

Full Length Research

Understanding the synergy between Nigerian Libraries and Information Centres in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Salihu, Ayira Muhammed

Department of Library and Information Science, Kogi State University, Anyigba.
Email: salihumuhammed1990@gmail.com. Phone No: 08065826971

Being a paper presented at Nigerian Library Association of Northwest Regional Conference Kano on 13th-15th November, 2023

Accepted 25 March 2024

This paper examines the roles of library in promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. The paper argues that libraries as important resources for achieving these goals must provide relevant and adequate information to the public in an accessible way. This paper, therefore, outline the roles library and information centres play in promoting sustainable development goals. This paper also highlights the challenges associated with libraries towards promoting sustainable development goals. The paper, among others, recommends that libraries should regularly organize seminars, government should ensure that libraries and information centre are fully integrated into the scheme of activities at both the local and national levels, government and the parent institution should support the library and information centres financially.

Keywords: Libraries, Sustainable Development Goals, information resources

Cite This Article As: Salihu, A.M. (2024). Understanding the synergy between Nigerian Libraries and Information Centres in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci. 12(2):45-50

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was launched by the United Nations to create a common set of development goals for all communities in every country with a deadline for attainment of 2030 vision. These goals are focused on some special areas of the country economy. In the era of Millennium Development Goals, the roles of the libraries and information centre were not highly pronounced. The library and information centres are important institutions that serve as a channel to knowledge, provides information literacy skills, long life learning, research and learning development of an individual. 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, Urom, & Unagha, 2015).

Libraries are tools for the development of society. Thus, in order to enable the people to live responsibly, library must be able to meet their needs at the appropriate time (Okoro, Akidi&Arua, 2014). Lozano (2002) agreed that the general library' roles are to provide information to its community, therefore acquisition of knowledge dispels ignorance, as such the general objective of the library is to serve as a centre for information where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance and level of uncertainty about their environment.

It is obvious that for libraries to be successful and effective, they cannot act alone. They need to build strong associations, partnerships and networks with strong, attractive and achievable plans of actions that they can use to advocate for substantial and sustainable support. Libraries need to advocate decision making at local, regional, national and international levels that can help bring about a change in policies in support of libraries. Libraries in many parts of the world have been seen as great agents of change based on what they have been able to deliver and, as a result, are receiving support from governments and other agencies and stakeholders. African libraries can follow the same steps by proving that they can be true agents of transformation of the communities. Libraries are of great value especially as development is concerned. This view has been supported by declarations such as that of Scheeder (2017) who stated that, there can be no sustainable development without access to information and there can be no meaningful inclusive access to information without libraries.

This paper discusses the roles library could play in supporting the SDGs, by challenging librarians to brace-up to actualize the numerous submissions encouraging librarians to be role models and expectations as they facilitate access to information, preserve sources of information, store and retrieve, as well as promoting literacy (Lor, 2015). Prompting the essence of this paper, the researchers noted that several studies (Okuonghae and Ibinovia, 2019; Omeluzor and Ogo, 2018; Gani, Kasa and Khali, 2016; and Abdulsalami, Okezie and Agbo, 2013) captured the roles of libraries for the attainment of information literacy, national development and sustainable development, while none of them emphatically stressed the utilization of libraries and information centres in promoting sustainable development goals in Nigeria. This therefore is the gap the researchers intend to cover. In so doing, the paper has seven parts comprising; introduction, review of related literature, sustainable development, roles libraries play towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), challenges facing libraries towards SDGs and conclusion as well as recommendations.

Library and information services

Libraries are established to foster learning and development in the society by rendering different quality information related services to the citizens to enable them make informed decisions and solve societal problems, as well as enable the citizenry to play active role in the society. Through their vital services, libraries have positioned themselves to be potent vehicle for societal development and lifelong learning among the citizenry. Over the years, libraries have contributed to the paradigm shift towards sustainable developments in Nigeria. According to Igbinoia & Okuonghae (2019), the library provides the platform for users to access different information and information resources in different formats in order to meet their information need.

Furthermore, the aim of all libraries is to provide information for all its users. It is no more a secret that the attainment of the SDGs requires citizens to have access to timely, accurate and adequate information (Oladokun, et al., 2021). Information and knowledge provide access to economic opportunities, personal and societal development. Unrestricted access to quality information equips people to make informed decisions with the potential of improving their lives and well-being. Communities and societies with access to quality information for all citizens are better equipped to eliminate poverty and close the inequality gap, perk up agriculture, offer quality education, sustain good health, advancement in culture, research and innovation (IFLA, 2016). According to Igbinoia & Okuonghae (2019), through quality information service delivery, libraries have been able contribute to the actualization of SDGs as well as help improve the digital and information literacy skills of the citizens (Emezie & Igwe, 2017). Some of the existing initiatives of library support to SDGs may include: bridging the digital divide gap by providing digital literacy training for library users; provision of information and research space to help decision makers achieve the SDGs; provision of Open Access resources in different areas such as health, agriculture and environment and media and information literacy programmes for marginalized persons to make an important contribution to achieving universal literacy (Bradley, 2016).

Information in the development of any nation cannot be left behind because it is a vital factor for a sustainable development. A nation needs to provide sustainable development goals for its citizens to meet their ever-increasing demands. To accomplish this, the library has to play an important role to create, organize, process, store, disseminate and provide access to information. This information to be provided will reduce the level of ignorance and help people to gain a living. Ezekwe & Muokebe (2012) in their study observed that libraries with various resources are best heritages that humanity can access to. This signifies that any nation without a library and information centre is not worth its development. In view of the foregoing, the library and information centres is the bedrock for the development of any nation and serve as an institution that store and preserves the information of the people and disseminates the information needed at the appropriate time. Hence, there is need to find out the role of libraries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria.

Sustainable Development Goals

Development plays a crucial role in the substance and growth of any country. When a country is said to be developed, it must be able to provide qualitative life for its citizenry. A large majority of the world's population are in the developing world. The problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, and growing inequalities continue to face less developed countries which Nigeria belongs to. Nigeria has not been able to engender meaningful development in spite of her huge human, material, and natural resources endowments. This has greatly affected her quest for improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the county. Sustainable development is essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of a country in order to successfully enhance the meaningful standard of living among the populace which libraries hold the key to all information needed to develop (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2004).

Sustainable development not only meets the need of present generation but also those to the future generation. In other words, it is the development that guarantees a better quality of life for everyone, now and for the generation to come (Shah, 2012). According to Nevin (2008), sustainable development emerged as a growing concern about human society's impact on the natural environment. The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission (formally the World Commission on Environment and Development) as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 2007). This definition acknowledges that while development may be necessary to meet human needs and improve the quality of life, it must happen without to meet present and future needs. The sustainable development movement has grown and campaigned on the basis that sustainability promotes both the interest of future generation and the earth's capacity to regenerate. At first, it emphasized the environment in development policies but, since 2002, has evolved to compass social justice and the fight against poverty as key principles of sustainable development.

In the work of Tyonum (2015), sustainable development means the overall change and improvement in the society as related to the individual in progress in the social, political, religious and economic structure of the nation. A major outcome of education is sustainable development. Shah (2012) noted that sustainable development encompasses a number of areas and stands as the idea of environmental, economic and social progress and equity, all within the limits of the world's natural resources.

The Sustainable Development Goals comprised some interrelated goals targeted at making the world a better place by eliminating HIV/AIDS, hunger and poverty as well as promoting gender equality, good health, quality education, environmental degradation, sanitation, climate change amongst others (Igbinovia & Okuonghae, 2019). The 17 goals were adopted to transform the world without leaving any region behind by 2030. The SDGs, also known as the global goals or the 2030 Agenda, were adopted to bring about significant change and improvement in every society as well as build on the achievement of the millennium development goals (MDGs) which came to an end in 2015. As opposed to the MDG which brought unequal level of development among different countries of the world, the framework for the SDG was designed to apply to all countries irrespective of their level of development.

The goals are distinctive and peculiar to solving societal challenges and as such should be acted upon by all countries regardless of population size and economic strength in order to spur prosperity and transformation of the world while protecting it. The United Nations recognizes that ending poverty must be systematically carried out alongside addressing economic growth, educational, social, health, climatic and environmental issues (United Nations, 2015). Though implementation of SDGs is unanimously agreed upon, governments are to make conscious effort to personalize and adopt this agenda by establishing national frameworks that supports the actualization of SDGs. Thus, governments should follow-up and closely monitor the implementation of the 17 goals and continuously evaluate how they impact of the development of all citizens through strategic feedback mechanisms. This evaluation should be done across local, state, national and regional levels which will inform on how the goals are making global impact in line with the United Nations' agenda. The 17 goals of the United Nations aimed at transforming our world bothers on critical life issues including the eradication of poverty, putting an end to hunger, ensuring healthy living and promotion of wellbeing, quality education for all, ensuring gender equality, providing clean water, renewable energy, sustaining decent work and inclusive economic growth, ensuring innovation and infrastructural development, reducing inequality, improving sustainable urbanization, enhancing sustainable consumption and production, climate action and environmental sustainability, conservation of life below water, protecting life on land, ensuring peace and inclusive access to justice, and partnership (United Nations, 2015).

Role of libraries and information centres

The libraries and information centres are considered as a hub of research and information and its role can never be denied by educating the masses. The basis roles of information centres and libraries whether academic, school, public, national, special or digital is seen as the extension of education hence perform the following functions:

- **Information Services:** One of the important roles of the library is information provision which will help augment ideas collected from other sources. Information is an essential element in the communication process. With the advent of ICT in the digital library, this role is facilitated. Hence users can access information via the internet to update the knowledge and keep abreast of current trends.
- **Educational Role:** Education has been defined as a complex of social processes of acquiring knowledge and experience, formally or other. Libraries are there to perform this activity because when a person is informed with information, s/he is equally being educated. Libraries ensure lifelong education by providing various information resources. They also support education by providing supplementary textbooks, reference materials and even non-print materials. Libraries enable the individuals to obtain spiritual, inspirational and recreational activities through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge (Omojuwa, 2003).
- **National Development:** Libraries play a great role in national development through the support they offer to the educational sector. It is an irrefutable fact that without libraries there as well can be no universities hence the creation of professionals' drought. All professionals, whether graduates or not, are capable of utilizing their skills through the knowledge they acquired through books and the internet in libraries. Lawyers safeguard the flow of justice and foster constitutional developments; teachers support literacy campaigns; doctors support health issues; the list is endless. All those are a product of information dissemination progress through different libraries (Achitabwino, 2007).
- **Self-development:** People can develop themselves by going to the library for independent studies. Individualized instruction can take place in the library with or without the help of any teacher yet this ensures an expansion of knowledge.
- **Health Sector:** A vibrant health sector needs a well - documented and organized health information meant for dissemination to users and potential users in order to consolidate health records, planning and management. Libraries provide people with appropriate information on diseases and prevention measures, health care, side effects of premarital affairs, dangers of early pregnancies and any other health-related information (Oladokun, et al., 2021).
- **Cultural Services:** The library is the chief centre for cultural revival. It is the centre of all cultural activation because it actively promotes participation and appreciation of art literature which is part of cultural heritage is one of the areas stock materials highlights.
- **Politics:** Information promotes and empowers citizen's participation in the democratic process; it maintains the rule of law and creates a viable outlet for the injection of public opinion. Information informs the policy-making process of political leadership, all of which nurtures the building of sustainable peace for the enhancement of the state (Achitabwino, 2007).
- **Policy Formulation:** Policymakers in Nigeria need strong information base to discharge their duties and the level of decisions taken by the political class depends on how informed they are.
- **Promotion of Marketing Tourism Sector:** Libraries as reservoirs of information are the most reliable information reference centers where tourists can seek information on hotels, motels, national parks, mountains and other interesting places.
- **Training and Learning Media:** The library is an indispensable training and learning laboratory. Some libraries are training media for manpower development.
- **Access to Knowledge:** Libraries join resources together for maximum accessibility and usability by the potential users. Information is power and information brings knowledge. Hence the library helps its patrons to access such information and knowledge with ease and in turn, prepare an individual to prove him/herself as a responsible citizen in contemporary society.
- **Recreational Role:** Users can read in the library at leisure for pleasure. Libraries provide various information media (print and non-print) that are used for recreational activities.

Role of libraries and information centres towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Libraries play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It is globally considered as a centre of research and a place of information empowerment which role can never be over emphasized, as the public benefit immensely from it. Library and information centres is an institution that is responsible for the selection, ordering, acquisition, processing, storing, preservation of resources in diverse formats to users at the appropriate time. Similarly, Nicholas and Perpetual (2015) pointed out library as an information centre that acquire process, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information to users.

Adesoji (2007) posit that the culture of continuous learning and reading is intertwined with libraries, which in still in students the culture of reading. The role of information in any nation cannot be left behind because libraries are seen as the custodians of knowledge and the most reliable information centre that deals with the acquisition, organization, dissemination and preservation of information all for actualizing sustainable development. According to Abata-Ebire,

Adebowale and Ojokuku (2018), the roles of the library in achieving the seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are discussed into the following:

1. **No Poverty:** Information is key the hub to make information available. Therefore, they should provide meaningful information on poverty alleviation and eradication in a packaged format. Also they must ensure that both the rich and the poor should 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
2. **Zero Hunger:** Library and information centres should use their resources to eradicate extreme hunger and ensure proper functioning of food commodity by creating awareness and providing an enabling environment where information on sustainable agricultural practices in all its form can be accessed and use.
3. **Good health & well-being:** Library and information centres should provide information both in print and electronic format that will the public to eradicate child mortality and improve maternal health. The effect of bad dietary on health should be emphasized by providing information on the cause of diseases and the natural ways to prevent diseases. Also, they should ensure a universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive
4. **Quality Education:** Library and information centre should provide information literacy skills and long life learning for the public by educating and enlightening youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. More so, they must organize and disseminate information that society will access and use to inform themselves on various issues of life and by empowering communities through knowledge and the ability to access information for themselves.
5. **Gender Equality:** Library and information centres should encourage gender equality and when selecting information resources, the use of enabling technology should be adopted by libraries, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Library and information centres should facilitate access to hygiene-related information through raising awareness, campaigns, and symposiums. Also, they should support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Library and information centres should provide public access to ICT, study rooms, and classes on using mobile phones and ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services through library campaigns.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Libraries should provide education and training for both the young and old to make sure that they have access to information in an affordable way. It is also their responsibility to make sure that people find jobs through their public library and this will allow the Public access to ICT and skills enables people to apply for jobs, as the application process for all jobs has moved online.
9. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** Library and information centres should provide access to information technology and endeavor to provide affordable access to Internet facilities to less developed areas. This can be achieved by engaging in lively debates, quizzes and spelling competitions through smart phone, laptop and video conferencing project.
10. **Reduce Inequality Goal:** Library and information centres should encourage safe and dependable mobility of citizens through a reliable migration policy that is well planned and managed. Library Services including information and support about legal, childcare, housing, health, education; providing support with applications for citizenship, residence, subsidized housing, government benefits.
11. **Sustainable Cities and & Communities:** Libraries should provide and protect the nation's cultural and natural heritage for posterity. It is the responsibility of the public library to develop and implement disaster risk management at all levels in the community.
12. **Responsible Consumption:** Libraries should encourage organizations to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainable information into their reporting cycle. Libraries can come together to ensure that all countries have access to information.
13. **Climate action:** Climate Information awareness and access program should be conducted. This should include resources on climate change and action; it is early warning, mitigation, adaptation, and impact reduction.
14. **Life below water:** Libraries and information centres should provide scientific information on preservation and conservation techniques that can sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. **Life on land:** The threats from man and nature to land can be safeguarded by libraries through educating people with the skill set on the management of forest, land and ecosystem; its degradation and recovery.

16. **Peace, social and strong institutions:** Libraries make Internet access available to the community at no or low cost and ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.
17. **Partnership for the goals:** In support of this Uhegbu&Igwe (2006) asserts that librarians, whether in school, university, public or in special libraries have a greater responsibility in the development of a global partnership for development by acquiring, packaging, organizing and disseminating knowledge and experience to Nigerians. Librarians, therefore, can foster understanding and communication through library awareness campaign strategy, and this brings together some of the ideas for global development.

Supporting this, the IFLA Statement on Libraries and Development (2013) stated that libraries contribute to the delivery of Sustainable Development by providing opportunity for all, empowering people for their own self-development, offering access to the world's knowledge and providing expert guidance.

Challenges associated with libraries in promoting Sustainable Development Goals

Unfortunately, at present, the greatest challenge libraries face as an educational tool for sustainable development is high illiteracy rate and lack of reading culture. Most information is on print and most people cannot read and write. Kiyimba in Achitabwino (2007) went on to say that coupled with illiteracy, however, even those who can read and write have little interest in reading. Other problems include:

Inadequate Fund: Libraries in Nigeria are not properly funded to serve the purpose for which they are meant to render and this will not enable them to be effective and attractive in the achievement of sustainable development goal in Nigeria

Inadequate Staff: This is another challenge facing the library and information centres. Most libraries do not have experienced and well-trained staff to run the system (Apotiade, 2002). Because of this, the achievement of the goals could be jeopardized or slowed down.

Inadequate Facilities: This has also become another militating factor that affects libraries and information centres. It has limited the services and information provided by libraries and librarians for a sustainable development. There is a need for the provision of contemporary facilities to meet the growing demands of the Sustainable Development Goals in the 21st century.

Poor Infrastructure-Library materials are liable to damages and therefore appropriate structures should be put in place to protect them (Krolak, 2005). However, this is mostly not the case, as books, computers, and audiovisual materials are not been protected from getting damage which in turn hinders librarians in providing services to patrons.

Other Challenges facing Libraries towards Achieving Sustainable Development Goals are: negligence of library and information centres by Nigeria governments; low self-esteem among library and Information professionals; poor lobbying and advocacy skills among librarians; non-challant attitude of Nigerian policy makers; low level of partnership drive among librarians; and inconsistent government policies.

Conclusion and recommendations

The place of information in development cannot be overemphasized. Thus, indeed, there cannot be any sustainable development without access to information and there cannot be any meaningful inclusive access to information without libraries. It is therefore clear that libraries are critical in driving access to information and in an inclusive manner in a way that no other organ in the human society can. Libraries are essentials tools in the society and they play an important role in achieving sustainable development goals. If sustainable development goal in Nigeria is to be sustained, citizens need to be well informed and this can be done through information selection, processing, organizing and dissemination of resources taking into account the development indicators raised in the sustainable development goals (SDGs), hosting local forums where people can discuss problems such as community health, education, environmental issues, climate change etc. If the nation can give serious attention on library and information centres, to some extent the nation will be able to overcome some of the challenges militating against information provision and will be among the top countries' economies in the world in the year 2030. Based on this, the paper suggested the following:

- Library and information centres should regularly organize seminars, workshops; symposium that will serve as an educational forum where citizens irrespective of gender, age, and profession can listen to information on social, economic, health agriculture or education to enable them to develop themselves physically and mentally.
- Government should ensure that libraries and information centre are fully integrated into the scheme of activities at both the local and national level.
- The government and the parent institution should support the library and information centres financially in order to end challenges of inadequate infrastructure and facilities, poor network distribution and would also assist in the publishing of research findings conducted by researcher

REFERENCES

- Abata-Ebire, B.D. Adebowale, A. &Ojokuku, B.Y. (2018). Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: The Roles of Libraries. *International Journal of Applied Technologies in Library and Information Management*, 4 (2) 10, 89-95
- Achitabwino, P. (2007). Libraries and national development. Retrieved from <http://pachitabwino.blogspot.com>
- Adesoji, F.F (2007). Need for Re-Introduction of Reading Corners in Primary School Libraries in Nigeria: A cursory Look at Non-Conventional School Libraries. *Niger. Sch. Libr. J.*,6,73-83.
- Agbo, A.D. &Onyekweodiri, N.E. (2014). Libraries are dynamic tools for national development. *Chinese Librarianship: An International Electronic Journal*.
- Apotiade, J. (2002). *National, state and public libraries*. University of Ibadan press.
- Brundtland, G. (2007). Our common future: The world commission on environment and development. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Ezekwe, F.A &Muokebe, B.O (2012). *Introductory studies in the use of the library information technology*. Enugu: RhyceKerex Publisher.
- IFLA (2013). *The role of public libraries in the attainment of Botswana's Vision 2016*
Retrieved from <http://library.ifla.org/258/1/201-radijeng-en.pdf>
- Igbinovia, M.O. &Okunhae, O. (2019).The role of academic libraries towards the attainment of sustainable development goals: The Nigerian perspective. *Covenant Journal of Library & Information Science (CJLIS)*, 2(2).
- Krolak, L. (2005). *The Roles of Libraries in the Creation of Literate Environment*. Retrieved from: Files/literacy-and reading /publication /krolak.pdf.
- Lor, P. J. (2015). Who was to blame? The genealogy of the "Anglo-American" national library service model. Paper presented at the IFLA/WLIC, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Nevin E.(2008). Education and sustainable development' policy & practice: A development. *Education Review*, 6, 49-62.
- Nicholas, M.T & Perpetual, A.E (2015). Library and education: Panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 5(2),28-31
- Okoro, C.A., Akidi, J.O. &Arua, U. (2014). Information literacy and the development of democracy in Nigeria: The role of libraries. Proceedings of the 3rd National Conference/Annual General Meeting of Nigeria library association, Abia State Chapter. 13th – 15th November, 2014.
- Onah, E.A., Urom, O.C. &Amanze-Unagha, B. (2015). Emergence of sustainable development goals and the case for rebranding information agencies for action in Nigeria. *Ebonyi Journal of Library and Information Science*, 2(1): 217 – 225.
- Omojuwa, R.A. (2003). Directions in adult literacy programming in Nigeria. Literacy and reading in Nigeria. *Reading Association of Nigeria*,7, 207-214.
- Oladokun, B. D., Yemi-Peters, O. E., & Owolabi, K. A. (2021). Utilization of library and information centres in promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). 6648.
- Tyonum, N.M. &Ezeogu, P.A. (2015). Library and education: Panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 5 (2), 28-31.