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Libraries as Vehicle to Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs): Nigerian's current status and outlook
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Libraries as Vehicle to Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs): Nigerian's current status and outlook

Magnus Igbiovvia

Introduction

The resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 September 2015, resulted in a 2030 agenda for sustainable development with 17 goals and 169 targets – a transition from the millennium developmental goals (MDGs) which should stimulate action over the next 15 years[1]. In view of this agenda, sessions at the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Conference were held in 2015 in Cape Town to focus on the post-2015 development agenda[2]. Session 103 of the 2015 IFLA Conference was on the contribution and mission of libraries and information services or sustainable development.

Overview

The Registrar of the Librarian's Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), during the 6th Induction Ceremony for librarians held on September 13, 2015 stated that the profession will focus on making sustainable developmental goals (SDGs) a reality. In line with this, libraries and librarians in Nigeria have been doing a great deal, especially in the area of creating awareness about the goals by all stakeholders. The aim of this paper is to examine the current status of Nigerian libraries toward meeting the SDGs, as an example for developing countries and to propose recommendations for meeting these goals.

On creating awareness with regard to SDGs, the Anambra State Library Board concluded the Igbo (one of the major indigenous languages in Nigeria) translation of the 2030 agenda. To create awareness, the Nigerian Librarians SDGs Action Group was created as a platform on Facebook to make contributions on how libraries can

contribute in the achievement of SDGs. Several other platforms such as radio broadcasts, tweets (@SDGsNigeria Action, @SDGsNigeria etc), posters and other dissemination means were also used. Also collaborations by libraries with governmental and non-governmental institutions are in place to ensure synergy. The Nigeria Library Association 2016 National Conference scheduled for July 2016 is intended to be an academic forum where knowledge will be shared on the implementation of SDGs in Nigeria and resolutions will be presented for appropriate actions.

Libraries and other information centers play a crucial role in this movement. Several library and information services will enhance the achievement of these goals by adapting to new roles. Libraries will need to consolidate their services that facilitate the implementation of the SDGs. It is, however, noteworthy that an attempt by libraries to achieve all the goals will be difficult. Libraries in Nigeria and other developing countries should adopt those goals that can be well-managed through concentrated efforts for success.

One of the library services that should be consolidated to ensure achieving these goals are information literacy services. Information accessibility and utilization are essential elements in the developmental agenda. Ifidon (2006) notes that planning without information is a bane to national development and most national developmental plans and programs do not have adequate information. Libraries have the mandate to fill this gap by providing access to basic information on education, health, agriculture, other social and civic issues and capacity building that will be required for national development.

Library and agriculture extension services should be revamped to meet the information need of rural dwellers providing them with agricultural and health-related information. While doing this, libraries should at the same time, acquire the indigenous knowledge from communities on agricultural practices, orthodox medicine, etc. which should then be processed, stored and disseminated to those in need of such information for future generations. Librarians must collaborate in research with scholars in all areas possible, including psychology, sociology, health, finance, nutrition, engineering and many others areas to provide solutions for improving the well-being of individuals by providing a major gateway to all knowledge available.

Recommendations

Libraries need creative solutions and need to work outside-the-box to embrace new roles and challenges:

- Development occurs in stages and phases and requires clear cut targets and indicators of success to track and monitor progress.
- Increase collaboration with economic, health, social, agricultural and environmental researchers that will enhance sustainable development and provide and curate access to research results.
- Use social media platforms as a current means of awareness; libraries should collaborate with telecommunication companies to disseminate information to those outside social networks using programmed calls and short messages.
- Provide vocational training and information literacy to empower

individuals, especially to women and girls, ensuring gender equality.

- Generate funds for infrastructure and capacity such as internet services in public places for unrestricted access to information and provide opportunities for digital literacy.
- Create collaborative networks or groupware that enable information exchange among geographically distributed professionals both within the country and globally to accomplish projects related to SDGs.
- Develop a platform on institutional websites where information on SDGs can be accessed along with FAQs appropriate to the goals for your country, in our case Nigeria.

Outlook

It is difficult to predict the future, but looking at activities taking place in libraries to meet the SDGs in Nigeria, it

is quite possible that in the next 15 years we will see:

- A society where libraries will be more involved in powering national development and gain greater visibility.
- There will be new roles to meet the educational, social, economic and agricultural needs of the country.
- Greater collaboration of librarians with professionals in all areas of research to help solve social issues for their local and national communities.
- New library services that are attractive, efficient and value based.
- Nigeria and other developing nations will achieve remarkable progress in the implementation of SDGs.

Summary

Availability, accessibility and use of information are pivotal to the implementation of SDGs. Libraries as

information hubs will play a central role in the development agenda. While libraries are already creating awareness of the goals via social networks, traditional library services directly support some target and underserved populations. Libraries must function beyond conventional practices to achieve greater impact in moving to the SDGs. Collaboration with other organizations, institutions and professional bodies is essential. By 2030, libraries will truly be acknowledged as a major vehicle to the success of meeting the SDGs. The journey so far has been remarkable and the future can only be better.

NOTES

- 1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>
- 2 www.ifla.org/node/9727

REFERENCE

Ifidon, S.E. (2006), "Planning without information: the bane of national development", The 26th Inaugural Lecture in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.