

Uncovering The Role Of Library And Information Professionals In Sustainable Development Agenda In Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examined the role library and information professionals play in enhancing sustainable development in Nigeria. Sustainable development is the organizing principle for sustaining continuous resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. It is a process that takes into visions a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity, stability and beauty of natural biotic systems. And librarians And Information Professionals can make the process achievable by bringing information services within the reach of ever more people and through their participation in the design of information policies aimed at achieving sustainable development. The paper looks at the concepts of development, library, library and information profession, sustainable development, the important role of information policy prompted and supported by library and information professionals and how it can be used to achieve sustainable development including its various domains. The paper concluded by providing certain recommendations on how library and information professionals can serve as a means creating and disseminating information that will influence orientation about sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Library, Development, Sustainable Development, Information Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria like any other nation has been led by various leaders and they all seem to have attempted their best towards making Nigeria a developed country, however this is yet to be achieved. Then one may ask what have the government done for Nigerians. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) opined that it is the pride of every government to attain a high level of development that will improve the life of its citizens. Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) therefore, described development as the ability of a nation to provide a qualitative life for her citizenry. Sustainable development is the organizing principle for sustaining continuous resources necessary to provide for the needs of future generations of life on the planet. It is a process that takes into visions a desirable future state for human

societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity, stability and beauty of natural biotic systems. Library in every sector of the economy provides a significant role of making information available and accessible to users for timely decision making as a repository of knowledge in all its form. Library and information professionals provide information to protect the natural resources upon which the economy and society through their support for life-enhancing policies. This paper examines the role of library and information professionals in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria, and how information policy can play a role in its achievement. The paper is further divided as follows: First, we introduced the study and defined the concepts of development, sustainable development, library and information profession,

then we examined how information policy can play a role in the sustainable development agenda of the country. Finally, the concluding aspect provides recommendations based on proposed information policies for sustainable development discussed.

II. CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

Development is described as the habitual process by which a country provides for its entire population, ensuring they have the basic needs of life such as health, nutrition and housing, and provides everyone with the opportunities to contribute to the very process through gainful employment as well as scientific and technological innovations (Oludayo 2004). Ibietan (2014) described development as the change and growth manifested in socio-economic progress and the transformation of a society. The change and growth can be in the form of social improvement, increase in the capacity of the political system and the gross national income or GDP. The essence of development is for a positive impact to exist in a society, it could either be economic development, social development or political development. Fagbemi (2007) supported that development not only entails the value or profit gotten from economic, social and political development, but the increase in the sum total of human happiness and welfare.

Development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by erudite scholars to conceptualize development. Gboyega (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material wellbeing of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life (Naomi, 1995). Chrisman (1984) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the wellbeing of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is reasonable to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life.

III. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The continuity and genuine survival of a nation is not far-fetched from the term sustainable development. Sustainable development is seen basically from two perspective which is to ensure the present generation have sufficient resources and also to ensure that the coming generation are not left with nothing and that they are able to tap from the wealth of

knowledge left behind by the generation before them. Fagbemi (2007) stated that "sustainable development presupposes that man in his quest for survival and development must draw the line between his immediate needs in term of development without jeopardizing the ability of future generation to meet their needs".

Dictionary.com define sustainable as the ability to be maintained or kept going, as an action or process. The World Commission on Environment and Development's as cited by the world bank group (2001) described sustainable development as the "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The essence of sustainable development is to put in place important measures toward managing environmental degradation, population growth, resource depletion, loss of biodiversity and poverty (Amiolemon and Adegbite). Emas (2015) corroborates the above sentence by stating the overall goal of sustainable development (SD) is the long-term stability of the economy and the environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process, as well as making use of professionals like librarians for documenting decision made.

Although, sustainable development concept dwells on economic and environmental sustainability, it also deals with the ability to maintain an equilibrium between meeting the human immediate needs while at the same time preserving the natural resources in such a way that the future generation is not compromised (Fagbemi 2007). Anyira, Onoriode and Nwabueze (2010) and Owiny, Mehta and Mareztki (2014) opined that for sustainability to exist, it is paramount to document and preserve past and existing knowledge and technology that will enhance sustainable economic and social development.

IV. LIBRARY AND LIBRARY PROFESSION

According to Ode and Omokaro (2007) library is defined as a designated building where information in prints and in other formats are collected, organized, carefully prepared according to some specific or definite plan and made accessible for reading and consultation by all ages and interest. This definition acknowledge the fact that library provides information relevant to different ages and interest in the sense that information is meant for every citizenry without any restriction and discrimination of age and gender as such accelerate the development of the economy.

Library and information profession like other professions is vast in their study scope thus making them acquire skills in various aspects of human endeavour and fit for consultation in many subject matters. Library professionals serve users effectively and efficiently. Omekwu (2003) enumerated emerging required skills in library profession that result from digital technology, including computer literacy, Internet literacy, information technology literacy, and information literacy. Librarian utilize these technology to enhance service quality to users.

Library and information professionals therefore play important role in every sphere of human endeavor by providing adequate information to users and acting as gatekeepers and brokers of information which is essential for knowledge acquisition, decision-making and national development (Abioye, 2013).

Library profession contribute immensely to the sustainability in Nigeria by promoting literacy in Nigeria, thus sustainable development can be experienced in all spheres of the economy. The library can lead in sustainable development and help reduce illiteracy among youths who are future generation and who are the reason for ensuring sustained development and adult in Nigeria. By making information accessible to users whenever they need it for timely information decision making that affect development is quick. One of the platforms through which library and information professionals help sustain sustainable development is through creation of a link between citizens and government in the debate for sustainable development. More importantly is the role the library and information professionals play in generating and sustaining policies that affect sustainable development in Nigeria.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: *THE ROLE OF INFORMATION POLICY*

Uhegbu (2008) pointed out that since the 1990s, efforts are being intensified for the formulation of information policy instruments that will be suitable for the development of the nation by different bodies or stakeholders. These efforts are aimed at sustaining both the existing level of development and new ones. In its crusade for an information policy in Nigeria that can help enable sustainable development, the Nigerian Library association has organized several seminars, workshops, conferences with a view to coming out with a blue-print to enable the government formulate an information policy.

Policies are directives that shape decisions and actions of individuals, organizations and government agencies; they are usually based on past experiences and give guidelines on present and future endeavours. A national information policy is a series of decisions taken by a national government, which are designed to encourage a better information infrastructure. In other advanced economies, the formulation and implementation of information policies that impart sustainable development in all ramifications continue to be sustained. Age (2015) pointed out that information policies aimed at developing and governing available technological, legal and human structure in order to deliver economic and social benefits for individuals and society as a whole and future generation. These policies on information for sustainable development will mostly focus on how developing environmental, economic, social, ecological, economy, equity and governance markets, infrastructure and technologies. Aspects of information policy that can serve as instruments for sustainable development include policies on the following:

✓ COMPUTING AND TELECOMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

One of the core concepts in sustainable development is that technology can be used to assist people meet their developmental needs. Today appropriate technology is often developed using open source principles, which have led to open-source appropriate technology (OSAT) and thus many of the plans of the technology can be freely found on the Internet (Pearce, 2012). Nigeria like most other African countries has been ruled for decades by military dictatorship and witnessed political upheavals which had stifled all initiatives for technology because the military rulers regarded information and communication technology as a threat to their power of oppression and control opportunity (Ajayi, 2003). This made information policies to be dormant and it was not until the country witnessed transition to democratic rule in 1999 before development in National Information Infrastructure (NII) took off under the then president Olusegun Obasanjo. The aim was to take advantage of telecommunications and computer technologies such as the VSAT and fiber optic networks to enhance access to quality education, eradicate poverty, create jobs and investment opportunities and enhance the nation's capacity to compete globally. In line with the stated objectives, the federal government approved the National Policy for Information Technology in 2001. Also, according to Yusuff (2007), the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was established as the agency to implement the national ICT policy in collaboration with the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). NITDA is to develop and regulate the Information Technology sector in Nigeria, develop a critical mass of IT proficient and globally competitive manpower, ensure that every Nigerian is empowered with information technologies and ensure that IT resources are readily available to promote national development. Ajayi (2003) and Olatokun (2006) outlined some of the projects that NITDA undertook in order to fulfill its mandate: a. Public Service Network- The goal of this project is to provide an ICT infrastructure that will enhance Internet access in the country. The core of the infrastructure is a Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) sited in the Federal Capital city. The VSAT is to provide internet access to the State Capital as well as other sites around the country through Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) while the various locations are connected to each other with the Virtual Private Network. b. Mobile Internet Units (MIUs)- These are buses that are equipped with computer systems, printers, scanners, digital cameras etc. and connected to the internet and converted into a mobile training and cyber center. The MIUs were constructed to serve as mobile telecenters for carrying ICT education and Internet awareness to the rural communities in the six geopolitical zones of the country. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs can be addressed through more ICT policies promoted by information professionals. This in a way will ensure that information that can sustain development is at the disposal of

everyone because majority now has access to information and communication technologies.

✓ HUMAN AND BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE

The most broadly accepted criterion for corporate sustainability constitutes a firm's efficient use of natural capital. This idea has been popularised by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) under the following definition: "Eco-efficiency is achieved by the delivery of competitively priced goods and services that satisfy human needs and bring quality of life, while progressively reducing ecological impacts and resource intensity throughout the life-cycle to a level at least in line with the earth's carrying capacity." (DeSimone and Popoff, 1997: 47)

Whereas, it can be assumed that most corporate impacts on the environment are negative (apart from rare exceptions such as the planting of trees) this is not true for social impacts. These can be either positive (e.g. corporate giving, creation of employment) or negative (e.g. work accidents, mobbing of employees, human rights abuses).

It has been suggested that because of rural poverty and overexploitation, environmental resources should be treated as important economic assets, called natural capital (Barbier, 2006). Economic development has traditionally required a growth in the gross domestic product. Sustainable development may involve improvements in the quality of life for many but may necessitate a decrease in resource consumption (Brown, 2011). According to ecological economist Malte (2008), ecological economics is defined by its focus on nature, justice, and time. Issues of intergenerational equity, irreversibility of environmental change, uncertainty of long-term outcomes, and sustainable development guide ecological economic analysis and valuation. The world is now in the era of information society and economic factors rely on information, therefore the role of library and information professionals have been expanded and their contribution cannot be overlooked.

As early as the 1970s, the concept of sustainability was used to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems (Stivers, 1976). The goals of environmental conservation and economic development are not conflicting and can be reinforcing each other (Barbier, 1987).

A meta review in 2002 looked at environmental and economic valuations and found a lack of "sustainability policies" (Pezzey and Michael, 2002). A study concluded in 2007 that knowledge, manufactured and human capital (health and education) has not compensated for the degradation of natural capital in many parts of the world (Dasgupta, 2007). It has been suggested that intergenerational equity can be incorporated into a sustainable development and decision making, as has become common in economic valuations of climate economics (Heal, (2009), signifying that library and information professionals have more roles to play in developing and identifying conditions for a strong case to act on climate change, and called for more work to fully account of the relevant economics and how it affects human welfare. They enable the effective practice of personal responsibility

and the development of mechanisms to protect the environment. They can create conditions which encourage the people to save the environment by going green themselves and creating aware about its importance. Sustainable development reduces poverty through economic (among other things, a balanced budget), environmental (living conditions) and also social (including equality of income) dimensions. The information society suggests that all these dimensions depend on information, information is then serve as a useful tools in the drive for sustainable development. In helping the business sector in the area of sustainable development, the role the library and information professionals is yet to be visible and more will be required in this aspect.

Yusuff (2007) pointed out that development of human resources through information is already a pivotal goal of NITDA and the agency had initiated various programs targeted at people in different groups and sectors such the youths, professionals, civil servants etc. Some of these initiatives were executed in partnership with private and multilateral organizations such as UNESCO, International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and Cisco Systems. The Digital Bridge Institute established by NCC in 2004 also made remarkable efforts in terms of human IT capacity development. IT capacity development has been strengthened through the various training programs initiated by NITDA especially in the public service as part of preparation towards e-government. Furthermore, the MIUs have helped in ICT awareness and training especially in the rural areas.

✓ LEGAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A study concluded that social indicators and, therefore, sustainable development indicators, are scientific constructs whose principal objective is to inform public policy-making (Paul-Marie, 2008). In order to achieve sustainable development, legal information on organization and governance, law and justice, communication and critique, representation and negotiation, security and accord, dialogue and reconciliation, ethics and accountability is necessary. Also, in ensuring the integrity and preservation of data and information on aspects of sustainable development, information policies also help to protect individuals and organizations that create or use information.

According to Yusuff (2007), the need for such legal framework has become critical with increase in electronic transactions such as e-banking, e-commerce and e-business and the corresponding rise in cybercrime. Cybercrime constitute a global challenge and nations and multinational organizations are formulating policies and enacting laws to combat the menace. In line with this statement, the first draft of the Computer Security and Critical Information Infrastructure bill was produced in 2005 (Akinsuyi, 2010). The bill addresses cybercrimes like unlawful access to computer, unauthorized disclosure of access code, fraudulent electronic mail messages, data forgery, computer fraud, system interference, misuse of devices, denial of service, identity theft and impersonation, records retention and data protection, unlawful interception, cybersquatting, cyber-terrorism, violation of intellectual property rights with the use of a computer, using the computer for unlawful sexual

purposes, conspiracy and abetment. The second draft titled 'Cybersecurity and Information Protection Agency Bill' was produced in 2008. This has however been criticized as being inadequate especially in relation to data protection. According to Akinsuyi (2010), the bill does not specify how personal data is to be handled and how long such data could be retained.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

People concerned about sustainable development suggest that meeting the needs of the future depends on how well we balance social, economic, and environmental objectives--or needs--when making decisions today (World Bank, 2015). There are many definitions of sustainable development, including this landmark one which first appeared in 1987:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

But can this be achieved without information and the library? Probably no. The library and information services can be used to achieve the goals of sustainable development through the information policies supported by its practitioners. Such areas where these can be possible include effective policies for ICT, human, business and legal infrastructures to mention just a few which are all in the domain of information profession. If within ourselves, as library and information professionals, we support sustainable development with information tools at our disposal and design information policies in the different domains of sustainable development, both the present and future generations will greatly benefit from our efforts. In line with the purpose of the paper, the following recommendations are made:

- ✓ Library and information professions
- ✓ Library and information professionals should identify policies needed by the government to promoting sustainable development.
- ✓ Library and information professionals should show commitment and support for the promotion of sustainable development communication, as well as display skills as advocate for sustainable development.

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