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UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND EFFORTS TO END POVERTY AND ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY IN BENUE STATE 2016-2020

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Abstract

This paper "United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to end poverty and achieve food security in Benue State 2016-2020" examines Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to end poverty and achieve food security in Benue State 2016-2020. The study was guided by two research objectives. The research uses a survey research design. This design seeks to describe, explain or interpret existing conditions. The population of the study was 5,741,800 out of which four hundred (400) respondents were randomly sampled. The primary data was obtained through questionnaire, and oral interviews. Descriptive Statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentages were used to analyze and present the data. For the qualitative data interview excerpts were used to compliment the quantitative data. The findings revealed that the extent to which United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals efforts to end poverty in Benue State is high. The finding also revealed that United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved food security in Benue State 2016-2020 to a high extent. It was therefore, recommended that government should make consultation to communities and vulnerable groups in order to understand the particular SDGs project is needed in order to improve standard of living and achieve food security in the state through contact with the groups via seminars and workshops. This could also be achieved through a robust research programme in order to meet the global challenges of poverty and food security.

Key words: Sustainable Development Goals, Poverty and Food Security

Introduction

Development tries to remove major sources of poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as the systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states. Since development is human centered, it is sometimes very difficult to regard a nation developed when majority of the citizens continue to live in poverty. Poverty is a negation of development a situation in which an individual lacks command over basic consumption giving rise to insufficient food, clothing, or shelter and moreover the lack of certain capacities such as being able to participate with dignity in society (Alamu, 2017).

Nigeria like many other countries in the developing world is not an exception of these indices, despite efforts over the years by successive governments to address the issue of poverty. The situation in Nigeria

just like other developing nations became a matter of concern to world leaders and international development institutions. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1998 report, the three richest countries in the world have access that exceed the combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 48 least developing countries (Ayiye, 2014). This concern and worry by world leaders and leading development institutions led to the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000 where about 189 countries including Nigeria adopted a development plan termed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) presently called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals represent part of global efforts to address the development challenges of development countries.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world's biggest promise, a global agreement to reduce

poverty and human deprivation at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative actions; they differ from all other global promises for poverty reduction in their comprehensive nature and the systematic efforts taken to finance, implement and monitor them (Hulme, 2009:). These Goals are enveloped in a cloud of soft words with good intentions and moral comfort (Saith, 2006).

The Goals are one significant breakthrough in development policy and its quest for sustainable development indicates a concerted and pragmatic attempt on the part of government and international agencies, to align with a major development agenda of the development goals and targets by various implementing agencies, the Federal, States and Local Governments

Sustainable Development Goals

On September 25-27, 2015 during the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations member states convened a special summit for the adoption of the post 20th development agenda. This special summit concluded with the adoption of the declaration “Transforming over World- the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development” a universal call for action for the betterment of people, planet prosperity, peace and partnership which is unprecedented in both scope and ambition. To catalyze cooperative transformative action at the international scale, the 2030 includes a set of 17 universally applicable, integrated objectives for sustainable development, which are accompanied by a total of 169 concrete targets and indicators. These objectives are officially referred to as the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The SDGs build upon the expiring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): either target which guided global action on the reduction of extreme poverty in its multiple directions from 2000-2015 while the SDGs maintain the thematic work on poverty eradication targeted by the SDGs. They reflect a comprehensive perspective on international development and sustaining human life on this planet. By providing a set of integrated targets and progress indicates the SDGs are the key to the success of the 2030 Agenda, and will guide the development agenda and national policies of UN member states and their international cooperative within the 15 years.

End extreme poverty in all forms, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture by 2030 are among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. According to United Nations (2017), end poverty in all its forms everywhere implies that: By 2030, SDGs aimed to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance. By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016).

Also, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture according to United Nations (2017) entails that: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round. By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving food security, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment. By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and

production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016).

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted by the world leaders and International Development Agencies and being implemented primarily target poverty reduction and on the other hand contribute to meaningful development. Benue State has index of poverty and poverty in the state is severe, widespread and multidimensional.

The Concept of Poverty

Poverty is defined as a dynamic process of socio-economic and political deprivation, which affects individuals, households or communities resulting in lack of access to basic necessities of life (National policy on Evaluation of the Republic of Nigeria, December 2000). In practice, the above definition of poverty entails, where such basics of life as portable water, electricity, gainful employment, youth empowerment, improved social welfare service and the likes, are farfetched, for the society in question. In a situation of mass poverty, a country with abundant natural resources like Nigeria might be incapable of transforming them into welfare advance for its population, for the forces which govern and determine the pattern of ownership of means of production and forces which govern the access to development of process are vital factors as they determine the structure of interpersonal and inter-group differentials in wealth and income in the country (Kwanashie, 1998). It is clear that poverty would be organic to any system that restricts individuals or groups access to means of production.

Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil producer with much revenue resources: however, a grim statistics of the population of Nigerians in abject poverty released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2012 showed that about 112 million Nigerians live below the poverty line. According to the report, absolute poverty is measured by the number of people who can afford only the basic essentials of shelter, food clothing. This followed another depressing disclosure by the World Bank which

also said that the population of Nigerians in poverty has increased considerably. The figure represents about 67 percent of the entire population (BBC, 2012).

The poverty characteristic of Benue state shows that 79% of the working population is engaged in subsistence agriculture which is not rewarding. It is only about one third of the population that has access to health facilities with a quarter of this population in the rural areas. It is something of a worrisome paradox that a country recognized as one of the richest in human and material resources in Africa and indeed the whole world find in the rather inglorious position of mass and object poverty. Since the early 1970s, Nigeria has ranked as the sixth largest producer of crude oil petroleum. The country has earned billions of dollars from the export of the product. Nigerians and her well-wishers hoped that with such enormous resources, it would be possible for the country to "takeoff" and achieve rapid and socio-economic and industrial growth (Edoh, 2003).

This situation is true of Benue State with rich national and human resources. Poverty is very real in Nigeria in general and the Benue State case in particular. Over the years, the quality of life in Nigeria has nose-dived (Edoh, 2003). Nigeria is therefore a nation trapped in a vortex of abysmal poverty and declining productivity. Available statistics indicate glaringly how precarious life has become for the average Nigerian citizen over the years in the face of suffocating levels of poverty. The Benue situation becomes more pathetic when comparisons are made with others less endowed groups in the country. This research therefore, seeks to identify and examine sustainable development goals and efforts to end poverty and achieve food security in Benue State 2016-2020.

Sustainable Development Goals and Food Security in Nigeria

Food security is fundamental to all nations because no nation will like to see its people poor and hungry. It is thus the driving force to national development. The term "food security" was defined as "when all people, at all times have, physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" That is, food security exists when all members of household at all times have access to enough food for

an active and health life (FAO, 2006). Another definition also given by FAO is, “food security means that food is available at all times, that all persons have access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quality, quantity and variety and that is available within a given culture (Ahmed et al, 2007). There are thus three basic components to food security and these are; availability, access and utilization.

Sustainable food security is a global problem considering the increasing global population which is projected to reach nine (9) billion by 2050 (Okpi, 2013). The challenge of food security is more serious in developing countries and Nigeria is no exception. Several efforts have been made in Nigeria in the past to ensure food security, but most of these efforts are yet to yield any result. Shortages of essential agricultural commodities remain perpetual as evidenced by continuous increases in food prices, and higher import bills. Nigeria is still importing food and according to the then Minister of Agriculture, Chief Audu Ogbah, Nigeria spends 20 billion USD annually on food import (Anwar, 2016). Some of the efforts made in the past include, the National Accelerated Food Production Program (NAFPP) launched in 1960, Operation Feed the Nation, launched in 1976, Green Revolution Program launched in 1980, and Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) launched in 2011. There were also the agency-based intervention programmes which include; National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Center for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM), etc (Manyong et al., 2005). Yet, while these programmes have recorded major successes, many limitations including lack of continuity have hindered the much desired goal of achieving self-sufficiency in food production (Manyong et al., 2005). In Nigeria, about 70% of the population is farmers as reported by Okolo, (2004) and even though farming is subsistence on small farms, it produces 80% of total food production in Nigeria. The farmers depend on agriculture as their only source of food, and often their main source of income. Thus, agriculture holds the potential to food security and to stimulate wider economic growth once adequate attention is given to the sector. In the face of the

numerous challenges that threaten achievement of food security including insurgency, militancy and clashes between herdsmen and farmers, there is a need to device alternative farming methods that can boost food production to feed the population and reduce the level of hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

One of the main global challenges of this century is how to ensure food security for a world growing population whilst ensuring long-term sustainable development. Agriculture has changed over the years and is facing multiple challenges due to problems associated with water stress, soil degradation, global climate change, genetic engineering and loss of manpower necessary for agricultural development due to urban migration. People tend to migrate from the rural to urban areas for better opportunities and the migration is highest among the youths of ages between 15-30 years, who happen to be more productive. This causes a heavy drain on the supply of human family labour (Iruonagbe, 2009). The reason for the migration could be because farming is not lucrative as the gain from agriculture is meager, due to many reasons including drudgery associated with traditional farming practices, owing to the high cost or inadequate agricultural machineries and tools, migration resulting from fear of insurgents and farmers-herders' crisis, poor pricing of the farm produce, poor transportation, and lack of good storage facilities, etc. This results in reduction of agricultural production, because a large proportion of the people have abandoned farming and taken up other non-agricultural jobs in the cities. The risk posed by rural urban migration is that the resulting loss of manpower necessary for agricultural development leads to more poverty and food insecurity. Rural-urban migration thus, becomes a risk factor to food security. Agricultural research has also undergone changes and will continue to change to meet the needs of the ever changing society. Feeding the world's population sustainably is a global challenge and research has an important role to play.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this paper is to examine sustainable development goals and efforts to end poverty and achieve food security in Benue State 2016-2020. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. To examine the impact of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals efforts to end poverty Benue State 2016-2020.
- ii. To find out the impact of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in achieving food security in Benue State 2016-2020.

Research Design

The research uses a survey research design. This design seeks to describe, explain or interpret existing conditions. Prevailing circumstances or practices, existing relationship, attitudes, beliefs and so on.

Population, Sample size and Sampling Technique

The population of Benue state is about 4,219,244 (NPC, 2006, and 5,741, 800 for 2020 projection NBS 2019).

The said population is distributed among the 23 local government areas of Benue state. However, it is only the sample size of the selected local government that is considered in this study. The sample for this study comprises four hundred (400) respondents of the total population of 5,741, 800 people in Benue State. This is based on minimum sample size requirement as proposed by Taro Yamane in Emaikwu (2019) who state that for a study of a known population N and error level, the minimum size requirement should be given by the formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Table 1 Proportionate Sampling of Respondents in the selected LGA

S/N	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS SAMPLED	POPULATION	PROPORTIONATE SAMPLING	SAMPLE
1	Katsina-Ala	303,400	$303,400/1,875,600 \times 400$	65
2	Vandeikya	316,600	$316,600/1,875,600 \times 400$	68
3	Makurdi	405,500	$300,377/1,875,600 \times 400$	86
4	Guma	262,100	$194,164/1,875,600 \times 400$	56
5	Otukpo	359,600	$266,411/1,875,600 \times 400$	77
6	Oju	227,400	$168,491/1,875,600 \times 400$	49
	Total	1,875,600		400

The researcher adopted simple random sampling technique and accessed individual respondents; this was done based on the number of questionnaire given at individual local government. This means the questionnaire contained predetermined questions to elicit specific answers from respondents. This instrument is employed with a number of questions to elicit information to help answer the question raised in chapter one of this work. As it is indicated in the above table, a total of four (400) questionnaires was administered through one on one contact with the respondents in the areas accordingly after which, it was collected, collated and analyzed.

Method of Data Collection

This research uses both primary and secondary method of data collection, this is generally categorized into

three basic areas; the questionnaire, the interview and the secondary data. The primary data is obtained through questionnaire and oral interviews while the secondary data is obtained through books, journals, etc.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentages are used to analyze and present the data. By the nature of primary data collected, the researcher restricts himself to descriptive statistics. The data collected is presented in line with the objectives of the study, the qualitative data obtained from interview are transcribed and used to compliment the quantitative data obtained.

Results

The result is presented in line with the research objectives that guide the study:

Table 2 Respondents awareness of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Project

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully aware	103	26.8
Aware	145	37.7

Partially Aware	78	20.3
Not Aware	59	15.3
Total	385	100.0

Source: Field work 2021

Table 2 seeks respondents' opinions on their awareness of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Project. The data revealed that 103(26.8%) of the respondents were fully aware of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Project. 145(37.7%) were aware and 78(20.3%) are partially aware and 59(15.3%) of the respondents were not aware. this result implies that respondents were aware of United

Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Project. This means that respondents can thus offer reliable data on nexus between UN SDGs goals and some interventions in Benue State.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals efforts to end poverty Benue State 2016-2020?

Table 3: The extent/efforts to which United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ends poverty Benue State

Extent of Need	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	316	82.1
Average	30	7.8
Low	13	3.4
None of the above	26	6.8
Total	385	100.0

Source: Field work 2021

Table 3 shows respondents' views on the extent to which the state needs aid to eradicate poverty/hunger. The data revealed that 316(82.1%) of the respondents were of the view that the state needs aid to eradicate poverty/hunger on a high extent. 30(7.8%) were of the opinion that the state averagely needs aid to eradicate poverty/hunger. 13(3.4%) were of the view that the area lowly needs aid to eradicate poverty/hunger and 26(6.8%) of the respondents were of the view that the state does not needs aid to eradicate poverty/hunger. This result depicts that the extent to which United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals efforts to end poverty in Benue State is high.

Also complimenting the above data, interview with Desk officers of the various Local Government Areas revealed that:

The goals and targets of UN SDGs led to efforts to end poverty and achieve food security in Benue State. However, the Makurdi Community Leader Sir. D.A Bem remarked that

there are several efforts and interventions especially; the area of Agriculture is well captured.

The Makurdi SDGs Desk Officer Mr. Philip Shirsha commented that:

The skill acquisition center has done much to reduce poverty and improve the standard of living.

In Oju, HRH, Chief Nelson Ibe commented that:

SDGs has done well especially in the area of poverty and hunger during the covid-19 pandemic.

Also the SDGs desk officer in Vandeikya LGA Mr. Emmanuel Vembe added that:

The skill acquisition centers made remarkable impact to reduce poverty in the area as it attempts to engage the youth and made them to have means of livelihood.

Research Question 2: To what extent have United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved

food security in Benue State 2016-2020?

Table 4: the extent to which United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved food security in Benue State

Extent of Need	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	127	33.0
Average	101	26.2
Low	92	23.9
None of the above	65	16.9
Total	385	100.0

Source: Field work 2021

Table 4 shows respondents' views on the extent United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved food security. The data revealed that 127(33.0%) of the respondents were of the view that the state needs aid to achieve food security in Benue State. 101(26.2%) were of the opinion that the state averagely needs aid to achieve food security in Benue State. 92(23.9%) were of the view that the state lowly needs aid to achieve food security in Benue State and 65(16.9%) of the respondents were of the view that the state does not needs aid to achieve food security in Benue State. This result depicts that United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved food security in Benue State 2016-2020 to a high extent.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analyzed data the following findings are discussed:

The findings revealed that the extent to which United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals efforts to end poverty Benue State is high.

The second finding also revealed that United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals achieved food security in Benue State 2016-2020 to a high extent.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions are drawn: United Nations through Sustainable Development Goals has immensely reduced poverty and achieved food security in Benue State 2016-2020 to a high extent.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings the following recommendations are put forward:

Government should make consultation to communities and vulnerable groups in order to understand the particular SDGs project is needed in order to reduce poverty and achieve food security through contact with the groups via seminars and workshops.

Adequate and accurate data should be collected with a good research from the communities in desperate need of SDGs projects through professionals. There is a need to focus attention on researches that will pave ways for increasing agricultural productivity to counter the risks posed by the challenges for food production and security. Some of these challenges can be overcome when scientists from across disciplines collaborate. A robust research programme will be needed to meet the global challenges for food security. In robust and even Africa as a whole, innovative approaches to production and storage of agricultural produce will be required to meet the challenges. Researches should address components of sustainable food security such as food production and better nutrition, integration of natural resources, forestry and fisheries, integrating new areas of science e.g. biotechnology, communication and information technology, intensifying application of Biochemical and molecular tools to develop improved crop varieties, adapting to urbanization

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