

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE, USING ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL AS A STUDY

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Abstract

The paper examined the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, with emphasis on rural communities. With an estimated population of 1,967,500 inhabitants in 2016, the Abuja Municipal Area Council hosts the federal capital territory. The area council has members of diverse ethnic affiliation as its population. The Abuja Municipal Area Council occupies strategic position in the social, political and economic development of Nigeria, and therefore deserves an examination of how the SDGs are being implemented, as part of the national agenda of achieving the SDGs. The specific objectives of the paper emphasize the following: How has the area council facilitated awareness on SDGs and advocated for good level of awareness and local ownership of the SDGs by the local communities? How has the area council integrated the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework? How has the area council integrated the 3 dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of SDGs in its policy framework? What is the progress and status on the goals and targets, making reference to data, where available, and strategic initiatives and activities that will drive achievement of the targets? How well is AMAC mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs? How enabling is the environment for the implementation of the SDGs? What challenges are AMAC facing in the implementation of the SDGs? The paper relied on both primary and secondary data for its data generation. The primary data was quantitatively analyzed while the secondary data was analyzed using content analysis. The study found out that AMAC is yet to embark on initiatives to mainstream the SDGs into its local policy, planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. AMAC suffers from huge infrastructural deficit in power, roads and rail networks as well as food insecurity, among other challenges. Given the poor implementation of the SDGs by AMAC in the rural communities, the paper recommends strategic action with local and international dimensions, for the implementation of SDGs to avert failure by 2030.

Key words: SDGs, AMAC, communities, strategy, implementation

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a worldwide initiative geared toward making countries all over the globe a better and safer place to live (Oyemike et al. 2006,41) .SDGs is the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).The MDGs, while it lasted was a point of convergence of the world's developmental agenda and achieved novel and innovative partnerships and considerable development to both developing and developed countries especially in terms of eradication of hunger and poverty,(United Nations,2017).Unfortunately, it was acknowledged within the Nigerian setting that neither reduction of poverty, hunger, eradication nor inequality in education, decrease of unemployment rate and other related goals were accomplished as at the terminal time of the set goals in 2015 (MGDs, 2015; Aransi 2020,43). Several factors have been postulated by researchers for being responsible for the failure of MDGs in the attainment of the enumerated goals within the time period in Nigeria including greed and selfishness; lack of stable socio-political atmosphere; absence of formative midcourse and proper end-line evaluation; ineffective poverty reduction strategy; ethnicity/nepotism; bad leadership/poor governance; policy inconsistency; lack of holistic database; gap in knowledge and awareness between people in rural and urban centers; poor policy formulation and implementation; insufficient human capacity; poor infrastructure; poor revenue base; lack of accountability; endemic corruption; and rampant incidences of insurgency, among others,(Okoroafor2012,70;Obinna and Simon 2016,3;Donatus and Joseph 2012,128;Durokifa and Moshood 2016,672; Ogbodo et al.2021, 3991).

The termination of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 led to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs is commonly known as Agenda 2030. It is the belief of the United Nations that by 2030, the SDGs should have been attained worldwide; the SDGs represent a more comprehensive agenda than the MDGs, with 17 goals, 169 targets and 200 indicators. Each SDG objective is focused on a specific area of the country's economy and is development-situated, (Oyemike et al.2016,41). There is scarcity of empirical data on the implementation of MDGs at local government level in Nigeria. However, the researcher observed that the local councils were not fully involved in both the formulation and implementation of SDGs policy framework in Nigeria.

The fact that the involvement of local authorities was minimal during the implementation of (MGDs) raises some pertinent concern regarding the involvement of local councils in the actualization of the current SDGs goals. Thus, the actualization of the SDGs may be feasible if the stakeholders including local authorities are completely involved in policy formulation and implementation process. This study, is therefore, aimed at examiningthe implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, with emphasis on rural communities.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to examine the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, with emphasis on rural communities. The specific objectives of the paper emphasize the following:

- 1How has the area council facilitated awareness on SDGs and advocated for good level of awareness and local ownership of the SDGs by the local communities?
- 2 How has the area council integrated the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework?

3 How has the area council integrated the 3 dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of SDGs in its policy framework?

4 What is the progress and status on the goals and targets, making reference to data, where available, and strategic initiatives and activities that will drive achievement of the targets?

5 How well is AMAC mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs?

6 How enabling is the environment for the implementation of the SDGs?

7 What challenges are AMAC facing in the implementation of the SDGs?

The Study Area

Abuja is the capital city of Nigeria. The population of the city (after the 2006 census) was 776,298. It is among the top ten cities of the world with the highest population. A United Nations study indicates that the city grew from 2000 to 2010 to 139.7%, making it the fastest growing city all over the world. The city of Abuja is administered by the Abuja Municipal Area Council. The council is close to Suleja along the North, and leads to the Keffi-Nyanya road. The council houses a federal university- the University of Abuja, and many other private universities like Baze, Veritas, Nile, Bingham and the African University of Science and Technology owned by the World Bank. With an estimated population of 1,967,500 inhabitants in 2016, the area council hosts the federal capital territory. The area council has members of diverse ethnic affiliation as its population. It is surrounded by many towns and villages.

Methodology

The researcher used descriptive research design, for both quantitative and qualitative data, because it allows the researcher to summarize the important components of SDGs goals and whether they are being implemented in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). This research approach also allows the researcher to gain insight into data in a clear and concise manner and extracts the most relevant data for the study. Data were collected from the staff of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The target population comprised of all workers of AMAC of 6787 staff. A sample of 307 respondents was administered questionnaires. The 307 respondents were purposively selected. The descriptive study was carried out from May to July 2022. The researcher distributed 400 questionnaires and retrieved 307 as the required sample size.

Primary data were sourced through a perception survey that was conducted to measure variables using *structured questionnaire*, that is, a questionnaire instrument was circulated to the sample population for the purpose of collecting the relevant data needed for the study. The self-constructed questionnaire used for data collection was labeled Implementation of the sustainable development goals in Nigeria: the local government experience, using Abuja municipal area council as a study and contained 56 items. The items on the questionnaire were structured on frequency count and percentages (Yes & No). Questionnaire hinged on issues such as local residents' awareness on SDGs; the environment for the implementation; integration of the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework; the progress and status on the goals and targets and the challenges facing AMAC in the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, *interviews* were conducted among the senior staff of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). Secondary data were obtained from relevant literature (i.e. SDGs policy document, UN policy framework on SDGs, AMAC bulletins and other related/relevant textbooks) and electronic journals. Data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics as frequency count and percentages.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' views on Research question 1.

How has the area council facilitated awareness on SDGs and advocated for good level of awareness and local ownership of the SDGs by the local communities?

Items	No		Yes	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1 Have you ever heard of the Sustainable Development Goals?	214	69.7%	93	30.3%
2 Are you completely aware of the aims SDGs?	212	69.1%	95	30.9%
3 Have you ever participated in any program or workshop that is related to Sustainable Development Goals in your locality?	265	86.3%	42	13.7%
4 Are you aware of any local government initiatives and activities that aim at ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture in your locality?	231	75.2%	76	24.8%
5 Are you aware of any local government initiatives and activities that promotes social cohesion, stable and peaceful environment in your locality?	229	74.6%	78	25.4%
6 Are you aware of any local government initiatives and activities that targets at eliminating poverty, providing clean water, creating jobs and raising income for local residents?	182	59.3%	125	40.7%
7 Are you aware of any local government initiatives and activities that promotes basic and lifelong education at all level for all people in your locality ?	83	27.0%	224	73.0%
8 Are you aware of any local government initiatives and activities that aims at reducing inequality and promoting gender equality within and among locality?	257	83.7%	50	16.3%
9 Do you know any beneficiary of these initiatives and activities ?	286	93.2%	21	6.8%

Table 1 contained the participants' perspective on how the area council has facilitated awareness on SDGs and advocated for good level of awareness and local ownership of the SDGs by the local communities. Their views were reflected on item 1-9 above. The result reveals poor awareness, poor advocacy, lack of integration and implementation, while 69.7% indicated that they have not heard about it. As high as 93.2% of the respondents indicated that they are not aware of anybody who has benefited from SDGs in the local communities, while 83.7% of the respondents indicated lack of awareness of local government initiatives and activities that aims at reducing inequality and promoting gender equality within and among locality. 86.3% of the respondents indicated that they have never participated in any program or workshop that is related to Sustainable Development Goals in your locality.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' views on Research question 2

How has the area council integrated the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework?

Items	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
10 initiatives and activities for ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture	281	91.5%	26	8.5%
11 ensuring healthy livelihood and promoting well-being for all at all ages in the localities	291	94.8%	16	5.2%
12 strategic programs that guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education	256	83.4%	51	16.6%
13 project and activities that targets gender equality	289	94.1%	18	5.9%
14 initiatives and activities that guarantee availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	47	15.3%	260	84.7%
15 programs and activities that guarantee access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	261	85.0%	46	15.0%
16 strategic initiatives and activities for ensuring and consolidating good governance and effective institutions	272	88.6%	35	11.4%
17 strategic initiatives and activities that promote peaceful co-existence	222	72.3%	85	27.7%
18 Policies for waste management to accelerate achieving clean environment	29	9.4%	278	90.6%

Table 2 contained the respondents' perspective on how the area council integrated the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework. Their views are reflected on the responses on item 10-18 above. The result shows lack of integration of the SDGs into the local policy and planning framework of the local council, as 94.8% of the participants responded negatively to initiatives and activities that deal with elimination of hunger and achieving food security. 94.1% of the participants responded negatively to initiatives that target gender equality while 88.6% of the respondents responded negatively to initiatives that target good governance and effective institutions. 83.4% of the participants responded negatively to initiatives that guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and 72.3% of the respondents responded negatively to initiatives that promote stable and peaceful environment. However, 90.6% of the respondents responded positively to integration of decrees and policies for waste management and 84.7% of the respondents also responded positively to policies that target availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents views on Research question 3

How has the area council integrated the 3 dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of SDGs in its policy framework?

	Items	No		Yes	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
19	Provision of clean water, efficient waste and land management.	29	9.4%	278	90.6%
20	Through program that supports local economies, creates jobs and raise income	287	93.5%	20	6.5%
21	Through initiatives for ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition	241	78.5%	66	21.5%
22	Through initiatives that improves rural transportation for the growth of local food chain.	257	83.7%	50	16.3%
23	Through projects that empower girls and women and to achieve gender equality	275	89.6%	32	10.4%
24	Through some ongoing projects and programs that provide quality education and lifelong learning to local communities.	24	7.8%	283	92.2%
25	Through initiatives and activities that ensure that both urban and rural settlement are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for citizens	216	70.4%	91	29.6%
26	Through initiatives and activities that promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems,	287	93.5%	20	6.5%
27	Through several projects, program and activities that combat climate change and its impacts	262	85.3%	45	14.7%
28	Through several projects, program and activities that aims at reducing inequality within and among localities	252	82.1%	55	17.9%

The answer to research question 3 is reflected in the responses of the respondents on items 19-28 in table three above. The result demonstrated lack of integration of the three 3 dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of SDGs in the local council policy framework. 93.5% of the respondents indicated lack of support for elimination of poverty, poor support for local economies that could create jobs and raise income for local residents while 93.5% also indicated lack of policy framework for promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. 89.6% indicated lack of support for women empowerment and gender equality and 85.3% indicated lack of policy framework for combating climate change and its impact. 82.1% indicated negatively to policy

framework that could reduce inequality within and among localities. 78.5% indicated poor support for initiatives that aim at ending hunger, achieving food security. 70.4% indicated lack of support for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable environment. However, 92.2% indicated positively to existence of ongoing projects and programs that provide quality education and lifelong learning to local communities.

Table4: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' views on Research question 4

What is the progress and status on the goals and targets, making reference to data, where available, and strategic initiatives and activities that will drive achievement of the targets?

S/N	Items	No		Yes	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
29	The Council is Aggressively pursuing strategies that will eliminate poverty and hunger in all its forms in localities.	165	53.7%	142	46.3%
30	The council provides and distribute resources to support local entrepreneurship and sustainable agriculture improvement of the lives of local communities	244	79.5%	63	20.5%
31	The council ensure increase access to primary and lifelong education for people of all ages across the community.	168	54.7%	138	45.0%
32	The council promotes prioritized infrastructural development to promote entrepreneurship, local production and manufacturing of viable products	288	93.8%	19	6.2%
33	The council ensures availability of quality of health care services for all citizens of all ages across the various communities	298	97.1%	9	2.9%
34	The council promotes and provide resources and facilities for promotion of gender awareness and inequality	255	83.1%	52	16.9%

The responses of the respondents on research question four is shown on item 29-34 in table 4 above. The result reveals lack of strategic initiatives and activities that will drive achievement of the SDGs targets. 93.8% of the participants responded negatively to existence of local government-initiated infrastructures that could promote local entrepreneurship and local production. 93.8% of the participants indicated poor access and poor quality of health care services. 83.1% of the participants indicated lack of gender awareness and equality while 79.5% of the participants indicated lack of support for local agriculture, lack of initiatives for building a community value chain through the promotion of local entrepreneurship and local production. 54.7% of the participants indicated poor support for basic and lifelong education, while 53.7% of the participants indicated poor activities and initiatives that target poverty alleviation and elimination of hunger.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents views on Research question 5

How well is AMAC mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs?

S/N	Items	No		Yes	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
35	The council is creating a global enabling environment for achieving SDGs targets	208	67.8%	99	32.2%
36	The council has poor resource revenue for mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs	276	89.9%	30	9.8%
37	The council has supports from the federal and state government for mobilizing financial resources	30	9.8%	277	90.2%
38	The council has global partnership and support for mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs	279	90.9%	28	9.1%
39	The council has sufficient revenue for mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs	270	87.9%	37	12.1%
40	The council is creating a global enabling environment for achieving SDGs targets	286	93.2%	21	6.8%

The views of the participants on how well AMAC is mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs are reflected in item 35-40 in table five above. The result demonstrated poor mobilization of financial resources to facilitates the implimentation of SDGs at the local level. Also, 93.2% of the respondents indicated that the council lack sufficient revenue for mobilizing financial resources to facilitate implementation of the SDGs. 90.9% indicated that the council is not receiving support from the federal government to facilitate implementation of the SDGs while 89.9% indicated lack of global partnership for revenue mobilization. 87.9% indicated lack of enabling environment for financial mobilization. The findings indicate AMAC is currently not working in partnership with any institution for the mobilization of funds to facilitate implementation of the SDGs

Table 6: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' views on Research question 6
How enabling is the environment for the implementation of the SDGs? (Goals emphasizing sustainable development)

S/N	Items	No		Yes	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
41	Insecurity ,threats to human life and properties jeopardizes the local government efforts to improve the life of rural communities	25	8.1%	282	91.9%
42	The local government has a complete autonomy in carrying out policies that supports SDGs goals	267	87.0%	40	13.0%
43	The federal has provided sufficient facilities supports for the implementation of SDGs goals. at the local level	255	83.1%	52	16.9%
44	The council has relatively sufficient revenue base and supports for the implementation of SDGs goals.	266	86.6%	41	13.4%
45	The council has relatively socio-cultural supports for the implementation of SDGs goals.	240	78.2 %	67	21.8%
46	The council has relatively political supports for the implementation of SDGs goals.	304	99.0%	3	1.0%

Table 6 exhibited the respondents' perspectives on whether there is enabling environment for the implementation of SDGs at the local level. The views of the respondents are shown in item 41-46 above. The result demonstrated lack of enabling environment for the implementation of the SDGs. 99.0% of the respondents indicated that the council lacks political support for the integration of the SDGs into its local policy and planning framework. 87.0% of the respondents indicated that the local council lacks the autonomy for the implementation of SDGs goals. 86.6% of the participants indicated that the council has poor revenue base for pursuing SDGs agenda while 83.1% indicated lack of support from the federal government. 91.9% also indicated that insecurity, threats to life and properties also hampers the local council efforts on improving the lives of the communities.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' views on Research question 7
What challenges are AMAC facing in the implementation of the SDGs?

S/N	Items	No		Yes	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
47	Poor representation and integration of local council on federal policy document relating to SDGs	35	11.4%	272	88.6%
48	Gap between SDGs integrated policies and implementation	28	9.1%	279	90.9%
49	Infrastructural deficit to promote sustainable development programs	32	10.4%	275	89.6%
50	Leadership/Managerial Problems/ Unsteady political environment	42	13.7%	265	86.3%
51	Poor enabling environment to encourage wealth creation and sustainable health living	41	13.4%	266	86.6%
52	Failure of government policies to reduce poverty	44	14.3%	263	85.7%
53	Persisting insecurity	15	4.9%	292	95.1%
54	Corruption/Lack of transparency and accountability in implementation of public policy	167	54.4%	140	45.6%
55	Lack coherence between development policies, plans, strategies and implementations	44	14.3%	263	85.7%
56	Poor infrastructure and technology that supports the implementation of SDGs goals at local level	36	11.7%	271	88.3%

Table 7 shows the participants' perspective of challenges that AMAC is facing in the implementation of the SDGs. The result reveals that, poor representation and integration of local council on federal policy documents relating to SDGs (88.6%), gap between SDGs integrated policies and implementation (90.9%), infrastructural deficits to promote sustainable development program(89.6%), leadership management problem/unsteady political environment(86.3%), poor enabling environment to encourage wealth creation and sustainable health living (86.6%), failure of government policies to reduce poverty (85.7%), persisting insecurity (95.1%), corruption/lack of transparency and accountability in implementation of public policy (45.6%), lack of coherence between development policies, plans, strategies and implementation (85.7%), and poor infrastructure and technology that supports the implementation of SDGs goals at local level (88.3%).

Conclusion

The study concluded that poor representation and integration of local council on federal policy documents relating to SDGs is the major impediment to the implementation of the sustainable development goals in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The findings revealed that there is no active program or project currently being pursued by the council for reducing income inequality and eliminating extreme poverty at the local level as stipulated by SDGs Goal1. Thus, there is the constraint of resource mobilization for poverty eradication in the local council. There are no active initiatives and activities currently being pursued by the local council that targets SDG Goal 2 of ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Thus, there is currently no existing project that mobilizes revenue resources for assisting farmers or support the poor and vulnerable people to have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. There are no active initiatives and activities implemented in pursuance of SDGs Goal 3 of ensuring healthy living and promoting well-being for all at all ages by minimizing health risks, and ensuring local access to quality health-care services. There are insufficient initiatives that support access to quality education in pursuit of Goal 4 that target ensuring

inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Although the council supports and finances primary education, there is a deficit in resource mobilization for lifelong education or training that targets skills acquisition and competence for self-reliance. Equally lacking is a policy framework for special education for the handicapped. There is no active program or project implemented in pursuance of SDGs Goal 5 that targets achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

The council has no legal policy framework that targets ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, thus, officials do not promote, enforce or monitor inequality and discrimination on the basis of sex within the local council. However, there are policy framework, initiatives and activities in pursuit of SDGs goal six that targets the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, but no initiatives on Goal 7 that targets access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Equally, there is no active program or project implemented in pursuance of SDGs Goal 8.,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17. The council is yet to integrate the 3 dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of SDGs in its policy framework. The council is yet to embark on initiatives to mainstream the SDGs into its local policy, planning and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. AMAC suffers from poor representation and integration of local council on federal policy documents relating to SDGs. This study has demonstrated that poor revenue base, mismanagement of funds, poor infrastructure and technology affected the implementation of SDGs goals at local level. These factors, among others, were identified to have contributed to huge infrastructural deficit in power, roads and rail networks as well as food insecurity, resulting in the poor implementation of the SDGs by AMAC in the rural communities. Given the poor implementation of the SDGs by AMAC in the rural communities, the paper recommends strategic action with local and international dimensions, for the implementation of SDGs to avert failure by 2030.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes that emanated from this research work, the following recommendations are suggested for stakeholders as follows:

Local council stakeholders in both federal and state level should provide facilities as well as financial resources for the effective implementation of the SDGs by AMAC in the rural communities.

Full representation and integration of local council on federal policy documents relating to SDGs is necessary for the implementation of SDGs

Involvement of all stakeholders from government and non-governmental organizations is necessary in SDGs policy formulation and implementation process to ensure success. The government should provide the enabling environment necessary for the implementation of SDGs.

Priority should be given to development projects related to Sustainable Development Goals in local communities to facilitate and accelerate the attainment of the targets enumerated under the goals

Strategic attention should be given to local council areas in SDGs policy formulation and implementation.

The local council should be authorized and equipped to carry out regular awareness and literacy program to ensure community stakeholders' involvement in SDGs policy implementation.

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