

1 Introduction

Evolution of the SDGs framework

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Evolution of sustainable development concept

Sustainable development has been a recurring theme in the international sphere in different mutations. The Brundtland Commission also known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainable development as ‘the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’¹ (WCED 1987: 3; Owosuyi 2015). Also, sustainable development ‘is an evolving concept that has gained prominent status, but lacks consensus as to its precise meaning’² (Oniemola and Tasie 2020). One major reason for the lack of consensus on definitions of sustainable development is the distinct connotations and understanding of sustainable development in developed and developing countries (Ako 2012: 9).³ The various interpretations of sustainable development can be divided into diverse slants including ideological, institutional, and academic camps and the essence of these interpretations is that world is faced with an environmental crisis that requires a systemic shift in the way society lives (Mebratu 1998; Gellers and Cheatham 2018).⁴ However, the notion of sustainable development has been in existence for many years (Du Pisani 2006).⁵ The term ‘sustainable development’ is a buzz word for a plethora of issues (Owosuyi 2015).⁶

The Stockholm Declaration in 1972 embodies a set of principles to guide the people in the protection and preservation of their environment (Atapattu 2019).⁷ Hence, this Declaration ‘formed the foundation of modern international environmental law and shaped its direction (Atapattu 2019: 218).⁸ Though, term ‘sustainable development’ is not explicitly mentioned in the Declaration, it has engendered the initial elucidation of issues relating to sustainable development in the international sphere (Atapattu 2019).⁹

Notwithstanding the various criticisms of the various definitions of sustainable development, the definition by WCED has become the most commonly accepted definition (Oniemola and Tasie 2020).¹⁰ Furthermore, the publication of ‘Our Common Future’ by the WCED in 1987 popularised the sustainable development paradigm and ‘researches into the concept in a holistic manner’ (Ako 2012: 13).¹¹ This definition is said to promote sustainable

development as an environmental concept (Owosuyi 2015).¹² Furthermore, developments in the international sphere have extended the remit of the concept of sustainable development to include environmental protection, equality or social inclusion, and economic development/growth (Owosuyi 2015; Atapattu 2019).¹³ The 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio in Brazil is said to have established the links between environment and development (Ako 2012).¹⁴ Furthermore, the Rio Declaration (which is one of the outcomes of the conference) is ‘credited with recognising sustainable development in terms of the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of development’ (Owosuyi 2015: 2012)¹⁵ In essence, sustainable development is a tool for resolving the conflicts arising from the three sectors comprising the economy, environment, and social (Gellers and Cheatham 2018).¹⁶ This is a challenge which exists in many developing countries wherein more often than not, economic considerations are the overarching considerations in the implementation of sustainable development paradigm in such countries.

There have been recent UN conferences on sustainable development, which includes Johannesburg in 2002 and the Rio +20 Conference in 2012 (Scheyvens *et al* 2016).¹⁷ In 2012, countries attending the Rio +20 Conference are engaged in the process that would lead to the development of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to replace the millennium development goals (MDGs) which were due to expire in 2015 (Scheyvens *et al* 2016).¹⁸ The sustainable development paradigm is now fully embedded within the United Nations system with the development of the SDGs (Oniemola and Tasie 2020).¹⁹

The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 25 September 2015, along with a set of bold new SDGs. The former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed this as a universal, integrated, and transformative vision for a better world. In January 2016, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into force with the hope that within the next 15 years, these new goals apply universally, and countries will intensify efforts to end all forms of ‘poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring no one is left behind’ (United Nations Website).²⁰ Some of these global (and inter-connected) goals include end to poverty, gender equality, and quality education amongst others. The three dimensions or slants of sustainable development – social, economic, and environment are also embedded in the SDGs framework (Omisore 2018).²¹ The SDGs encompass the view that for meaningful development or growth to occur globally, a systemic shift is needed to enhance or promote stronger global environmental governance and ensuring an efficient integration of the social, economic and environmental slants of sustainable development (UNEP 2015).²² The SDGs are integrated, indivisible, and compulsory and balance the three slants of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental (United Nations 2015).²³ Hence, none is more significant than the other. Furthermore, the SDGs are grounded on five ‘Ps’ – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership (Atapattu 2019).²⁴

The SDGs are the heirs to the MDGs and have been hailed as one of the major achievements of the international community (Gellers and Cheatham 2018; Zanten and Tulder 2018).²⁵ The SDGs were a culmination of an extensive consultation and stakeholder participation (Kharas and Zhang 2014).²⁶ This consultation process involved a plethora of groups not limited to governments, civil society, companies, and knowledge institutes amongst others, including the views of more than one million people across the world (Zanten and Tulder 2018).²⁷ Here, the extensive consultation amongst other measures involved over 4.5 million online responses to a survey (My World Survey) conducted by the UNDP (Kharas and Zhang 2014).²⁸ This consultation process has been termed ‘hyper-participatory’ (Quint 2014: 114)²⁹ and lauded by a plethora of scholars (Zanten and Tulder 2018).³⁰ Thus, unlike the MDGs which involved a top-down development process involving a few stakeholders (Kharas and Zang 2014; McArthur 2014),³¹ the development of the SDGs was a bottom-up process and a more consultative process than the MDGs (Scheyvens *et al* 2016).³² Furthermore, unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are firmly anchored on human rights (Atapattu 2019).³³ Notwithstanding the strengths of the SDGs, it has been criticised for not being ambitious enough or too ambitious (Copenhagen Consensus 2016 in Zanten and Tulder 2018, 208),³⁴ ‘worse than useless’ (The Economist 2015 in Gellers and Cheatham 2018)³⁵ and Easterly (2015) pejoratively stated that the acronym ‘SDG’ stands for ‘Senseless, Dreamy, Garbled.’³⁶

Arguably, the SDGs are fundamentally different from earlier mutations of the sustainable development initiatives in the international sphere including the MDGs and the Washington Consensus (Zanten and Tulder 2018).³⁷ The prevailing view is that the SDGs ‘instigate a shift from a state-centred, duty-based, and negatively framed agreement aimed at ‘developing countries,’ to a partnering-centred, opportunity-based, and more positively framed ambition aimed at developed as well as developing countries’ (Zanten and Tulder 2018; Langan 2017).³⁸

Rationale for book

Despite its massive oil wealth and revenues, Nigerian citizens remain mired in poverty. Corruption, maladministration, and the inability of successive governments in Nigeria to adequately distribute the enormous wealth it has earned to its citizens have worsened the poverty rates in the country.

Notwithstanding that the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to be the engine or take ownership of the framework. Governments are to establish national frameworks for the actualisation of these global goals. The federal government of Nigeria has produced various reports on the implementation of SDGs in Nigeria and the first report is titled the ‘Implementation of the SDGs: A National Voluntary Review 2017.’ This report stated that the government had achieved some key milestones, however, some challenges still plague the successful implementation of the SDGs framework in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include over-reliance on the

oil and gas sector, infrastructural deficits and technological gaps, economic recession, and humanitarian crisis.

In June 2020, the second Voluntary National Review (VNR) was published (VNR 2020).³⁹ The second VNR focuses on poverty (SDG-1) and an inclusive economy (SDG-8); health and well-being (SDG-3); education (SDG-4) and gender equality (SDG-5); enabling environment of peace and security (SDG-16); and partnerships (SDG-17). President Buhari in the second VNR avers that some ‘relevant institutional frameworks, such as the Nigeria Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) Model and the re-alignment of the National Statistical System (NSS) with the requirements of the SDGs have been put in place to guide effective implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria’ and his administration is committed to mainstreaming the SDGs into the country’s medium and long-term development plans (VNR 2020).⁴⁰ Arguably, recent events such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the economic crisis/economic recession in Nigeria due to the falling oil prices will have detrimental effects on the ability of the Nigerian government to fully implement the SDGs in the country.

More so, a major challenge militating against the successful attainment of the SDGs in Nigeria has been said to be lack of awareness and inadequate sensitisation of the citizens on the practical benefits of the framework (Aramide 2017).⁴¹ Thus, collaboration of various actors should not be limited to ‘national, state and local governments, the private sector, the academia, civil society as average everyday citizens have a stake in achieving Agenda 2030’ (Aramide 2017).⁴²

A series of long-term trends, from climate change to demographics, are already reshaping the national landscape for policymakers and practitioners, just as they set their sights on implementing the SDGs by 2030. A slowdown in the economies of countries around the world, migration, and consequences of fragile states and societies – ranging from public health crises, natural hazards, crime to terrorism – will all impact how the SDGs can be implemented. The gravity of these challenges cannot be underestimated. When there are 17 goals, 169 targets, and 230 indicators, what you need is a process that simplifies complexity. Consequently, the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria requires a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. Issues around natural disasters, migration, demographic changes, social inequality, gender inequality, climate change, sustainable cities, rural economics, economic growth, and environmental and social justice need to be considered in a more ‘interconnected’ manner.

Partnerships (e.g. between academia, public sector, private sector, civic society, and local communities) need to be developed to achieve sustainable SDGs outputs. As such, one of the aims of this book is to develop a network of practitioners, academics, private sector, and civil society to undertake research to better inform that aid the development of SDGs in Nigeria. In furtherance of this objective, in 2018, two of the editors of this book (Dr Eghosa Ekhator and Professor Servel Miller) were awarded a University of Chester Global Challenges grant to organise a workshop on the implementation of SDGs in Nigeria. This workshop took place in December 2018, at the University of Benin, Nigeria. This workshop was organised in collaboration

with the SDGs office/department (formerly headed by Prof Igbinosa, a co-editor of this book) at the University of Benin, Nigeria. The workshop focused on the challenges militating against the successful implementation of the SDGs framework in Nigeria. This workshop involved stakeholders from the academia, civil society, religious organisations, community-based organisations, the private sector, and the government towards addressing the key challenges for implementing the SDGs. One of the anticipated outcomes of the workshop was the publication of an edited book focusing on some of the issues discussed in the workshop. Hence, this book is done in furtherance of meeting this aim of the workshop.

Scope of book

Contributions to the book contain conceptual analyses and the implementation of SDGs in Nigeria. The goal is to present comparative historical and contemporary accounts that will enable cross-exchange of ideas, practices, and innovative solutions for sustainable development and improving its effectiveness for developing and emerging economies, especially Nigeria. This book explores progress (and/or lack thereof) linked to key SDGs, most relevant to Nigeria and hopefully serve as platform, for cross-disciplinary, inter-agency academic-industry-government collaboration.

This book is divided into five parts that contain 14 chapters with contributions from diverse disciplines. The first chapter which is the introduction is jointly written by the editors of this book – Eghosa O. Ekhaton, Servel Miller, and Etinosa Igbinosa. The first chapter gives a general overview of the book and discusses the evolution of the sustainable development paradigm. The second chapter titled ‘The Legal Framework for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework in Nigeria’ is jointly written by Prof Nathaniel Inegbedion and Dr Godwin Umoru. This chapter focuses on the examination of the implementation mechanisms of the SDGs framework in Nigeria.

The third chapter of the book is by Juliet Aimienrovbiye and Odunagbon Theodora Osagie and titled ‘Food Security through Technological Innovations in Agriculture: What role for law?’ This chapter explores the place of technological solutions like high-yielding crop varieties, development of new biotechnology based on genetic modification in enhancing food production and ultimately, food security. The fourth chapter is titled ‘Implementing the Teaching Manpower Policy in Nigeria: An imperative for Sustainable Development’ and written by Dr Philip Igenegbai and Dr Michael Osakpamwan Osasuyi. This chapter focuses on the role of teachers as catalyst in promoting quality education. Teachers translate education programmes and policies of government to the next generation. This implies that competent teaching manpower or personnel is sacrosanct to achieving quality education and achieving the SDGs.

Chapter 5 is titled ‘The Environment, Climate Change, and Underdevelopment of Nigerian Cities’ and written by Ibukun Ajayi, Dr Eguonor Oleabhiele, and Eseosa Enobakhare. This chapter examines the environment,

issues of climate change and its impact on the underdevelopment of Nigerian cities. The paper relied on secondary sources for data collection. The sixth chapter is written by Prof Vincent N. Chigor, Chidiebele E.I., Nwankwo, Dr Chinyere B. Chigor, Chizoba A. Ozochi, Prof Nkechinyere O. Nweze, Dr Ebele C. Amaechina and Prof Jonah C. Agunwamba.. This chapter is titled ‘Towards Successful Delivery of Clean Drinking Water by 2030 in Nigeria: Dealing with the Challenges of Climate Change and Poor Environmental Practices.’ This chapter reviews the journey towards the provision of clean/potable water in Nigeria and highlights climate change and poor environmental practices as critical challenges to the successful delivery of clean/potable water by 2030. The seventh chapter is written by Dr Edward Okumagba and titled ‘Examining Global Court Practices in Reducing Climate Change Impacts through Litigation: Lessons for Nigeria.’ This chapter discusses the various attempts at regulating climate change issues in Nigeria, and the attitude of Nigerian courts in environmental protection issues.

Chapter 8 is titled ‘Towards Corporate Sustainability in Nigerian Corporations: Opportunities and Disruptions’ and written by Dr Oludara Akanmidu and Dr Simisola Akintoye. This chapter investigates the opportunities and disruptions to corporate sustainability focusing on the prevalent form of business – the corporation. **Chapter 9** is titled ‘Taxation and the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria’ and written by Emo Idornigie Pearce and Dr Chisa Onyejekwe. This chapter advocates the need to strengthen tax laws for optimal contribution to economic growth and equally promote SDGs in Nigeria. **Chapter 10** is titled ‘SDGs and Private Public Partnerships in Nigeria’ and written by Dr Newman U. Richards. This chapter discusses the need to engage the private sector in resource mobilisation to fund the SDGs in Nigeria.

Chapter 11 is titled ‘SDG3 and Maternal Health Rights: A Biosocial Approach to ending the VVF Scourge in Northern Nigeria’ and written by Dr Hadiza Hama. This chapter sets out to analyse the state of maternal health in Nigeria through the lens of the United Nations SDGs. **Chapter 12** is titled ‘Churches and the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria – Nigerian Religious Institutions and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’ and written by Omole Iyayi and Dr Pedi Obani. This chapter examines the increasing focus on the role of religious institutions (in this context, churches) in promoting the SDGs in Nigeria.

Chapter 13 is titled ‘Assessing University of Benin Staff Awareness of the Role of Education in Sustainable Development, Edo State, Nigeria’ and written by Dr Omoyebagbe Rosaline Dania and Prof Esther Obiageli Okobia. This chapter examines the level of the University staff awareness of the role of education in sustainable development and if there is a demographic difference between male and female awareness of the concept of sustainable development.

The final chapter (**Chapter 14**) is titled ‘Towards an Inclusive Implementation of Sustainable Oceans, Seas, and Marine Resources – SDG14: A Holistic Approach in Nigeria’ and written by Dr Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood

and Clement Sefa-Nyarko. This chapter seeks to explore efforts by the Nigerian state to attain SDG 14 and the potential implications of working towards a sustainable marine environment.

Notes

1. WCED 1987, 3. The Brundtland Commission which was headed by the former Norwegian Gro Harlem Brundtland and the report titled – WCED Our Common Future is credited as the catalyst for the successfully thrusting the notion of ‘sustainable development’ into mainstream discussion around the world. Generally, see Ifeoma Owosuyi, ‘The Pursuit of Sustainable Development through Cultural Law and Governance Frameworks: A South African Perspective’ 18 (5) (2015) *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal* 2011.
2. See, Peter Oniemola and Oyinkan Tasie, ‘Engendering Constitutional Realization of Sustainable Development in Nigeria’ 13 (1) (2020) *Law and Development Review* 159–191.
3. Rhuks Ako, ‘Challenges to Sustainable Development in the Niger Delta (Nigeria)’ in Samuel Ibaba (ed), *Niger Delta: Constraints and Pathways to Development* (Cambridge Scholars, 2012) 9.
4. Desta Mebratu, ‘Sustainability and Sustainable Development: Historical and Conceptual Review’ 18 (1998) *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 893. Also cited in Joshua Gellers and Trevor Cheatham, ‘Sustainable Development Goals and Environmental Justice: Realization through Disaggregation?’ 36 (2018) *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 276.
Furthermore, according to Ako, (n 3) 11, various attempts to define sustainable development can be subsumed into two major slants: sectoral and holistic.
5. Jacobus Du Pisani, Jacobus A. ‘Sustainable Development – Historical Roots of the Concept’ 3 (2) (2006) *Environmental Sciences* 83–96.
6. Owosuyi (n 1) 2015.
7. Report of the UN Conference on the Human Environment UN Doc A/Conf48/14 (1987); Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972) (hereafter Stockholm Declaration). Also cited in Owosuyi (n 1) 2012. According to Sumudu Atapattu, ‘From Our Common Future to Sustainable Development Goals: Evolution of Sustainable Development under International Law’ 36 (2019) *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 215, 218, this Conference ‘was the first global conference on the environment, held at the invitation of Nordic countries, which were beginning to experience the adverse effects of acid rain.’
8. Atapattu (n 12) 2019, 218.
9. Generally, see Atapattu (n 7) 2019.
10. However, see Oniemola and Tasie (n 2) for the various criticisms of the definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland Commission 2020.
11. Ako (n 3) 13. However, according to Gellers and Cheatham (n 4) 277, sustainable development ‘has existed in popular discourse since the 1980 World Conservation Strategy.’
12. Owosuyi (n 1) 2015
13. Owosuyi (n 1) 2015; Atapattu (n 7) 2019.
14. Ako (n 3) 2012.
15. Owosuyi (n 1) 2015.
16. Gellers and Cheatham (n 4) 2018.
17. Regina Scheyvens, Glenn Banks, and Emma Hughes. ‘The Private Sector and the SDGs: The Need to Move Beyond ‘Business as Usual’’ 24 (6) (2016) *Sustainable Development* 371, 372. The Rio +20 Conference (Earth Summit) 2012 produced the ‘Future We Want’ document.

18. Ibid.
19. Oniemola and Tasie (n 2) 2020.
20. United Nations Website 'Sustainable Development Agenda.' <<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>> accessed 25 March 2020
21. Akinlolu Omisore, 'Attaining Sustainable Development Goals in sub-Saharan Africa; The Need to Address Environmental Challenges' 25 (2018) *Environmental development* 138.
22. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2015. 'The United Nations Environment Programme and the 2030 Agenda; Global Action for People and the Planet.' <<https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/united-nations-environment-programme-and-2030-agenda-global-action-people-and>> accessed 25 March 2020
23. United Nations, 2015 Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>> accessed 25 March 2020. Also see Atapattu (n 7) 2019.
24. Generally, see Atapattu (n 7) 2019.
25. Gellers and Cheatham (n 4), Jan Anton Van Zanten and Rob Van Tulder, 'Multinational Enterprises and the Sustainable Development Goals: An Institutional Approach to Corporate Engagement' 1 (3-4) (2018) *The Journal of International Business Policy* 208.
26. Homi Kharas and Christine Zhang, 'New Agenda, New Narrative: What Happens After 2015?' 34 (2) (2014) *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 25.
27. Zanten and Tulder (n 25) 2018, 208.
28. Kharas and Zhang (n 26) 2014.
29. Rachel Quint, 'Leveraging Africa's Voice: Determining the Post-2015 Development Goals' 34 (2) (2014) *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 113, 114.
30. Zanten and Tulder (n 25) 2014.
31. Kharas and Zhang (n 26). For a contrary view, see John McArthur, 'The Origins of the Millennium Development Goals' 34 (2) (2014) *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 5. Also, Quint (n 29) 114 has argued that '[d]espite criticism that the MDGs reflected a donor-driven agenda, many African countries adopted national strategies that have corresponded clearly to the eight goals and twenty-one targets outlined the MDGs framework.' Examples include Nigeria and Ethiopia.
32. Scheyvens et al (n 17) 2016.
33. Atapattu (n 7) 2019, 227.
34. Copenhagen Consensus 2016. Cited in Zanten and Tulder (n 25) 2018, 208.
35. The 169 Commandments, *THE ECONOMIST* (26 March 2015) <<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/03/26/the-169-commandments>> Also cited in Gellers and Cheatham.
36. William Easterly, 'The SDGs Should Stand for Senseless, Dreamy, Garbled' (Foreign Policy, 28 September 2015) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/28/the-sdgs-are-utopian-and-worthless-mdgs-development-rise-of-the-rest/>> assessed 25 March 2020.
37. Zanten and Tulder (n 25) 2018.
38. Zanten and Tulder (n 25) 2018, 209. However, see Mark Langan, *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa* (Springer, 2017) who argued that the SDGs promote neo-colonialist policies in developing countries.
39. Nigeria National Development Planning A Second Voluntary National Review (2020) Nigeria*. .: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (un.org).
40. Ibid.
41. Oyindamola Aramide, 'Sustainable Development Goals; Two years and Counting...' 26 September 2017 <SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA; TWO YEARS AND COUNTING... - Nigeria Network of NGOs (nnngo.org)>
42. Ibid.

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