SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The general objective is to find out whether sustainable development can be achieved without social justice in Nigeria. The theoretical framework of the study is anchored on Ambbedkarism which posits that justice has consistently involved notion of equality and the proportion of compensation. Ambedkar saw justice not alone as the distribution of material wealth among individuals but fundamentally as a way of life rooted in mutual respect, esteem and a sense of fellowship as equal members of society. Themethodology is largely descriptive and analytical with anecdotal evidence gleaned from qualitative and relevant literature on sustainable development, social justice, good governance. The materials included Primary and Secondary data. The findings suggest partial progress in SDGs projects in Nigeria. Challenges persist in effective implementation like lack of inclusiveness and gender inequality, the issue of corruption and top down development approach etc. The research implication is that social justice which is central in the sustainable development projects has not been properly addressed giving room to embezzlement of public funds meant for the SDGs projects. To be genuinely acetated Nigeria SDGs achievement by the set 2030 target, urgent and coordinated efforts are needed from the government, international, development partners, local government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The originality and value of the research is manifested in the fact that the research revealed that social fairness is essential for sustainable growth significant sustainable development is unattainable without social justice. Social justice signified equitable rights and opportunities for all individuals within a nation. The integrity of the research is founded in the fundamental ideals of honesty, openness, fairness, accountability and stewardship

KEY WORDS: Sustainable development, social justice, corruption, poverty and social inclusion.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

After Nigerian independence in 1960 successive Nigerian governments used mobilization techniques which included: import substitution, indigenization policy 1972 National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) 1973, River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) 1972/73, Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) 1992, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1976, The Green Revolution Programme" (1980), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)1986 and Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self-reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) 1987. Better life for rural women in 1987, Family Support Programme for Rural Women (FSRW) 1992, Agricultural Development Banks (ADB), People's Bank for Poor Masses (PBPM), Microfinance Banks which mostly targeted rural areas for small scale and medium scale business development. NEEDS 2003: Nigerian Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy to develop and

reduce poverty Vision 2010:Projected Economic Plan for Nigeria to improve economically and Vision 2020:Conscious Economic strategy that was planned to improve the sustainability of the development goals in order to build a robust economy and become one of the top 20 economies in the world

With the mobilization techniques, government realized that much could not be achieved for rural development, hence adopted self-help strategy. The meaning of self-help according to Igboeli (1992) entails strategies that induce progress in rural societies, not all of which involve action by governments. It could be related to an individual who alone has the resources to implement a project or projects to satisfy the basic needs of a community. Similarly, it also imply coordinated efforts within a community to select and execute political, economic and social programmes addressed to the development of a community. Igboeli (1992) postulated that self help means the following;

1. The participation of citizens in an effort to improve their level of living with as much reliance as possible on their initiatives
2. Mobilization of the citizens to stimulate their enthusiastic participation
3. The provision of human and material assistance by the government to encourage initiative in self-help and mutual help in order to make the efforts of the citizens more effective and meaningful.

Social justice is a prerequisite for both good governance and sustainable development in any country of the world. The principles of good governance include: participation, consensus orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency equity and inclusiveness, rule of law and strategic vision are necessary for national stability which will in turn give way to sustainable development. The ten days national protest in August, 2024 to end bad governance was an example of what bad governance can cause though some protesters were killed, some were injured and others detained but the message was clear that the people were not part of the national government of the day and the rule of law is not being observed

Social justice means equal right and equitable opportunities for all citizens of a country. Social justice encompasses a wide range of issues and advocates for the fair treatment of all citizens regardless of gender, ability or socio-economic status. According to United Nations "social Justice may be broadly be understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic systems". While National Association of Social Workers noted that "social Justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone particularly those in greatest needs"

Democracy as defined by Aristotle is rule by the people which led Abraham Lincoln in 1863 say that democracy is "government of the people, by the people and for the people". As a matter of fact it is believed that the people govern themselves by organizing regular elections through which the people's highest leaders are periodically determined or polices governing them are made.

The demands of social justice include the following: the acceptance of the right to have one's vote counted equally, the right to run for political offices of media which are free to criticize government policies and gaders without intimidation, debate of issue and voting by democratically elected representatives, promotion of religious tolerance and freedom and right to hold and express unpopular opinion, protection of minority rights, economic empowerment of the citizens and the existence of the rule of law encoded in a fundamental document which structures the government elaborate the reciprocal rights and duties.

Government and the people and whereby all government official and their policies must obey and he subjected to constitution *(Dura 2018)*.

Freedom is not limited to political freedom, it extends to freedom from poverty, freedom to hold religious beliefs and opinions. Equality of Opportunities etc., protection not only relatives to safety of lives and property but to the sanctity of the human rights. Development is thus deemed to have started only when man's life sustaining needs, self-esteem, freedom ad protection are provided for and can be maintained for as long as man lives *(Dura 2018)*.

According to Goulet (1971) development has three major components namely: life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance is concerned with the provision of basic needs. No country can be regarded as fully developed if it cannot provide its entire people with such basic needs as housing, clothing, food and minimal education. Thus, the major concern of development should be to raise people out of primary poverty and to provide basic needs simultaneously. Self-esteem consists of feeling of self-respect and independence. No country can be regarded as fully developed if it is exploited by others and does not have the power and influence to conduct relations on equal terms. Nigeria seeks development to eradicate the feeling of dominance and dependence which is associated with inferior economic status. Freedom refers to self-liberation from the three evils of "want, ignorance and squalor", so that people are more able to determine their own destiny. No man is free if he cannot choose; if he is imprisoned by living on themarg in of subsistence with no education and no skills. Suffice it therefore, to say that, development occurs when there as been an improvement in basic needs, when economic progress has contributed to a greater sense of self-esteem for the country and individuals within it. and when material advancement has expanded the range of Choice for individuals. (Ukertor and Vambe 2021).

Sustainable development is a notion, a movement 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)).In its first formulation stressed sustainability in ecological terms, and was far less concerned with economic development. It argued for three priorities to be built-in to development policies:

The maintenance of ecological processes;(ii) The sustainable use of resources; and (iii) The maintenance of genetic diversity (Olewe, 1995).

H Sustainable development, as used today, is concerned with political mobilization, and the twin Issues of environmental protection and economic development. It embodies the notion and ideals of a development process that is equitable and socially responsive, recognizing the extensive nature of poverty, depreciation and inequality between and within nations, classes, and communities. It also seriously advocates that the world be seen as one eco-system and advocates that economic development process should Include ecological and environmental issues as an essential component (World Bank, 2000).

The World Bank (Brutland) Commission on Environment and Development (1991:14) also stresses that: Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future.. . it is a process in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations.

Cameron (1993) noted that, sustainable development entails 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. Without questioning the principle of "development" as a method for satisfying the needs of current generations, it explicitly recognizes that future generations also have interests and even rights deserving protection in this new model of development. The essential features of sustainable development according to Idisi (2002) and Offiong (2001) include:

i Ecological integrity and sustainability. ii Equity and distributive justice at all levels .iiiSocially-relevant economic productivity and technological development. ivPopular participation and collective autonomy. vPrevalence and institutionalization of human development. (Ukertor and Vambe 2021)

Sustainable Development encourages to conserve and enhance resource base by gradually changing the ways in which we develop and use technologies. Countries must be allowed to meet their basic needs of employment, food, energy, water and sanitation. Stabilizing and reducing carbon emissions is key to living with environmental limits. It ensures improved quality For resent and future generations noted World Commission on Environment and Development (2017).

Sustainable development is largely about people, their well-being and equity in their relationships with each other in a context where nature-society imbalances can thereafter become economic and social stability. Sustainable Development is important for economic growth because:

I.   Environment must be conserved while development is taking place.
II.   Resources must be cited in such a way that something is conserved for future generation.
III.   The standard of living of all people must be raised (U N Publication 2020)

Abraham (2012) noted that principles of sustainable development include: equity, social development, inclusiveness, human environment harmony and co-operation. Nigeria has never lacked or been in short supply of good policies or reforms the problem has remained its inability to convert them to tangible stable and quantifiable result Nigeria has been constrained by lack of holistic approach to their conception, appraisal and implementation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Statement of the Problem

Despite the huge investments in time, money and energy on the Millennium Development Goals which ran from 2000 to 2015 at the end of the day much was not achieved and in the same 2015 Nigeria adopted SDGs which ends by 2030 five years into the programme much has not been achieved. According to African Sustainable Development SDG lndex Ranking Nigeria scored 47.07 43 position out of 52 countries in the Index Ranking.

We do not have technology center or research institute with up to date science laboratory for innovation. There are few industrials that can service the comprehensive need of extraction. Processing, production, manufacturing, packaging and distributive function. The laboring populations that generate the wealth of our nation are visibly weak and unhealthy. This makes productivity to fall below capacity which translates into underdevelopment. Many of our hospitals are mere consulting rooms and electricity supply rates and prizes are

disappointing. Environmental education and awareness are not the priority of the ruling class..

Challenges include: Slower economic growth, long lasting corruption and inequality unfavorable demographic in various forms and wide spread epidemics, depletion of natural resources, gender inequality, and unequal distribution of wealth. Poverty and exclusion unemployment climate change, conflict and humanitarian aid building peaceful and inclusive societies building strong institution of governance and supporting rule of law. Political barriers: includes inadequate economic, social and environment methods for policies, plans and projects are the major barrier combating the implementation of sustainable development goals UN 2020 progress report on SDG5 2030.

As a result of its colonial legacies, the Nigerian economy today is characterized by a lopsided dependence on the export of raw-materials and the import of manufactured goods. The structural imbalance in the economy resulting from its over dependence on the export of a few primary products makes the country extremely vulnerable to external forces and seriously undermines internal development. This has arisen largely as a result of declining prices of primary exports and the rising prices of industrial imports from Europe and North America. Consequent upon balance of trade deficits. Nigeria has been forced to finance imports as well as its development programmes through borrowing from foreign sources. This has led to a huge debt burden and increased dependence on foreign capital and foreign aid. and no country can expect to pursue any meaningful policy or programmes designed to achieves stainable development in a situation of acute dependence and poverty. (Ukertor and Vambe 2021)

According to recent data from the World Bank, Nigeria's efforts in diminishing poverty rates since embracing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been modest at best. The statistics paint a stark picture: in 2015, the year the SDGs were adopted, 40.1% of Nigeria's population was living below the national poverty line. Four years later, in 2019, this percentage remained unchanged

Using the 2022 National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report to evaluate poverty across health, education, living standards, and work and shocks reveals that 63% of Nigeria's population resides in poverty. This alarming statistic implies that a substantial 6 out of every 10 Nigerians experience multidimensional poverty, highlighting a significant distance from attaining Goal 1 of the SDGs. This statistic was a stark indicator of the widespread economic challenges and disparities faced by a significant portion of the country's population. Despite ongoing efforts and initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, the situation remained largely unchanged as of 2019. The poverty rate, steadfast at 40.1%, highlighted a concerning stagnation in economic improvement for the most vulnerable segments of Nigerian society. This stagnation is particularly noteworthy given the period's global and national emphasis on poverty reduction as a key objective of the SDGs

Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women's' lives. Despite, a general commitment to the principle of non-discrimination as enshrined in section 2 of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigeria Falls short of the desired result of giving makes and females equal opportunities to advance socially, physically, educationally, politically and economically. Evidence abound that several negative aspects of gender relations, such as gender-based division, disparities between males and females access to power and resources, and gender biases in right and entitlement, remain pervasive in Nigeria (National Gender Policy, 2006). Violence against women, particularly domestic violence against woman, particularly domestic violence and rape, is widespread and has

increased the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDs. Gender inequalities substantially limit woman's access to control over, and use of services and productive resource.

The Nigeria democratic experience has not resulted in the much-expected good governance that is the foundation for economic growth and development and, by extension, poverty reduction. This is because democratic government in Nigeria is practiced at variance with the basic tenets and principles of good democratic government. Relevant studies revealed, amongst others, that democratic government in Nigeria is pervaded by various issues such as electoral violence, manipulation of election results, political apathy, and the "do or die" posture of the major political leaders.

The government has tried to fight corruption, which is deeply rooted in Nigerian society and has penetrated all its Facets. The anti-corruption war is not successful because the anti-corruption outfits often become part of the problem of corruption themselves. The absence of peace in Nigerian society because of a lack of justice has manifested in massive poverty and insecurity in the country. The massive marginalization in the country led to agitation for self-determination, while the alleged preference given to the Fulani has sustained Fulani-farmer clashes resulting in the killing of local "Farmers, the destruction of farm crops and Farms and the raping and killing of women, giving credence to the saying that without justice there can be no peace in any society (Aguene 2024).

The socio-political climate has become more tensed due to the growing discontentment, discomfort, and distress within society as a whole, as well as the ongoing pervasive corruption, high unemployment rate, economic crisis, pauperization of the masses, deteriorating infrastructure, and a fruitless national integration project. As a result, violent crimes such as abduction, political assassinations, armed conflicts, terrorism, and ethnic and religious genocides have come to dominate social interactions in Nigeria. The World Bank (2021) noted that about 4 out of every 10 Nigerians are living in poverty, with millions more susceptible to falling below the poverty line.

Farmers and herdsmen clashed, killing and displacing many Nigerians and destroying farm crops. They have forced many Nigerians into poverty. The Fulani, or herdsmen, are one often major causes of pauperization of Nigerians in recent times. They also engage in killing, rape, kidnapping, and other crimes. Following several appeals to the Presidency for solutions, the Southern Governors issued this statement. This led to the Asaba Declaration in 2021, where, among other things. They banned open grazing of cattle throughout southern Nigeria. Many have followed up the Asaba declaration with anti-open grazing laws, and insecurity has led to the pauperization of Nigerians (Aguene 2024).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to find ascertain whether sustainable development can be achieved without social justice. The specific objectives include:

1. To ascertain whether social justice is prerequisite for sustainable development
2. To ascertain whether sustainable development can reduce poverty level drastically.
3. to ascertain whether sustainable development can be achieved under national insecurity
4. to ascertain whether corruption has negative effect in sustainable development

1.4   Research Questions

In view of the above objectives of the study the following research questions were raised:

1. Is social justice prerequisite for sustainable development?
2. Can sustainable development drastically reduce poverty level?
3. Can sustainable development be achieved under national insecurity?
4. Has corruption any negative effect on sustainable development?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design of the Study

The study design is largely descriptive and analytical with anecdotal evidence gleaned from qualitative and relevant literature on sustainable development, social justice, poverty, insecurity and good governance

2.2 Data Collection

The materials for the research included; Textbooks, journals articles, documentary paper, government publication, monographs, periodicals, interactions with practitioners especially during conferences, workshop, internet materials, radio, television, newspapers and symposia had also conferences to enriching the sources from where materials were gathered

3.0 FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Result/Findings

The anti-police brutality protest across Nigerian cities in October 2020 resulted in deaths, injuries and destruction of properties clearly proved that there is no social injustice in Nigeria. The ten days national protests across Nigeria in August 2024 showed hunger and anger among Nigerians signifying the failure of the government in their primary assignment of taking care of the wellbeing of the Nigerian Masses.

The unemployment of the youths many of them graduates, no skills acquisition center or coupled with reckless spending by the Nigerian Politicians has increased the level of insecurity in the country by armed robbery, kid napping and other fraudulent practices. This is because the youth were not gainfully engaged

There is poor implementation of the sustainable development projects in Nigeria. The Chairman of Local Government Councils who would have joined hands with Presidents of town unions and associations within the local government area are not fully utilized instead they anchor sustainable development projects in local council under desk officers others include gender inequality and social exclusion resulting in poor performance despite huge investment in Nigeria scored 47.07%, and 43 position out of 52 countries in Africa dash board of vaunting 2020 SDGs assessment while countries in North Africa were raising from 70%-90% became they were up to date in implementation with community driven development approach instead top down development approach used in Nigeria

Project discontinuity is another problem because any government that come to power in Nigeria usually drop the projects of the predecessor without accountability because of lack of interest therefore the project is just abandoned like that without questioning which give rise to massive corruption and vandalization of the remnants of the abandoned project. All the federal, state and local government councils have their own different development plans.

The impact of COVID-19pandemic nearly collapsed the Nigerian economy. There was no money, food and frustrated that many Nigerians died because of the Corona virus disease some Nigerians even attempted or actually committed suicide. The lock down from March

2020 to September 2020 nearly collapsed the Nigerian economy. The Federal, state governments and even local government were forced to direct attention to giving palliative to the most vulnerable in the community. Flooding killed many Nigerians and erosion flooding swept away many farm lands during 2020 rainy season.

Findings suggest partial progress in SDG integration within Nigeria's development plans. While some strides have been made in areas like policy alignment and strategic planning, challenges persist in effective implementation and tackling systemic issues like inequality and corruption.

In light of these findings, it becomes clear that tackling poverty in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach. This approach should not only focus on immediate economic relief but also on long-term sustainable development strategies that address the root causes of poverty. Efforts need to be intensified in areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure development, and economic diversification to create a more inclusive and equitable society

However, despite the well-intended design and objectives of these programs, their implementation has faced significant challenges. In summary, while the Nigerian government has recognized the importance of addressing poverty through initiatives like the NSIP, the challenges in implementation, particularly in ensuring effective delivery and preventing misappropriation of funds, remain significant barriers.

The issue of poverty in Nigeria is exacerbated by the stark inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities. This disparity is particularly pronounced when comparing urban and rural areas. In rural regions, poverty is more acute due to limited access to essential services such as quality education, healthcare, and viable employment opportunities.

Nigeria's food insecurity is the country's rapid population growth. With one of the highest population growth rates globally, Nigeria faces increasing pressure on its agricultural systems. As the population expands, so does the demand for food, intensifying the challenges of feeding a burgeoning populace. This demographic trend amplifies the strain on already constrained food resources, making the attainment of zero hunger an even more daunting task

Gender equality is crucial for Nigeria's socio-economic development. Despite policy frameworks and legal provisions promoting gender equality, women still face discrimination and unequal opportunities. Gender-based violence, limited access to economic resources, and cultural norms continue to hinder progress.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Theoretical framework of the study

Ambedkar concurred with Bergbon that the concept of justice, which posits that Justice has consistently invoked notions of equality and the proportion of; compensation Equity denotes principles of equality, while rights and righteousness pertain to equality in worth. & quot; I fall individuals are equal, they share the same essence, which grants them identical fundamental rights and equal liberty & equity; (cited in Ambedkar, 1987). Ambedkar has a liberal conception of justice, rooted in human values. Ambedkar defines & quot; justice& quot; as synonymous with liberty, equality, and fraternity. Ambedkar posits that political democracy cannot endure without a foundational social democracy that acknowledges equality, liberty, and fraternity as fundamental values of existence. The values of liberty, equality, and fraternity should not be regarded as distinct elements of a trinity; rather, they

constitute an integrated unity, as severing one from the others undermines the fundamental objective of democracy (Ambedkar, 1994). For

Ambedkar, democracy is a fundamental component for achieving social justice.

Ambedkar believed that liberty played a crucial part in the formation of human identity. It is rooted in the articulation of thought, belief, faith, and worship; hence, an individual possessing it becomes and flourishes in wealth through diverse forms of self-expression. It provides opportunity for artistic and literary expression. Concealed abilities are manifested through freedom, allowing an individual to select the optimal path to forge his fate. Equality emerges to constrain ultimate liberty. It interconnects individuals, groups, and fosters mutual bonds, collaboration, and social empathy.

Citizens cannot exist in a debilitated state. Equality relies on, recognizes, and enforces the awareness of reciprocal obligations and mutual acknowledgment of rights that unite the members of society. Equality is the unifying concern of the populace. Fraternity is the profound sentiment to create an environment where individuals can appreciate the principles of liberty and equality.

Ambedkar posits that & quot; fraternity signifies a shared brotherhood among all Indians (a notion he articulated concerning India, which can be extrapolated to socio-cultural contexts), unifying all Indians as one people; it is the principle that fosters unity and solidarity within social life & quot; (Ambedkar, 1994). Ambedkar clarified that these principles of trinity are interdependent, as each one enhances and supports the others in the pursuit of social justice.

Ambedkar & #39;s notion of social justice signifies a lifestyle that ensures every individual occupies their rightful position within society. The principles may include: living honestly, extending respect to all, causing no harm to others, and ensuring that every individual receives their rightful due without any arbitrary bias or unnatural societal classification. The additional principles of social justice include: supremacy of constitutional law, equality before the law, provision of fundamental rights, fulfillment of duties, compliance with legal and social obligations, and a strong commitment to the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, and human dignity.

Ambedkar saw justice not alone as the distribution of material wealth among individuals, but fundamentally as a way of life rooted in mutual respect, esteem, and a sense of fellowship a sequel members of society. Thus, the criterion for social fairness is not material advancement, but the richness and dissemination of human values within the populace (Jatava, 1998).

Therefore, his understanding of justice is a comprehensive and ongoing process. He is primarily focused on social transformation and growth, as it includes social justice.

In the absence of social justice, peace cannot exist, and without peace, meaningful growth is unattainable. Sustainable development relies on social inclusion and equity. These challenges, along with gender equality, were distinctly highlighted in the Millennium

Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The democratic government in Nigeria is hindered by several constraints, including inflated and unsustainable governance costs, corruption, lack of political will, widespread embezzlement, insecurity, marginalization, disregard for the rule of law, human rights abuses, gender discrimination, and the intimidation of citizens. These constraints have impeded the meaningful advancement of sustainable development.

At the conclusion of the MDGs, it was revealed that the absence of local government chairmen, town union presidents, traditional institutions, women's groups, and others from participation indicated that the CDD model was top-down, resulting in suboptimal performance.

3.2.2 Social Justice Programmes

Nigeria has made some progress towards achieving gender equality in recent years. For instance, the country has enacted laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality. The National Gender Policy, which was launched in 2006 and renewed in 2021lasting up to 2026 is one such policy. The policy seeks to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors of the economy. It also aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. The rule of law is a durable system of law, institution, norms, and community commitment that delivers four universal principles: accountability, just law, open government and accessible and impartial justice. Accountability in the government as well as private actions. including present president and past ones.

The four principles of social justice
As a term, "social justice" is vague and often misunderstood. To become a reality in every part of society – healthcare, education, employment, etc – social justice needs clearly-defined goals. With clear goals, solutions for change and progress are possible. A definition must consider <u>four principles</u>: access, equity, participation, and human rights (Odinioha 2014).

Access
To serve the people, a healthy society must offer services and resources. These include education, healthcare, shelter, and food. However, in many societies, there's unequal access. Education is a prime example of the consequences. When only people from a certain class can afford good schools, those with lower-paying jobs have to settle for less. This leads to those kids growing up and being unable to access certain jobs. In an unjust society, somebody's race and sexuality can also limit services and opportunities. When everyone gets equal access, it helps even out the playing field.

Equity
Equity is different than equality. If social justice was only concerned with equality, it wouldn't lead to a just society. As an example, let's say two people need a health insurance plan. The benefits are identical and equal in every way, but one of the people has a chronic illness. In this case, "equality" can cause significant harm to the person who is ill. The two people with the same healthcare plan end up in very different places. Equitable healthcare considers the differences between the two people, adjusting to benefit the person who needs the most help. While "unequal" according to a strict definition, equity leads to a society with reduced inequalities.

Participation
Society must allow everyone to voice their concerns and take part in making decisions. If something affects a person's life, that person needs to be a part of the process. If there's only a select group calling the shots with others silenced through discrimination, that's social injustice. This is where access and equity come into play again. Within most societies, participation is reserved for only a few. To increase access, society must remove barriers to participation. For equity, historically-undermined groups should be encouraged to speak.

Human rights

Human rights and social justice are two sides of the same coin. They can't exist apart from each other. For a society to be just, it must ensure the protection of everyone's civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights. These rights include the right to life, the right to free speech, the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, and so on. Governments must be held accountable when they violate these rights or fail to protect them. Human rights might be the most powerful principle for social justice because they're recognized internationally and enshrined in many treaties.

Ever since Nigeria's independence, Human Rights provisions have always occupied very important positions in the nation's Constitutions. The 1960 Independence Constitution; the 1963 Republican Constitution; The 1979 Constitution; The 1989 Constitution; and The 1999 Constitution.

According to Odinioha (2014) Social justice is a creation of the government in power. At independence, most African leaders pledged to develop their economies, to democratize their political systems and to promote social justice amongst their citizens (Ihejirika, 2013). Promoting social justice is a deliberate effort by the government which can be achieved by adopting and acting on the points at the left part of Gil's(1998) value dimensions differentiating socially just from socially unjust societies.

Just Societies	Unjust Societies
Equality of citizens	Inequality of citizens
Liberty of citizens	Domination and exploitation
Individuality of citizens	Selfishness and individualism
Collective Orientation and mutualism	Disregard for community
Cooperation	Competition

Source: Gil, D. G. (1998). Confronting injustice and oppression; New York: Columbia University Press.

Looking at this classification, one can easily identify which strand fits Nigeria state: the research used the following to state that Nigeria belongs to the unjust society: the October 2020 National Youth Protest against police brutality and the August 2024 ten days National Protest against bad governance for hunger insecurity etc

3.2.3 Sustainable Development Projects

A. Fadama Development Projects:

Fadama is the Hausa name for irrigable low-lying plains underlain by "shallow" aquifers found along major river systems. The Fadama concept is an old tradition in Hausa, where flooded land is used for growing a variety of crops and small scale irrigation. The land is sustainable for irrigation, fishing and providing food and water for livestock (Ajayi and Nwalieji, 2010). This was done following advice and corperation from food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)

Fadama I lasted from 1993 — 1999 though the idea originated in 1990. Following the widespread adoption of simple and low-cost improved irrigation technologies, farmers realized incomes increased from various crops up to 65%. However, as a result of post harvest handling of the output these crop loose quality and could not fetch the best prices available in the markets. Fadama was implemented fully in six (6) states while in other states it is still in pilot stage.

In 2001 Federal Government adopted a new rural development strategy that addressed the constraints in Fadama I and this resulted to Fadama II project. Fadama II aimed to contribute to food security and increased access to rural infrastructural facilities consequently the banks found it worthy to agree to the government request for financing of Fadama II as a follow-up to Fadama I. The new strategy was in line with African Development Bank strategic plan in its focus on poverty reduction, private sector promotion and participatory approach to rural development. Fadama II stressed the principles of non-intervention; consistency, sustainability and greater equity in access to land benefits of resources (Ezemie, 2000).Them World Bank Fadama III project was a follow up to Fadama II project

Fadama III Additional Financing: Following the success of the completed Fadama projects I, ll and III, the Nigerian government wanted to expand the success to the Agricultural Transformation Agenda, which led to the additional financing. Fadama Ill additional financing, which started in 2015, focused on support to value chains of cassava, rice, sorghum and horticulture in six states; Kogi, Niger, Kano, Lagos, Anambra and Enugu. The six states served as hubs of Staple Crops Processing Zones (SCPZs), while surrounding states serve' as catchment areas to feed the processing zones. Today, Fadama development projects have dominated most states in Nigeria as other states wish to partake in the development process (Egwu, 2015).

Annual Income of Fadama Farmers: Benefits and constraints of Fadama revealed that access to loan and agricultural information were identified as additional benefits of participation in Fadama projects by 50.0% and 33.1% of the respondents respectively. This may have resulted to higher productivity recorded by Fadama participants than non-participants. Agricultural information and agricultural loan are the most important prerequisites for high agricultural productivity mostly among Women Fadama farmers.

B. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Millennium development Goals found on specific target related to poverty, education, and health there are 8 goals with measurable targets and clear deadlines for improving the lives of the world's poorest people to meet these goals and eradicate poverty leaders of 189 countries signed the historic declaration of United Nation Millennium summit in 2000 to run up to 2015

The Presidential Committee on the Assessment and monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGS were subsequent established to guide the use of the Debt relief Gains (DRGS) in the execution of pro-poor programmers and projects and coordinate progress towards the MDGs.

In 2005, Nigeria successfully negotiated debt relief from the Paris Club which enabled the country to increase and target public investment in pro-poor programmers and projects towards achievement the NDGS.

These goals commit leaders into combat Poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against woman. The MDGs were:

MDG'S	**MDG'S**
1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	5. To improve Material Health
2. To promote gender discrimination	6. To combat HIV/AIDS and other Diseases
3. To achieve universal primary education	7. To ensure environmental sustainability
4. To reduce Child mortality	8. To ensure a global partnership for development

United Nations Millennium Survival 2000

A review of MDGS implementation in Nigeria reveals that the country has registered mixed resulted across the goals, geographic areas and gender groups. Despite progress on some indicators, many of the goals and targets have not been met. The slow pace of progress notwithstanding, the country has registered multiple success stories such as reaching the threshold of eradicating polio, achieving gender parity in Universal Primary Education (UBE) enrolment, reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and reducing maternal death. The implementation of largely successful CONDIITIONAL grants scheme [CGS]and mobilizing community utilization of heath facilities through the village health workers scheme Nigeria has in fact provided leadership on the MDGs within Africa and globally. Institution innovation and polices introduced in Nigeria were admired and replicated by other countries.

C. Sustainable Development Goals SDGs

Sustainable Development encourages to conserve and enhance resource base by gradually changing the ways in which we develop and use technologies. Countries must be allowed to meet their basic needs of employment, food, energy, Water and sanitation. Stabilizing and reducing carbon emissions is key to living with environmental limits. It ensures improved quality For resent and future generations noted World Commission on Environment and Development (2017).

Sustainable development is largely about people, their well-being and equity in their relationships with each other in a context where nature-society imbalances can thereafter become economic and social stability. Sustainable Development is important for economic growth because:

IV.   Environment must be conserved while development is taking place.
 V.   Resources must be cited in such a way that something is conserved for future generation.
VI.   The standard of living of all people must be raised (U N Publication 2020)

The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 according to UN Publication (2015) including the following:

Gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals. Only by ensuring the rights of women across all the goals we will get to justice and inclusion,

economies that work for all, sustaining our shared environment now and for future generations.

For SDGs to be achieved it is crucial to harmonize three core elements; economic growth & social inclusion and environment protection.

The sustainable development goals 2030 according to UN publication (2015) including the following

SDG	SDG
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. Reducing inequality 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. Partnership for the goals.

The 17 goals to be implemented basically is to ensure, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation are infrastructure, reduction of inequality urgent action to combat clamant change and its impact promoting peaceful and inclusive societies sustainable development among others. These goals capture the essence of development in any nation and have as its slogan to "leave no one behind"

The SDGs provide a multifaceted framework that encompasses a wide array of objectives. These include poverty eradication, hunger elimination, promotion of health and well-being, ensuring quality education, achieving gender equality, and providing clean water and sanitation. The goals also focus on affordable and clean energy, economic growth, industrial innovation, reduction of inequalities, development of sustainable cities, responsible consumption, climate action, and preservation of terrestrial and aquatic life. In essence, these goals strive to foster peace, justice, robust institutions, and global partnerships (Oweiba & Elemuwa 2024).

In its commitment to the SDGs, Nigeria has demonstrated strategic foresight by developing the National Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). This plan resonates with the SDGs' ethos, outlining key strategies for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Furthermore, the establishment of the Ministry of Budget and National Planning symbolizes Nigeria's dedication to overseeing the SDGs' implementation and coordination at a national level

A cornerstone of these efforts is the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), an ambitious program designed to modernize and revitalize Nigeria's agricultural sector. The ATA's primary objective is to significantly boost food production, a move seen as crucial in mitigating food scarcity. To achieve this, the government has channeled substantial investments into several key areas. Firstly, research and development have been prioritized, recognizing the vital role of innovative agricultural techniques and technologies in increasing crop yields and improving food quality. By fostering a robust R&D ecosystem, the ATA

seeks to introduce more efficient farming practices and resilient crop varieties, tailored to Nigeria's diverse climatic zones. Secondly, enhancing infrastructure related to agriculture is another focal point. This encompasses the development of better storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, improvement of transportation networks for efficient food distribution, and the establishment of irrigation systems to mitigate the impacts of erratic rainfall and droughts. These infrastructure upgrades are crucial for ensuring a consistent and stable food supply. Finally, capacity building is a critical component of the ATA. (Oweiba & Elemuwa 2024).

The Federal Government of then President Mohammadu Buhari put some mechanism in place to achieve the implementation of the SDGs 2030 target. The President appointed Princess Orelope - Adefulire as Special Assistant to the President on SDGs in the Presidency which is a carryover from the MDGS under the Presidency too.

There is Senate Committee on SDGs which provide over sight functions for SDGS while Federal House of Representatives Committee on SDGs provide appropriation for SDGS. There is also inter- ministerial Committee on the SDGs. There is private sector advisory group and the civil society strategy group on SDGs. The Federal Government worked together with the States Governments through their SDGs Desk Officers. These are the people that implement the SDGs in their different states and local government areas. The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) with their 169 targets form the core of the 2030 agenda. They balance the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainable development on the same agenda for the first time (Oweiba & Elemuwa 2024).

President Mohammadu Buhari's government introduced the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) in 2017 as a policy option. It is a medium term all round development initiative focused on restoring growth, investing in people and building a globally competitive economy. The focus is to stabilize the macro environment achieve agriculture and food security, ensure energy sufficiency in power and petroleum products security improve transformation, infrastructure and drive industrialization (Egwuatu & Kolawole, 2019). It is expected to cover four years until 2020. This is where the implementation of sustainable development goals was anchored.

3.2.4 Social Justice and Sustainable Development Projects

The persistence of a high national poverty rate, despite various governmental initiatives, paints a sobering picture of the current state of affairs. The challenges of rapid population growth, unequal resource distribution, and implementation inefficiencies present complex, interconnected hurdles. To make substantial progress in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development, Nigeria must address these challenges holistically. This requires not only the refinement of existing strategies but also the innovation of new approaches that are scalable, sustainable, and resilient to the diverse socio-economic landscape of the country.

Despite the progress made towards achieving gender equality in Nigeria, significant challenges still exist. One of the major challenges is gender-based violence. Women and girls in Nigeria are at risk of various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. According to the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) conducted in 2018, 30% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, and 10% have experienced sexual

violence. Another challenge is the low level of female participation in the labor force. Although the number of women in the labor force has increased in recent years, women still account for only 22.4% of the labor force participation rate. This is partly due to cultural and social norms that limit women's access to education and employment opportunities

Nigeria's standing on the global hunger index is labeled as 'serious,' as indicated by the latest data from the 2022 Global Hunger Index annual report. In 2022, Nigeria was ranked 103rd out of 121 countries, and in the 2023 global hunger index, it has further slipped to 109th out of 125 countries with sufficient data. The 2023 Global Hunger Index records a score of 28.3. Notably, Nigeria has witnessed a continuous increase in undernourishment prevalence since 2015, with recent years displaying a performance even worse than that of 2001.

Nigeria's journey towards the critical goal of zero hunger, a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals, is marked by significant obstacles. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that as of 2018, the prevalence of undernourishment in Nigeria stood at 20.8%, a figure that, while representing a marginal improvement from the 21.1% recorded in 2013, underscores the persistent issue of food insecurity in the nation. This modest reduction in undernourishment levels, though indicative of some progress, highlights the ongoing struggle many Nigerians face in accessing adequate nutrition. The challenge of achieving zero hunger in Nigeria is multifaceted

Nigerian farmers often grapple with limited access to modern farming techniques, quality seeds, fertilizers, and efficient irrigation systems, all of which are pivotal for enhancing agricultural productivity. This gap in resources and technology significantly limits the country's agricultural output, making it challenging to produce sufficient food to meet the growing needs of its population. Additionally, the lack of adequate infrastructure, such as effective storage facilities and reliable transportation networks, exacerbates this problem. These deficiencies lead to considerable post-harvest losses, further reducing the overall availability of food and contributing to persistent food insecurity (Moti & Vambe 2021).

A major impediment is the inadequacy of funding allocated for agricultural development. This financial constraint severely limits the government's capacity to implement effective agricultural programs and to invest in advanced technologies that could substantially enhance productivity. In addition to government funding issues, a significant obstacle for smallholder farmers, who are vital to the nation's food production, is the lack of access to credit and financial services. This lack of financial support hinders these farmers' abilities to invest in essential inputs like quality seeds and fertilizers, and to adopt modern agricultural techniques, all of which are necessary to improve their yields and contribute to the overall food security (Moti & Vambe 2021).

Furthermore, security concerns, especially in regions affected by conflict, pose a severe challenge to achieving food security. In these areas, agricultural activities are frequently hampered, disrupting both food production and distribution systems. The resultant instability not only exacerbates food insecurity but also impedes the effective implementation of food security initiatives. Farmers in these conflict-affected regions face enormous risks, and this insecurity can lead to abandoned farms, reduced agricultural output, and consequently, increased food scarcity

However, deeply-entrenched barriers continue to impede successful prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. Key amongst them are poor health literacy rates regarding chronic disease risk factors, severe shortages of healthcare infrastructure and workforce

outside urban concentrations, and inability of rural populations to access screening or sustain treatment adherence.

Nigeria cannot holistically meet the mental health needs or ensure the rights of citizens impacted by mental health disorders. Prioritizing mental health is indispensable for improving quality of life and achieving sustainable good health and wellbeing targets.

The escalating phenomenon of insecure environments due to insurgencies obstructs education continuity for vulnerable children while girls remain highly susceptible to socio-cultural pressures that perpetuate the cycle of denial, underinvestment and poverty

Insufficient funding is a major contributor to the low quality of education in Nigeria. The education sector in the country is characterized by limited financial resources, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, poorly equipped classrooms, and a lack of teaching materials. According to UNESCO 2021, Nigeria's education expenditure as a percentage of its national budget is only 6%, which falls below the recommended benchmark of 15% set by the UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) initiative. This lack of funding severely hampers efforts to improve the quality of education and provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background. In addition to inadequate funding, the shortage of qualified teachers is another significant obstacle to achieving quality education in Nigeria.

Nigeria's vulnerability to climate change-fueled extreme weather events threatens sustainability of water availability for consumption, agriculture and sanitation needs of economically disadvantaged groups. Intensifying droughts and floods damage water catchment and storage infrastructures. This particularly endangers remote villages dependent on season rainfall and natural sources like lakes, rivers and streams.

The causes of poverty in Nigeria include low or slower economic growth, income disparities, unemployment, corruption, and poor governance, the allocation of funding to non-developmental projects, fund embezzlements, ineffective macroeconomic policies, and a lack of adequate human support. Nigeria's poverty is mostly caused by corruption, which develops as a result of poor government. Under social structures that are weak, it thrives. The government thief is granted chieftaincy titles and is set free, whereas the poor thief is storied or put in prison. A United Kingdom Newspaper the Daily Trust of 25 June 2005 alleged that the amount stolen by corrupt Nigerian rulers amounted to E220 billion as of that date (Ekeh, 2010). If that amount of money was used to establish industries in Nigeria definitely millions of people would have been employed thereby reducing the poverty level in Nigeria. And we would not have been the poverty capital of the world.

According to the SDGs report 2024 Nigeria ranks 146th out of 166 countries subscribing to the SDGs and it scored 54.27/100 for a country with vast human and economic resource the grading is low. The attainments of SDGs in Nigeria continue to be hampered by various governance challenges including the low level of awareness and inadequate agencies.

The SDGs still lack prioritization among donors with insufficient funding hindering effective engagement with policy makers and supporting associations. Additionally there prevalent issue of fund being misused or underutilized, income inequality, automation, jobless growth, demographic imbalance, climate change –related shocks, political instability and security threats and weakened domestic governance. The Challenges of achieving the MDGs include poor policy implementation, corruption, bad leadership, political instability, slow public service structure, ethnicity and lack of data

Challenges of achieving Fadama Project included poor financial capability, inaccurate costing, corruption, incompetence, and lack of knowledge, poor planning and estimation, poor contracting and contractor practice, poor communication, frequent design scope changes and error, poor leadership influences from soci0-cultural and political factors and poor implementation.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Social Justice which is central to the sustainable development project have not been properly addressed giving room to powerful individuals and weak social institutions. Systemic challenges severely affect Nigeria's advancement across various critical goals connected to eradicating poverty and hunger, enhancing health and wellbeing, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, achieving gender equality, and providing clean water and sanitation. These obstinate issues stem from pervasive corruption and mismanagement of resources, lack of continuity in development policies and programs, rising insecurity, widening inequality between socioeconomic classes, and the overall struggle with diversifying the economy away from oil dependency. The rule of law is not observed and at times the anticraft agencies become the problem of corruption outside their selective prosecution.

Nigeria faces significant challenges in providing quality education to its citizens. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient qualified teachers, and a high number of out-of-school children persist. Furthermore, gender disparities and insufficient access to educational opportunities for marginalized groups hinder progress towards achieving quality education

4.2 Recommendations

Nigeria should implement the principles of social justice especially the rule of law, social inclusion and participation of the citizens of Nigeria to avert the future occurrenceof end policebrutality bad government by the Nigerian youth in October 2020 and the August 2024 ten days National Protest against bad governance in Nigeria. Instead of addressing the problems raised some people were killed and some arrested and detained. The causes of this two national protests should be investigated an addressed.

To genuinely accelerate Nigeria's SDG achievements by the set 2030 target, urgent and coordinated efforts are needed from the government, international development institutions, local non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Specifically, sustained political commitment to human-centered national development policies, increased budgetary allocations to social sectors, multi-stakeholder partnerships, rigorous monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and effective resource mobilization strategies have to be prioritized. Significant improvements on foundational issues like poverty alleviation, nutrition, healthcare access, education quality, gender mainstreaming, clean water availability and sanitation are indispensable for the country to unlock its human capital potential and foster widespread economic prosperity. (Oweibe & Elemuwa 2024)

Odinioha (2014) For Nigeria to make progress in her sustainable national development project, the leaders have to:
1. Create the right atmosphere for the Practice of real democracy, rather than mere ritualistic democracy.
2. Dismantle every structure that had hitherto trampled on the egalitarianism of the country, so that all animals can truly be equal as against the current situation where

some animals are more equal than the others. Example, widening rich-poor-gap, immunity clauses, born to rule syndrome, state of origin concept, etc.

3. Develop and inculcate in everyone- new values and national cultures that will ginger patriotic mindsets among her citizens; including those who have been previously meted with injustice.
4. Ensure proper accountability for all resources; including foreign aids, loots recovered as well as internally generated revenues.
5. Avail itself of the opportunity offered by the staggering national confab in charting a definite sustainable national development agenda that will not be subjected to interruptions by subsequent administrations.

Repositioning Local Government as the SDGs Tier of Government, Local Government is pivotal to the achievement of the SDGs because it is the only tier of government that can feasibly understand, monitor and react to the millions of activities that will collectively add up to the SDGs. Chairman of the Local Government should be provided with the mandate and responsibility for pursuing and coordinating progress towards the SDGs within their local government area, Nigeria's Road to SDGs Country Transition Strategy (2015).

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