# INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

*This study examined the role of the public library in achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. It investigated the rate at which Nigerian public libraries are aware of the existence of sustainable development goals. It also examined the quality of human resources in public libraries in Nigeria. It investigated the challenges faced in the achievement of the SDGS. The objectives of the study were to determine the level of awareness of sustainable development goals in public libraries in Nigeria. ascertain the qualities of the available human resources in the public libraries that can enhance the achievement of sustainable development goals and enumerate the factors inhibiting the implementation of sustainable development goals by Nigerian public libraries the systematic sampling was used to select six states, one from each geopolitical zone and purposive sampling was further used to select a sample size of 158 library staff from the population. The survey approach was adopted using questionnaire to collect data. Data collected was analysed through the use of frequency tables, percentages and Somers' delta was used for the hypothesis testing. The result of the study showed that there is some form of awareness of the SDGS on the part of the library staff but very low involvement in activities that drives the SDGS and found that the Nigerian public library is hardly in a good state materially to play an efficient role in the achievement of SDGS. It was also discovered that the challenges inhibiting the public library from playing its role as a developmental tool include, infrastructural problem, lack of adequate funding and poor government involvement in public library activities. The study concluded that the public library staff have to be educated on the SDGS, wholly involved in the modern way of information acquisition and dissemination which involves being active on social media platforms. The study recommended that government should put the public library in a good state in infrastructure, material resource and human resource; it was also recommended that SDGS offices work hand in hand with the public library in their programmes.*

**Keywords:** Public library, Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria, Awareness

## Introduction

Development refers to improvement in a country's economic and social conditions. It refers to improvements in the way of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people's lives. The purpose of development is a raise in the level and quality of

life of the population. Barder (2015) defined development as a process rather than an outcome; dynamic, meaning that, it involves change from one state or condition to another.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is a collection of 17 goals with total of 169 targets covering economic, environmental and social developments. These seventeen sustainable development goals are built on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and rest upon collaborative partnership between countries in balancing, economic growth, environmental sustainability and social inclusion for all. Barder (2015) stated that without ensuring sustainability all development efforts will be short-lived, and may cause more harm than good.

According to Unwin (2017), to achieve these goals, those who develop policies and implement programmes need to address issues of empowerment, focus on the needs of the poorest, develop innovative technological solutions and new business models, legislate new kinds of regulations through which governments facilitate the ICT and telecommunication sector, and ensure that there is effective security and resilience within the systems being developed.

According to Mamman (2015), the public library's major function is to provide free information to the people in the community. The need for an agency available to all, which provides access to knowledge in printed and other formats such as multimedia and internet sources, to support formal and informal education, has been the reason for the foundation and maintenance of most public libraries and remains a core purpose for the public library. That is why Stiglitz (2015) noted that learning does not end with the completion of formal education but is, for most people, a lifelong activity. Therefore, the public library has an important role in assisting this process.

Unlike other types of libraries where their services are limited to a particular group of users, the public library embraces all types of users. As such IFLA (2016) confirmed that in order to fulfil its mandate, the public library performs specific functions which include the following: to provide the educational development of all people in the community; to support the civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations in a positive way; to make recreation and leisure time wholesome and positive; and to give the user access to information over a wide range of human activities such as agriculture, crafts, commerce and industry.

According to United Nations (2015), it is a basic human right to be able to have access to and understanding of information, and there is now more information available than ever before in the world's history. The public library has a particular responsibility to collect local information and make it readily available. The public library must therefore be well equipped to satisfy the information needs of the various individuals and groups in any given community. Chewe and Imasiku (2018) stated that public libraries were conceived to provide members of the community with an avenue for recreation, in which people could go and find something to read for leisure hence the emphasis on fiction material. While serving recreational purposes, people could also use the information resources for self-education.

Promotion of sustainable development in the 21st century demands access to information. This with the increasing need of information, the diverse needs of every individual can be met and taken care of once there is free access to information through the public library. With the increasing need for information in various activities of human endeavour, the world has since become a global village where information is made readily available by just a click of few buttons. In other words the services that information and communication technology (ICT) facilities offer have no limitation to service rendered in the library and it cuts across all areas of human life. Implementing sustainable development goals by taking advantage of the benefits accruable from the use of ICT effectiveness is not an exception. United Nations (2015) posited that public access represents the most economical, expedient and equitable way to reach the greatest number of new users and that why public libraries are often one of the only places where many people can access computers and the Internet.

PublicLibraries2020 (2015) stated that training and resources are needed to help libraries and librarians upgrade the information and services they provide to users. In another study, World Bank

(2016) defined Information and Communications Technology as an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning.

Around the world, public libraries are used as strong tools in actively communicating with people and filling needs, for example, in Slovenia, an Employment Information Service (EIS) was created by the Ljubljana City Library and this programme helped about 1,200 people per year, to find a job. The library taught them to improve their resumes and apply for jobs. Whereas in Nigeria, their potentials are yet to be fully harnessed. In a study carried out by Okojie and Okiy (2019), the public libraries in Nigeria are not actively involved in programmes that help in the implementation of SDGs. More so, most of the public libraries lack working ICT tools and trained personnel in the field of ICT to make the process easier and faster.

**Statement of the Problem**

Countries around the world are actively involved in the implementation processes of SDGs using the public libraries as effective tools (UN, 2018). For the public library to carry out these responsibilities effectively, it has to be equipped at least with basic materials and human resources which include, book and non-book materials, information and communication technology, trained library staff, among others.

However, the state of Nigeria's public library is not as stated above. Ejechi (2018) stated that the public library in Nigeria is not only lacking in materials and adequate manpower but also, is in a poor infrastructural state. The author further pointed out that the government is yet to see the library as a tool for development and solving many challenges we may have as a nation. As such, the nonchalant attitude of the government towards the building of the public library as a whole, has propounded its problems.

As shown in Okojie and Okiy (2019), majority of Nigerian public librarians do not have knowledge of the sustainable development goals and therefore, may not have be actively involved in its implementation. As a result, the researcher has embarked on a study to investigate how public libraries could help in the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria by the year 2030.

**Objectives of the Study**

The general objectives of this study is to find out the role of public libraries on the attainment of sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to:

1. Determine the level of awareness of sustainable development goals in public libraries in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the qualities of the available human resources in the public libraries that can enhance the achievement of sustainable development goals.
3. Enumerate the factors inhibiting the implementation of sustainable development goals by Nigerian public libraries.

**Null Hypothesis**

$H_{01}$ - There is no significant association between the librarians' level of awareness and the implementation of sustainable development goals.

**Methodology**

This study employed descriptive survey research design. The population of the study is made up of 1,776 library staff which includes certified librarians, library officers and library assistants from the

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| | users | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Partaken in programs to end hunger and achieve food security | 10(18.2) | 10(18.2) | 2(3.6) | 10(18.2) | 23(41.8) | 55 (100) | 2.5273 | Disagreed |
| 5 | Partaken in programs to help in providing quality education for the people | 13(23.6) | 19(34.5) | 9(16.4) | 4(7.3) | 10 (18.2) | 55 (100) | 3.3818 | Agreed |
| 6 | Partaken in programs to ensure sustainable management of water and sanitation for all | 13(23.6) | 15(27.3) | 9(16.4) | 4(7.3) | 14(25.5) | 55 (100) | 3.1636 | Agreed |
| 7 | Banners and fliers in the library on the SDGs | 9(16.4) | 17(30.9) | 10(18.2) | 7(12.7) | 12(21.8) | 55(100) | 3.0727 | Agreed |
| 8 | Organized programme in relation with development of its community | 12 | 18 | 12 | 2 | 11 | 55(100) | 3.3273 | Agreed |

**Table 1.2 Responses of library staff on their level of awareness of sustainable development goals.**

The table 1.2 showed responses by library staff on the level of awareness of sustainable development goals in public libraries in Nigeria. 14 respondents representing 25.5% responded that they are extremely aware of the sustainable development goals. 25 of the respondents represented by 45.5% responded that they are moderately aware of sustainable development goals.

7 respondents represented by 12.7% responded that they are somewhat aware of sustainable development goals. 5 respondents represented by 9.1% responded that they are slightly aware of sustainable development goals while. 4 respondents represented by 7.3% responded that they are not aware at all of sustainable development goals.15 respondents represented by 27.3% responded that they have attended programmes that have to do with sustainable development goals.

10 respondents represented by 18.2% responded that they have moderately attended programmes that have to do with sustainable development goals 8 respondents represented by 14.5% responded that they have somewhat attended programmes that have to do with sustainable development goals while nine of the respondents represented by 16.4% as slightly aware of programmes that have to do with sustainable development goals while 13 respondents as represented by 23.6% have not at all attended programs that have to do with sustainable development. Objective 1 sought to find out the level of awareness of SDGS in public libraries in Nigeria and the table 4.1 above attempts to answer this question.

The main results of question 1 2 5 6 7 and 8 are =>3, which means that the decision is retained. In essence, a large number of respondents are moderately aware of the existence of SDGS. A large number are also aware of the organised programs that have to do with SDGS but even though they claim to be aware, a large number also stated that they haven't particularly received any training on

From the table 1.5, there is a strong association between library staff level of awareness and implementation of SDG. This shows that as library staff level of awareness about SDG increases, the rate of implementation of SDG will be high. Furthermore, the approximate significance shows that there is a statistical significance value of $p=0.225$, which means $p > 0.05$. The null hypothesis is rejected.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study discovered that the public library is a viable tool for the development of the people. And for this to be effectively done, the public library staff have to be educated on the SDGS, fully involved in the current ways of information acquisition and dissemination which involves being active on social media platforms so that they can keep abreast with what is happening around the world and exposure to the use of ICT components. To ensure that public Libraries play a role in being an active tool for SDG implementation, some important steps must be considered and these are presented as the recommendations below

## Recommendations

1. There should be adequate awareness programmes by the government agencies in charge of SDGS in order to enlighten public library staff about the existence of SDGS and to work in collaboration with for the effective dissemination of information about SDGS.

2. The public library staff should be encouraged with adequate incentives to attend conferences, workshops and seminars that pertain to development in order to further expose them to developmental strides happening around the world.

3. The government should invest more in the public Library through provision of better infrastructure, modern material resources and better packages for staff to awaken the Nigerian public Library system.

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