

CESDEV MONOGRAPH SERIES

Making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Work for People in Africa

Amina J. Mohammed (OFR)

October, 2016

CESDEV Issue Paper No. 2016/3



**CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

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**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
Ibadan, Nigeria**

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Published by:
Centre for Sustainable Development
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria

ISBN: 978-978-54826-2-1

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This paper is the keynote address presented by Her Excellency, Amina J. Mohammed at the 7th Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS) on 22nd August 2017.

Amina J. Mohammed is the Honourable Minister of Environment, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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Printed by:
Deleprints – 08060328997

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Making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Work for People In Africa

Introduction

I thank the organisers of the 7th Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS), the University of Ibadan Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV) in collaboration with African Sustainable Development Network (ASUDNET) and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN-Nigeria). It gives me great pleasure and honour to be in your midst today and present the Keynote Address on “Making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) work for people”. The theme for the discussion today is apt taking into consideration the global commitments on sustainable development, environment and financing. Sustainable development is a topical issue in the world today, therefore this 7th ISDS is relevant and timely as it will address the strategies for making the SDGs work for people. I also consider the timing of the Summit appropriate, because 2016 marked the commencement of the implementation of the SDGs having completed, at global level, the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015.

Development is about people, policies and actions taken at improving their socioeconomic status. As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) puts it “people are the real wealth of a nation”. The main objective of development should therefore be to create enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. I have, therefore, organised my presentation in four

parts. First, the definition of Sustainable Development is considered. Second, issues related to development goals will be reviewed. Third, the 17th SDGs will be examined. Fourth, the attention of stakeholders will be drawn to strategies to be adopted for making SDGs work for people. This paper concludes with assurance that the Federal Government (FG) will provide enabling environment for the country to achieve all the identified 169 targets of SDGs, hopefully, on or before 2030.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a paradigm linking economy, society and environment. The Brundt Commission in its now Famous Brundt Report, "Our Common Future" defined sustainable development as "development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). This definition evolved over the years. Discussions in different forums, the Earth Summit in 1992 (UN, 1992), the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (UN, 2002), have formalised the notion of sustainable development to include three pertinent pillars-- social, economic and environmental.

Those who conceptualised the concept recognise that the focus should be on people and their well-being; that human life should be "healthy, productive and in harmony with nature". In addition, they felt that the concern should not only be on the present generation; but that due consideration should be given to future generations. In other words, the concept refers to a mode of human development, in which resource use aims to meet human needs, while simultaneously ensuring the sustainability of natural

systems and the environment, so that the needs of the present generation are met, without jeopardising meeting the needs of generations yet unborn.

Sustainable development is a process of development which leaves at least, sufficient capital; natural and man-made, for the future generations to have access to. According to United Nations (1987), it is the development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs. From the various definitions of sustainable development; it is evident that there is the need to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Figure 1 depicts the interdependence of growth loops and calls, needed for a balanced pursuit of economic growth and environmental sustainability. As the figure shows, human needs lead to consumption through purchases, with the aim of improving their well-being. These purchases increase GDP, creating jobs and financial status, leading to more purchases. This, in turn, will lead to more production and increase in GDP. Enhanced production and GDP will raise the use of carbon-based resources, depleting those resources (Higgins, 2013). Environmental degradation could lead to water pollution, environmental health hazards, desertification, drought, flooding, erosion, biodiversity depletion and a host of other problems, ultimately leading to high cost living.

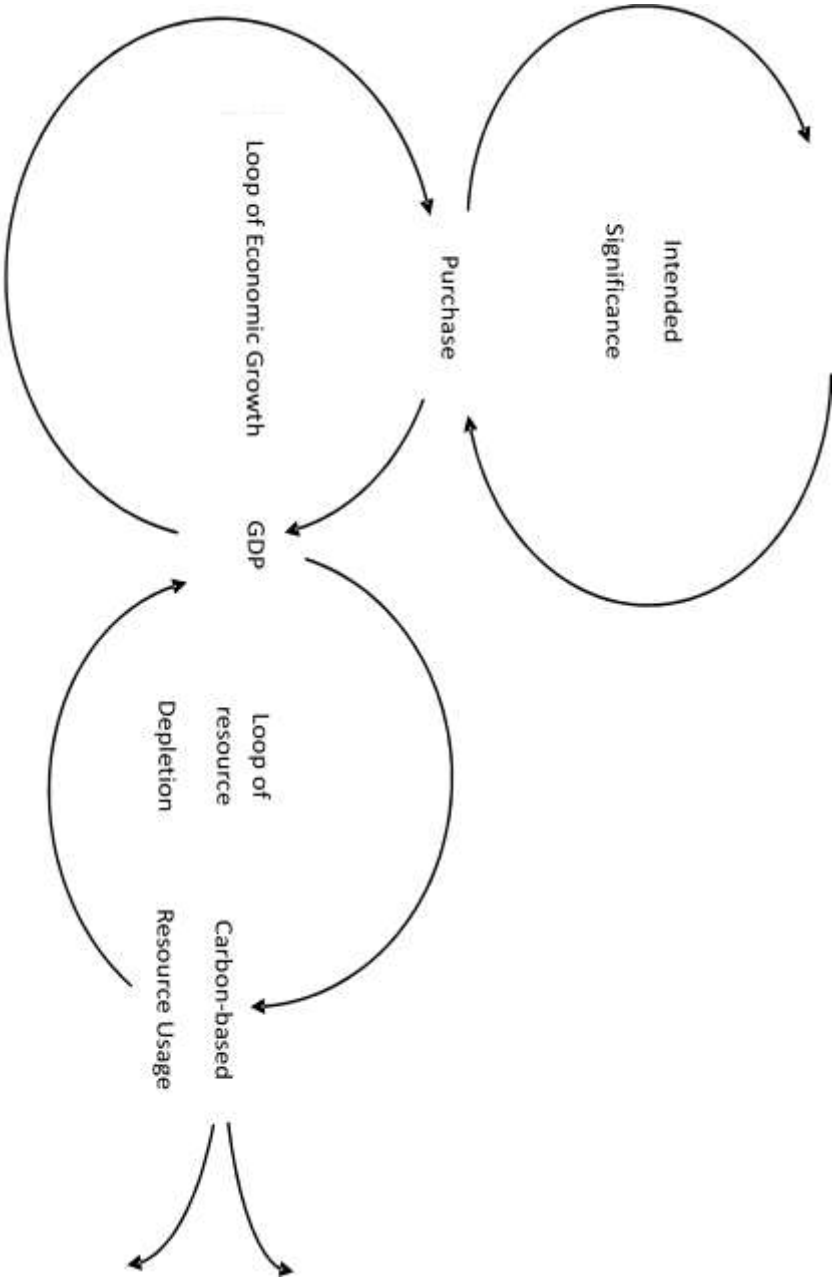


Figure 1: Interdependence of growth loops

2.0 Overview of Sustainable Development Goals

2.1 *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development are an intergovernmental set of aspiration and goals with 169 targets, spearheaded by the United Nations (UN). SDGs were adopted by the Resolution of the General Assembly of United Nations on 25 September 2015. It acts as the post-2015 Development Agenda, a successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SDGs are deeper than MDGs; it was designed to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. This agenda intends to eradicate global challenges; notably poverty, a cardinal problem to be addressed by sustainable development. All countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership are intended to implement the plan.

The UN general assembly resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. They were also determined to take the bold and transformative steps; urgently needed to move the world unto a sustainable and resilient path. The 17 SDGs and 169 targets demonstrate the scale and ambition of the new universal agenda. This intends to build on the MDGs and complete what it did not achieve. The goals were conceived to realise the human rights of all and achieve gender equality as well as the empowerment of all women and girls. Also, they were structured to integrate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The goals and targets are expected to stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. These include:

(i) People

To end poverty and hunger in their entire forms and dimensions as well as ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potentials in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment

(ii) Planet

To protect the planet from degradation through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing of its natural resources as well as taking urgent actions on climate change, to support the needs of the present and future generations.

(iii) Prosperity

To ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives as well as ensuring that economic, social and technological progress occur in harmony with nature.

(iv) Peace

There is the need for an inclusive society, just as well as free from fear and violence to foster peaceful atmosphere for sustainable development. There can be no sustainable development without peace and vice versa.

(v) **Partnership**

To mobilise the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable as well as with the participation of all countries, stakeholders and people.

2.2 What are the SDGs and what inspired them

The Sustainable Development Goals are a proposed set of targets relating to future international development. They are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states are expected to use in framing their agendas and policies over the next fifteen years (2016-2030). The SDGs build upon, follow and expand the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs played a huge role in the development of SDGs. The MDGs have been criticised for being too narrow and leaving out many people and needs like mental health. The MDGs made no mention of human rights nor specifically, addressed economic development.

2.3 Visions of SDGs

With these goals and targets, we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision. We are envisaging a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive. We are envisaging a world free of fear and violence. A world with universal literacy, with equitable and universal access to: quality education at all levels, healthcare and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being is assured. Further, where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human rights to safe drinking

water and sanitation as well as where there is improved hygiene; and food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious. A world where human habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable and there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

3.0 Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1.** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 2.** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition as well as promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education as well as promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5.** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6.** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7.** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment as well as decent work for all.
- Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
- Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12.** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

- Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 14.** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15.** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, as well as halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable as well as inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

5.0 Roles of Individuals, Governments, Non-governmental Organisations and Financial Sector

4.1 Making Sustainable Development Goals work for people

For the SDGs to work for people at national and international levels, the involvement of the generality of people is key to the implementation of the 17 goals and 169 targets. Therefore, every citizens of this country must play important roles as an individual, a leader in government establishment, non-government organisations (NGOs), and as drivers of financial institutions. We are all stakeholders.

4.2 Individuals

We must see the sustainable use of our environment resources as an integral part of the country's development process. Attainment of sustainable development requires that our natural environmental resources are properly

managed, used wisely and cherished. Unfortunately, in its use, we face a number of challenges. Nigeria continues to be severely impacted by the effect of deleterious changes in our environment with sea level rise along our coastline, progressive desertification in the northern zone, acute drought, loss of fertile land, deforestation, destructive erosion, land degradation, biodiversity depletion, ozone layer depletion, climate change, flooding and general environmental degradation from pollution and contamination. These are issues that threaten the livelihoods and survival of citizens of this country. We are all guilty of contributing to environmental degradation. There are opportunities to derive maximum social and economic benefits from our environmental resources if properly managed (SDG; 13, 14, 15).

Individuals are encouraged to give proper education to their children (males and females), empower them and create an enabling environment for them to become good citizens of the country (SDG; 3, 6).

4.3 Government

The targets of SDGs must be supported by the government, because she is a powerful agent of change and occupies a central place in the implementation and achievement of anticipated targets of SDGs. The role of government centred especially on policy formulation. Policy development and plans must be drawn through participatory and inclusive processes, following a bottom up approach system as against a top down approach that usually neglects the opinion and aspiration of local communities. The government must ensure that national and international policy decisions and activities are tailored to support and implement sustainable

development. It is by harmonising international agreements and translating the developmental goals into enforceable national laws with respect to country-specific development priorities, that the SDGs' targets will be achieved. Strategies must put in place to monitor the implementation process and be accountable to the people, for national progress on the SDGs. Government must recognise that development should focus on human security, human rights and dignity, fairness and law enforcements, as well as equality and equity, thereby, mobilised resources and tailor it towards ensuring sustainability.

The role of government is not limited to the development of appropriate policies; it includes provision of social services that are accessible and affordable for all people especially the poor, vulnerable groups and those living in the remote areas of the country. Government could also play vital roles by disseminating information and engaging the citizen in decision making process. It is as a matter of importance for the government to link the global goals of sustainable development with local communities. Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets, they are directly or indirectly related to the daily work of various governments at different levels.

4.4 Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

NGOs are usually found devoting their attention towards ensuring social and community development. The independent role of NGOs within the society calls for their participation in the implementation of SDGs. They can play the role of connecting governmental strategies and initiatives with local communities. NGOs can provide technical support and enhance capacity building in all

thematic goals related to sustainable livelihood development, education, health and employment. They can also play a facilitating role in reaching out to those marginalised or difficult to reach; bring people's aspirations and knowledge to collective actions. This role will extend the impact of SDGs to local people which are the ultimate priorities.

NGOs are expected in creating and raising awareness as well as inspiring people towards a change of attitude and behaviours. They are also expected to help in measuring the progress of achievement of sustainable development through data collection, providing expertise and participatory support in planning and monitoring process. NGOs are expected to ensure behavioural changes among the people, mobilise them to develop a sense of opportunity and ownership with regards to the challenges they are facing, leverage collective action and engagement across all goals during the planning, implementing and monitoring phases.

NGOs' expected responsibilities include empowerment and capacity building. People skills should be developed across different SDGs through knowledge transfer while facilitating the dissemination and building a valuable information system. It is expected that NGOs will promote community action towards building resilience and strengthens preparedness to support the achievement of SDGs.

4.5 *Financial services sector*

SDGs serve as a global compass which the financial community of banks, insurers and investors can use to guide their core business towards achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability. Sustainable development is

about capital allocation and thus, should be at the core of financial markets activity. The financial services industry is a vital enabler for the real economy. It supports improved economic well-being which increases the ability of families and governments to improve social outcomes. The greatest potential of the commercial banking sector is in its relationship with small and medium sized enterprises (SMSEs), where banks can be very influential through their lending practices and by providing information. Commercial banks have less influence over larger companies. There is, however, scope for them to influence consumer behaviour through the financial products they offer. Financial markets present an opportunity for environmental policy, particularly useful in view of the need for a wider range of policy instruments. The biggest opportunities for shared value - where we see the coming together of market potentials, societal demands and policy actions - are grouped around the following themes:

Access

Increasing financial inclusion for individuals (SDGs; 1, 2, 3, 4, 10), as well as SMSEs (SDGs 5, 8) and governments (SDG; 13). This includes access to secure payment and remittance facilities, savings, credit and insurance. The core financial services are:

- (i) Facilitate secure payment for goods and services including regional and international trade;
- (ii) Enable smoothening of cash flows and consumption over time;
- (iii) Provide financial protection; and
- (iv) Support more efficient allocation of capital.

Investment

Investing in financing and insuring renewable energy (SDGs; 7, 13) and other infrastructure projects (SDGs; 6, 9). These include:

- (i) Banks raising capital through the debt and equity markets for government and private sectors' investments;
- (ii) Asset managers investing as part of a diversified portfolio as well as to meet demands of impact investors;
- (iii) International / development financial institutions and sovereign wealth funds helping to de-risk investments for institutional investors; and
- (iv) Institutional investors and financial institutions with a long-term investment horizon – such as pension funds and insurers – should be investing in infrastructure.

Risk

Leveraging risk expertise to directly influence customer behaviour and to create more resilient nations through:

- (i) Developing innovative pricing models which incentivize more sustainable living and production (SDG, 12); and sharing non-proprietary risk data, risk analysis and risk management expertise to inform public policy and practice (SDG11). This includes insurers collaborating to develop open source risk models which can inform disaster risk reduction policies and actions such as land zoning, building codes and investment in resilient infrastructure.

Cross-cutting

Positively influencing environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices of corporate clients and investee companies (SDGs;13, 14, 15, 16). This can be achieved through:

- (i) Adoption of good practice principles, policies and risk frameworks to guide business transactions and investments – particularly on sensitive sectors or issues;
- (ii) Pricing which reflects ESG risks and opportunities; and
- (iii) Active investor stewardship.

Conclusion

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I believe I have said enough to underscore the fact that people are the wealth of a nation and should be responsible for making SDGs work; we are all stakeholders. As a key stakeholder, we should play our role with all sincerity and highest dedication it deserves. I assure you of government support to provide enabling environment as well as good foundation that will be created for individuals, NGOs and financial services sector (banks, insurance and investors) to work collectively towards sustainability in every sector of the economy and environmental growth.

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ABOUT CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CESDEV)

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV) was established by the University of Ibadan through Senate paper 5386 in May 2010 as a demonstration of the University's commitment to Sustainable Development. It was based on the need to provide intellectual platform for identification of issues germane to sustainable development, critically analyse them, and provide leadership in finding enduring solutions that will enhance sustainable development.

The establishment of CESDEV was sequel to series of events, paramount among which was the winning of a USD 900,000 grant from the MacArthur Foundation to establish the Master's in Development Practice (MDP) Programme. The University of Ibadan was one of the ten original Universities that won the grant in a global competition involving over 70 Universities. Further brainstorming led to defining the composition of the emerging Centre beyond the MDP Programme. It was resolved that a number of development programmes that were "hanging in the balance" be moved to the Centre. The **Centre for Sustainable Development** (CESDEV) thus became a Teaching and Research Centre with a mandate in multi- and inter-disciplinary approach to Sustainability issues affecting not just our continent but the whole universe. The Centre is designed to be a Teaching, Research and Development unit in the University. Presently, CESDEV has the following academic and outreach programmes:

- ◆ Development Practice Programme (DPP)
- ◆ Tourism and Development Programme (TODEP)
- ◆ Indigenous Knowledge and Development Programme (IKAD)
- ◆ Sustainable Integrated Rural Development in Africa Programme (SIRDA)
- ◆ Climate and Society Programme (CSP)
- ◆ Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Programme (EPNARP)
- ◆ Leadership and Governance Programme (LGP)
- ◆ Annual Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS)

ISBN: 978-978-51675-7-8



978-978-51675-7-8