

ADVOCACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

¹John-Adegbesan, Ekwi, ²Wonah, Emmanuel

Department of Political and Administrative Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract: This paper considered the impact advocacy will have on Nigeria's drive to sustainable development. It was highlighted that the term 'sustainable development' began to gain popularity, when it became increasingly fashionable to use it as a way of responding to global environmental concerns, biophysical issues, fairness, equity and distribution. The paper adopted the secondary sources of data collection and analysis to reveal that with a view to revamping the economy and ensure sustainable development, the Nigerian State has initiated several policies and programmes and that like any developing nation, Nigeria faces some challenges in its development stride and efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens. The critical economic, political and security issues facing the Nigerian State requires the need to foster advocacy that will lead to sustainable rapid economic growth and cater for the needs of its large population and the imperative for proper integration of its domestic economy into the world economy in the face of increasing globalisation. The paper, thus, recommended that to improve the social status of Nigerians and ensure sustainable development, social policies and programmes that will address existing social inequity and concerns, including economic liberalisation and globalisation have to be pursued vigorously through advocacy.

Keywords: Advocacy, Development, Sustainable Development, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to interrogate issues surrounding advocacy and sustainable development in Nigeria. Most recently, there has been a preponderance of issues regarding sustainable development. Most especially since the early 1980s, the term 'sustainable development' has been used widely and indiscriminately. The term began to gain popularity, when it became increasingly fashionable to use it as a way of responding to global environmental concerns, biophysical issues, fairness, equity and distribution.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global initiative aimed at making the nation a better place to live. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an offshoot of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contains seventeen goals that are target specific towards various sectors of the economy. Each goal is focused on a specific area of the nation's economy and is development-oriented. The fundamental philosophy underlying the sectors-inclined contributions towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underpins the necessity of priorities amongst various stakeholders. However, the actualization of the SDGs will be feasible provided all the essential infrastructures, including information agencies, are given the desired attention to contribute their quota in that direction (Onah et al, 2015).

With this in mind, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were put up in recent times to address and include the issue of sustainability in development. As emphasised by (Olabode et al, 2014):

The key to growth and development is a structural change, some measure of distributive equity, modernization in social and cultural attitudes, a degree of political transformation and stability, an improvement in health and education so that population growth stabilizes with an increase in urban living and employment (Olabode et al, 2014).

It is common knowledge within development circle that development involves a physical reality and a state of mind. Through development process, the interactions between social, economic and institutional processes must be continually sustained to meet up with increasing future demands in terms of population growth and continuous use of natural, human and material resources.

It has been observed that changes in the integrated approach to social, economic and environmental issues have not really facilitated the developmental goals in Nigeria. For instance, problems such as poverty, flooding, ethnicity, environmental pollution corruption, attitudes and lopsided income distribution have been on the increase. A cursory look at the poverty profile in Nigeria showed that in 2004, Nigeria's relative poverty measurement stood at 54.4%, but increased to 69% in 2010. In absolute terms, 54.7% of Nigerians were living in poverty in 2004 but this increased to 60.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Besides these in the early 1990s Nigerian cities experienced flood hazards have more than doubled in the last ten years While in recent times, it was recorded that Nigeria experienced the worst flooding as at the year 2012 (Odermeho, 1993).

In view of these challenges, it should be recalled that in the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by 189 member-countries of the United Nations including Nigeria. This was with a view to fast-track key developmental issues in Nigeria which include increasing the availability of basic life sustaining goods, raising the standard of people's living as well as expanding the range of economic and social choices. A set of eight goals to be achieved by 2015 was adopted by the United Nations which were to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development (Todaro & Smith, 2011).

The Concept of Advocacy

Advocacy is a set of organised actions aimed at influencing public policies, social attitudes, or political processes. Advocacy can include the following:

- i. Organising efforts by citizens to influence the formulation and implementation of public policies and programs by persuading and pressuring state authorities, international financial institutions, and other powerful actors.
- ii. Giving support to a policy and persuading those with power to act in support of the policy at local, national, and international levels;
- iii. Enabling and empowering people to speak for themselves;
- iv. Gaining and exercising power to influence a political action; and Clark (1992) provides the following definition of advocacy.

The aim is to alter the ways in which power, resources, and ideas are created, consumed and distributed at a global level, so that people and organisations in the South have a more realistic chance of controlling their own development.

Furthermore, Clark (1992) suggests that NGOs attempt to change policy in two ways. These are not mutually exclusive - in fact the most effective strategies will probably use both methods. Advocacy is the process of using information strategically to change policies that affect the lives of disadvantaged people. It often involves lobbying northern development and political institutions. Increasingly southern NGOs are developing advocacy skills to challenge local, national and international policies. This involves strengthening the structures through which poor people can participate in the formulation of the policies that control their lives, for example developing strong local networks and representation on local and national civic institutions. Projects which involve the people affected by policy change in developing, implementing and monitoring advocacy work are more likely to achieve concrete change on the ground.

Concept of Development

According to McCaskill and Kampe (1997) development is a multi-dimensional, process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. Abdulgafar, Ibrahim and Alasinrin, (2013) views development in human society as a many-sided phenomenon that has come to mean different things in different societies in different situations and different development thinkers, development connotes changes either for the better or change for the worse

and has wide application in variety of situations. Rodney (1972) also sees development in human society as a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the macro level, McCaskil (1997) notes that conventional development, practice attempts to modify the lifestyles of “under-developed people” to better reflect national or western standards of what constitutes a good life (politically, economically, and socially), without prior genuine consultation with those to be developed. McCaskil and Kampe’s (1997) definition of development also reflects that which the people themselves desire: to reclaim their identity and their continuity as a people ... the right to determine for themselves the type of social order that they want.

In all, the human element is the central focus either as a beneficiary or as victim, which is why Preiswerk (1980) posits that communities and individual people define their own development according to their own needs, values and aspirations. However, the direction of any development process is certainly geared towards a better condition or a better situation whether biological, physical, psychological, economic, political, social, national, scientific and technological. The term development connotes growth or maturation in a process which starts off gradually and cumulatively through a kind of unfolding of internal and latent potentiality when the whole moves towards some goal attainment (Ogbonnaya, 2012). This implies that development is a long-term commitment to improving the lives of people in its totality through a process of providing opportunities and decision-making authority to indigenous people in determining their own future, and to what extent and in what form they desire external assistance. According to Mbagwu (2001) development is a gradual movement along a definite trend from one stage to another involving several stages producing a cumulative effect towards the achievement of a desired goal/objective of the people. The phases of change are initiated by the people within the community of society.

Development therefore, is a qualitative and quantitative improvement in the well-being and living standard of the people as exemplified by level of industrialisation, food production, size and distribution of labour force, pattern of income distribution, health facilities and access to its use, good and affordable housing, education and access to it and availability of basic amenities. It is simply meeting the needs of a people or society. It can also be offered as a generalization, that all phases of development are temporary or transient and destined sooner or later to give way to something else.

Concept of Sustainable development

It must be understood that there is no single definition for sustainable development but they key idea common to all definitions concerns resource exploitation at a rate that would not prove detrimental to future generations. For instance, according to the Complete A-Z Geography Handbook sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising future generations to meet their own needs. The environment should be seen as an asset, a stock of available wealth but if the present generation spends this wealth without investment for the future, then the world will run out of resources. If, however, we use this capital to research and develop new resources for the future, we can build machines that will substitute for the environmental resource (resource substitution). A good example is the construction of solar panels to replace oil and coal”.

According to the direct Government website UK “Sustainable development means a better quality of life now and for generations to come. It means not using up resources faster than the planet can replenish, or re-stock influences decision making with organizations, and therefore can go towards forming principles and business ‘values’ – for example, providing information to the public in an open and accessible way and involving people and communities who are affected by those decision. Or openly reporting how they run their business and the care they take about the local environment and the people that work for them, these principles can also apply to government policies – for example, in planning regulations for green buildings and technologies. It is also about being clear and responsible about the use of scientific, and other, evidence – for example, about levels of pollution or carbon emissions.

According to the international Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definitions is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report:

Sustainable development is development the meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: - The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and – The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

All definitions of sustainable development require that the world be seen as a system—a system that connects space; and a system that connects time. When one considers the world as a system over space, you grow to understand that air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia, and that pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia. Besides, when you think of the world as a system over time, you start to realize that the decisions our grandparent made about how to farm the land continue to affect agricultural practice today; and the economic policies we endorse today will have an impact on urban poverty when our children are adults. According to the Teachers in Development Education Annual Report (2008), sustainable development concerns a wide range of interrelated issues which may be approached through the following seven principles or dimensions. The first concerns the interdependent nature of the world. This gives rise to the need for a participative response through the exercise of citizenship and stewardship, which is the theme of the second concept.

An analysis of Advocacy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

With a view to revamping the economy and ensure sustainable development, the Nigerian State has initiated several policies and programmes that will help achieve this. For instance, there has been series of development plans aimed at the development of the Nigerian state. But unfortunately, none of these plans have been able to effectively galvanize the State towards a sustained drive towards development. Furthermore, in 2004 the First National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS I) was launched. This was followed by the Second National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS II, 2007-2009). The latter was replaced by the National Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) meant to span 2010-2020. Therefore, it was based on NV20:2020 blue print, the Transformation Agenda emerged as the implementation strategic framework which is now being implemented.

Like any developing nation, Nigeria faces some challenges in its development stride and efforts to improve the quality of life of its citizens. The critical economic, political and security issues facing the Nigerian State requires the need to foster advocacy that will lead to sustainable rapid economic growth and cater for the needs of its large population and the imperative for proper integration of its domestic economy into the world economy in the face of increasing globalisation.

Lele (1991), for instance, described sustainable development as “a new way of life and approach to social and economic activities for all societies, rich and poor which is compatible with the preservation the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, an analysis of advocacy and sustainable development in Nigeria should involve an efficient management of resources for human survival taking into consideration both the present and future generation.

The Nigerian state should also recognise the fact that advancing democratic governance through freedom of speech and expression is key to sustainable development and overall political stability of the country. Overcoming the challenges of poverty, fighting corruption, meeting the basic needs of the people, inadequate and inefficient infrastructure and development of human resources and capital for sustainable growth and equity are critical social challenges that government must be determined to address. The economic, social and environment pillars of sustainable development have been adequately embedded in many parts of the country’s 1999 Constitution. In particular, the Constitution states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is “a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice”.

Therefore, the Constitution also promises to all Nigerian citizens’ justice encompassing the social, economic, political, equality of status opportunity and the dignity of the individual. With particular emphasis on the environmental pillar of sustainable development, Article 20 (sub-section 2), of the Constitution states that, “the State shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria”. Unfortunately, especially from events in recent times, it is obvious that the Nigerian State has failed in her attempt to galvanise sustainable development due to sectional interests, lack of political will, poor leadership among others, hence, the need to employ advocacy as a tool to engender sustainable development in the Nigeria.

2. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper considered the effect advocacy will have on Nigeria drive towards Sustainable Development. Therefore, in a bid to address the challenge of sustainable development globally, and particularly in Nigeria, all available means must be employed to tackle related problems of the environment as well as economic and social issues. This can be achieved by taking a conscious step towards the achievement of the goal of sustainable development as stated in Nigeria’s visionary plans through advocacy. In addition, the issue of sustainability must be a concern to all parastatals (public and private) and individuals. This will require educating everyone through advocacy on the need for sustainable development and as a result walk towards its actualisation

Furthermore, the Nigerian state must ensure that policies that will promote sustainability should be in place, which is consistent with international policies, in order to achieve an overall sustainable development. Again, improving the critical regulatory and strategic policymaking roles of the public sector to re-orient various economic and social sectors towards a sustainable development pathway is a necessity. Enhancement of the role of the private sector especially advocacy groups to take a sustainable development pathway as become very important.

Summarily, to improve the social status of Nigerians and ensure sustainable development, social policies and programmes that will address existing social inequity and concerns, including economic liberalisation and globalisation have to be pursued vigorously through advocacy.

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