

**ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE  
LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper focuses on the fourth agenda of SDG, which centers round the quality of education. The library acts as the hub of academic activities. Therefore, this paper attempts to highlight information ecology, Information and knowledge society, highlighting the role of Library and Information centers in meeting SDGs. The paper highlighted some challenges facing libraries and librarians in actualizing Sustainable Development Goals. The paper calls upon the administrators, policy makers, managers, research scholars and the community members to use the library resources and services to act as a platform in meeting the SDGs.*

**KEYWORDS:** equitable, quality education lifelong learning, opportunities sustainable, development, goals, libraries

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Knowledge society exists since the existence of human being in different forms. The development of society depends on well-educated and well-informed community, where information and knowledge are important components. Knowledge economy is an economy, which creates, disseminates and uses knowledge to enhance its growth and development in all sectors including agriculture, industry and service sectors. The growth and development of information society leads to a knowledge society. Information literacy is basically empowering people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are seventeen goals that show the eagerness by the government of the world to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and hunger, to provide quality education, good health, gender inequality, good jobs, economic growth at a global level and partnerships among international communities. These goals respond to the world's most development challenges. It is argued that the purpose of the development is to improve people's lives by expanding their choices, freedom and dignity. (Igbuzor, 2006). The United Nation's SDGs recognized the interdependence between growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development so that achieving one of them can be expected to contribute to achieve others, for example, poverty eradication would certainly help to deal with the health and education challenges also achieving health and education goals would also contribute to fight against poverty.

Education is the key that will allow many other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved. When people are able to get quality education they can break from the cycle of poverty. Education therefore helps to reduce inequalities and to reach gender equality. It also empowers people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives. Education is also crucial to fostering tolerance between people and contributes to more peaceful societies.

### **Sustainable Development Goals: General Overview**

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, more than 150 world leaders adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 new Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, aim to end poverty, hunger and inequality, take action on climate change and the environment, improve access to health and education, and build strong institutions and partnerships. Public access to information enables people to make informed decisions that can improve their lives. Communities that have access to timely and relevant information for all are better positioned to eradicate poverty and inequality, improve agriculture, provide quality education, and support people's health, culture, research, and innovation ("The Role of the Library in Achieving Vision 2030 Goals," n.d.)

Oneyeyan, G. & Adesina, 2014) Observed that since the sustainable summit in 2015, the SDGs have received global acceptability as targets for human survival and sustainable development. They have become international standard for measuring the progress and effectiveness of development programmes for national governments. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aegis was assigned responsible to support governments around the world in tackling the new agenda and taking it forward over the next 15 years.

Nigeria is a signatory to the Sustainable Development agenda of 2015 and committed to achieving the SDGs in 2030. Apart from her three campaign promises (Security, Corruption and Youth Employment), a strategic framework for reaching these goals was adapted by the president Muhammadu Buhari on 21 March 2016 during a 2-day national economic council retreat at the state house conference center. The resolution of the conference led to the development of Multi Center of Prospects. According to President Muhammadu Buhari "I am going to throw at this gathering some random policy options filtered from across the spectrum of our stakeholders on four (4) selected sectors of our economy. These are: Agriculture, Power, Manufacturing and Housing. I have not touched Education, Science and Technology pointedly because these related subjects require a whole retreat by themselves."

The achievement of the SDGs by the target date of 2030 may likely met some challenges. In spite of the Nigerian government commitment towards actualizing the goals through its political and economic agenda, with the high poverty levels in Nigeria, it has become obvious that it is no longer up to the governments alone to find ways of tackling poverty, but other organisations need to join in the fight. As each country looks forward to fulfilling the SDGs, the Nigerian government needs the support of all institutions of which libraries are vital part. Librarians therefore need to take up their responsibilities as professional information analysts in offering ideas and services for the attainment of the SDGs (Ubale, K & Yahaya, 2016).

**Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Long-Life Learning Opportunities for All**

Education equips learners of all ages with the skills and values needed to be responsible global citizens, such as respect for human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability. Investing in and strengthening a country's education sector is key to the development of any country and its people. Major progress has been made in access to education, specifically at the primary school level, for both boys and girls. However, access does not always mean quality of education, or completion of primary school. Currently, 103 million youth worldwide still lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60% of those are women. Target 1 of Goal 4 is to ensure that, by 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. ("Wikipedia-Sustainable Development Goals," n.d.)

Without investment in quality education, progress on all other development indicators will stagnate. The Global Partnership for Education works to ensure that all children irrespective of where they live get a quality education, prioritizing the most vulnerable. (Alokun, 1998) reports that various researchers have shown that a strong library campaign can lead to higher student's achievement. Therefore to achieve qualitative education at all levels without the support of libraries and librarians would be very difficult.

According to John Dewey, "Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not preparation for life but life itself." According to "Education for all" of UNESCO, Quality education is improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measureable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Quality is the heart of education and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environment is fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults. A quality education is one, which satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experiences of living. (Samantaray, 2017)

NCF 2005 (National Curriculum Framework) reports that, learning has become an isolated activity, which is not encouraging for children to link knowledge with their lives in any vital way. It needs to be remembered that, "every child is unique". But what is presented and transmitted in the name of learning in school is bypassing vital dimensions of the human capacity to create new knowledge. Quality education includes a concern for quality of life in all dimensions like maintaining peace, protecting the environment and predisposition towards social change. Quality is not merely a measure of efficiency, it has a value dimension. Those, who complete their school education, are in need of continuous learning, as knowledge is dynamic, tumultuous and infinite in nature. Learning is possible through reading. The books not only teach few facts but also enriches the imagination, widen the outlook, develop a fact finding attitude and train to use the leisure hour properly. This shows that, social and educational significance of books cannot be underestimated. Knowledge outside the classroom is cross-curricular and organic in nature. It is not confined to single subject/ discipline. Knowledge may be constructed through education.

Tbilisi conference in 1997 recommends that, all the concerned international agencies should take necessary steps to establish an international programme in environmental education, interdisciplinary in approach, in school and out of school, encompassing all levels of education,

and directed towards the general public and the ordinary citizen living in rural and urban areas in particular.(Samantaray, 2017)

### **Library Campaign as a Strategy for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Today, Librarians are compelled to use new skills and strategies in order to change, survive and continue to compete in the world of virtual information. Library campaign has become very essential and important in the provision of library and information services that are not marketed effectively may not be heavily patronized (Gupta & Savard, 2009). The need to increase awareness and use of information for different purposes have resulted in the establishment of various information services providers which have the capacity to compete for survival with libraries in providing users with timely, adequate and relevant information in the preferred formats.

Libraries and Librarians in Nigeria therefore need to respond to such challenges in the quest to enhance the use of their resources (electronic and non-electronic) and services. According to (Rubin, 2000) Library campaign techniques involves planning and managing the organization's exchange relations with its clientele. It consists of studying the target market's needs, designing appropriate products and services, and using effective pricing, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the users.

(“Pearson,S & Hall, A 10 Strategies for Effective Public Awareness – Library Strategies,” n.d.) ) identified the following as top ten strategies for libraries to create greater awareness and impact for national and international development:

1. Create and tell your library's story
2. Develop key messages
3. Ensure that staff, Board, and volunteers understand and can deliver key messages and that everyone is speaking from the same script
4. Engage the media
5. Identify target audiences and create objectives for each audience
6. Engage your audience and allow them to participate
7. Create a public awareness campaign and tie it to an advocacy campaign
8. Use your website, social media, and print materials to spread your message
9. Don't stop with the story... make 'the ask' for public or private support
10. Evaluate your success

According to a paper on Partnership for SDGs(“The sustainable development of every aspects of life is connected to our reading culture,” n.d.), Library services contribute to improved outcomes across the SDGs by:

- Promoting universal literacy, including media and information literacy
- Closing gaps in access to information and helping government, civil society, and business to better understand local information needs
- Providing a network of delivery sites for government programmes and services

- Advancing digital inclusion through access to Information & Communications Technologies (ICT), and dedicated staff to help people develop new digital skills (Advancing Sustainable Development, 2014)

- Serving as the heart of the research and academic community
- Preserving and providing access to the world's culture and heritage
- More specifically, libraries has supported the implementation of the SDGs by providing access to information, support for literacy and ICT skills, and access to community space.

Some of the existing initiatives of library support to SDGs may include:

- UN Depository Libraries that support dissemination of information and research to help decision makers achieve the SDGs
- Access to health, environmental, and agricultural information that are targets of the SDGs; including Open Access resources
- Media and information literacy programmes for marginalized populations to make an important contribution to achieving universal literacy (Bradley, 2016)

### **Challenges Facing Librarians towards the Actualization of SDG's in Nigeria**

Libraries in Nigeria are faced with a number of challenges so also librarians. These challenges have affected the impact libraries and librarian can make on the SDG's. The challenges include inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing, inadequate facilities etc. (Aptiade, 2002) laments that libraries are not adequately funded, Libraries have to be appropriately funded if they are to be effective and attractive. Another challenge of libraries is poor infrastructure especially at local level, which in essence also affects the librarians' readiness to serve these communities. (Krolak, 2006) posits that appropriate buildings are needed to provide protection to library materials. The author added that books, computers, and audio visual materials are very sensitive and have to be protected from extreme weather conditions. Inadequate staffing is another challenge of libraries and also librarians.(Aptiade, 2002) asserts that many libraries are run by non-professional staff. Poor and inadequate facilities have also become an undetermining issue for libraries and librarians to meet their goals of providing information for development. Libraries and librarians need sufficient space and facilities to accommodate new types of materials such as computers, CD-ROM etc.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has established the relationship between libraries and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have been discussed with ways in which librarians can be instrumental to meeting them. Challenges facing librarians and libraries in provision of information has also been highlighted. Based on these the following recommendations are made:

1. Libraries should appreciate that fact that they are indispensable in the provision of information for the actualization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and therefore be in the forefront in their activities and services to contribute to the achievement of the goals.
2. Librarians and libraries need to be adequately supported by the parent organisation with all the required facilities and financial support so that librarians can attend professional's seminars and workshop for effective service delivery in terms of SDGs.

3. Adequate staffing in terms numbers and professional qualification needs to be provided also.
4. Libraries should strive to acquire information materials on the Sustainable Development Goals and bring the materials to the awareness of the library users.
5. Libraries need to be more thorough and determine in running services that would directly impact the achievement of the SDG, through organizing awareness programmes, hosting local forums, partnering with other agencies etc.

The search strategies and databases used were: Google, Google Scholar and Emerald insight .The reasons for them are

- They are search engines used by researchers because they are easily accessible web search engines that indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature.
- They help one to identify the most relevant scholarly research.
- They give immediate access to latest academic articles and publication.

The search strings used were; Libraries and SDGs, Roles of Libraries and SDGs and Library campaigns.

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