

# Prospects and Challenges to the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The global socio-economic and environmental crises are worsening daily. The scale is up and daunting. Poverty is glaring and evident in all spheres of life. The effect is much more on the developing nations, Africa and Nigeria being at the core. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world woke up to the startling reality of a world so rich yet the majority of its populations live in poverty. Half of the three billion go to bed without a means of livelihood especially food in their bellies. By the year 2020 developing nations were already expending \$1.3 on debt repayment for \$1 they received in grants. In addition to this statistical reality, approximately one billion people entered into the 21<sup>st</sup> century not able to read and write. The environment is polluted with various outbreak of pandemics and deadly diseases which have claimed and still claiming millions of lives. These horrendous statistics moved the United Nations to adopt the Millennium Declaration on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2000 in New York. From the Declaration came the millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators which are committed to fight poverty, gender inequality and environmental degradation and to foster a global partnership for development (Oke and Oluwasuji, 2008:61; Oke; Oluwasuji and Simon-Oke 2011:61; Oluwasuji; 2013). As a follow-up to the achievement and attainment of the MDGs, World leaders on September 2015 during the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (a transmutation for MDGs to SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development focuses on 'a present and a future that is economically sustainable, socially inclusive and environmentally resilient'. This is expressed through the framing of the 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 230 Key Performance Indicators. It is also aimed at ending poverty, safeguarding the planet and ensuring that all people live in peace and prosperity by the year 2030.

This paper hence, focuses on the prospects and the challenges that are posed as inhibitors to the attainment of these goals in Nigeria. The paper used secondary sources of data and content analysis. It is observed that as laudable as the dream of SDGs is, there are some inherent inhibiting factors such as insecurity, global economic recession, corruption, embezzlement and nepotism, secessionist agitations, youth restiveness, global pandemics, a monolithic economy, culture and tradition, insurgency and terrorism among other factors that will impede the attainment of the SDGs in Nigeria. The paper submits that for the goals to be achieved these factors have to be addressed head on. In addition to the fight, the paper suggested diversification of the monolithic economy from oil dependency to other non-oil sectors; involvement of non-state actors and non-governmental agencies, institutions and agencies vis-à-vis the critical stakeholders and civil societies to encourage socialization, awareness and public understanding of the goals. The paper also encourages the government to establish a special monitoring agency to monitor the activities earmarked under SDGs for effectiveness and efficiency to avoid the same old stories with other similar intervening agencies in Nigeria.

**Key words:** development, sustainable, goals, efficiency, attainment, economy, nations.

## INTRODUCTION

The global socio-political and economic indices are appalling. One of the most significant issues discussed in development studies is poverty. Inertly, poverty is defined as a level of income, food, health, education, housing, and quality of life below the minimum standards of life and decency. According to Mareš and Savy (2021), countries that are developed are considered as Global North countries, while those developing are considered as Global South countries. But, of course, poverty exists in all parts of the world. There are areas of extreme unemployment, homelessness, and even hunger in the developed world. However, extreme poverty is found mainly in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs), also referred to as the south. Global economic growth only filters down to a few people. Around one in every five people on earth lives in poverty. The poorest peoples are found in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. With little or no purchasing power, many of them are destitute. Roughly 1 billion humans are malnourished and 1.1 billion lack clean drinking water and proper health care services. More than 15 million children a year die before reaching 5 years of age. These people have little hope of escaping poverty. Illiteracy is extremely high (more than half the people of the poorest of the LDCs are illiterate) and so is unemployment (Jackson and Jackson, 2008). On health, 1 billion people live without access to improved water sources (UNDP, 2002); 2.6 billion people without access to basic sanitation; 40.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS. Education does not fare well, 781 million illiterate adults, 64% of them women; 134 million children between 7 and 18 have never been to school. Sasu (2023) noted that nearly 12 percent of the world population in extreme poverty lived in Nigeria, considering the poverty threshold at 1.90 U.S. dollars a day. Much of the hierarchy of states can be seen in the difference between northern and the southern states.

The World Development Report says that the Global South has 85 percent of the world's population but controls only 20 percent of the wealth. Mired in abject poverty and almost entirely populated by non-Western cultures, these people have little hope of significant progress for the next half century. Many countries in the Global South are extremely small and poor. In 2005, the GDP (PPP) per capita was \$1328 in the least developed countries, \$ 4359 in the developing countries, and \$30 181 in the high-income OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. The global wealth is skewed against the Southern divide of the world. Viewed at as a whole, the average income of the top 20 percent of the world's population has about 50 times the average income of the lowest 20 percent. Put another way, the upper 20 percent has three-quarters of the world's income. The poorest 40 percent (roughly 2 billion people) have 5 percent of the world's income and live on less than US \$2 per day (Jackson and Jackson, 2008).

To corroborate this (Oke and Oluwasuji 2008: ix) submit that:

“So many in the world lives on less than two dollars per day and about 800 million go to bed without food in their bellies. By the year 2000, developing countries were spending \$1.3 on debt repayment for every \$1 they received in grants. In addition, approximately one billion people entered the 21st century not being able to read or write-intellectual poverty”.

The Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) is appalling and the analysis below is frustrating going by the submission of the UNDP. In 1996, UNDP computed the first HDI for Nigerian states, for the year 1992, the situation has not really changed today.

### UNDP HDI for Nigerian States, for the Year 1992.

State	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult Literacy (%)	Mean year of schooling	Educational attainment (%)	Real GDP per capita	Adjusted real GDP per capita (PPP\$)	HDI
Bendel	53.7	65.5	4.00	45.07	5,003.4	5,003.4	0.631

Rivers	50.2	51.9	3.84	35.88	4,860.7	4,860.7	0.539
Cross Rivers	57.8	69.4	3.27	47.36	2,626.0	2,626.0	0.513
Lagos	61.4	65.0	3.92	44.64	2,034.7	2,034.7	0.489
Imo	60.0	75.6	3.80	51.67	1,341.1	1,341.1	0.466
Gongola	57.8	26.0	2.15	18.05	665.1	665.1	0.214
Ondo	49.4	50.6	3.29	34.83	422.9	422.9	0.212
Oyo	51.3	40.4	3.11	27.97	678.1	678.1	0.210
Niger	54.9	16.0	1.04	11.01	1,262.0	1,262.0	0.191
Benue	53.5	27.0	1.91	18.64	809.5	809.5	0.188
Kwara	45.9	40.0	3.00	27.67	1,020.1	1,020.1	0.183
Anambra	44.9	43.1	2.91	29.70	860.1	860.1	0.174
Kano	57.1	12.1	0.73	8.31	692.6	692.6	0.161
Plateau	39.5	36.7	2.18	25.19	1,224.1	1,224.1	0.149
Sokoto	49.2	2.7	0.43	1.94	1,246.2	1,246.2	0.128
Bauchi	36.7	39.8	2.03	27.21	762.2	762.2	0.127
Ogun	37.4	41.8	2.81	28.80	619.3	619.3	0.126
Kaduna	36.6	30.8	1.52	21.04	876.4	876.4	0.101
Borno	37.0	10.0	0.55	6.85	957.8	957.8	0.042
HDI of 1993	51.5	50.7	1.20	34.20s	1,215.0	1,215.0	0.246

Source: UNDP 2006:53; Oluwasuji, 2017

Deriving from the table above, UNDP (2006) argued, on the basis HDI scores, Nigeria states would easily have qualified in 1990 as middle human development countries occupying positions 79<sup>th</sup>, 91<sup>st</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> respectively in the world.

Also contributing to this, Azaiki (2007:173-175) contends that:

“With regards to available infrastructure, Nigeria has been variously described as having one of the worst physical development indicators in the world. The country is also at the bottom in human development factors, ranking 158 in the world in the 2005 Human development Index. Infrastructure is steadily in decline social services deteriorate from lack of funds and priority. Roads, bridges, and school buildings collapse one after the other, hospitals (especially in the rural areas) grind to a halt unnoticed by the leaders...the transportation sector is still in a state of despair... The rail system is almost extinct... Housing, healthcare, clean water, electricity, communication, recreational facilities and even food are luxury affordable only for the rich and in many cases, the very rich, since the middle class has been extinct. In a country whose petroleum resources are monopolized by the ruling class and their associates, the rest of the society is condemned to poverty and voicelessness.

In addition, he submits that:

The inadequacy of educational facilities and high drop-out and unemployment rates coupled with many young people's desire to take part in the affluence lifestyle of the treasury culminates in crime explosion. Crime becomes more sophisticated every day. Secret cults and ritual killings are a dreadful aspect of national life.

He goes further, The socio-economic factors of employment, poverty, and inadequacy of educational facilities all contribute to the crime rate in Nigeria. Until these are address and resolved, there will only be a sleeper rise in crime. One way the government could bring about equality is to take care of ..., the most impoverished people in the country.

The rate of progress in poverty reduction is a function of two factors: economic growth and the rate of such growth brought to the poor. According to the 2005 Human Development Report, global income poverty has declined over the last two decades, but global inequality remains at very high levels. Much of the overall change is due to the reduction of poverty in China due to economic growth. On the other hand, in sub-Saharan Africa in 2005, about 100 million people lived on less than US \$ 1 a day than they did 10 years ago. Despite India's economic boom and the declining poverty of the country, the absolute number of poor there has not diminished. In the former Soviet Union's central and Eastern European and Central Asian regions, the number of people living on less than US \$ 2 a day has increased dramatically. In Russia, for example, 10 percent of the population lives on less than \$ 2 a day.

However, total income data does not fully correlate with other indicators of poverty and unfavorable lifestyles. For example, the 2006 Human Development Index (HDI) shows that the majority of the population of developing countries is generally poor. The United Nations has compiled this annual index that includes life expectancy, adult literacy rates, average education and purchasing power. Despite some technical difficulties, the country's index clearly shows that wealth is distributed very unequally around the world. All of the top 20 countries except Japan are in Europe, North America, or Australia. The bottom 20 countries are all in Africa.

LDCs are particularly vulnerable to debt problems. In the 1970s, many LDCs were in heavy debt. Then, in the 1980s, they realized they couldn't repay their debt. Many overestimated their ability to repay loans, while others mismanaged the capital lent to them. More loans were extended to cover this unpaid debt, creating a spiral of unpaid debt. The situation came to mind when Brazil, the world's largest debtor, began threatening to never repay a loan. In 1982, Mexico, the second largest borrower, announced that it could not repay a loan or even pay interest. This has made many commercial bankers much more conservative and that the LDC relies on the IMF and the World Bank.

The IMF and the World Bank are conservative institutions managed in accordance with the financial commitments of member countries. They argue that the borrowing nation revives the economy by swallowing essentially austerity medicines and spurring the development of capitalism. To meet the demands of the IMF and the World Bank, many least developed countries had to reduce public services in certain areas such as health care and education. In other words, developing nations were forced to accept the consequences of the modernization and development ideas of capitalism. Many of this developing countries still have a lot of debt to repay as a result of borrowing.

In 2006, developing countries still have billions of dollars in debt. This is calculated to be about 80 percent of the total value of exports and services combined. The twenty-eight Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) were overdue at \$782 billion. The impact of these amazing figures, updated annually by the IMF and the World Bank, hinders development plans in developing countries and does not significantly reduce the borrowing rate by the developing countries of the world.

The grim statistics above led the UN General Assembly to adopt the Millennium Declaration at its largest rally in New York on September 8, 2000. From this declaration, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were born. This is a set of 8 goals, 18 goals and 48 indicators that committed countries around the world to fight poverty, illness, gender inequality, environmental degradation and promote global partnerships for development.

The Millennium Project began with the task of developing a recommended implementation plan to enable all developing countries to achieve the MDGs. Consistent with the above, many countries have developed strategies and adapted socio-economic strategies to incorporate these goals. Some goals had 2015 as a target period to improve human life. Most MDGs are compatible with poverty reduction because they want to improve the performance of results that are important to the poor groups that dominate Africa.

The attainment of MDG remained a mirage as submitted by Aribigbola and Folami, 2008:1:

“At the midway point between their adoption in 2000 and the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve any of the Goals” (United Nations, Africa and Millennium Development Goals, 2007). Similarly, another report also emphasized that at the midpoint of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), sub-Saharan Africa the only region which, at current rates, will meet none of the MDG targets by 2015”

They contend further by asserting that:

“Africa .... is the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015” (UN World Summit Declaration, 2005) “in Africa... the world is furthest behind in progress to fulfil {the MDGs} ...Africa is well behind target on reaching all the goals.” (Blair Commission for Africa 2005). Beside, a notable feature of the MDG campaign is that it has emphasized the failure of Africa compared to other regions. Those involved in the MDGs efforts have been virtually unanimous, that sub-Saharan Africa stands out in that it will not meet ANY of the goals.

## **NIGERIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): AN ASSESSMENT**

As a follow-up to the achievement and attainment vis-à-vis failure of the MDGs, the World leaders on September 2015 during the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (a transmutation for MGDs to SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development focuses on ‘a present and a future that is economically sustainable, socially inclusive and environmentally resilient’. This is expressed through the framing of the 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 230 Key Performance Indicators. It is also aimed at ending poverty, safeguarding the planet and ensuring that all people live in peace and prosperity by the year 2030. The 17 SDGs can be summarized as follows:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reduce Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities



12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals.

In summary, the SDGs are a call for universal action to end poverty, protect the planet and enable all to enjoy peace and prosperity by the year 2030.

After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Nigeria acted very quickly in the general implementation of the SDGs. Institutional frameworks are in place at the national and quasi-national levels to support effective implementation. From 2016 to the present, many policy initiatives have been implemented, some of which are still underway. Some of these strategic initiatives are:

2016. The development of a Country Transition Strategy-From MDGs to SDGs-2016.

2017. SDGs Data Mapping and the Publication of Nigeria SDGs Indicators Baseline Report – 2017.

- Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the SDGs into the Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020.
- Domestication and Customization of the Nigeria Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDGs) Policy Simulation Model-2019).
- Ongoing Re-alignment of the National Statistic System (NSS) with the requirements and Indicators of the SDGs.
- Commenced the design and implementation of the Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) for the SDGs.
- Commenced the process for independent evaluation of priority SDGs-SDGs 1;3 and 4 and
- Conducting its 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria

Accordingly, each country is free to prioritize the SDGs according to its national priorities since no country could achieve all the SDGs at a time because of economic challenges. Mirroring the mind of the United Nations, Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SSAP-SDG) (2022) posits that:

...the United Nations allows member Nations to prioritize whatever can be done quickly. And we are not to achieve it within a year or two but systematically making life more meaningful to people. We have prioritized seven goals and reached out the private sector, women organizations, CSOs, youth groups, academia. And people living with disabilities, finding out from them what needs to be done

Nigeria prioritizes seven goals in pursuing the SDGs. These goals are: Goal 1, without poverty. Goal 3, Health and well-being; Goal 4, Education; Goal 5, Gender Equality. Others are Goal 8, economic growth. Goal 16, Security and Peace; Goal 17 dealing with partnerships. The goals were chosen in line with President Muhammadu Buhari's government priorities and development goals. Orelope Adefuire published the second National Voluntary Review Report on the SDGs on web television at the second meeting of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on 14 July 2020, with Nigeria on the 2030 Agenda. Emphasized the progress achieved through her office in implementation. According to her, the Buhari government initially introduced a social investment program (SIP). The N-power aspect of SIP provides a structure for the development of large-scale and relevant learning and work skills, linking its core and results to coping with inadequate public services and broader economic stimulus. By addressing the challenges of youth unemployment. The modular program gave participants of ages 18-35 the opportunity to acquire skills that help them become self-employed and employers. There is also N-Power Volunteer Corp. It deploys trained graduates to volunteers in areas such as education, health, civilian and agriculture on a

large scale and provides a monthly benefit of N30,000. Another aspect of N-Power is aimed at providing a knowledge economy for young Nigerians. In this knowledge economy, young people acquire world-class skills and qualifications and become innovators and players in the domestic and global markets. The goal is to build a pool of software developers, hardware service providers, animators, graphic designers, architects, artists and more. Non-graduates will not be able to participate in the N-power program as they will also have the opportunity to learn relevant technical and business skills that will improve their work prospects and livelihoods. Over a half a million young people are benefiting from the N-Power Youth Empowerment Program. In the same vein, youths are also major beneficiaries of the GEEP and Tradermoni aspect of the SIP. Two major projects involved giving of loans to start or support their existing businesses, there are also the Special Public Works programme to provide 3-month employment to 774,000 Nigerians across the country (1000 beneficiaries per local government), the \$20 million Fund for Nigerian Tech Innovators and Entrepreneurs, managed by BOI, the Accelerated Agricultural Development Scheme (AADS) by the CBN designed to engage a minimum of 370,000 youths in agricultural production across the country over the next three years being implemented in collaboration with State Governments.

The goal of the initiative is to facilitate increased private sector agricultural of staple foods and industrial raw materials, as well as support food security, job creation and economic diversification. In addition, the Buhari's government is also implementing the Creative Industries financing Initiative of the CBN in the goal of providing single digit financing for the creative sector to boost creation of jobs. The initiative has four pillars: Fashion; Information technology; Movie and Music. Other programmes include the NESP-Homes – mass Housing Strategy of the Nigeria Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP). It envisages the creation of 1.8 million jobs starting with the construction of 300,000 homes using 1005 locally sourced materials for construction, the five million Solar Connections Programme, to expand access to 25 million Nigerians by providing five million new connections through the provision of solar Homes systems, or construction and operation of mini-grids. The programme would incentivize the creation of 25,000 new jobs – particularly for the young people – in the energy sector as well as the Energizing Education Programme (EEP) initiative of the Federal Government to provide clean power supply to 37 Federal Universities and seven University Teaching Hospitals across the country. Another cardinal initiative of the Federal Government is the Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES), to address the needs of unskilled and less educated youth, by targeting areas of activities that are of practical importance and are essential to every aspect of our economy, including agriculture and food processing, restaurants and catering, tailoring and fashion design, welding, carpentry and joinery, etc. There is also national Survival Fund, designed to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 on businesses, including but not limited to the following: Free business name registration for 250,000 beneficiaries; One-off Payment of N30,000 to more than 300,000 artisans nationwide; and payroll support of between N30,000 and N50,000 per staff for between minimum) and 10 (maximum) staff of qualifying MSMSs for 3 months. Various Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are also engaged in training of youths in skills like mobile devices repairs, digital skills business training and support for SMEs.

Apart from the Investment Fund, the ministry of Sports and youth had initiated other youth-centered opportunities such as the Digital Literacy, Entrepreneurship, employability and leadership skills (DEEP) and Work Experience Programme (WEP). The programmes are carefully crafted to address employability of youths. To corroborate all these, the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs) in 2016 launched Digital Skills for Africa Programme with the support of Google. Over 125,000 youths were trained nationwide. This was to increase their levels of awareness of opportunities in Digital Technology for employment. Also, OSSAP-SDGs in partnership with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) would train 1.2 million Nigerian youths, mostly Youth Corp members in online and digital skills and business management within the next ten years. According to Orelope-Adefulire (2020:7): The various programmes are in line with SGD Goals 1,2,4,8,9, and 10 on reduction of poverty, zero hunger, decent work, and economic growth, industry

innovation and infrastructure and reduced inequalities. However, the assessment of these goals shows that Nigeria is not really doing badly, but it is still a long way from the important awards.

For instance, on SDGs 3-Health, Nigeria is battling with many challenges in the sector such as high rates of maternal mortality, it has recorded successes in the area of under-five mortality rates from 157 to 132. In the same vein, Nigeria's Current access to basic drinking water stands at 64 per cent, while the country must make more investment in public health and to ensure the most vulnerable are reached through universal access to essential services.

One of the main challenges facing the country when it comes to education is related to the Out of School Children. This is a demographic challenge related to the interaction of employment (SDG 8), education SDG 4, poverty (SDG 1) and the digital economy (SDG 17). There was a significant difference in literacy levels between regions, with 78% of children in the southwest being able to read the full sentences, compared to only 17% of children in the northeast.

## CHALLENGES TO THE ATTAINMENT OF SDGS IN NIGERIA

As laudable as the SDGs programme may be, there are various challenges to its attainment if not addressed and removed. Below are some of the challenges:

1. **Insecurity:** Nigeria is bedeviled with a plethora challenges in terms of security crises such as insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism and succession agitations etc. Nigeria, undoubtedly the most populous black nation in the world with an estimated population of about 170 million with over 250 ethnic groups and about 400 languages like any other states exists primarily for the protection of lives and properties and ensuring the well-being of the people. However, the political history of Nigeria is characterized by an unprecedented level of insecurity. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic clashes, religious violent, and armed robbery, assassination, murder, gender based violence, and bomb explosions have been on the increase leading to enormous loss of lives and properties and a general atmosphere of siege and social tension for the people. Eliagwu (2005) contends that: the period 1980-2005 (alone) witnessed at least 140 violent conflicts and crises. In these conflicts, many lives were lost and properties destroyed. Often, quite a large number of people are displaced. Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002) put it succinctly:

...it has been estimated that no less than ten thousand lives have been lost to violence of different natures and character. While communities and groups fight each other, state agents have also been involved in the perpetration of violence and destruction as reflected in the Odi and Benue crises.

Nigeria is a nation suffering from many woes, such as Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen in clashes with Christian farmers, famine-like conditions in the North-East, drought and refugee crisis quickly add up to make Nigeria a very trouble country. The menace posed by Fulani Herdsmen in the different communities they migrate to for purposes of grazing their cattle is becoming very alarming. They are more and more constituting major security challenges to their host communities. The propensity towards engaging the land and farm owners of the sites they graze their cattle is increasing by the day as they update their arsenal with highly sophisticated weapons

2. **The impact of global economic recession and global pandemic (COVID-19):** the global recession of the 2016 had badly affected Nigeria and it is yet to fully recover from this. The result was global oil price crash and insufficient foreign exchange earnings to meet imports. In its desire to achieve positive economic growth, the Federal Government's Budget for the year 2020 was prepared with substantial revenue expectations with, projected revenue collections put at N8.24 trillion, based on oil price benchmark of \$57 per barrel and 2.2 million barrels per day. The revenue assumptions were based largely on expected increased global oil demand and stable market. The emergence of COVID-19 and its spread across the world,



has forced the decline in oil prices by 55% between the last quarter of 2019 and April 2020. As of March 18, 2020, the price of crude oil dipped to US\$29.6 per barrel. The oil and gas sector contributes about 65% and 90% to government and total export revenue in a year. The Federal Government in consultations with the National Assemblies called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections this COVID-19 'induced' liquidity squeeze had certainly undermined the capacity of the federal and the State governments to implement policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and promote inclusive growth and development. Indeed, the decline in export revenues is projected to have a combined effect of 0.55% drop in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With the imminent lockdown of the major political and economic cities of Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna and Rivers, the country's services, trade, and financial sectors witnessed monumental disruptions. Taken together, these major services sectors contribute over 30% to GDP. Thus, any shrinkage in these key sectors could lead to significant job losses both in the formal and informal jobs markets. As youth unemployment is already at 55%, the impact of COVID-19 on SDGs 1,3,4,5,16 and 17 is better imagined (Yunusa, 2020:33-37).

3. **Corruption, embezzlement and nepotism:** The incidences of corruption abound in the Nigerian public service, this section briefly cites some of the cases 1999 – 2012. These range from embezzlements, frauds, contract scams and rent-seeking involving politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups. Prior to the return to democratic governance in 1999, the United Nations Executive Director for Drugs, Narcotics and Money Laundering, Costa (2008), estimates that corrupt leaders embezzled close to \$400 billion in the period of 1966 – 1999.

With the return of democratic governance to Nigeria and the establishment of many anti-corruption agencies nothing seems to have changed. Shehu (2011) citing a research conducted by the Human Rights Watch in 2007 estimated that Nigeria lost between US\$4 billion – US\$8 billion annually to corruption during the eight-year period of Obasanjo administration (1999 – 2007). State Governors and other politicians allegedly embezzled US\$250 million hidden in Western Banks and other offshore financial centres between 2005 and 2007 alone (Shehu, 2011). Others include the Siemens 1.3 billion Euro and Wilbrow International's 10 million Euro bribery scandal involving some public servants and the foreign firms between 2006 and 2007 (Akinjuromu, 2009 and Financial Standard, 2009).

Ogbeidi (2012) narrates that over \$400 million was invested on the Turn – Around Maintenance (TAM) and repairs of refineries. However, the refineries could not be turned around and the contractors were never brought to book. The report by the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) indicated undeclared revenue shortfall of the sum of N302 billion between January and July 2002 from sale of 445,000 barrels of crude oil. Efforts made by the RMAFC for the presidency to compel the then Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) to refund the missing amount to the Federation Account was unheeded. Curiously, the presidency directly oversees the petroleum ministry at that time.

In addition, an audit report of Federal Ministries between 1999 and 2002 revealed that over N23 billion was stolen from ten ministries through embezzlement, payments for unexecuted contract, over invoicing and unauthorized releases of funds. However, it was the then acting Auditor-General that was hastily retired for alleged offences of procedures breaches while the minister was not brought to book (Ogbeidi, 2012). There was also the \$214 million National Identify Card Project Scam involving some political office holders and bureaucrats with a French company, SAGEM S.A. in 2001 (Ogbeidi, 2012). Section 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria empower the legislature to conduct investigations into the activities of government for the purpose of exposing corruption, waste and inefficiency. However, the House of Representative Committee on Capital Market was alleged to have requested for a bribe of N39 million from the Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 2012 (Suleimaan, 2012).

The report of the House of Representatives Committee on the Management of Petroleum subsidy in Nigeria reveals how politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups in rent-seeking collaborated in defrauding the nation. The committee established that the actual subsidy paid out by the Federal Government from January – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 was N2.587 trillion which is 90% higher than the N304 billion appropriated for 2011. Over N230.184 billion was also paid to marketers on 3.262 billion liters of petrol which was not supplied. The Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) on its part paid itself N158 billion in 2009 and N157 billion in 2011 from subsidy payments. Thus, the policy of subsidy payments on petrol became avenue for rent seeking by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency (PPRA) and oil marketers in Nigeria.

Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) indicates that the level of corruption in the Nigeria Public Service still remains high in spite of government’s efforts over the years. This view is presented in tabular form as shown below.

**Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for Nigeria, 1999- 2012**

Year	CPI	Transparency (%)	Corruption (%)
1999	1.6	16	84
2000	1.2	12	88
2001	1.0	10	90
2002	1.6	16	84
2003	1.4	14	86
2004	1.6	16	84
2005	1.9	19	81
2006	2.2	22	78
2007	2.2	22	78
2008	2.7	27	73
2009	2.5	25	75
2010	2.4	24	76
2011	2.4	24	76
2012	2.7	27	73

**Source: Transparency International’s CPIs 1999 – 2012 Editions**

The data in Table above presents Nigeria’s CPI scores from 1999 – 2012 as obtained from the world’s most reputable anti-corruption watch-dog, Transparency International. The organization provides reliable quantitative data on the level of corruption both at global and national levels using its CPIs. The CPIs prior to 2012 ranges from zero (0) to ten (10). The closer a country’s CPI is to 0, the more corrupt is the country. Conversely, the closer a country’s CPI is to 10, the more transparent (clean) is the country. However, the CPIs were converted to percentage from 1999- 2011 for ease of analysis. The CPIs for 2012 were however presented in percentages by Transparency International itself (Transparency International, 2012). Nigeria’s CPIs range from the lowest of 1.0 (10%) transparency and 90% corrupt in 2001 to the highest of 2.7 (27%) transparent (73% corrupt) in 2008. The 2008 score could neither be improved upon nor maintained as the country’s CPI shipped back to 2.5 in 2009 and further to 2.4 (24% transparent and 76% corrupt) in 2010 and 2011. However, Nigeria’s CPI again moved to its 2008 level of 2.7 (27% transparent and 73% corrupt) in 2012. Although, the country’s CPIs have not gone below 2.4 since 2008, the rate of transparency in the Nigerian public service has been generally poor with 27% as the highest score from 1999 – 2012. On the other hand, the rate of corruption remains generally high ranging from 90% in 2001 to 73% in 2008 and 2012. The mean rate of transparency for the fourteen years was 19.57% as against 80.43% for corruption.

4. **Youth restiveness:** Nigeria over time is a-washed with youth agitations, but in a country with diehard need of development, humanly and infrastructural, the preponderance should be abated. The recent Endsars agitations in Nigeria opened a new can of worms if not checked may bring all the efforts at development to zero. Nigeria woke up to reality of youth restiveness on October 20 2020 with this agitation against police brutality. The cost of the protest is enormous in both human and financial capital. In its submission, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) disclosed that Nigeria lost more than N700 billion in economic values to the protest and the carnage that ensued thereafter. According to the president of the Chamber, Mrs Toki Mabogunje, “LCCI uncovered that the Nigerian economy has suffered an estimated N700billion in the past twelve days” (<https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/20>). She further posited that: this action has been a great cost to the economy and the welfare of Nigerian citizens. It should be noted that our economy is still reeling from the shocks of COVID-19 pandemic and struggling to recover from its devastating effects. As the protest lasted, the economists and financial experts have made an estimate that businesses in the country lost at least N10billion daily to the protest. Accordingly, Nairametrics reported that the Lagos state Government lost at least N234 million to the closure of the tollgate. The economic cost of the protest according to the Punch, (November 11, 2020) is estimated at N1.5 trillion approximately 1.03 per cent of the GDP and 11.47% of the 2021 budget. As submitted by the Financial Derivative Company limited led by Bismarck Rawane. The protest magnified the existing output challenges and supply chain disruptions... about 1800 truck of commodities, food supply, finished goods, and other raw materials and logistics enter Lagos on daily basis. A noticeable trend during our survey was that highly perishables and seasonal commodities were severely impacted. Food prices skyrocketed with major food items costing significantly higher than previous months. For instance, a 50kg bag of rice that used to be sold at N26, 000 rose to N32, 000. A bag of onions that was N20000 in January was increased to N80000. A bag of garri also sells up to N20000 higher than before. This is in fact that the protesters “in some instances destroyed food stores” (Premium Times, November 20, 2020). In a nutshell, the socio-political and economic cost of the protest is enormous and the impact will take a magnitude period of time to overcome. At the last count, at least 69 people died as a result of the protest all over the country. The breakdown shows that 51 civilians 11 police officers and seven soldiers died, while several people were injured.

**Monolithic economy:** Nigeria economy is dependent on oil production alone when this economic base is under attack as a result of internal agitations or global recession or meltdown, the economy is nosedived and crippled. The Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on the oil sector, which accounts for approximately 95% of total export earnings and 80% of the federal government revenue (World Bank, 2008). All the of Nigeria’s onshore oil production takes place at the Niger Delta region of the country. The unrest at the region has led to significant losses in onshore production, particularly since 2015. Their activities have spread armed resistance resulting in hostage taking, kidnapping of expatriates, pipeline vandalization, closure of flow stations and gross insecurity of lives and properties in the area. The cumulative effects and quasi-military resistance by the Niger Delta youth have been enormous in term of human, financial, and economic sacrifices. The impact of hostage taking has come to be regarded as national malady afflicting the soul of the nation’s economy. It is morehazarded as the nation’s oil output is the worse with the loss of 600,000 barrels of crude oil per day. Nigeria’s daily oil revenue loss for 2006 was a whopping \$700,000,000 (The Punch, Friday, February 9, 2007). Putting it in a different way Ubhenin (2013:181-182) contends that the Niger Delta challenge is having an untold implication on the nation’s economy:

In 2006 alone, the federal government reportedly lost 500 billion on account of restiveness in the region. The problem became worse in 2008, with an estimated US\$6.3 billion in oil stolen and another US\$28 billion in-deliberately not produced in comparison with decline in crude oil to the tune of 500,000 barrel per day. This translates to a revenue loss in the region of US\$40 million per day.

The shortfall in the production led to drop of 3.2% in crude oil export production, and 10.9% decline in tax revenue. Attacks by the militants in the Niger Delta in 2006 led to the short-down of several oil facilities as the attackers kidnapped workers and damaged facilities. Kidnappings and pre-meditated attacks on workers and facilities have continued unabated with various degrees of casualties. Corroborating this Oluduro and Oluduro (2012:51) have this to say:

As a matter of fact, in the first nine months of the year 2008, about 1,000 people lost their lives, 300 were taken hostage and the government lost \$23.7 billion to attacks, oil bunkering and sabotage (Report of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, 2008). Apart from the inability of Nigerian government to meet up with its OPEC quota and other negative economic effects, the oil MNCs on their part reportedly lost billions of dollars to the conflicts. For instance, between 2003 and 2007, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) estimated that it lost US\$10.6 billion, with a total loss of not less than US \$21.5 billion by the oil MNCs as a whole since 2003.

Perhaps, the dwindling price of oil will pose an incontestable challenge to the realization of the SDGs. As earlier stated, it contributes 90% of the government revenue. Recently, the oil price fell to as lower as \$28, a clear departure from the government benchmark for budget. Therefore, if government revenue is at variance from the annual projection especially for the realization of SDGs, then it will remain a tall dream (Oluwasuji, 2013).

5. **Failure of the Past Policies:** as observed by Oke, Oluwasuji and Simon-Oke, (2011), over the years, policies that are hitherto directed to solve poverty or reduce it are fraught with many problems. One of such problems so identified are institutional and methodological. Policy alleviation programmes are conceived and implemented at three levels vis local, state and federal levels. This placed a sort bottleneck to the implementation of such policies vis-à-vis the administration of funds for poverty eradication. The question of who administer what, how and when thus arises? This bring us to the issue of methodological weakness both in identification of the poor and the administration of programmes and projects.
6. **Non-Continuity of Government programmes:** the problem of non-continuity of government programmes and projects are very common in Nigeria. Everything is politics and political. Every programme is colored as party affairs. Successive government abandoned the projects and programmes of its predecessors. This is grossly responsible for many policy summersault in the country.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With great concern about the level of global poverty, economic deprivation and degradation, the World leaders on September 2015 during the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (a transmutation for MGDs to SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development focuses on ‘a present and a future that is economically sustainable, socially inclusive and environmentally resilient’. This is expressed through the framing of the 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 230 Key Performance Indicators. As assessed, Nigeria is not doing badly in the pursuit and the implementation of the programme, there are certain banana peels that are rather institutional and engrained in the system which have led to the failure of similar precursory programmes in the past and if not adequately waged war against may serve as the albatross of SDGs. In corroborative efforts towards the attainment of SDGs, the following recommendations are very germane.

- i. **The Primacy of the Informal Sector:** Nigeria’s informal economy is one of the largest on the continent – estimated at 53% of the labor force and accounting for 65% of the GDP with youth having a combined unemployment and under-employment rate of 55.4% or 24.5 million. The government should devise a means of equipping youth with the required skills to enable them move into secure and less precarious forms of employment.



- ii. **Emphasis on the Youth:** the youth forms the largest group of the population with effective ability to work, therefore, government should ensure that the youths are well educated and able to transmit to productive employment taking advantage of opportunities of digital economy as a way of reducing poverty, diversification and growth beyond dependence on oil and gas. Nigeria's government generated unlimited intervention, which targets employment of 20 million youth was identified as a good one, but the government should do more.
- iii. **The Banking and Financial Sector:** The banking and financial Sector can play an important role in supporting the country's efforts to leverage greater private sector-led growth by providing access to finance, particularly for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).
- iv. **Digitalization of the Economy:** In addition, the Nigerian government can dramatically shift to digitalization and strengthening its transition to e-government to facilitate its social protection to the poor and vulnerable population.
- v. **Involvement of Non-Governmental Agencies:** Key segments of the society are very germane if the goals must be achieved. These are grouped into- the Civil Society Organizations and Scientific Community People With Disabilities (PWDs), the Organized Private Sector, and the Donors/Development Partners Group. Youths, women and older person were embedded into the broad segments for the purpose of the virtual Consultations.
- vi. **Participatory Democracy or Democratization of Policy Making:** An integrated, bottom-top participatory process that ensures the livelihood of the people and their psychological needs should be adopted. An integrated, bottom-top participatory process that ensures the sense of belonging in decision making should be employed. A full democratization of policy making initiative process is expedient, whereby the state allows the people to participate more in the decisions that affect exploration in their communities. In other words, government should employ participatory approach rather than exclusion approach to constitution making, such that communities and interest groups will be more involved in the process. This involves thorough consultations with all the stake-holders which include: academia, grass-root consultations, civil servants, government operatives, youth, NGOs, even the clergies and Imams etc., a kind of community village/town hall meeting is desirable. Democratization of the relationship between the state and the nationalities is very important. This is achievable when the state sees itself as an impartial arbiter when sub-nationalities compete for their own shares of the state scarce resources. This connotes that the state handles the competition with even-handedness without discriminating against or in favor of any particular group (s). It also indicates that the state should be committed to programmes and projects of even development. Deductively, when nationalities are treated with respect, fairness and equity, inter-communal frictions and sub-state nationalism will be removed from the system or at least reduces their threat against the nation-state. There is need to adopt a more people-oriented and people-centered approach to national issues rather than selfish tendencies of the political leaders.
- vii. **Increased Engagement of the Civil Society:** Increased engagement of the civil society, especially the NGOs by the oil companies and the whittling down of the involvement with the state bureaucracy. It is therefore important to note that the solution to the crisis of militancy and insurgency is not exclusive. The government should make a wide consultation with all the strata of the states both internally and externally to address the problem.
- viii. **Restructuring of the Nigerian Federal System:** Restructuring of the Nigerian federal system is very imperative at this period in such a way that more powers and responsibilities be devolved to the state and the local governments which will directly impacted the people of the oil bearing communities. The local government as the closest government to the people at the grass-root should be made autonomous with greater fiscal power to carry out the statutory responsibilities. A situation whereby the local government is made an appendage of the state government by the 1999 constitution should be reviewed.



- ix. **Control of the Use of the Means of Coercion:** The Federal Government should be aware that the use of coercion has deterred the militant youths from blocking oil installations, kidnapping oil company officials and murdering law enforcement agents as a means to engage state attention to their grievances. Safety strategy for ensuring law and order is to address the demands of the people for environmental sustainability, and their welfare. This can be done through re-structuring of Federal system to guarantee true federalism, as against the present system in which an ethnic bloc dominates a centralized power structure. A reformed federal system would enable states and local governments to meet the needs of the people more adequately. Excessive centralization of power since the advent of the military in Nigerian politics in 1966 and control of oil wealth has resulted in weaker states and local governments. States and local governments have been incapacitated to meet the basic needs of the people. The social unrest arising from the situation threatens Nigeria's existence. The "re-federalization" of Nigeria, with an appropriate measure of autonomy for the constituent parts, will ensure better management of resources. People's welfare will also be better addressed in the context of local peculiarities. The Nigerian borders are too porous. It is even said, that the security agents do not know the number of borders through which illegal arms and ammunitions are ferried into the country. Airier monitoring of the borders should be adopted by the Nigerian security agents to monitor the borders and the pipeline installations. The Federal government should engage the support of international community, especially the countries at the border to prevent militants to make their countries an operational base. The government should demonstrate the political will to control the instrument of coercion. There are many groups in the country that possessed arms and ammunitions with the capacity to challenge the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.
- x. **The Federal Government Should Review its Economic Programmes.** The IMF and World Bank Policies should be implemented with caution. The privatization, commercialization and subsidy removals with the attendant decrease in standard of living of the masses; the high rate of unemployed youths; the disgruntled and disenchanted masses should be promptly addressed by the state. Without which youths are ready made hands in the hands of perpetrators of evil.
- xi. **Strengthening and Better Funding of Programmes:** The intervening measures, such as Amnesty programme, establishment of NDDC, The Niger Delta Ministry etc. should be better strengthened and funded to meet the purpose of their creation. All funds that are owed these agencies should be released forthwith and as when due.
- xii. **Use of Eclectic or Holistic Approach:** It is important to note at this junction that eclectic or holistic approach to the problem of development is needed rather than just a policy. Also Nigeria should learn from other nations of the world with the same problem and have been able to overcome their challenges if the SDGs are to be achieved.

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