Sustainable Development Goals Milestones Actualization and Communication Approaches in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated communication approaches used by the interventionist agencies (NDDC and NDBDA) in driving sustainable development goals in South South region of Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to; evaluate the discernible milestones of these communication approaches in light of SDG's actualization in South South Nigeria, evaluate the disposition of NDDC and NDBDA towards the actualization of the SDGs. The study is predicated on stakeholder theory. Survey research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study were staff of NDDC Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Rivers State and also the three staff of NDBDA, Rivers State, totaled 801. The questionnaires were purposively administered to the respondents. Findings of the study revealed that the sustainable development goals that are notably carried out by NDDC and NDBDA in the three states in South South Nigeria include; education, provision of water, sanitation, education, free medical care but of low and moderate extent except education. Findings also revealed that the communication channels used by the NDDC and NDBDA in driving sustainable development goals include; radio, television, social media platforms. The study concluded that the visibility of these goals are blurring such that the communities in South South Nigeria where these investigations are carried out cannot make boast of sustainable development programs. Therefore, for the fact that communication approaches have assisted the NDDC and NDBDA in recording some milestones in the light of SDGs in South South Nigeria, those approaches in used should not only be continuously implemented rather strengthen them by employing informal communication approaches to enhance for more actualization, although the NDDC and NDBDA 'disposition with respect to SDGs in South South Nigeria is that there are

performing well, this study recommends that the NDDC and NDBDA should work in conformity with the Publics so as to know the pressing needs of individuals. For instance, workshop, seminars and conferences should be regularly convened to discuss challenges bordering on people in the region.

Keywords: *Sustainable, Development, Communication, Approaches, Interventionist, milestones, Opinions, South South, Nigeria, actualisation*

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of communication to man and society is what water is to fishes in the aquatic world. The achievement of man across the globe revolves around communication hence, its significance cannot be overstressed, it is the central point of development in any society. The term communication is taken from the Latin word *communis*- which means to make common. When two people meet together in conscious or unconscious exchange of ideas, symbols, information, knowledge and culture etc. but one thing must be required for communication to take place effectively, both parties must have the same frame of reference or the communication will be a noise. Baran, (2002) accordingly defines communication to reflect the foregoing. He asserts that communication is a reciprocal and on-going process with all involved parties more or less engaged in creating shared meaning. This definition acknowledges communication as a circular and reciprocal process which includes a sender passing information to the receiver through a channel to the receiver, and from the receiver back to the sender (feedback) thereby demonstrating no permanent sender and no permanent receiver. On this part, Uche (1999) defines communication thus:

> Communication is a rule-governed, dynamic, ongoing
> Process of either transmitting messages or expressing
> One's/group's/community's/nation's feelings, ideas
> Views, values, attitudes, facts, opinions, either verbally,
> From a communication source, through both conventional
> And non- conventional channels, to a receiver, for the
> purpose of establishing mutual understanding and exchanges
> for peaceful co-existence, conflict resolution and the
> cumulative development, progress and wellbeing of a social
> system, nation state, the international community and their
> inhabitants (P.15).

This definition stresses the fact that due to the place of communication in human existence, no other thing has engaged man's consciousness as attempts at discovering faster, easier and cheaper means of communication. Presently, the revolution in communication is creating a great revolution in the entire society. In this particular instance, letter writing which was the main channel of sending messages over long distances is replaced with a cheaper and faster electronic mail or short messages on mobile phones Konkwo (2012) posits that man's ability to feed, clothe and house himself as well as satisfy the other needs of life is a function of the extent to which he can communicate with others within and outside his environment, verbally or non-verbally. Meaning

that the significance of communication for human existence is such that communication has become the integral element without which the human society cannot exist, develop or survive.

The significance of communication is not limited to man but also animals. According Konkwo (2012) states that animals do communicate with their likes, though in a much more limited way than human being, and it is possible for communication to take place between human beings and animals.

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) is widely seen as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. This concept can be traced to the MDGs which can be termed as its mother in the sense that the sustainable development goals came into existence to continue the journey of the MDGs that was anchored on eight (8) goals. In other words, to pilot the affairs of the MDGs in a broader scope of seven (17) goals. The concept of SDGs is the one that strives to balance three pillars which includes; economic, environmental and social growth. Noteworthy is the fact that sustainable development goals were reinvented to surmount the challenges of the MDGs and deliver the vulnerable low income in the developing countries which Nigeria is inclusive. It is fascinating to note that sustainable development goals are boundless to any country of the world unlike MDGs which was specifically designed for the developing countries. Cookey (2010) postulates that "sustainable development is a process by which over time, we succeed in managing all the different capital flows in our economies on genuinely sustainable basis. The consequence is that to achieve any development goal and sustain it, wise management of resources and transparency are main prerequisites. emphasizing the need for achieving sustainable development goal, Doner (2009) suggests that various stages of development require goodness of fit between the tasks involved and the capacities of institutions which include the norms, rules and organizations that govern economic activities. Cookey (2010) asserts that people who reside in the poorest nations and those who reside in sections of large cities in industrializing nations are faced with the dominant risks of public health problems such as the lack of clean water and sanitation and indoor air pollution. Beyond these, poor countries of the world are faced with social infrastructural deficit which account for many development needs. Wang (2016) opines that proper human resource management is another important principle of SD. It is the people who have to ensure that the principles are adopted and adhered to. It is people who have the responsibility to utilize and conserve the environment

Statement of the Problem

Some agencies like the NDDC and NDBDA were established to enhance and promote the sustainable growth and development of South South region of Nigeria. Over time, efforts have been put in place by the government in order to see how these organizations can function effectively to ensure that people's wellbeing in South South region is secured. The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, combating against diseases, universal primary education, improvement of material health care, creation of job opportunities etc were the cardinal reasons of establishing these agencies. As a matter of fact, the goals stated above were in tandem with the sustainable development agenda which would have been a propelling force that would enhance development.

It is worthy of note that the crude oil which is the cornerstone of Nigerian' wealth is extracted from South South. However, this region where the oil is extracted from is in serious pain and suffering because of environmental degradation and climate change which poses a serious challenge to human health. Agriculture which was a major source of livelihood in South South of Nigeria before the emergence of oil exploration and exploitation is no longer resourceful because the land has lost its fertility. NDBDA which is saddled with the responsibility of managing the agricultural sector in the region is inconsistent. South South Nigeria that would have been a zone of development has not recorded great developmental change in terms of education, healthcare and other amenities. With this, Sustainable development agenda that would have been a good template and guidepost to development in South South Nigeria is not taken into cognizance hence, the line of development in South South region is invisible.

South South region of Nigeria is an epitome of contradictions. While being the richest region in Nigeria, it is the poorest in terms of both human and infrastructural development. However, several government efforts to develop South South region through several intervention agencies in order to expedite action on sustainable development projects particularly on human development, infrastructure and ecological development in the region has not yielded much fruit (Jack-Akhigbe and Okuowa, 2013). This has generated a whole lot of grievances which have been expressed in various ways from peaceful protests to violent agitations, kidnapping and disruption of oil exploitation in the region.

Therefore, this study is to find out the communication approaches used in actualizing sustainable development goals by agencies like NDDC and NDBDA particularly in South South Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to:

i. evaluate the discernible milestones of these communication approaches in light of SDG's actualization in South South Nigeria;

ii. evaluate the disposition of NDDC and NDBDA towards the actualization of the SDGs

Theoretical Framework

The Development Media Theory

The Development Media Theory came into existence following the need to address development challenges of developing countries. The propounder of this theory was Denis McQuail and the theory was propounded in the year 1987. McQuail was advocating new media system theories as he argued that the initial four theories of the press provided by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm as far as 1956, were no longer adequate and could not fully explain media systems theories emerged all over the world. Development media theory which is primarily focused on the need to use communication to promote development needs and efforts in the third world countries (UNESCO,

1981). UNESCO (1981) posits that communication in developing countries should be used to promote efforts by government, communities, organization and individuals in carrying out development projects and programmes. This position is opposed to news flow about the third world countries as handled by the mass media in the west, which is more tilted towards presenting poverty, hunger, crimes and other negative practices. McQuail (2005) views development media theory as a prescription for sensitization and mobilization of the citizens for the development of their society. Folarin (2000) elucidates that the four theories- authoritarian media theory, Soviet-communist media theory, libertarian media theory and the social responsibility media theory- are normative theories that seek to locate media structure and performance within the setting in which they operate. Quoting Siebert, Peterson & Schramm in their books, Four Theories of the Press, Folarin asserts that the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. The fundamental factor of development media theory is that the media should support national development, political autonomy and cultural identity of the nations where they operate. The media should give hope to the people of the third world nations and encourage them to participate in the building of their nations. According to Hanson (2005), the authoritarian media theory is the oldest theory of the press and it views the press as the servant of the government and not the citizens. Hanson posits that the theory has its roots in the royal control of the societies by the monarchs during the era when the printing press was first developed. At this period, monarchs were believed to be given the authority to rule by God and therefore had the right and responsibility to control all aspects of the society. The authoritarian press system had operated Latin American, African, Asian countries with totalitarian governments.

The Soviet-Communist Theory places all means of mass communication under the control of the state and the media are instruments of the government and the Communist party. No independent press was allowed under the Soviet- Communist theory. The Libertarian Theory puts the press I the hands of the people. Under this theory, the press does not belong to government but instead, a separate institution that belongs to the people and serves as an independent observer of the government. It provides that the press should be free of government control, and every idea, no matter how crazy and offensive should be allowed to be published. According to Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso (2008), the press under the libertarian theory should be free from prior censorship; no restriction should be placed on the collection of information for publication provided it is done by the legal means and there should be no restriction on export or import of sending of messages across national boundaries. The social responsibility theory stipulated that the press should be free but with responsibility. Baran & Davis (2012) describe that the most innovative feature of social responsibility theory is its call for the media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative "great communities". They elucidate that by helping pluralistic groups, the media are building a wall to protect democracy from external and internal enemies. This theory is most adaptable to advanced democracies in the Americas and Europe.

Insecurity as Development Issue

Adversely, since the return to democratic rule, the Nigeria has experienced high level of security challenges that may have slowed down the pace of development. These challenges include political assassination, ritual killings, suicide bombing (especially by Boko Haram in the North East), farmers-herdsmen crises, militancy and so on. These social vices reinforce insecurity and impede

Nigeria's efforts towards national development (Udeh, Okoroafor & Ihezie, 2013). Beland (2005) refers to insecurity as the condition of dread or tension originating from an absolute or claimed absence of security. Olisaemeka (2011) argues that numerous violence attracts perpetuated by the Boko Haram have affected some economic activities in the northern Nigeria and as a result. Various residents have fled their homes. The loss of lives and psychological trauma that are witnessed after such attacks show that the existence of groups that promote terror compounds the search for sustainable peace and security. According to Nwanegbo & Odigbo (2013), security avails the opportunity for development. Adegoke, Philips & Keshinro (2015) assert that peace and security are potent tools for sustainable development in any society. Development can only take place where there is considerable peace.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable development relates to the principle of meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend (Cerin, 2006). While the concept of sustainable development has been relevant since time immemorial, it can be argued that the relevance deepens with the dawn of every day because the population keeps increasing but the natural resources available to humankind do not. Conscious of this phenomenon, global concerns have always been expressed for judicious use of the available resources. The latest of such concerns translated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MDGs were a sequel to the SDGs. The MDGs marked a historic global mobilisation to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide (Breuer, Janetschek, & Malerba, 2019). However, in spite of the relative effectiveness of the MDGs, not all the targets of the eight goals were achieved after being rolled out for 15 years (2000–2015), hence, the introduction of the SDGs to continue with the development agenda. As part of this new development roadmap, the UN approved the 2030 Agenda (SDGs), which are a call to action to protect the planet, end poverty and guarantee the well-being of people (Taylor, 2016).

Development Communication (Devcom)

The central reasoning of development communication is that strategic communication interventions should be used to produce social change. Development communication refers to using communication to facilitate development in the society. The primary purposes include fulfillment of basic needs, social transformation and development. J.F. Jamias articulated the philosophy of development communication, anchoring it on three main ideas, namely purposive, value-laden and pragmatic; they have become the philosophy that drives development communication. Nora Quebral, a pioneer in development communication in Asia, expanded Jamias's philosophy and then referred to development communication as, "The art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equality and the larger unfolding of individual potentials" (Quebral, 2001). The main purpose of communication for development is to facilitate the dialogue, horizontal communication, popular participation and empowerment.

Relating notions from Harold Lasswell, Akinfeleye (2008) says said communication is the most effective means of meeting many of the burning issues of the society. Man has always needed

something to watch over his environment and report to him the dangers, discoveries, opportunities, opinion, facts, decisions, changes and current trends, something to entertain people on a broad scale, something to broaden trade and commerce (Lasswell, 1968). Tracing the history of present day communication for development, Akinfeleye (2008) relates that in primitive times, certain individuals were given the task to make known current trends, discoveries, facts and opinions, and to entertain the people; thus community watchmen, members of the tribal council, parents, educators, jesters and bards were regarded as communicators. However, due to the expansion of the tasks and sophistication, the tasks grew too large for those individuals to perform and then communication systems took over the tasks because of their power of immediacy and mars circulation.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted because the variables measured in this study were complex as in addition to other things, the study measured human perception, opinion, attitude, etc. this opinion is validated by Hardy and Bryman (2004) who note that the survey research design is used for observing social and behavioral characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs of a large population using only few people or items considered to be representative of a large population using only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.

The population for this study comprised 106 staff of NDDC in Rivers State (as provided by the Personnel Officer), 113 staff of NDDC in Akwa Ibom State (as provided by the Personnel Officer), 102 staff of NDDC in Bayelsa State and 480 members staff of NDDBA in Rivers State (as provided by the Personnel Officer) totaled 801.The sample size for this comprised 12 respondents made up of three staff each of NDDC in Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State and Rivers State, and also three staff of NDDBA in Rivers State and purposive sampling technique was adopted in the study. This premised on the fact that the respondents were purposively selected based on their knowledge of the organization's communication approaches and outcomes. The researcher employed the use of interview guide. The interview guide consisted mainly of open-ended questions which gave greater latitude to the respondents to freely express their perception or attitude towards the subject matter under investigation in this research work, two questions were contained in the interview guide. However, as it was with convention inherent in the use of raising data for students, there may be follow up questions in this regard.

Results

Research question 1: What are the discernible milestones of these communication approaches in the light of SDGs actualization in South South Nigeria?

The interviewees 1 and 2 in NDDC show that their agency used good communication approaches to achieve great milestones example; pipe borne water project in Ogoni, Omoku, Omonwa in Rivers State and same to some communities in Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa State. The interviewee 3 in NDDC indicate that the agency used communication approaches to record milestones by building primary schools in Ogoni (in Nnonwa) and other rural areas, awarding scholarship, provision of reading glasses for those that have eyes problem, provision of mosquito-net for

homes, skill acquisition programmes, installation of solar light for communities across state in South South Nigeria. The interviewees 2 and 3 in NDBDA show that their agency uses effective communication approaches to record milestones in South South Nigeria by providing pipe borne water to rural communities in Ogoni, Ikwerre, Omoku in Rivers State and some communities in Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa State while the interviewee 1 in NDBDA revealed that the agency uses communication approaches to record reasonable milestones in the light of SDGs by providing skills acquisition programmes to the people, provision of pipe borne water and free medical care/ health campaign, awarding scholarship across state in the South South Nigeria.

Bearing in mind the main essence of establishing these agencies in South South Nigeria, it important to scale the achievements and actualizations of NDDC and NDBDA in the light of SDGs both in the past and present time to know if their performances are good or not to the people of South South Nigeria. From the data shown above, it is clear that the NDDC and NDBDA embarked on SD goals. The data shown above have revealed that the Goals carried out by these agencies are of low and moderate extent. It therefore means that their performances on SDGs are not impressive to the people of South South Nigeria regarding sustainable development programmes hence, sustainability by NDDC and NDBDA at this point has not been achieved in South South Nigeria. Also, inability to actualize these goals can also be traced to insufficient funds released by the Government but is it that the government has not fulfilled on its part of responsibility for not giving them sufficient funds? Hák et al. 2016 maintain that, conscious of this phenomenon, global concerns have always been expressed for judicious use of the available resources so that it will always be possible to satisfy the needs of the present generation without undermining the ability of future generations to satisfy theirs.

Research Question 2: What are the dispositions of NDDC and NDBDA towards the actualization of the SDGs?

 The data that answer the research question 2 showed that the NDDC and NDBDA have shown their dispositions that they have tried towards the actualization of SDGs in South South Nigeria despite the delay in the approval of their budget and the release of insufficient fund by the government. Although the performance of NDDC and NDBDA in the actualization of SDGs is disheartening especially in South South Nigeria as shown from the data but it is also important to know the roles of the government in the budget approval and the release of funds as it is indicated by the respondents with respect to SDGs actualization in these two interventionist agencies because as the indigenes of South South Nigeria are expecting more from the NDDC and NDBDA, it is also the same way these two agencies are expecting from the government hence, the role of engagement between the government and these two interventionist agencies in South South Nigeria is of essence to be known by the people of region. From the data shown above, the government would not be extricated from this blame because if the government fail on their part of responsibility, the NDDC and NDBDA' performance on SDGs is never expected to be impressive owing to the fact, the government who is the Engine room of societal change or development is also incapacitated in meeting the needs of those interventionist agencies

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. For the fact that communication approaches have assisted the NDDC and NDBDA in recording some milestones in the light of SDGs in South-South Nigeria, those approaches in used should not only be continuously implemented rather strengthen them by employing informal communication approaches to enhance for more actualization.

2. Although the NDDC and NDBDA' disposition with respect to SDGs in South-South Nigeria is that there are performing well, this study recommends that the NDDC and NDBDA should work in conformity with the Publics so as to know the pressing needs of individuals. For instance, workshop, seminars and conferences should be regularly convened to discuss challenges bordering on people in the region. This would serve as a stronger measure to promote the SDGs.

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