12,500 pregnancy kits,[13] and the construction of 45 blocks of classrooms with each block having 7 classrooms totalling 315 classrooms in elementary and middle schools in key local governments of need across the State of Osun. Boreholes were drilled in identified areas towards the provision of clean water.

As of March 2018, the projects in education, health and in the water and sanitation sector approached completion and 15,000 elementary and middle school pupils were beneficiaries from the construction of the classrooms, 78,000 people are benefiting from the primary health facilities while a projected 40,000 people are benefiting from the construction of 105 boreholes across the State of Osun towards the provision of clean water[14].

In January of 2019, a post-implementation survey was carried out on the impact assessment of the SDGs framework being implemented in the State of Osun and out of the 15,000 pupils benefiting from the middle and elementary school rehabilitation, 12,500 of them made immense improvement in literacy, hence the gradual shift in the attainment of SDGs 4 –

13. Ajibola Olaniyi, ''Maternal Mortality: Osun Government distributes 12,500 pregnancy kits,'' Daily Post, December 12, 2017 https://dailypost.ng/2017/12/12/maternal-mortality-osun-govt-distributes-12500-pregnancy-kits/ (Accessed July 15, 2019)

14. Gbenga Olarinoye, ''Osun, SDGs Build 61 Primary Healthcare Centres.'' Vanguard, March 17, 2018 https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/osun-sdgs-build-61-primary-healthcare-centres/ (Accessed July 15, 2019)

Quality Education. Maternal mortality rate decreased due to the efficient functionality of the primary health facilities. According to the USAID, in Osun, maternal mortality rate is 165 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.[15]

Conclusion and Recommendation

Sustainable development basically means preservation. It could relate to economic preservation which could lead to economic growth and development or environmental preservation, in which various procedures are formulated to create protection for the planet and it could also mean the preservation of wildlife and agricultural products and farmland.

With the implementation of the SDGs framework by the Osun Sustainable Development Goals Agency, this paper indicates a direct positive correlation in using indigenous approaches such as the inculcation of the traditional and religious institution in the implementation of the SDGs. The developing world, which is largely rural inhibits the existence of cultural and religious beliefs that dictates the modalities in which they live their lives or how they adhere to changes and accept the new ideas or framework.

The framework of forming partnerships in the implementation of the SDGs resonates with SDGs 17 – Partnerships for the goals. This further stipulates and demonstrates that when consensus is built around the importance and impact of the outcome, even stakeholders holding radical different ideological viewpoints can find a shared space for positive action.

This paper revealed few recommendations towards policymakers and key figures in the developing world who actively engage in the implementation of the SDGs, to not repeat the mistakes of the MDGs.

I. Policymakers should inculcate relevant stakeholders during the pre-implementation and post-implementation process of the SDGs.
II. Proper needs assessment should be carried out at the Pre-Implementation stage
III. The need for the conduct of Impact assessment at the post-implementation stage
IV. People of high moral and epistemic capital should head SDGs agencies in developing economies to forestall corruption.
V. The Institutionalisation of the SDGs agencies towards appropriate budgetary provisions by the parliament.

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