

## **TOWARDS BETTER PERFORMANCE IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *There are many challenges affecting how we can better achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Since the factors that affected our poor performance during the MDGs which include unmanageable population, pervasive poverty, ignorance and superstition, religious dogmatism, corruption and economic mismanagement, lack of political will, authenticity of collected data are still largely with us in Nigeria. Apart from those issues pertaining to Nigeria, we need to be able to manage some existing global threats to sustainable development. These threats include the continuous advancement towards finding or making more potent biological, chemical, nuclear, cyber and other weapons of mass destruction. United Nations need to improve on legislation to prevent these proliferations and also improve on how to coordinate scientific efforts towards better achievement of the Sustainable Development goals. Finally the importance of education in its entire ramification was identified as key to achieving the SD goals better.*

**KEY WORDS:** Sustainable development, Millennium development goals (MDGs), Sustainable development goals (SDGs), Weapons of mass destruction, education

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### **INTRODUCTION**

There has been a progressive improvement in how we manage global sustainable development. It was made very structural and evidence based and sustainable development efforts became much more coordinated with the consensual commitment by most nations of the world during the implementation of the millennium development goals from the years 2000 to 2015. Though, collectively the world achieved good results, the results for Nigeria at best were considered mixed.

UN Sustainable development report explained it thus: MDGs “*provided an important framework for development and significant progress has been made in a number of areas. But the progress has been uneven, particularly in Africa, least developed countries, ....., and some of the MDGs remain off-track, in particular those related to maternal, new-born and child health and to reproductive health*”. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

### **Millenium Development Goals: Nigeria’s Performance**

#### **Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

- 69% of population still live in poverty as at 2015
- There is ever increasing population  
<http://www.opinionnigeria.com/millennium-development-goals-a-performance-review-for-nigeria-2/#sthash.YyeHdFrT.BTvuuml7j.dpbs>

## **Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education**

Nigeria has made little progress. Many children are still out of school. Nigeria still has 10.5 million out-of-school children - the world's highest number. Sixty per cent of those children are in northern Nigeria. About 60 per cent of out-of-school children are girls.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=out+of+school+children+in+nigeria&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab>

## **Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

Nigeria has made some progress. Political affirmative actions are progressing despite existing cultural biases and hindrances.

## **Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality**

- 301 deaths/1000 live births in 2003 to 201 deaths/1000 live births in 2008 for under 5 years mortality
- 100 deaths/1000 live births in 2003 to 72 deaths/1000 live births for infant mortality as at 2013 <http://www.panafrican-med-journal.com/content/article/24/156/full/>

## **Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health**

800 deaths/100,000 births to 545 deaths/100,000 births <http://www.opinionnigeria.com/millennium-development-goals-a-performance-review-for-nigeria-2/#sthash.YyeHdFrT.BTvuml7j.dpbs>

## **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases**

HIV prevalence has been dropping in Nigeria. As at 2013 we had HIV prevalence of 3.17% (2014 est.), a HIV burden of 3,228,600 (2013) and HIV-associated deaths of 174,300 (2014)

<http://www.panafrican-med-journal.com/content/article/24/156/full/>

## **Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

Due to increasing population: biodiversity is degrading, environmental pollution is increasing, access to clean water is worsening and number of slums is increasing.

## **Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

Trading is not favouring the developing nations, debt problem is still an issue and corruption is a factor being managed.

## **Some Causal Factors Resulting in our Under Performance**

Nigeria is a developing nation with many problems; among them, some are very critical, including unmanageable population, pervasive poverty, ignorance and superstition, religious dogmatism, corruption and economic mismanagement, lack of political will, authenticity of collected data.

## 1. Unmanageable Population:

Nigerian population is increasing and our resource base and economy are stagnant or are deteriorating. This can be better explained using the following analogy: in the 1970s every graduate that wants a job is able to secure same. However the unemployment was growing to the extent that by the 1980s things were changing negatively and by the 1990s it was no longer easy for graduates to secure jobs in Nigeria and by the millennium many new graduates cannot get employment. As at today many graduates have been looking for jobs for more than 10 years without any hope, yet annually more graduates are thrown into the labour market.

Over population affects every aspect of our national life. The Forest ecosystems suffer because we cannot end firewood harvesting in most of Nigeria, as there are population pressure and there are no feasible alternatives.

We have a rapidly growing population and Nigeria for example, may become the third most populated nation on earth within the next 40 years with the current growth rate.

<b>WORLD RANKING</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>2018 ESTIMATES</b>
1	China	1,415,045,928
2	India	1,354,051,854
3	US	326,766,748
4	Indonesia	266,794,980
5	Brazil	210,867,954
6	Pakistan	200,813,818
7	Nigeria	195,875,237
12	Ethiopia	107,534,882
14	Egypt	99,375,741
16	DR Congo	84,004,989

*“Africa's share of global population is projected to grow from 16% in 2015 to 25% in 2050 and 39% by 2100, while the share of Asia will fall from 60% in 2015 to 54% in 2050 and 44% in 2100. ... For example, the UN projects that the population of Nigeria will surpass that of the United States by 2050”* ([www.worldmeters.info](http://www.worldmeters.info)).

## 2. Pervasive poverty:

The poor people in Nigeria and in many places are desperate to survive and ‘preaching’ to them, to protect the environment and starve is like pouring water on the back of a duck. How will wildlife resources not be overharvested by the many hungry and poor people, if agriculture and fisheries are not boosted to address the pressing need for food?

Let us know that we cannot improve on employment is we do not improve the economy and also encourage the establishment of several industries that will employ people. More important are industries that can use readily add value to available minerals and agricultural produce.

The fact that many species will go extinct because of overharvesting of wild life and forest resources does not mean much to the poor whose main goal is to survive first. Our snails, ‘bush

meat', choice fish delicacies, nutritious fruits are becoming more rear to find and more expensive to buy.

We have many poor people who cannot afford good medical care on their own for even ailments like diabetes and other none communicable diseases. They therefore die for no good reason.

### **3. Ignorance and superstition:**

There are people who will prefer to seek help from traditional medical people instead seek medical help for health care. Those family members who ignorantly take people suffering from ailments like Ebola or HIV for treatment by native doctors and other prayer consultants are part of the problem.

There are those who still unfortunately mismanage pregnancy and ignorantly kill our women.

We have cultures that discriminate against the women folks and impoverish them: and these women constitute up to 50% of our population.

Many who pollute the environment do not know that their actions are contributing to making living on earth and especially in their locality hellish.

Ignorance is also making many superstitious and fetish. They believe in all sorts of myths and carry out all sorts of sacrifices; some of such sacrifices are so primitive. Those who still carry out ritualistic murders thinking it can help them achieve success are primitive too and these crimes committed are selfishly motivated with no evidence that they achieve their devilish goals. It is all so vain and barbaric propelled and sustained by myths and lies.

If ignorance is playing a major role in the unsustainable lifestyles many of us live, then educating the populace and especially the children folk will be critical to transform the people.

### **4. Religious dogmatism:**

We have a lot of religiously fanatic people who are prone to involving themselves in conflicts, violence and terrorism and some make others become refugees. The north eastern parts of Nigeria are bereft with violence, deaths, trauma, displacement of people from their homes etc. because of religious intolerance taken to the extreme. Many have been indoctrinated to thinking that dying for a religious cause is rewarding. Another theatre of violence, deaths and human displacement has become the middle part of Nigeria where herdsmen are killing and evacuating the traditional owners of the land because of their own needs to acquire better lands to feed their cattle and expand their religious territories. The implication is that the people of the middle belt of Nigeria (the food basket of the nation) can no longer cultivate their land and this obviously will affect the national food security in the near future.

### **5. Corruption and Economic Mismanagement:**

We have a large population of poor people who are stagnated because of bad national economy (due to ubiquity of corruption and leadership impunity).

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Governance-Peaceful-Coexistence-Sustainable-Advancement-ebook/dp/B079HJBWX8/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1527510031&sr=1-1&keywords=some+governance+and+peaceful+coexistence+issues](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Governance-Peaceful-Coexistence-Sustainable-Advancement-ebook/dp/B079HJBWX8/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1527510031&sr=1-1&keywords=some+governance+and+peaceful+coexistence+issues)

The challenges are enormous: they are evident in the way we manage our debts, borrowing funds for consumption rather than investing in revenue and employment generation interventions. It is evident in how we manage our educational policies. This has accounted for our poor performance in the number of children that are out of school.

Corruption in a nation and in organizations account for wastefulness and if two nations or organizations have same revenue and one is well managed without corruption while the other has had a good proportion of generated fund frittered away on activities that do not contribute to achieving set goals: then the better managed nation/organization will make greater progress while the corruption laden one will be froth with problems and backwardness.

#### **6. Lack of Political Will:**

Most nations will cave in and refuse to support interventions that are more environmental friendly if they will lose revenue doing so. Many developed nations still encourage the use of coal generators to boost supply of electricity despite the fact that they are more harmful to the environment. Governments have not been very effective to stop many industries that pollute the air or they are not very effective in enforcing the laws stopping youths that are criminally involved in activities that cause crude oil pollution in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Port Harcourt currently is suffering high air pollution of soot that may be very harmful to the health of the citizens. Things are so bad that some people in some developed nations instead of supporting UN and other international efforts in ending deteriorating environmental situation in the world are becoming antagonistic saying that global warming is a hoax.

#### **7. Authenticity of Collected Data:**

It is difficult to vouch for the baseline data obtained from developing nations with which we are assessing the progress of the MDG and now the SDG goals in Nigeria and some developing nations. We need to be sure if the information is verifiable and properly collected?

Without verifiable data, it is difficult to prove that we have made progress or not.

#### **Implications of the Above as we Work Towards Achieving the SD Goals**

Currently, the drive towards improved quality of lives for the inhabitants of the world is coordinated through the United Nations, which has adopted the “universal integrated and transformative” 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

It is a set of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be implemented and achieved in every country from the year 2016 to 2030.

This is an improvement on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda that has just been completed and the SDGs have incorporated lessons learnt from the MDGs.

This is why we are asking if Nigeria and indeed Africa will perform better than it did during the implementation of the MDGs?

The answer to that question will depend on if we have identified our areas of weakness and have made efforts to improve.

Obviously, the previous narrative in this article can be a starting point.

### **Some Notable Developmental Challenges for SDG**

Apart from those specific challenges as listed for Nigeria, there are also general challenges that can improve sustainable development globally.

One of such is the continuous advancement towards finding or making more potent biological, chemical, nuclear, cyber and other weapons of mass destruction.

It follows that sustainable advancement should include international legislative restrictions, ensuring that no nation continues to make, improve upon or use weapons of mass destruction.

I am not sure any nation in Africa has these weapons of mass destruction and we do not need them. We should concentrate in using our scarce resources in efforts that will contribute to helping us grow economically and otherwise.

The other aspect that can help the United Nations (UN) monitor the implementation and enforcing these laws will be to strengthen the bodies it has put in place to ensure compliance. UN also need to strengthen its bodies set up to facilitate continuous scientific inputs in the improvement of the SDGs outcomes namely Technology Facilitation Mechanism to support the sustainable development goals (a multi-stakeholder collaboration) and the United Nations Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation which will promote coordination, coherence, and cooperation within the UN System.

### **Role for Education**

We need to effectively seek government support in our various nations and in Nigeria for all activities that can transform the people and achieve greater success with the SDGs implementation.

Clearly ignorance and superstition has accounted for the numerous sustainable development problems in Nigeria. We must therefore do everything to educate all the people. Make education at the primary and secondary levels compulsory and improve on our curriculum to take on board sustainable development education. We need to provide incentive for the poor to attend schools. For example, the school feeding programme is an ideal way to use one bullet to kill many developmental problems. It will attract many children to school and it will provide good nutrition to the most vulnerable people in the nation towards having better health and better child development. It will also boost the economy since many citizens will be economically active making money by providing services that will support the system.

Every state in Nigeria should have a Sustainable development body that will monitor agencies, organizations and ministries contributing to our achieving the set SD goals. The body will also build the capacities of these agencies and organizations towards providing better service.

We need to target providing quality education to children through curriculum improvement and fund research for societal developmental advancement.

We need to also educate the general population through community awareness campaigns all over the nation for people to understand why they must protect the environment, their livelihoods and their health etc.

## CONCLUSION

No matter the strides of progress we make in achieving our sustainable development goals, we must appreciate that one terrible war like that in Syria will erase whatever progress that may have been made.

It is time the world should begin brainstorming on how to control mass production of weapons of mass destruction. The whole world should ensure that no nation in the world should continue to produce these weapons and those produced should be destroyed

When sustainable development is improved in Nigeria, our life expectancy will improve too. Nigeria's is abysmally low at an average of 54.5 years, though nations like Algeria are doing much better with life expectancy of 75 years. *“As of 2015, the **country** with the **highest life expectancy** is Monaco at 89.52 years; the **country** with the **lowest** is Chad at 49.81 years”.*

<https://www.google.com/search?q=life+expectancy+by+country&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab>

Science and technology may not be everything, but it is a critical component to achieving expected success.

<http://www.eajournals.org/journals/international-journal-of-development-and-economic-sustainability-ijdes/vol-5-issue-5-september-2017/sustainability-filters-enhancers-towards-improving-intervention-functionality-sustainable-advancement-holistic-concept/>

No matter how a depleting resource is managed, it will eventually get exhausted one day. For example, efficient use of fossil fuel is still not the best possible sustainable solution but it is a good short term option.

Though many developed nations are aggressively pursuing greener energy sources for example, these efforts are not significant in Nigeria and globally these efforts can be more coordinated and more integrated.

We however recognize and commend what the UN is doing so far in this regard with the formation of Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the United Nations Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation.

Finally, adequate funding of interventions is important and vital to achieving sustainable development goals. This article is saying that funding alone will not get the high performance desired. The areas discussed in the article will greatly help.

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