

# Areas of Partnership among Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS), Private Sectors and Libraries towards Actualization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) in Nigeria

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The study focused on exploring areas of partnership among libraries, private sectors and NGOs towards actualization of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The stand point of this paper is that partnership must be recognized as a key factor in the full realization of SDGs. It highlighted the place of NGOs, private sectors and libraries in sustainable development, rationale for partnership towards SDGs, areas of partnership among the trio-sectors (public, private and NGOs).

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The method adopted was contextual analysis which entails the review of publications on the subject matter from library collection and the web

**Findings:** The Paper found out that Creation of awareness, agricultural development, health education, skills acquisition, capacity building, economic, political and social empowerment was identified as areas of possible alliance for the actualization of SDGs in Nigeria. Unavailability of funds, inconsistent government policies and corruption amongst others were identified as major challenges to

**Implication:** Public-Private partnership has become an obvious facilitator and approach to sustainable national development of a nation

**Originality/Value:** The paper concludes by proposing that collaborative approaches to service delivery will help to increase the flow of information across countries and regions thereby effective and reliable partnership towards the actualization of SDGs.

**Keywords:** Development Goals, Government, Libraries, NGOs, Partnership, Private sectors, SDGs.

## Introduction

NGOs have like the rest of the humanitarian sector been encouraged from many quarters to engage more with the private sector, diasporas, non-state actors, non-traditional bilateral donors, regional organizations and even in some instances with the military (Kent, Armstrong & Obrecht, 2013). NGOs as the third sector have an important role in promoting and implementing different developmental activities. They will continue to play a leading role in the promotion of good government, poverty alleviation, education, health, infrastructural development, promotion and defense of human rights, peace building and conflict prevention (Siddaraju, 2011; Ngeh, 2013).

One of the most interesting institutional developments and social trends over the past

decade has been the evolving relationship between NGOs and the corporate sector (Nelson, 2007). With the increase in NGO activism in recent years, the wider role that NGOs (beyond unions and trade organizations) play as intermediaries in the co-evolution of the business system and its institutional context needs to be explicitly recognized (Teegen, Doh & Vachani, 2004). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are non-profit, voluntary citizens, groups that are organized on a local, national or international level (Allard & Martinez, 2008). They are private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide development programme (Agba, Akpanudoedehe & Ocheni, 2014).

Collaborative approaches to service delivery helps to increase the flow of information cross

countries and regions and facilitate the extension of ideas (Lawal, n.d.). Private and non-governmental organizations play a vital role in national development (Anure, 2013). Meaningful collaborations among business and NGOs according to Teegen, Doh & Vachani (2014) with or without the active input of government, have emerged as major new organizational forms and vehicles to deliver social services such as poverty relief and environmental protection. Similarly, Omofonmwan & Odia (2009) hyped that NGOs are groupings that are outside the domain of government in the areas of formation, funding, management, processes and procedure in which it carries out its set objectives geared towards cultural, socio-economic and political transformation of all facets of the society. NGOs therefore are institutions or any group that is independent of government, which has humanitarian rather than commercial objectives (Ajogwu, 2016).

Public-private partnership is becoming an obvious facilitator and approach to sustainable national development of any nation (Ibeun & Eiriemiokhale, 2014). Realizing the relevance of public private partnership, Ibeun & Eiriemiokhale (2014) maintained that experience across the globe reveals that the attainment of meaningful and sustainable development requires the genuine participation of the public, the organized private sectors, donor agencies, individuals and civil society.

The effort of NGOs cannot be overlooked and libraries, including other institutions are expected to follow their footsteps and collaborate with them so as to render effective library and information services. Partnership must be seen as a key factor in the actualization of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Private sector actors have an inherent interest in seeing sustainable development goals succeed as companies, markets and economies become more global and interdependent, businesses and investors are becoming increasingly aware of the overlap between public and private interests (United Nations Global Compacts, 2015).

A United Nations (UN) open working group was formed in 2012 to develop the SDGs with the intention of building on progress made under the MDGs. On 25 September 2015 the Member States of the United Nations agreed on

the 17 sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the post-2015 Development Agenda. The contents of the SDGs as specified by the UN document of 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 are as follows:

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,

provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Osborn, Cutter and Ullah (2015) pointed out the different goals and targets will however represent different degrees of challenge and ambition for different countries depending on their present state of development and other national circumstances. So when it comes to implementation, different countries will need to give different degrees of attention and effort to the different goals and targets, depending on where they stand in relation to them at present, their differentiated responsibilities and their different capabilities and resources. The balance between the social, economic and political effort needed to deliver the different objectives is also likely to be different in different countries.

### Objective of the Paper

The objective of this paper is to identify the areas of partnership among the trio sector – public sector (libraries), private sector and non-government organizations (NGOs) that would lead to the actualization of the much heralded Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Non-Government Organizations (NGOs): Conceptual Analysis

Gemmill & Bamidele-Izu (n.d) citing Charnovitz (1997:186) sees NGOs as “groups of individuals organized for the myriad of reasons that engage human imagination and aspiration. They can be set up to advocate a particular cause, such as human rights, or to carry out programs on the ground, such as disaster relief. They can have memberships ranging from local to global. Dele (2004) in Anure (2013) conceptualized NGOs as organizations of people with special interest in a particular aspect of community or social life of the people and the nation.

Non-governmental organizations as pointed at by Ngeh (2013) are organizations that operate across national boundaries, that have membership composed of private individuals, and that do not answer to any government. Teegan, Doh, & Vachani (2004:466) defines NGOs as:

*private, not-for-profit organizations that aim to serve particular societal interest by focusing advocacy and / or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals, including equity, education, health, environmental protection and human rights.*

NGOs are organizations embedded in the institutional fiber of a society (Allard & Martinez, 2008). They are organizations concerned with the promotion of social, political or economic change – an agenda that is usually associated with the concept of “development” (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). This to them, implies that NGO is an agency that is primarily engaged in work relating to the areas of development or humanitarian work at local, national and international levels.

Allard & Martinez (2008) citing Doh & Teegen (2003) highlighted on three types of NGOs which includes *advocacy NGOs*, that promote before governments or in international for the interest groups who do not have either voice or access to do so themselves, *operational NGOs*, that provide goods and services to needy clients and *hybrid NGOs*, which perform both the previous functions. NGOs from the geographical point as submitted by Omofonwarn & Odia (2009) could be international, national, regional, or community based depending on its financial resources and networking capability.

### The Place of NGOs in Sustainable Development

As pointed out by Gemmill & Bamidele-Izu (n.d.), designing governance structures that draw NGOs into global-scale environmental problem solving, policy-making and implementation remains an important global challenge. They noted that the ability of NGOs to place issues on the global agenda does much to enhance their ability to participate in the later stages of decision-making. Anure (2013) citing Mulgunji (1990) noted that NGOs as important agents of change and development in the country especially at the grassroots and those NGOs have significantly increased their commitment, both human and financial, to the cause of development, seeking actively to reach a greater number of people and to improve their quality of life. The NGOs as noted by Siddaraju (2011) have taken lion’s share in promoting and implementing different development activities

and thereby declining the role of state in social welfare services.

The emergence of NGOs as new institutions filling voids where governments and / or forms have not met consumer and citizen needs speaks to their societal importance (Teegen, Doh & Vachani, 2004). The role of NGOs in development issues was aptly captured by Borode (2011:132) when he asserted that:

*NGOs are intermediate organizations dealing with development issues through participation. They are universally recognized as active role players in development programmes. A good number of them (both local and International) have demonstrated the effectiveness of their programme delivery through the success they have recorded in mobilizing of community participation in community development projects.*

As buttressed by Allard & Martinez (2008), NGOs as agents of globalization” demand attention not only from government and multilateral institutions but also from multinational corporations that look overseas from potential foreign direct investment locations. They form an integral part of the institutional context of a country and are often a third party in the business of government interface. Lewis & Kanji (2009:17) submitted that:

*Some NGOs were also seen as bringing a set of new and progressive development agendas of participation, gender, environment and empowerment that were beginning to capture the imagination of many development activists at this time.*

NGOs as noted by Agba, Akpanudoedehe & Ocheni (2014) are not directly affiliated to any government but often have a significant impact on the socio-economic and political activity of the country or region involved.

### **Private Sectors and their Place in Sustainable Development**

The private sector is one of the many threads that will hold the SDG together as they envelop the post-2015 agenda (Pfizer & GSK, 2015). The private sector according to Banda (n.d.), plays different roles from production, processing,

marketing and consumption. Henderson et al (n.d.) citing United Nations (2009) describe the private sector to include individual, for-profit and commercial enterprises or business, business associations and coalitions as well as corporate philanthropic foundations. The private sector as observed by Banda (n.d.) translates global and national policies into action for marketing purposes and deliberate move to deal with a health and nutrition problem. The sector to her has the capacity to inform and educate the public on this linkage.

### **Public-Private Partnership for Realization of SDGs**

Ibeun & Eiriemiokhale (2014) citing Mohammed (2007) explained partnership as a mutual relationship, alliance, cooperation or agreement between two or more several interested partners, parties, individuals, groups, organizations etc. with its predetermined areas of interest, competence, expertise and specialization aimed at integrating them together to achieve collective or common goals and aspirations. Cardinal to this concept is that of mutual relationship between two or more in a predetermined area of interest. In other words, there should also be mutual understanding in relation to the areas of interests.

Public-private partnership is one of the new trends in partnership strategies, and is popularized as an alternative approach to the delivery of goods and services, which refers to contractual arrangement between the public sector and the private sector to achieve well defined and shared objectives in a cost effective, efficient and sustainable manner (Ibeun & Eiriemiokhale, 2014).

### **Rationale for Partnership towards Realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The expression of Oshewolo (2011:17) underscores the necessity of partnership between the public sector, private sector and NGOs towards the realization of SDGs.

*“strategic partnership and collaboration among the various stakeholders is required for success to be achieved. The involvement and participation of the relevant stakeholders will promote collective ownership of the development plan as against previous practices and*

*strategies largely dominated by the state. Cooperation and collaboration between government at all levels, the private sector, civil society and even the donor community will promote better harmonization and implementation of pro-poor policies.*

Agba, Akpanudoedehe & Ocheni (2014) observed the NGOs have become increasingly influential in world affairs; they have become major players in the field of international development. NGOs as stressed by Lewis & Kanji (2009) have come to be recognized as important actors on the landscape of development. This obviously, points to the need for collaborative efforts towards realization of SDGs goals.

#### **Areas of Partnership among Libraries, Private Sectors and NGOs towards Actualization of SDGs**

The NGOs according to Siddaraju, (2011) has hitherto emerged in their traditional areas of health, sanitation, education, family planning, environmental protection etc. The government agencies engaged in this activity started co-opting and collaborating with NGOs. NGOs as posited by Teegen, Doh & Vachani (2004) can focus widely or narrowly as required by their clients and mission, allowing them to single out segments of a national population or expand beyond national borders. NGOs as written by Lewis & Kanji (2009:1)

*NGOs have also become active in a wide range of other more specialized roles such as emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights work, cultural preservation, environmental activism, policy analysis, research and information provision.*

Below are the various areas of partnership among libraries, NGOs and private sectors towards realization of SDGs

- i. **Awareness creation:** Libraries can partner with NGOs in creating awareness of the much heralded SDGs. With this approach, both parties can reach a wider coverage, it must be stated here, that the level of actualization of SDGs will be determined by the level of awareness. The citizens must be fully informed of their own contribution towards the realization of SDGs. The

Nigerian government cannot bear the burden alone. More so, private sectors can also sponsor awareness creation. Obviously, libraries and NGOs are non profit oriented institutions and may not be financially disposed to sponsor fully fledged awareness like going to media, on the basis of this they can partner with private sector like the financial institutions and fully established private organizations. Anure (2013) hyped that national development cannot be achieved if citizens are not mobilized towards development programmes and political activities of the country. Ngeh (2013) also identified enlightenment campaigns as one of the roles that NGOs can play in rural development. Such campaigns to him, help in creating awareness and educate people on government policies and programmes. This will help in actualization of Goal 17 (Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development).

- ii. **Agricultural development:** The NGOs according to Siddaraju (2011) are emerging as a new thrust for the sustainability of agriculture because many steps and programs initiated by governments seem not to have succeeded in this direction. The private sector on the other hand as noted by Banda (n.d.) is strong in capacity building in all areas of agriculture, linking farmers (producer) to retailers or processors to consumers. The sector (private) is directly involved with consumers of agricultural products; process and package products based on consumers preferences and needs amongst others.

NGOs can partner with financial institutions like the commercial banks and micro-finance banks to give credit facilities to small-scale farmers in rural areas. Through this partnership, there would be an increase in the agricultural base that will bring about reduction in the level of hunger being experienced as a result of low output in agricultural productivity. It will further reduce the huge finance that goes into importation of food products. The public libraries on the other hand can revive the moribund “mobile library system” and use them as avenue for disseminating agricultural information to the rural areas. They can also partner with the media houses

to disseminate agricultural information. The public library can as well liaise with agricultural extension agents to disseminate information on improved seedlings and provide other technical agricultural information to rural dwellers. An aggressive partnership between the private sectors, NGOs and public libraries could culminate in creation of job opportunities, thereby reducing poverty and hunger which are part of the SDGs target. Effective partnership between NGOs, private sectors and libraries will contribute towards the realization of Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).

- iii. **Health:** As pointed out by Pfizer & GSK (2015), the private sector plays a pivotal role often in partnership with governments and civil society in ensuring a sustainable model and framework for health in any country. They contend that the private sector must play a leading role in the translation of not only the “health” goal, but of the relevant goals, into concrete actions and measured outcomes. With the incessant strike in the health sector, especially, in government-owned parastatal, achieving the health goals of SDGs in Nigeria is more or less a mirage. According to Anure (2013), leaving the health sector only in the hands of private individuals and the government is unhealthy for national development. He thus, appealed that NGOs should wake up to the challenge.

NGOs in partnership with private sector can advocate for treatment centers especially for life threatening disease like HIV/AIDs, Ebola, Diabetes, Lassa Fever etc. The library, especially the public library on the other hand can help in the dissemination of health information to the society and rural dwellers in particular. This will contribute towards achieving Goal 3 (ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages).

- iv. **Education:** Education is one of the key factors in national development. NGOs, private sectors and libraries can partner in the areas of education as a strategic effort towards the full realization of the SDGs goal on education. Through this partnership effort, NGOs, libraries and private sectors can embark on an aggressive educational

development project such as provision of grants, scholarships and educational loans to students in rural areas that are willing to go to school, acquire education and become well informed citizens but lacks the financial capacity. There have been cases of many Nigerians dropping out of school due to financial constraints.

NGOs can step into the educational sector and provide scholarship opportunities for Nigerians especially at the basic level (primary and post-primary level). The NGOs can help the students to attract scholarship through progressive public-private sectors partnership with multinational corporations to provide basic education to the citizens. The public library can also play a significant role through the provision of relevant information resources to support the school system. They can help in regulatory school libraries to ensure that they are functional and are contributing to the attainment of the educational objectives.

The public libraries can help in reviving adult education programmes in Nigeria. Beyond the formal education, libraries in collaboration with NGOs can help in providing the rural dwellers with “*Financial Education*”. Here, the rural dwellers should be adequately educated on how to manage finance, how to save, the right place to get credit facilities etc. This will contribute towards realization of Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all).

- v. **Skills acquisition programmes:** for those already out of school who cannot go back to school even if the opportunities are provided, the NGOs in partnership with private sectors can organize *Skills Acquisition Programmes* (SAP). With this in place, these categories of persons can be trained to acquire skills either for employment or to start up small and medium scale business. This will help in the actualization of the SDGs on creation of decent work. It will also help in the realization of Goal 1 (ending of poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 8 (promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employments and decent work for all).

Beyond this, it will also help in increasing access to small-scale industrial enterprises which will contribute towards realization of Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation).

- vi. **Economic, political and social empowerment:** NGOs can partner with private sectors to empower the citizens socially, politically and economically. The NGOs can help in sensitizing the women on gender issues and empower them to effectively participate in political and social activities both at the local and national levels. The public libraries can collaborate with NGOs in the dissemination of gender-related information, beyond dissemination of information; such documents can be translated into the local dialect that will be used in communicating with rural dwellers. Moreover, in the south east of Nigeria, the popular “August Meeting” organized annually by Igbo women can be used as avenues for women empowerment programmes. This will go a long way in the actualization of gender equality which is Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls).
- vii. **Capacitybuilding:** Teegan, Doh & Vachani (2004) citing Brown & Kalgaonkar (2002); Offenhaser & Holcombs (2003) pointed out that NGOs contribute to building (or rebuilding) social capacity and these efforts typically involved a wide range of activities; establishing codes, providing training, resource access, and know-how concerning goods and service delivery, sharing best practices and creating and supporting institutional settings that promote social welfare.
- viii. **Towards peaceful co-existence:** The NGOs are the key player here, however, it can collaborate with private sectors to ensure that the SDG Goal No. 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). The NGOs have played significant roles in this dimension in time past. For, efficiency, it can collaborate with other sectors in ensuring that child abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence comes

to an end. They can partner with the judiciary to ensure equal access to justice for all and as well promote the rule of law at the national and international levels.

### Challenges to Effective Partnership between the Trio-Sectors

- a. **Inadequacy of funds to enhanced successful partnership between libraries, NGOs and private Sectors:** One of the recurring issues in public sector, (libraries inclusive) is the inadequacy of funds. Libraries as a social institution does not generate fund for the government like some other parastatals and the NGOs are non-profit agencies. Therefore, leaving the financial burdens associated with partnership to the private sector will ultimately lead the private sector to a state of “donor fatigue”. This will bring the partnership activities to a halt. Unavailability of funds is likely to hamper effective and meaningful collaboration between the trio-sector. The NGOs are non-profit agencies and as such may not have the financial capacity for instance to organize skill acquisition programmes amongst others.
- b. **Inconsistent policies:** One of the characteristics of Nigerian government since independence is inconsistency in government policies. The four year tenure for public office holders is often not enough to achieve all that they desire in order to put the nation on the track of speedy development. However, it is disheartening to note that instead of new government to consolidate on the gains or policy of their predecessors, they always come up with new ideas which when critically examined is the same with the former, with difference only in nomenclature and perhaps, human resources. Such an attitude will always have an adverse effect on the successful partnership between NGOs, private sectors and the public sectors. For instance between October 1960 till date, various agricultural policies and programmes were formulated by different governments. In the agricultural sector, different governments in Nigeria has always come up with new programme or agenda i.e. General Olusengu Obasonjo initiated Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1972, Shehu Shagari came up with Green Revolution (GR) in April 1980 with the aim of increasing production of food and raw

materials. Director of Foods Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was initiated in January 1986 under General Ibrahim Babangida's regime. These programmes as viable as they seem was not successful because of inconsistency. Thus, government inconsistency in policies does not in any way promote development in any nation and would affect partnership effort between the three sectors.

- c. **Corruption:** The president of Nigeria, Mohammed Buhari has always frowned at this "political virus" that has over-run the political, economic, social and even the religious sector in Nigeria. Corruption according to Buhari, will kill Nigeria if Nigerians don't kill it (corruption). The prevalence of widespread corruption according to Ngeh (2013) limits the NGOs scope of activities and impedes their growth.

### Conclusion

The government alone cannot actualize the SDGs. This calls for sustainable partnership between the public sector, private sector and NGOs. This synergy will help to speed up action towards realization of the SDGs in developing country like Nigeria. The key to successful realization of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria is "partnership" between the trio sector – public sector, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The government should put measures in place that will promote continuity culture, provide adequate fund and aggressively address the issue of corruption in the Nigerian society.

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