

## THE NIGERIAN YOUTH AND THE ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): DEALING WITH THE ROADBLOCKS

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### ABSTRACT

*Youths are considered as a great thinker, innovators and drivers of change whose crucial roles in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be ignored. Sustainable development comes with rapid/increase growth, and improvement in every aspect or sectors of the society which the youth must be actively involve towards achieving this agenda. Their relevance cannot be jeopardized in the society. This paper therefore examines the involvement of Nigerian youth vis-à-vis the roadblocks to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. The paper adopts the Gabriel Almond's structural-functionalism as the theoretical framework. The use of secondary source of data collection was relied upon and discussion was achieved through the use of content analysis. It is observed that as laudable as the dream of SDGs is towards the youth, there are some inherent and inhibiting factors such as unemployment, lack of quality education, non-continuity of government programs, poverty, youth restiveness, among other factors that impedes the attainment of the SDGs laudable projects in Nigeria among the youths in the country. The paper concludes that attainment of the SDGs 2030 agenda in Nigeria depends largely on the extent to which deliberate policy initiatives are evolved by government to eliminate the factors that prevent youth from participating meaningfully in the decision making and implementation. The paper recommends improvement to quality education, creation of more employment opportunities, improvement in governance, mutual collaboration between the rural and urban society etc. as a viable measure that can enhance youth participation and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030.*

**Keywords:** *Youth; Sustainable Development Goals; Unemployment; Youth restiveness; Governance.*

### Introduction

The advancement of human development has significantly increased in recent times due to the motivating and renewed efforts by leaders in the continent to create a more prosperous future for youths and all citizens. The youth are an integral part of any society which are considered as a focal point in sustainable development. The sustainable development comes with continuous growth, progress and improvement in every facet of human existence and the self-acquired capability for sustenance. Despite the advances envisioned in the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 which led into the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, deep challenges remain which are targeted towards the youth at large. Progress has been uneven, with many young people across the continent still experiencing interlocked forms of discrimination, limited political inclusion, high level poverty, and limited access to health systems, educational opportunities and decent jobs etc.

The global population is projected to reach 8 billion on the 15th November 2022 and would grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion and 10.4 billion in 2100 (U.N, 2022). More than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries: The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Republic of Tanzania. The countries of the Sub-Sahara Africa are expected to continue to grow through 2100 and to contribute more than half of the global population increase anticipated through 2050. According to the UN projection, two-third of the global population through 2050 will be given by the youth.

Nigeria, the most populous black nation, most populous in Africa and the seventh in the world with population estimation at 206 million in 2020 is growing at 2.6% a year, which makes it one the fastest in the world. At this rate, Nigeria's population could double within the next 25 to 30 years. The nation's population structure is politically an economic asset. It has the largest population of youth in the world with

a median age of 18.1 years. About 70% of the population are under the age of 15 (Akinyemi and Mobolaji, 2022). The size usefulness of the population could be a great economic asset to the country if properly harnessed; hence, offering great potential to expand the nation's capacity as the regional economic hub of Africa and globally.

Unfortunately, millions of the youth have a poor quality of life, including lack of education, low living standards and poor health outcome. It consists of a large population of unskilled economically and politically unproductive, unhealthy and poorly educated young people. Instead of being a blessing to the nation it has become rather a curse (Akinyemi and Mobolaji, 2022). The Nigerian government under the President Muhammadu Buhari embraced the declaration of the world leaders of September 2015 during 70th session of the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA) in which the 2030 agenda for SDGs was adopted. 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 Indicator. 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 Nigerian government priorities 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.

At the center of all these goals are the youths which forms the greater part of the population. Some of the governmental initiatives to drive the SDGs through the youth are: N-power programme, 75 Billion naira Youths Investment Fund (NYIF); Special Public Work Program; \$20 million Fund for Nigerian Tech Innovators and Entrepreneurs; National Youth Farmer Scheme; The Accelerated Agricultural Development Scheme (AADS); DEEL; D-digital skills, E- Entrepreneurship, E- Employability L, Leadership; NESP: Homes The Mass Housing Strategy of the Nigeria; Economic Sustainability Plan: The 5M Solar Connections Programme: Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES); The National Survival Fund, among others.

The government's intention is to through these programmes lift 10 million Nigerian youth out of poverty before 2023. As laudable as these programmes may be, actualization and attainment of these SDGs is grossly threatened by some road-blocks. Failure to remove these road blocks will make the efforts of the government to be in futility. Some of these road blocks are insecurity. external forces such as global economic recession and pandemic, executive and political recklessness, youthful restiveness, monolithic economy, failure of the past similar intervening policies, non-continuity of government programmes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to examine the Nigerian youth and the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs): dealing with the roadblocks. The specific objectives are to

1. Examine the nexus between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Nigerian youth
2. Explore the roles for youth in the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs).
3. Investigate the various policy strategies of government towards youths in Nigeria
4. Identify the roadblocks of the youths in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

In order to achieve the set objectives of this research paper, the following research questions were raised that will help guide the study

1. What are the nexus between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Nigerian youth?
2. What are the roles for youth in the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs)?
3. What are the various policy strategies of government towards youths in Nigeria?
4. What are the roadblocks of the youths in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Youths**

The concept of youth could be seen as difficult to define, as it covers such a diverse area. The concept of youth could be defined by some especially in western societies as the life stages between childhood and adulthood. The Pan-African Youth Charter (2016) defines youth or young as 'every human being between the ages of 15 and 30 years. According to the English convention, youths are classified within the ages of

15- 30 years (William-West, 2007). Youth is considered as the time to search for meaning, belongingness and for attainment. The concept of youth could be discussed based on three perspectives according to Vambe (2018) as follows:

1. Youth as an age category: this category considered youth as being more fluid than other fixed age-grouped. The category considered age as the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment.
2. Youth as a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood: The four important happenings mark the transition from childhood to adulthood they are leaving home, finding employment, setting up home and marriage.
3. Youth as a social construct: social construction is something that is created by the society. It exists because people agree to behave as if it follows certain conventional rules. Each and every society has its own rules and regulations for defining youth but these social constructs may not necessarily be true. Youth can be seen as a social construction; this is because youth over the last century has changed. Young people formed a growing economic force in society and in the family and children are therefore targeted by trade in own right.

In Nigeria, the youth include the citizens between the ages of 18-35 years, according to the bureau of statistics. The population of the Nigerian youth is estimated at 40 million in 2021 by the United Nations population fund. The Nigerian youth have enormous strength to work in various sectors of the economy, such as the manufacturing and agricultural sectors; formal and informal educational sector etc. which are critical to economic growth and development. According to Mokwena (2003) Youthful age may vary amongst sexes, varying between the ages of 13-16 years for male and 11-14 years for the female.

The peculiarity of the Nigerian situation has led to the invention of social and economic definitions, which treat youth as a thing of the mind and so admits people up to the age of 40 years and beyond Vambe (2018). Economically, the lateness of the period of independence for the average young Nigerian leaves them socializing in the realm of youth for as long as they remain dependent on their parents or guardians and this could be well beyond the age of 30.

Achievement of adulthood can be determined and measured by various motivating factors which includes achieving economic independence, leaving the parental home, getting married and having children. In some societies of the world, particular social or cultural rituals may be done which marks the transition to adulthood. Many countries perceived the word "youth" as the stage where an individual is given equal treatment under the law. In some country it considered as the stage one is given the permission to vote and be voted for. After this age, the young person is considered adult. In spite of the disparity in these views, it is generally agreed that youth age is the period that marks the physical, psychological and social transformation into adulthood. Based on this characterization, many government policies consider to include people aged 13-25 years old (William-West, 2007).

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is the idea that human society must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist in the long term. This implies that the imperative present and those of the future must be put into account such as the preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity. In clear terms, sustainable development could be agreed to the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is a movement, a notion and an approach which has developed into a global wave of concern today. It is an idea that was first used in 1980 in the World Conservation Strategy (International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This first formulation stressed sustainability in ecological terms, and was far less concerned with economic development. It argued for three priorities to be built into development policies, namely: the maintenance of ecological processes; the sustainable use of resources; and the maintenance of genetic diversity (Uhunmwuangho and Ogbator, 2013).

According to Cameroon (1993), sustainable development is defined as the "progressive economic and social development of human society through maintaining the security of livelihood for all peoples and by enabling them to meet their present needs, together with a quality of life in accordance with their dignity and well-being, without compromising the ability of future generations to do likewise". The definition

explicitly recognizes that future generations also have interests and even rights deserving protection in the new model of development. The essential features of sustainable development are:

1. Ecological integrity and sustainability;
2. Equity and distributive justice at all levels;
3. Socially-relevant economic productivity and technological development;
4. Popular participation and collective autonomy;
5. Prevalence and institutionalization of human development.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theory adopted for this study was the structural functional theory propounded by Gabriel Almond. The theory is also known as functionalism theory which sees society as a system with numerous inter-related parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in the society. According to Varma (2003), organized human society fits into this connotation of system, which is referred to as the social system. The English Philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) saw the similarities between the society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning which he refers to as social institutions.

The basic assumption of the theory is that, for a social system to survive and maintain its going concern, a certain degree of order and stability must be required and ascertain. To achieve this order and stability, the theory maintained that every functional part of the social system must perform its role. According to Uhumwuangho and Ogbator (2013), it is this functional pre-requisite that serves to connect the colorful parts and therefore integrate the social system as an organic system. Therefore, from a functionalist point of view, the social system has certain introductory requirements which must be met if it is to survive. These requirements are known as functional pre-requisites.

The structural functional theory is criticized based on the fact that it can't adequately explain social change and also dysfunction may continue even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premises of the theory. Meanwhile, despite the criticism, the theory becomes important to this research work because the youth is an important part of any human society with specific functions to perform. These functions are not only meant to ensure the continuity of the society but also to achieve what functionalists refer to as some degree of fit and compatibility (Afonja, 1994).

The political system is a specific system within the social system to which we can relate the functional pre-requisite of the youth. Almond argued that in any political system, there are four input functions which are performed by the non-governmental sub-systems, by the society and the general terrain. The input functions are:

1. Political socialization and reclamation,
2. Interest articulation,
3. Interest aggregation and
4. Political communication

Contemporary articulation of the part anticipation of the youth fit into these functional orders and should be treated as informed response to the social forces of democratization. Given their energy, invention and knowledge, the Youth form the subject of political socialization. Youth movement which has entered a boost in the wake of democratization process has also handed a platform for interest aggregation and articulation. Political communication provides the information inflow that determines the character and exposure of political system. According to Onuoha (2008), the applicability of Youth in this process cannot be overemphasized, especially in an imperative republic like Nigeria. In their interface with the establishment, the Youth largely represent the 'feedback circle', through which critical views of government action or inactivity inflow from society into the political system.

### **Methodology and discussion**

For this research work, qualitative techniques were adopted since the research seeks to understand and explain the efficiency and effectiveness of SDGs and poverty among the youth in Nigeria. The research paper relied extensively on the use of secondary source of data collection and analysis. The secondary data was sourced from documentary papers, government and institutional periodicals, scholarly journals, official

documents such as gazettes, circulars, technical reports etc. for an in-depth analysis of the data collected and was analyzed using content analysis.

### **Sustainable development Goals and the Nigerian Youth**

Youths have been described as “great thinkers, innovators and drivers of change,” whose crucial roles in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be ignored. As earlier stated, in Nigeria, the youth include the citizens between the ages of 18-35 years, according to the bureau of statistics. The population of the Nigerian youth is estimated at 40 million in 2021 by the United Nations population fund. According to Salami (2013), The Nigerian youth have enormous strength to work in various sectors of the economy, such as the manufacturing and agricultural sectors; formal and informal educational sector etc. which are critical to economic growth and development. Nevertheless, they are prone to crimes if they are not adequately and properly harnessed for effectiveness. In achieving sustainable development goals, the utilization and effective use of the youth will go a long way in achieving this goal in Nigeria. Hence the need to prioritize the youth by formulating and implementing viable policies that will eradicate poverty, illiteracy vis-à-vis crime from among the them.

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 synchronized as follows: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Reduce Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below water, Life on Land, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, 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 dreaded year of 2030. The major concern for this research is that how do the youth in Nigeria key into this agenda in achieving these goals?

Today, there are 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24 they are the largest generation of youth in history (Women, children and adolescent health, 2022). Close to 90 per cent of them live in developing countries of the world, where they make up a large proportion of the population. Their numbers are expected to grow between 2015 and 2030 alone, about 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old. Connected to each other like never before, young people want to and already contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. The youths are also agents of change, mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet. If the youths are provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed, they can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security.

Youth plays a significant role in the implementation process, monitoring and review of the Agenda of the Sustainable Development as well as in holding governments accountable for the fulfilment of the goals.

### **Roles for youth in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The youth are category of people who are expected to make sense of personal experiences and ask questions about the world around them. they have the capacity to identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and to expose contradictions and biases which may stand as barrier to achieving their goals and aspirations.

Similarly, the youth are energized with power to act and mobilize others. Youth activism is on the rise the world over, bolstered by broader connectivity and access to social media which is a predominating role in the attainment of the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to bringing fresh perspectives, young people often have direct knowledge of and insights into issues that are not accessible to adults. Youth best understand the problems they face and can offer new ideas and alternative solutions.

Outside the international development sector, only few people are aware that world leaders have come to a historic, far-reaching agreement to improve the lives of people and the planet by 2030. Young people can be partners in communicating the development agenda to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions. Finally, when youths are empowered with the knowledge of their rights and equipped with leadership skills, they can drive change in their communities and countries.

### **Various policy strategies of government towards youths in Nigeria**

There are numerous and different policy measures adopted by governments in Nigeria to achieve sustainable economic growth and development and also to reduce the incessant increase of poverty among the youth in the country. Some of these policies are but not limited to the following as identified by Vambe (2018):

1. Establishment of the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). This policy/programme was initiated in 1986 to execute rural development programmes. The directorate was involved in the construction and rehabilitation of feeder roads, rural water supply, rural electrification projects; and offering specified agricultural production support services. It identifies and support viable local community in the effective mobilization of the rural population for sustained rural developmental activities. It was also responsible for identifying areas of high production potential for the country's priority food and fibre requirement and supporting production of such commodity along agro-ecological zones within the context of one national market.
2. Environmental safe-guiding: Although quite number of natural resources conservation policies have been put in place for a very long period of time, their implementation has been in kicks and starts and highly uncoordinated. Furthermore, the specified recognition of the need for safe-guiding these natural resources in Nigeria as a means of sustainable development is of more recent development and advancement. Thus, while such programmes as those on soil conservation, soil reclamation, soil erosion control, food control, afforestation, desertification control etc., had been in existence for many years, such measures as air pollution control have until recently been poorly coordinated. An indication of government concern for the environment is the establishment of Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and a Ministry of Environment.
3. Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP): ABP was launched by the President Buhari led administration in November 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 and was established to create linkage between anchor companies involved in the process of selecting key agricultural commodities and small holder farmers. The programme was designed to create economic linkages between farmers and processors, not only to ensure increased agricultural output of rice and wheat, but also to close the gap between production and consumption. The focus of the ABP was to provide seed to farmers and cash to grow the crops which will assist to boost production of the selected commodities and ensure that there is constant supply of the commodities to the agro processors. The program targets farmers who produce cereals (Rice, Maize, Wheat etc.) Roots and Tubers (Cassava, Potatoes, Yam, Ginger etc.) Tree crops (Oil palm, Cocoa, Rubber etc.); Legumes (Soybean, Sesame seed, Cowpea etc.); Livestock (Fish, Poultry, Ruminants etc.) others include: Cotton, Sugarcane, Tomatoes, etc. The CBN had set aside N40bn out of the N220bn Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund to be given to farmers at a single, digit interest rate of 9 per cent per annum (Onuoba, 2015). Loans granted to the SHFs shall be repaid with the harvested produce that shall be mandatorily delivered to the Anchor at designated collection center in line with the provisions of the Agreement signed. The produce to be delivered must cover the loan principal and interest (Proshare, 2017). While it is touted as one of the most successful Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) development finance interventions to date, and also deemed to have so far achieved reasonable success, especially in the areas of outreach and coverage, the failure of most farmers in some states to repay their loans running into billions of naira, appears to have effectively signaled the commencement of the collapse of the initiative.
4. National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP): this programme was launched in 2016, the NHGSFP was designed to provide school children with a free nutritionally-balanced and locally-sourced meal every school day. The objective of the programme is to improve school enrolment and completion, stimulate agricultural production and create employment opportunities for the community. The federal government is currently implementing the programme as a pilot scheme in partnership with the governments of 18 Nigerian states to provide sustainable school meals to 5.5 million children in public primary schools (The Nation, 2016). The HGSF programme is experiencing serious challenges across the states where implementation has since got underway. There are allegations that beneficiaries in several states have to be connected to political heavyweights and other partisan interests, which defeat the essence of the programmes (The Guardian, 2017). The challenges have led to the halting of the programme in some states in order to clarify funding and implementation issues. What this shows is that good intentions alone are not enough; those altruistic intentions have to be backed up with

hardnosed strategies for implementation, accountability and to ensure the programmes meet citizens' high expectations.

5. Conditional Cash Transfer: Two main cash transfers are currently being implemented in Nigeria – both conditional. Other small-scale cash transfers include a child savings scheme in Bayelsa state and a disability allowance in Jigawa. In Care of the People (COPE) is a government-run conditional cash transfer (CCT) which started as a pilot in 2007 and is now in its third phase. Its objective is to break the intergenerational transfer of poverty and reduce the vulnerability of the extremely poor. It targets children of basic school age living in households that are headed by poor females or include members, who are aged, physically challenged, or fistula or HIV and AIDS patients. Beneficiary households first receive a monthly Basic Income Guarantee for one year. This ranges from \$10 to \$33, depending on the number of children in the household (a maximum of five); up to a further \$50 per month is withheld as compulsory savings, to be provided as a lump sum (up to \$560) to the head of the household at the end of the year.

### **Roadblocks of the youth in the attainment of SDGs programme in Nigeria**

**Unemployment:** Unemployment is a critical and great challenge to the attainment of sustainable development goals by the youth. Youth is disproportionately unemployed. According to statistics by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBC, 2011), between 2006 and 2011, there were 1.8million new entrants into the active labour market per year even some states recorded high composite unemployment rates that are above national average of 23.9 per cent as at 2013. For instance, in Bayelsa it was 38.4%; Katsina 37.3%; Bauchi 37.2%; Akwa-Ibom 34.1%; Gombe 32.1%; Adamwa 29.4%; Borno 27.7%; Kano 27.6%; Yobe 27.3%; Taraba 26.8%; and Jigawa 26.5% (Vambe, 2018). Nearly a fifth of the world's youth does not have job, education or training. Even in terms of economic recovery, the probability that youth is unemployed is extremely greater than that of adult; labour poverty, and low level of productivity, together with informal work, continue to represent an important challenge. High rate of youth unemployment implies a waste of resources and lead to the deceleration of the long-term growth potential of an economy, resulting in lower income. Today, the working poverty rate for youth at the USD 2 a day threshold in Nigeria ranges from 20-50 per cent (BBC News, 2017), attesting to the lack of productive employment opportunities. This is also ascertained by increased shares of workers in vulnerable employment that is the own-account workers and unpaid family workers who typically do not benefit from securities enjoyed by regular-salaried employees. All of these translate into more youth working in the informal sector, characterized by decent work deficits and relatively risks of exploitation. In seeking productive employment opportunities and decent work, one option selected by female and male youth is migration from rural to urban area or from their home to another country (ILO, 2015). Migration can be a positive experience for youth themselves and for both the 'origin' and 'destination' countries. However, migrating youth can be at risk of exploitation, abuse, social exploitation, adverse (physical and mental) health issues, human trafficking and death, with variability in risk between genders. Female youth, for example, are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking for sexual exploitation, while male youth may be susceptible to forced labour, such as in the agricultural industry.

**Insufficient Education:** One of the major goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is quality education which is goal 4. In so many areas of the country, youth lack access to the quality and affordable education and skills training which would help them get jobs or create livelihoods and improve their lives (Vambe, 2016). Several educational policies have been put in place by several government administrations to empower young people and improve access to education including the introduction of Universal Basic Education, the abolishment of school fees and introduction of free feeding at primary level. The quality of education in schools are declining every day, Inadequate infrastructure and training facilities, poor and inappropriate curricula, and lack of well-trained and motivated teachers are among the main reasons explaining the decline. The future of SDGs lies in the hands of the youth who are expected to be graduate in college/institutions but when the youth do not have access to this quality education, the future of Sustainable Development will be truncated. Many schools within the country are limited in capacity which is largely due to inadequate budgetary resources and implementation of policies for the sector. Many children do not have access to education, many are roaming the street hawking to make ends meet which is a threat to achieving the SDGs plan. Despite several hundreds of different ethnic groups in Nigeria, formal educational instruction occurs in only 3 languages (Hausa, Ibo; and Yoruba). Combined with discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion, youth (and children) whose mother tongue is not recognized in the

formal education system are thus relatively disadvantaged, with negative implications for educational outcome. One Goal of the 2030 Agenda is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015)'. Currently there exist structures and practices that discriminate against, for example, females, persons with disabilities, persons of low economic status and persons in rural and remote areas. These need to be recognized and rescinded, accompanied by the provision of facilities and procedures that promote access and inclusion.

**Poverty:** the first and one important sustainable development goal is to ensure no poverty and government in several led administration has ensured that this is achievable for youths within the country. This is done by the creation of numerous programmes targeted to address these challenges among the youth. Programs such as N-power, Nigeria Youth Investment Fund, School feeding program, Tradermon, Anchor Borrower's programme; Conditional Cash Transfer etc., Despite these implementations of several poverty alleviation programmes, poverty remains a reality and a threat for millions of people in the country, to which the youth are particularly vulnerable. Based on the findings by the World Poverty Clock which was compiled by Brookings Institute indicated that extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute, which is the highest number in the world at large (Adeboye, 2018). The survey showed that Nigeria had an estimated 86.9 million people in extreme poverty compared to India's 73 million. The World Poverty Clock report as quoted by Edwoye (2018) stated that of the 10 countries on this extreme poverty list, only Ethiopia is on track to meet the United Nations' SDG of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Youth poverty is witnessed and observed in numerous ways ranging from hunger and under-nutrition to restricted, access to social services, access to quality health facilities, access to quality education etc. the future of many youths has been truncated because they do not have access to this necessity making them become victims of anti-social crimes in the society.

**Non-Continuity of Government programmes for the youth:** 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 policies summersault in the country and it affect the performance of youth. The possibilities for good governance depend largely on institutional structures and economic resources available in ensuring good government. So many programmes have been abandoned by government because it was not imitated by them. Therefore, no matter how perfect the policies may be in enhancing the youth it becomes abandoned and subjecting the youth to unnecessary hardship.

**Land degradation and Production Environment:** Poor leadership, mismanagement and pauperization of the populace and inconsistent policies have taken a toll on the environment. For instance, Nigeria's Niger Delta area has been in the news intermittently. The nation's mangrove forests are being destroyed following poor exploitation of crude oil and gas in the region. The agrarian system in the area is being destroyed. The region has to depend on other regions for food supplies. The nation has to forgo most of the rubber and oil-palm plantations. Clearly, these are fallouts from poor sectoral policies. It depicts an uncoordinated policy formulation reminiscent of poor leadership. In Northern Nigeria, desertification processes are prevalent, and coupled with heavy fuel wood harvest, poor farming techniques and annual bush burning, the land is being destroyed. In eastern Nigeria, heavy gully, erosion coupled with overpopulation prevails. The results have been falling rural and agrarian sector, mass poverty of the rural populace, heavy food importation, and indeed mass exodus of young people from the rural areas. Even in the industrial and modern sector environments the society's greed for quick and cheap money has led to abandoning of standards, especially as seen in the emission of toxic materials into the environment. Substandard goods are being produced and imported. Thus, in Nigeria it is not so much the quality of life that is at risk because of environmental degradation but life itself.

**Lack of motivation for the youths:** in most African countries of the world Nigeria inclusive have battled with the problem of motivating their employee most especially the youth in contributing more to their effectiveness in their assigned jobs. For instance, the third goal of the Sustainable development deals with good health and general well-being has been truncated due to the incessant and intermittent strike actions



by various professional bodies relating to health due to the inability of government to meet the demands of the health workers which has drastically resulted to brain drain among the sectors. Many professional workers have migrated to other place in search of greener pasture. This has constantly become a threat in many sectors including education, health, manufacturing and so on. Motivating the youth should be a driver force in bringing and making the youth effective in achieving the goals of sustainable development which has in most cases been abandoned. Knowledge not appreciated in some African countries have become a valuable asset to developed countries of the world.

### **Conclusion**

The youth are considered to be on the average, healthier, better educated, better connected and politically more engaged than any previous generation. Despite this, they are needed with better opportunities to fully realize and achieve their potential and equally participate in societies that value their opinion and talent. Hence the onus is less on young people themselves, but on the older generations who are unwilling to let go of power and the ideals and life styles that propagate inequity and ecological degradation. In this context, to successfully achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Nigeria and in the world, every effort must be made to have youths at the forefront of each and every step to transform the country. Currently, the system is bewildered with several issues such as inequality, corruption etc. if not prevented could further damage the society at large. Greater efforts should be given to the youth by government at all levels to achieve their potentials and aspirations. Civil society and other stakeholders are also needed to address the numerous shortcomings in most of our sectors such as education, health care and employment, along with risks associated with disasters, diseases, maltreatment, exploitation and abuse.

### **Recommendations**

In order to eradicate the roadblocks of youth in attaining sustainable development goals, the following recommendation or suggestions are considered to be important:

1. Improvement to quality education: having noted that education is a threat to sustainable development it is important for government and educational stakeholders to improve the quality of education which varies depending on household income, urban-rural location, ethnicity, gender ability, and social and cultural norms etc. infrastructural facilities are needed to put in place such as buildings, vocational centers, ICT centers, transport etc., along with quality and well trained teachers without neglecting the provision of conducive environments which are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory. Education curricular also need to correspond to modern and future labour market demands, while adhering to the principles of sustainable development and noting the importance of technical and vocational training.
2. Creation of employment opportunities for youth: it is an undisputable fact that government in several ways tends to create employment opportunity for youth even though some of these opportunities have been abandoned and neglected. There is need to create more opportunities for the youth to be proactive and productive in sustaining development within the country. Graduate should be provided with enabling environment to perform their duties which will reduce drastically the number of unemployed youth roaming the street and causing truancy in the society.
3. Improvement in governance: For effectiveness and efficiency of youth, there is need for future and actively participation in development processes, their distrust of politics, business operations and civic institutions should be countered. Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders need to address the problem of corruption and the inequitable distribution of resources. There is need for transparency and accountability alongside with an independent judiciary where people can seek redress when their rights are being violated. Learning processes should build the capacity of youth to operate in contexts where sustainable development is not compromised.
4. Address exclusion and unrest: youth could be excluded from effective participation in both civil and political processes which the resultant effect could be an increase in criminal activities, social unrest and armed conflicts, as well as terrorist activities. Thus, there is need to engage the youth people in the creation of systems that promote dialogue, inclusion and peace building which could support the development of the societies, economic stability and responsive and accountable political institutions in line with the Agendas of the sustainable development goals
5. Promotion of both urban and rural development: There is an untapped potential for cooperativeness within the rural and urban development, human capital development, agriculture, sustainable industries and human settlements development. Understanding and leveraging urban-rural linkages and creating

solidify partnerships among government at multiple levels and the private sector can create opportunities for youth livelihoods in both the rural and urban environment while reducing the menace of rural-to-urban migration. Youth need to be actively involved as critical partners in doing so, can help enhance collaboration between generations and communities.

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