

Challenges of the Domestication of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

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Abstract:- Sustainable Development is the ability of a people to meet the present goals using the natural resources, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable Development is a new method of development that takes cognizance of the environment in its development strides. The Industrial Revolution in Europe had taken off with the exploitation of resource. The industrial revolution led to the proliferation of industries which manufactured household and industrial goods on a large scale. The industrial base expansion led to higher demands for resources to power the industry. Coal, petroleum and biomass that had been hitherto required for space heating and on a small scale were required in large quantities. Large mines were established and coal was exploited on an industrial scale. Along came oil and gas exploitation with Rockefeller leading the pack (Standard Oil) in the USA. The greater access to energy led to greater exploitation of resources. Ores were extracted, processed and smelted as input for industrial processing/manufacturing, where there were shortages in the provision of energy, biomass was used. The industrial Revolution led to rising standards of living and increased economic growth and development. Cities expanded and wants increased. Whole rivers were dammed or diverted for the construction of hydropower dams for the provision of electricity, where the hydropower dams were insufficient, coal was utilized for electricity generation, where coal and hydropower dams were insufficient, nuclear power was employed to. As the cities expanded, swamps were filled to accommodate the expansion. Whole hills and mountains were levelled in the course of development. And Europe did develop...then North America and more recently in the past half a century; Asia. Whole continents have been brought from pristine existence into the 21st Century and further. But at what cost?

I. INTRODUCTION

In the course of the development of these countries, the uncontrolled development only took cognizance of energy & the economy with no consideration for the Environment. The environment thus, had taken a serious beating as a result of the unsustainable development of the 19th Century. The earth had become warmer (Global Warming), the Green House effect of gaseous effluents (GHG), depletion of the ozone layer and the littering of the oceans and seas with liquid effluents and solid wastes. The earth is a living thing and responds to poisons. All the effluents are poisonous to it and the earth reacted. The diverted rivers, filled swamps, etc,

alongside the effect of the GHG gases adversely affected the hydrological cycle. Climatic conditions were changing. And the earth was changing with them. The resources had been vastly depleted. The rapid development of the 19th and the 20th centuries had depleted the resources of the earth, brought about the reduction in natural air and water qualities and caused global warming. The earth was literally dying due to development. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm brought the industrialized and developing nations together to delineate the ‘rights’ of the human family to a healthy and productive environment. This meeting flagged of the first global conference on the environment and agreed on the effects of development on the environment. Subsequent meetings in 1980 and 1987 provided recognized the rights of nations to develop self but also recognized the responsibility of countries to protect the environment in the course of development. The practice of developing without giving considerations to the environment would deplete the resources and prevent future generations from satisfying their own needs with the available natural resources.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro and adopted an agenda for environment and development in the 21st Century. The Agenda 21 was adopted. The Agenda 21 was a Program of Action for Sustainable Development on Environment and Development, which recognizes the right of each country to pursue social and economic progress and assigned to states the responsibility of adopting a model of sustainable development. The Framework Convention for Climate Change was agreed upon in the same conference. Thus, was birthed the concept of Sustainable Development.

In 1987, the Bruntland Commission published its report, Our Common Future, in an effort to link the issues of economic development and environmental stability. In doing so, this report provided the oft-cited definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p. 43). This concept of sustainable development aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment; it “provides a framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies. The concept of Sustainable Development is the official recognition of the nexus between development and the environment and the agreement of the fact that while not compromising on development needs, there is the need to

adopt development strategies that maintain or enhance the ability of the ecosystem to keep performing its natural functions and to have sufficient ability to meet the needs of future generations.

The concept of Sustainable Development brought the economic realization that the costs of goods and services were not appropriately priced as the cost to the environment was not captured. The integration of the environmental costs of development were initially seen as externalities (Marginal Private Costs & Benefits) but are actual integral to the cost of production. It was seen necessary to integrate the cost to the environment; environmental pollution is an inefficient application of resources and bears a cost and has an impact on the concept of sustainable development. It is in the interest of a nation to understand the cost of development and move to lower same as regards cost of Energy, cost to the Economy and cost to the environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development also has to do with the sustainability of capital, whereas capital could be manufactured capital, the most important capital is the natural capital. The human capital is the ability to convert the natural capital for public good and manufactured capital.

The key principle of sustainable development underlying all others is the integration of environmental, social, and economic concerns into all aspects of decision making. All other principles in the SD framework have integrated decision making at their core (Dernbach J. C., 2003; Stoddart, 2011). It is this deeply fixed concept of integration that distinguishes sustainability from other forms of policy.

The domestication of sustainable development goals is the main thrust of this work. In 1992, the United Nations had set an Agenda for the domestication of Sustainable Development Goals; it was called Agenda 21.

The Agenda 21 was the recognition of the inter-link between development and the environment. This agenda was set for countries to take the environment into consideration in their development strategies. This was the precursor to United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change.

In 1997, the United Nations Convention on the Environment & Development (UNCED) set up the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to see to the implementation of the Agenda 21. This was to encourage countries to implement strategies for development that would sustain the environment and bring about efficiency. Technological changes and process audits were integral aspects of the Agenda 21. And yes, there were economic opportunities even with environmental constraints in the implementation of the goals of the Agenda 21. Numerous countries in North America, Europe and South Asia embraced the Agenda 21 as midwifed through the CSD.

The appreciation of our natural resource constraints is in our overall best interest. Truly rational and “effective governance requires a nation to consider and protect the environment and natural resources on which its current and future development depend. Any other approach is self-defeating. The connections between the environment and development thus provide a powerful rationale for environmental protection: enlightened self-interest” (Dernbach J. C., 1998).

In September 2000, the United Nations agreed on the Millennium Development Goals for member countries (MDG 2000) of which Nigeria was a signatory. The MDG 2000 became the reference document that drove national, regional and sub-regional policies in several countries. The Millennium Development Goals are Sustainable Development Goals targeted to eradicate the Indignity of Poverty.

In 2015, the United Nations have further set agenda for the SDG 4 among others. The 2030 Agenda is a seventeen (17) point agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. Member countries are to implement the following:

- End poverty in all forms and everywhere
- 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
- 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 and 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
- Make cities and human settlements 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 oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and preserve land degradation and biodiversity loss
- Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for sustainable development.

The Agenda 2030 is explicit in its goals to see a more secure and healthy earth that would satisfy the needs of the current needs while protecting the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs.

Nigeria is one of the countries that agreed to and signed the Agenda 2030 on the expiration of the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) in 2015. The Agenda 2030 is in effect, a continuation of the MDGs. Nigeria had been a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals that lasted a period of fifteen (15) years.

Ajiye (2014) wrote of the domestication of the MDG in Nigeria by the Obasanjo administration led to the establishment of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the establishment of the same at the state levels (SEEDS). The establishment of the NEEDS and SEEDS was to consolidate the achievements between 1999 and 2004 to lay the foundations of poverty reduction, economic growth, wealth creation and value re-orientation.

Several more agencies were created to help actualize the MDG objectives. Organizations like the National Orientation Agency, anti-graft bodies like the ICPC and EFFCC, were a fallout of the NEEDS program.

NEEDS itself became the cornerstone of the economic and development thrust of the Obasanjo Administration for the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. The

National Economic Council and the National Council of Development on Planning were the monitoring and evaluating bodies for the implementation of the MDG objectives. The states were “supposed” to develop their strategies for the implementation of the MDG objectives.

III. METHODOLOGY

There are different opinions on the success of the MDG implementation in Nigeria. Whereas government sources and agencies claim that it has been fairly successful, realities on ground corroborated by UNDP Reports reveal that Nigeria hardly scratched the surface. The Human Development Indices (HDI) are a good method to measure the progress of a country in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Agenda 2030 Goals. For conciseness of comparative, the HDI shall be employed here.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The United Nations Development Program describes the Human Development Index (HDI) as a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. A long and healthy life is measured by life expectancy. In the analysis of the success or not of Nigeria in the implementation of the Agenda 21, MDG 2015 or the Agenda 2030, the HDI measurement over a period is employed for comparative analysis.

Table A: Nigeria's HDI trends based on consistent time series data and new goalposts

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)	HDI value
1990	45.9	6.7		2,792	
1995	45.9	7.2		2,569	
2000	46.3	8.0		2,451	
2005	48.2	9.0	5.2	3,669	0.465
2010	50.8	8.4	5.2	4,862	0.484
2015	53.0	10.0	6.0	5,527	0.527
2016	53.4	10.0	6.2	5,326	0.530
2017	53.9	10.0	6.2	5,231	0.532

Table A culled from the UNDP 2018 Report

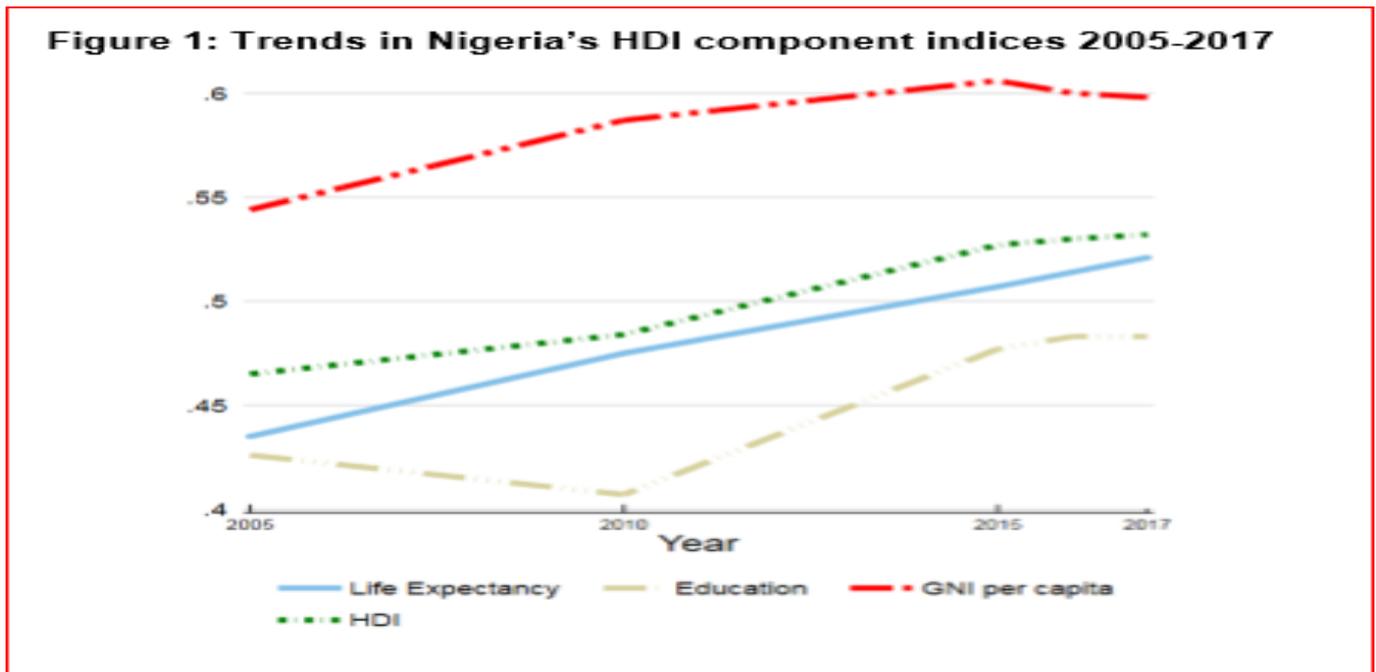
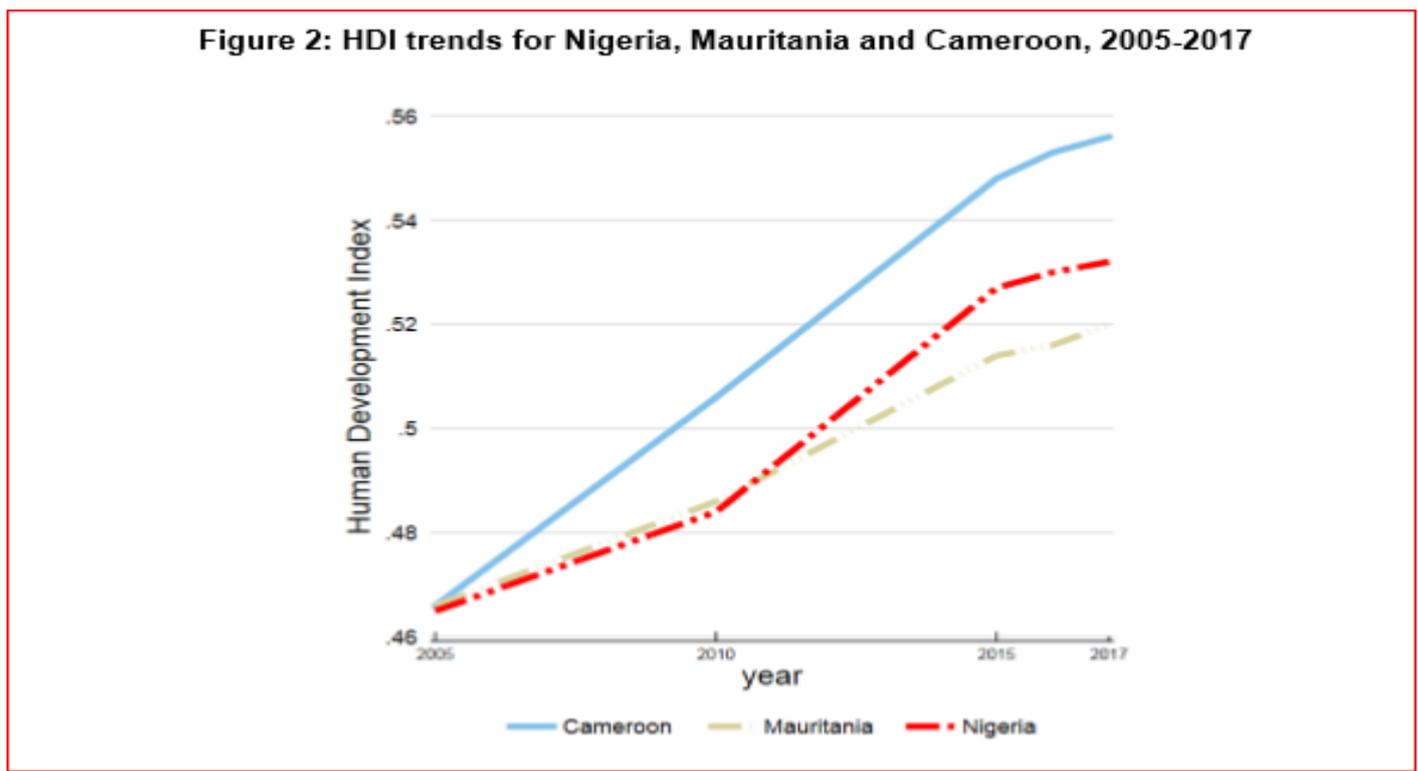


Fig 1 culled from the UNDP 2018 Report



The data above are a summary of the HDI for Nigeria.

The Table A shows a slight increase in HDI levels between Years 2000 and 2015. The period under review coincided with the MDG years for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. A comparison with the Republic of Cameroon as revealed in the Figure 2 above shows the Human Development Indices with a higher gradient than that of Nigeria. Whereas that of Cameroon is higher and smoother (which might be an indication of a scientific approach to implementation), that of Nigeria seems

to change with changes in the administration. Nigeria trended higher between 2011 and 2014 and lower by 2015 till date.

The UNDP Report (2018) shows that Nigeria is grouped among the Low Human Development countries but trends at just above average among the Low Human Development countries. This shows a disconnect between the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation/domestication of the set objectives. The SDG Indicator Baseline Reports (2016) by the Bureau of Statistics gives a comprehensive

report on the Year 2000 to 2015 period including financial commitments to various development needs. The report however, agrees in several ways with the UNDP review during the same years.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has indicated the need to better implement the 17-point Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and the implementation of the 169 targets using the 230 indicators for monitoring. Good as this sounds, the reality on the ground does not seem to give much comfort.

From the data available, sub-Saharan countries have poorly implemented SDG goals. As Nigeria, various countries in the sub-Saharan parts of Africa have been unable to properly domesticate the Sustainable Development goals. Some of these countries have attributed the poor implementation of the SDG to the unfair advantage of the advanced countries or outrightly complained about the very objectives to which they were signatories.

Despite some seeming successes in Africa, there is an obvious lack of institutional framework for the implementation of the SDG objectives in Africa. The strong economic growth experienced by Nigeria between 2004 and 2014 was more due to global expansion and the increase in the prices of commodities. This was also the opinion of Elhirika (2005).

A study of African countries reveals the absence of strong institutions and governance structure that would complement and enhance the implementation of the SDGs. This was corroborated by Oloyede (2006) who posited that for MDGs objectives to be realized there is need for establishment of an appropriate political and institutional framework to guide states intervention, market reform and poverty alleviation.

In Nigeria, studies have revealed that while Nigeria embraces the United Nations Development Program and agrees to the set objectives of Sustainable Development, the country finds it extremely difficult to implement. The SDG Indicator Baseline Reports (2016) by the Bureau of Statistics shows how poorly implemented these SDGs are under the Nigerian environment despite the domestication of all the agreed policies and programs of the UNDP through the CSD, MDG and SDGs.

The major factors affecting the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria is could be listed below as:

- Weak political and government institutions
- Weak political structure
- An overbearing federal government
- Weak or no governance at the local level (the community or municipality)
- Weak judicial structure
- Weak law enforcement structure
- An uninformed populace.

These factors above are real factors militating against the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the implementation of the SDG 1-17.

It has been argued by a school of thoughts that when a constitution takes power from the people and gives it to the government, then the people quit being responsible for the development of the country but cede all responsibilities to the government. Who is the government in the Nigerian context?

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria has government divided into three tiers as shown below:

- The federal government
- The state governments
- The local governments.

This is shown in the Sections 1 to 3 of the constitution. In the constitution, the Sections 4-12 are dedicated to the Powers of the Federal Republic. Of course, the Sections 13 through 24 are a codification of the objectives of the government but was more of the objectives of the Federal Government and less about the State and local governments.

A further interrogation of the constitution shows the arrogation of powers to the federal government in the Sections 130 to 175 and the legislation over the 36 states in subsequent sections of the constitution. The 1999 constitution prevents any other constitution at the state and local levels and takes over all factors of production in the Second Schedule with 68 items on the Exclusive List and 33 items on the Concurrent List.

A complete review of the 1999 constitution shows that the Federal Government has arrogated most of the powers to itself and has prevented the states and local governments from developing as they would. The states are more appendages of the federal government than federating entities. They cannot have a constitution and more depend on the federal police for enforcement.

It gets worse that most of the activities that ought to have been carried out at the state, community and municipal levels have been embedded in the Exclusive List of the federal government. The Concurrent List is a list of activities that could be carried out by both the federal and state governments but whose legislation is by the federal government.

The Residual List meant for the local governments (delineated by the federal government) is forgettable and of little consequence.

There is no officially recognized government at the community level (or municipalities) where the real people live and where the Indicators of Sustainable Development Goals must be implemented and measured. The most important government that could most domesticate the Sustainable Development Goals, does not exist in Nigeria. Herein lay a major impediment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria.

As shown in the section above, the constitution of a country determines its political and governance structure. A study of the constitution of Nigeria (as earlier explained) has revealed the overtly powerful federal government and an almost non-existent government at the communities. An audit of the governance structure reveals that only the federal government is constitutionally prepared to be functional. All directives of the effectiveness of government must be from the federal government.

The Exclusive & Concurrent Lists in the 2nd Schedule of the 1999 Constitution do not assign any roles to the municipalities. The local government structure does not represent a government in the real sense. There is no real role assigned to the local government except the cleaning of markets and the signing of marriage certificates. The local government is not meant for development.

The State governments have no constitutions; the governance structure at the states is constitutionally determined by the federal government the federal government (Sections 176 to 230). Most development approvals at the states are incumbent on the federal government. The roles of the states are limited to the 33 items on the concurrent list. The states are effectively departments of the federal government. They have little powers in the real sense.

The federal government is the major revenue generating level of government. All funds are paid into the Federation Account from where funds are disbursed to the states and local governments. The funds are not tied to projects in particular and there is little institutional framework to ensure the effectiveness of disbursed funds. Effective governance in Nigeria is not ensured by the constitution. The constitution makes it difficult for the effectiveness of governance beyond the federal level.

From the foregoing, the domestication of Sustainable Development Goals beyond the federal level is almost an impossibility. From the data available, SDG objectives might be the policy drivers for the federal government as shown in the National Economic, Empowerment & Development Strategy (NEEDS) of the federal government. Despite its modest success, the SEEDS program existed only on paper. There was no SDG objective to the municipalities which do not exist.

The major drivers of the SDG objectives should be the government closest to the people. The City Government of any town or city should be responsible for its own development. Issues of housing, provision of electricity, sustainable infrastructure, education, city planning, security, access to justice among others, ought to be under the purview of the City Government. The 1999 Constitution does not provide for City Governments thus denying the country of the major drivers of development.

The federal government is inadvertently saddled with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for over 200 cities and thousands of towns as a SINGLE government with almost zero responsibility to other tiers of government as determined by the 1999 constitution.

Yet the reach of the federal government is finite despite its inordinate powers. The budget is finite and there is only so much that could be achieved with unitary system. The over 10,000 possible development agencies at the community level (City Governments) would have been natural development receptors of the SDG objectives. The City Government is the best suited for the implementation of the SDGs as is seen in other countries with successful implementation of SDGs.

The role of the federal and state governments should be limited to monitoring the implementation and filling gaps, regulations and partnership. Most of the activities that ought to be carried out by the City Governments have been arrogated by the Federal Government. The Federal Government of Nigeria has inadvertently prevented development by the constitution it is saddled with. Every domestication of the SDG objectives finally trickles down to the towns, villages and cities (if ever) as government aids or charity. The SDG objectives have no ownership beyond the federal government, and few means of implementation outside the federal government.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The domestication of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals have not been very successful in Nigeria. This work has discussed the unitary constitutional structure as the major impediment of the proper implementation of the SDG objectives.

The city governments are the major drivers of development worldwide. This tier of government does not exist in Nigeria and there is no equivalent. Invariably, there are no receptors to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and Nigeria keeps falling behind the rest of the world in all facets of life as a result.

- A complete overhaul of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria to a more people and development-oriented constitution
- There is the need for the establishment of city governments
- There is the need for the citizens to sponsor their own government and development with taxes and participation
- There is the need to review downwards the Exclusive List of the 1999 Constitution
- Sustainable Development Goals target should be given to the City Governments and national data for the 230 indicators should be directly from the relevant department in the city government and not by questionnaires
- City Governments should be given the responsibility to directly implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

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