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TOWARDS EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY PERSPECTIVE.

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Abstract:

Since the adoption of the sustainable development goals, Nigeria has continued to demonstrate its commitment to the SDGs promise through leadership and ownership of the implementation process. Despite the government continued demonstration and commitment to the SDGs promises, it is observed that these goals have not had any desirable impact or effect on the rural communities as poverty level is still high, health condition and over all well-being is poor and mortality rate is on the increase not to mention the number of out of school children. To forestall the deterioration that would accrue from non-realization of the SDGs in rural communities, this paper explored Nigerian academic libraries as an alternative to delivering Sustainable Development Goals to rural communities. It discussed the potential of academic libraries in Nigeria towards delivering

Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities since some of the libraries are situated in the rural areas. Academic librarians from two academic libraries in Imo State were used for the study. Descriptive survey research method was adopted to investigate a total population of 45 Academic librarians while structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the research out of which 31 were duly filled and returned for analysis. Findings shows that academic libraries possess some potentials in delivering sustainable development goals to the rural communities. It also listed some strategies that will help in actualizing this programme to include organizing sensitization campaign on the different SDGs to rural communities, Partnering with health-related NGOs for health activities and Repackaging information for user. The study also identified some challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries to include administrative bottlenecks from university management, inadequate finance to cater for logistics and implementation, poor relationship between university and rural communities, societal and environmental threats.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, rural communities, academic libraries, Imo State, Nigeria.

Introduction:

Sustainable Development in the 21st century is now focused on access to information and knowledge leading to opportunities and social and economic growth. The UN General Assembly in September 25, 2015 adopted the post-2015 development plan captioned Transforming Our World: the 2030 sustainable development plan. The United Nation specifically referred to the agenda as an action plan for the people, the earth and the stability to establish universal peace in greater freedom. The SDG's agenda 2030 comprises 17 SDG's which include among others; Eradication of poverty in all its form; end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Others are Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Reduce inequality within and among countries;

The 2030 agenda further advocate to make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reserve land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institution at all levels and finally Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development and 169 objectives.

The agenda is seeking to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and to complete what the MDG's have not accomplished. The SDGs recognize everyone's human right and gender equality and also empower both women and girls (Jain & Jibril, 2018).



Fig. 1 UN Graphical Illustration of the 17 SDGs.

For a long period of time, libraries have been at the forefront of social movements, offering platforms, programmes and tools to inform, educate, empower and connect their communities (Charney, 2014). Yap and Labagon (2015) posit that academic libraries are now designing and expanding viable programs to the society they represent by taking socially responsible initiatives such as creating opportunities for people all over the world to understand and appreciate different cultural and environmental identities, way of life, health matters and even participation in global programs like the SDG. In this way, academic libraries facilitate the exchange of information between different groups and the use of effective communication to build productive relationships (Charney, 2014). Given their proximity and accessibility to rural dwellers, it has become

expedient for academic libraries to provide community information services. Ultimately, this would promote economic transformation, progress and the actualization of the objectives of sustainable development.

Although academic libraries are not autonomous but are part of a tertiary institution, their position as providers of information has a positive impact on the community. Due to their contributions to social, educational, cultural and economic aspects, they are considered a kind of social transparency (Eid, Altamimi & Shaheen, 2016). In the business of developing and implementing personalized information systems, marketing library services and offering information literacy education, academic librarians have long been involved. In view of this, Charney (2014) explicitly notes that the sustainability movement is a natural match for academic librarians who strive to excel in collecting, synthesizing, disseminating and transmitting knowledge through disciplines. Academic librarians who are already used to offering knowledge literacy services are ideally qualified to contribute by providing quality knowledge to the physical and economic well-being of members of the host community.

This paper therefore examines Nigerian academic libraries as an approach to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals for rural communities by selecting two rural-sited Federal tertiary institutions in Imo State. They are Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) located in a remote village of Ihiagwa Imo State and Federal Polytechnic Nekede located in a rural community of Nekede Imo State.

The problem.

It is an undeniable fact that Nigeria as a country has keyed in to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) agenda of 2016-2030 to eradicate poverty, hunger, achieve food security, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being etc. It is still observed that these goals have not had any desirable impact or effect on the rural communities as poverty level is still high, health condition and over all well-being is poor and mortality rate is on the increase not to mention the number of out of school children. Academic libraries play important role in the development of an individual and the society and are best positioned to deliver SDGs to rural communities due to their nature and structure. The question therefore in this paper is how would academic libraries

play this role and in what capacity will they be able to achieve this. These are the issues this research intends to tackle and explain.

Objectives.

This research aims to achieve- purposes namely:

- a. To determine the potential of the academic libraries in Nigeria towards delivering Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities.
- b. To establish the aspect of the SDG that academic libraries in Nigeria could accomplish in the rural areas
- c. To find out strategies that could be employed by Nigerian academic libraries in delivering inclusive development to rural communities.
- d. To identify the challenges that could affect academic libraries in this programme.

Literature review.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sometimes known as the Global Goals, are a series of goals established by a global agreement to eradicate poverty, safeguard the planet's natural resources, and ensure that all people live in peace and prosperity now and in the future. The Goals were formally accepted by all UN member states in 2015 for the period 2016–30, in response to overwhelming factual and scientific evidence that the world need a radically more sustainable approach. The objectives give a well-considered framework that is scientifically sound, politically acceptable, and understandable to the general public. The goals provide us the best possibility of achieving the essential teamwork and alignment as we adopt global strategies to ensure a fair, healthy, and prosperous future for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren (Morton, Pencheon and Squires, 2017). The SDGs covers four major areas namely people, prosperity, planet and peace and partnership.

(a) People

- No poverty (Goal 1)
- Zero hunger (Goal 2)
- Good health and well-being (Goal 3)
- Quality education (Goal 4)

- Gender equality (Goal 5)
- Clean water sanitation (Goal 6)
- (b) Prosperity
 - Affordable clean energy (Goal 7)
 - Decent work and economic development (Goal 8)
 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9)
 - Reduce inequalities (Goal 10)
 - Sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11)
 - Responsible consumption and production (Goal 12)
- (c) Planet
 - Climate action (Goal 13)
 - Life below water (Goal 14)
 - Life on land (Goal 15)
- (d) Peace and partnership
 - Peace, justice and strong institution (Goal 16)
 - Partnership for the goals (Goal 17).

Community participation is a key ingredient of an active community. It occurs when a community organizes itself and takes full responsibility for handling its issues. It refers to the process of giving people more opportunities to participate effectively and these could only be achieved when quality information is made available to them. Dapo-Asaju and Bamgbose (2016) believe that access to information in the knowledge economy cannot be ignored and in the opinion of Sharma (2013), access to relevant information plays an important role for the rural community, in particular for rural farmers in agriculture and other areas such as economic, social and cultural development, policy-making and decision-making. In both developed and developing countries, academic libraries are responsible for providing information for the promotion of learning, teaching, study and community service as structured information systems. Furthermore, they provide survival data such as health, agriculture, housing, income, legal, security, income prospects and political rights can be transmitted to citizens in communities through community-based information centers (Osagie, 2011; Ndinde and Kadodo 2014),.

The provision of community-based libraries and information services could improve the poor socio-economic status of community dwellers (Agboolo & Bionle, 2013). The critical ingredients for development are effective delivery and coordination of information services (Harande, 2009). Emojorho and Ukpebor (2012) reiterated that in developing countries where there is a shortage of information and even less development of knowledge principles, academic libraries have to play

an important role in dismantling semantics of many concepts in order to provide information where there is such a lack of data, information and knowledge. Iwe's (2003) survey confirms the important role that library and information services can play in ensuring sustainable development in rural areas; noting, therefore, that the establishment of academic institutions with academic libraries will not be sufficient, but should be accompanied by the dissemination to citizens of appropriate and timely information as well as the introduction of a service-oriented system to address frustrating rural life of Nigerians. Kari's (2007) research on how to enhance the provision of information services to rural community residents in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, revealed that rural residents have shown a positive response to information agents' services, such as agricultural extension workers and rural health workers.

In addition, Adewusi's (2013) investigation in Ondo State, Nigeria, confirms the critical role of provision of community information services to rural dwellers was uncommon particularly in the communities that make up the state's Akoko Northwest Local Government. The research establishes that rural dwellers were unaware of the potential inherent in the use of community information center (CIC) services. In order to inspire, improve and turn their lives socially, economically, educationally, technologically and politically for the better, the study concluded that societies yearn for the provision of CICs. For Uzuegbu and Uzuegbu, (2013), the key involvement of academic library and information professionals who are qualified workers who understand the taxonomy of expertise and methods for serving people with their complex information needs has been the provision of information services. This confirms Daudu's (2014) submission that improving the situation in rural areas in Eastern Nigeria needs improving the provision of information services to allow citizens to be better prepared and better informed about aid sources and information on all their activities.

The Methods.

The study made use of descriptive survey using the questionnaire to collect data from 45 academic Librarians in Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) and Federal Polytechnic Nekede. The questionnaire was designed using a four point likert scale and out of the 45 questionnaires, 31 copies representing 68.8% were returned and found usable.

Result.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean values were employed to present data. The following was used in calculating the mean from the responses based on Likert scale: Strongly Agree = 4; Agree = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1. To obtain the mean value, $4+3+2+1 = 10$. Where mean value is $10/4 = 2.5$. The decision to accept or reject any statement of the objectives were based on the decision rule for each table of the objectives.

Level of agreement on the potentials of the academic libraries in delivering sustainable development goals to the rural communities.

The following were identified as the Potential of the academic libraries in delivering Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities.

S/N	Potential of the Academic libraries in delivering Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities.	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
a	Provision of media literacy programmes for the rural communities.	15	14	2	-	31	3.41	Not Significant
b	Provision of information literacy programmes for the information sick rural community in order for them to make informed choices	16	13	2	-	31	3.45	Not Significant
c	Giving out instructions on the most efficient use of appropriate resources	17	12	2	-	31	3.48	Significant
d	Provision of accurate, up-to-date information.	19	10	2	-	31	3.54	Significant
e	Provide skills and resources to help achieve universal literacy	18	11	2	-	31	3.51	Significant
	Significant mean value	3.47						

Analysis of data showed that the mean response on the potentials of the academic libraries in delivering sustainable development goals to the rural communities was high in the following areas:

Giving out instructions on the most efficient use of appropriate resources (3.48), Provision of accurate, up-to-date information (3.54) and Provide skills and resources to help achieve universal literacy (3.51). However, it were low on provision of media literacy programmes for the rural communities (3.41) and provision of information literacy programmes for the information sick rural community in order for them to make informed choices (3.45).

Level of agreement on the aspect of SDGs academic libraries could accomplish.

The following were identified as the aspect of SDGs academic libraries could accomplish.

S/N	Aspect of SDGs academic libraries could accomplish	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
a	Eradication of poverty in all its form	7	14	9	-	30	2.93	Significant
b	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	3	19	8	-	30	2.83	Not Significant
c	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	8	15	7	-	30	3.03	Significant
d	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	8	16	7		31	3.03	Significant
e	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	10	14	6	-	30	3.13	Significant
f	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	4	15	9	-	28	2.82	Not Significant
g	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	3	15	10	1	29	2.68	Not Significant
h	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	2	20	7	1	30	2.76	Not Significant

i	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	4	15	10	1	30	2.73	Not Significant
j	Reduce inequality within and among countries	5	17	7	1	30	2.86	Not Significant
k	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	8	12	9	1	30	2.9	Significant
l	Ensure sustainable consumption and production pattern	2	20	7	1	30	2.76	Not Significant
m	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact	5	15	9	1	30	2.8	Not Significant
n	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	2	16	11	1	30	2.63	Not Significant
o	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.	18	10	1	1	30	3.46	Significant
Significant mean value		2.89						

Decision Rule: 2.89

Analysis of data revealed that the mean response on the aspect of SDGs academic libraries could accomplish was high in the following areas: Eradication of poverty in all its form (2.93), Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (3.03), Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (3.03), Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (3.13), Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (2.9) and Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (3.46). However, the mean response on the aspect of SDGs

academic libraries could accomplish were low on; End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (2.83), Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (2.82), Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (2.68), Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (2.76), Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (2.73), Reduce inequality within and among countries (2.86), Ensure sustainable consumption and production pattern (2.76), Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact (2.8) and Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (2.63).

Level of agreement on the strategies in delivering inclusive development to rural communities.

The following were identified as the strategies in delivering inclusive development to rural communities.

S/N	Strategies in delivering inclusive development to rural communities.	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
a	Organizing sensitization campaign on the different SDGs to rural communities	24	7	-	-	31	3.77	Significant
b	Organizing periodic information literacy training to the rural communities	16	15	-	-	31	3.51	Not Significant
c	Provision of basic ICT training programmes	16	15	-	-	31	3.51	Not Significant
d	Partner with health-related NGOs for health activities	19	12	-	-		3.61	Significant
e	Provision of capacity building workshops	16	14	1	-	31	3.48	Not Significant
f	Repackaging information for user	23	7	1	-	31	3.70	Significant

g	Partner with various organizations in the implementation of many SDG related programmes	18	13	-	-	31	3.58	Not Significant
Significant mean value		3.59						

Decision rule: 3.59

Analysis of data indicated that the mean response on strategies in delivering inclusive development to rural communities was high in the following areas: Organizing sensitization campaign on the different SDGs to rural communities (3.77), Partner with health-related NGOs for health activities (3.61), Repackaging information for user, (3.70). However, it were high on Organizing periodic information literacy training to the rural communities (3.51), Provision of basic ICT training programmes (3.51), Provision of capacity building workshops (3.48) and Partner with various organizations in the implementation of many SDG related programmes (3.58).

Level of agreement on the challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries

The following were identified as the challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries.

S/N	Challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
a	Administrative bottlenecks from university management	21	8	1	1	31	3.58	Significant
b	Lack of zeal from library managers	10	17	4	-	31	3.19	Not Significant
c	Inadequate finance to cater for logistics and implementation	27	4	-	-	31	3.87	Significant
d	Poor motivation of librarians for community service	12	17	2	-	31	3.32	Not Significant

e	Poor knowledge of librarians on SDG programmes	13	12	5	1	31	3.19	Not Significant
f	Poor relationship between university and rural communities	17	13	1	-	31	3.51	Significant
g	Societal and environmental threats (e.g insecurity in the rural communities)	18	12	1	-	31	3.54	Significant
h	Poor road network which hinders access to rural communities	20	10	1	-	31	3.61	Significant
i	Poor infrastructural facilities to support SDG programmes	23	8	-	-	31	3.74	Significant
Significant mean value		3.50						

Decision rule: 3.50

Analysis of data showed that the mean response on the challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries was high in the following in the following areas: Administrative bottlenecks from university management (3.58), Inadequate finance to cater for logistics and implementation (3.87), Poor relationship between university and rural communities (3.51), Societal and environmental threats (e.g insecurity in the rural communities) (3.54), Poor road network which hinders access to rural communities (3.61), Poor infrastructural facilities to support SDG programmes (3.74). However, it was low on Lack of zeal from library managers (3.19), Poor motivation of librarians for community service (3.32) and Poor knowledge of librarians on SDG programmes (3.19).

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study reveal the level of agreement on the potential of the academic libraries in delivering Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities. This finding shows that academic libraries possess some potentials in delivering sustainable development goals to the rural

communities. These may be because academic libraries are responsible for providing information for the promotion of learning, teaching, study and community service as structured information systems. Furthermore, they provide survival data such as health, agriculture, housing, income, legal, security, income prospects and political rights can be transmitted to citizens in communities through community-based information centers.

The study also discovered some aspect of SDGs academic libraries could accomplish. Eradication of poverty in all its form, Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. This may be due to the fact that the provision of community-based libraries and information services could improve the poor socio-economic status of community dwellers. Also the critical ingredients for development are effective delivery and coordination of information services.

The study also revealed the strategies academic libraries can adopt in delivering inclusive development to rural communities. Some of these strategies include organizing sensitization campaign on the different SDGs to rural communities, Partnering with health-related NGOs for health activities and Repackaging information for user. This is in tandem with the opinion of Yap and Labagon (2015) that academic libraries are now designing and expanding viable programmes to the society they represent by taking socially responsible initiatives such as creating opportunities for people all over the world to understand and appreciate different cultural and environmental identities, way of life, health matters and even participation in global programmes like the SDG.

Finally, the study identified some of the challenges affecting the accomplishment of these programmes by academic libraries to include administrative bottlenecks from university management, inadequate finance to cater for logistics and implementation, poor relationship between university and rural communities, societal and environmental threats (e.g insecurity in the rural communities), poor road network which hinders access to rural communities, poor infrastructural facilities to support SDG programmes. These challenges limits and have proved to be a barrier for academic libraries in Nigeria in participating in sustainable development goals.

Conclusion.

Academic libraries possess potentials in delivering Sustainable Development Goals to the rural communities such as giving out instructions on the most efficient use of appropriate resources, provision of accurate up-to-date information and provision of skills and resources to help achieve universal literacy. These potentials can be harnessed through organizing sensitization campaign on the different SDGs to rural communities, partnering with health-related NGOs for health activities and repackaging information for user. However, academic libraries are faced with many encumbrances as they strive to add their quota to corporate social responsibility. Chiefly, they are constantly bedeviled by inadequate finance which continues to undermine many laudable programmes.

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