THE ROLES OF BUSINESS DEVELOPERS AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SOUTH-SOUTH REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study focused on the roles of business developers and the achievement of sustainable development goals in South-South region of Nigeria. The study was carried out to determine the contributions of business developers on achievement of SDGs. The work used only secondary data. It was discovered that business developers can use their broad networks to engage in awareness campaign and sensitization of the general public on SDGs. Business developers can also strengthen and leverage impact of development programs by providing local knowledge, identifying potential risks, targeting assistance, and expanding reach, particularly at the community level. It was concluded that the business developers should be used for achievement of SDGs.

Introduction

The year 2015 marked the end of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which began in September 2000, when the world mobilized around a common program to overcome poverty and enhanced development by 2015. The need to consolidate and complete the development progress driven by the MDGs and ensure that no one is left behind led world leaders to again gather at the UN Headquarters in New York in September 2015 to adopt a new program on sustainable development. This new Development Agenda includes 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will guide the development policy and financing, for the next 15 years (i.e. until year 2030) (Fioramonti & Heinrich, 2017). Therefore, there is need to understand the major roles of business developers in the achievement of SDGS in Nigeria in general and South-South in particular.

Statement of the Problem

A review of the MDGs implementation in Nigeria reveals that the country has registered mixed results across the goals, geographic areas and gender groups. Despite

progress on some indicators, many of the goals and targets have not been met. Uneze and Adeniran (2014) identified Nigeria as one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that performed dismally on the MDGs, despite its high domestic revenue. The South-South Nigeria as other parts of the country also did not record good result during the MDGs era. Given that the objectives of the SDGs are more in number compared to those of the MDGs, achieving them requires mechanisms for robust follow-up and review process to track progress. This in turn means that governments will need the broad involvement of other stakeholders, such as business developers.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study focused on the roles of business developers and the achievement of sustainable development goals in South-South region of Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To determine the major roles Business developers can play in achieving SDGs in South-South Nigeria.
2. To find out the strategies used by business developers towards achieving SDGS

Table 1: Sustainable development goals

Goal	Indicator
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	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global

partnership for sustainable development

Source: Malaolu, V.A & Ogbuafor, J.E (2017). Towards achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria: Role of CSOs and VOPEs. Saudi *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 2(5), 482-487.

Conceptual Issues
Concept of Business Developers

According to Heder (2011), business developers are the business experts who discover business opportunities and utilize such to achieve positive goals. For Beagley, Guariguata, Weil & Motala (2014), anybody, no matter the profession, can be a business developer. This means that people in all field of life who has business interest or who can provide good business information are business developers. business developers is a professional body that has great mix of experienced evaluators both locally and abroad including informal network of public, private and academic evaluators (Rugh & Segone, 2013). According to Ajiye (2014), business developers are established by evaluation practitioners, that is, people who make their living by doing business, or commissioning evaluations, who self-organize to discuss and share professional experiences and challenges and to jointly advance the profession and develop professional standards. Business developers do organize events like conferences, workshops and seminars, and publications which provide a platform for professional exchange. However, Barthes, Howard & Phillips (2010) argued that business developers are the implementers of business plan whose aim is to achieve business success. For that, we can say that business developers can play good roles in achieving sustainable development goals in the South-South Nigeria.

The Major Roles of Business Developers can Play in Achieving SDGs in South-South Nigeria

Business developers can play a numbers of roles in achieving SDGs. These roles are discussed briefly below:

Business developers in service delivery towards achieving SDGs:

Easterly (2007) argue that as national governments hold primary responsibility for delivering services in their country, the private sector (business developers), also play a key role, particularly in situations where governments lack capacity, capability or the will to provide essential services for their citizens. Engaging business developers in developmental programs is a critical underpinning factor in: building the climate for investment, job opportunities and sustainable growth, and investing in poor people and empowering them to participate in development (Bissio, 2015). This is particularly relevant to promoting the Corporate Advocacy Priorities of public sector governance, empowerment, security, social inclusion, education, and health. This is in view of the fact that business developers are perceived as important channel for delivery of social services and implementation of other development programs, particularly in areas where either there is no government presence or weak capacity. Thus, there is need for business developers to advocate for states that have development plan to align their plan with the SDGs and look for area of convergence so they can meet the SDGs as they are implementing their development plan. For states that do not have development plan in place, business developers can advocate for the need for their yearly budget to align with the SDGs and also ensure states work towards meeting those targets.

Business developers and accountability:

In view of Aikman & Unterhalter (2005), business developers can support in improving public transparency and accountability of development activities, and thus contributing to the enabling environment for good governance. The increasing international focus and emphasis on better governance and transparency of governments and even business developers has opened doors for business developers involved in accountability. In a nutshell, involving business developers in development and strengthening their "watchdog" role is now widely accepted by the international community as an essential component of promoting good governance and attracting more donors funding.

Business developers and creating awareness:

Many government agencies and parastatals including private sector are not aware of the SDGs and even when they are aware they either lack understanding of what SDGs stand for or have apathy towards the SDGs (Kapur, Lewis, & Webb, 2011). There is also equal need for business developers to use their broad networks to engage in awareness campaign and sensitization of the general public. To achieve this, business developers can partners with media organization. As an addition to the above role, business developers can also strengthen and leverage on the impact of development programs by providing local knowledge, identifying potential risks, targeting assistance, and expanding reach, particularly at the community level;

Mobilizing private sector involvement:

According to Elshal, Khan, Takahashi, Solomon & McCoy (2005), business developers need to understand SDGs and align their activities with the SDGs so they can engage the government and look for issues that have traction so other players like private sector can engage in because one of the shortcomings of the MDGs is the minimal involvement of the private sector in the process. In addition, business developers can promote public consensus and local ownership for reforms and for national poverty reduction and development strategies by creating knowledge-sharing networks, building common ground for understanding, encouraging public-private cooperation, and sometimes even diffusing tensions.

Empowerment role:

The goal number one of SDG is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, business developers actions are needed to strengthen the political role of the poor and to make state institutions more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the poor (Gössling, Hansson, Hörstmeier & Saggel, 2012). Processes of accountability and legal institutions defending the rights of the poor and vulnerable members of the society must be strengthened. Social barriers to poverty reduction, such as discrimination against women in the job marketplace, need to be removed. Business developers need to engage policy and decision makers to make this a reality in Nigeria. Business developers can give voice to the concerns of primary and secondary stakeholders, particularly poor and marginalized populations, and help ensure that their views are factored into policy and program decisions;

Monitoring role:

There is need for proper monitoring of projects under the SDG (Gravel, Fitzpatrick, Gouin, Millar, Curtis, Joubert & Porter, 2013). Project monitoring means the assessment of the performance of a project to ascertain its conformity with stated objectives or goals. Monitoring is very relevant and vital process for ensuring continuity, feedback for planning future projects and achieving sustainable development generally. Effective Monitoring

process properly instituted or incorporated into the design or planning of an infrastructure project will create feedback and learning culture from the project inception to completion by all stakeholders thereby promoting the benefit of continuous learning, better communication, planning and coordination on government policies and programs. Business developers can play monitoring and evaluation role by ensure the implementation of the SDGs on yearly basis. Ayinde, Lukman and Arowolo (2015) argued that business developers have the important role of directly monitoring the local implementation of the SDGs.

Fighting corruption:

Historically, corruption has been blamed for all that is wrong with Nigeria. For instance, the persistent and continuing decay in social overhead, rising unemployment and poverty levels, rising wave of insecurity, and the unacceptably high level of hardship in Nigeria are said to be products of corruption. As the voice of the voiceless and defender of the defenseless, the business developers are better positioned to engage public sector institutions, especially those directly involved in the fight against corruption. Such engagements will help in strengthening state institutions against the sociopolitical and economic monster called corruption. This paper stresses that until corruption is defeated in Nigeria, other efforts geared towards achieving the SDGs, however described, will be futile.

The Strategies used by Business Developers towards Achieving SDGS

The strategies are:

Training and capacity building:

In view of Adeyeri (2014), business developers can serves as training platform by supporting appropriate training and capacity building programmes need of delivery staff and other stakeholders in order to enhance their productivity and efficiency in implementing SDGs programmes and projects.

Issue of inadequate and unreliable data system:

Zhou & Hardlife (2013) argued that Nigeria does not have adequate data or systems to collect and analyze data and this makes planning and implementing measures to meet the MDG targets particularly difficult. Kariuki (2014) argues that the disappearance of disciplined collection and analysis of data for national planning and development hinders the efforts to plan and track progress towards the MDG targets because the available is not reliable or consistent (Ayeni, 2015). This problem was attributed to the fact that the capacity of institutions to gather data is very weak, and as a result the data available are not very reliable or consistent. For instance, assessment of progress towards achieving the MDGs since 2006 and the recent assessment of the Conditional Grants Scheme (CGS) consistently reflects the inadequacy of data (Bamgbose, 2019). This underscores the critical need for quality data both for planning programmes and projects, and for monitoring. Business developers can support data collection just as the "traditional" forms of large-scale data collection take a number of years to complete and analyse, which ultimately delays action for those in need as reported by Sustainable Development Solutions Network (Bobadoye and Fakere, 2016). The new improved information technology, such as the innovative use of mobile technology in collecting data, if the associated challenges can be managed adequately can be adopted by business developers as adaptable tools for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of processes related to the implementation of the SDGs.

Monitoring and evaluation role:

To achieve the SDGs, successful execution of projects that have direct and indirect link to the SDGs is necessary (Igboanusi, 2017). The SDGs are ends, and the projects are the necessary means to these ends. Thus, the processes of managing projects require monitoring and evaluation. These exercises are integral parts of project cycles and are important for ensuring that due process, standardization and adherence to project specifications are followed (Kolawole, 2016). Monitoring data help track progress, but evaluation is needed to explain results and support change. Monitoring systems are a key aspect of tracking policy and programme implementation, and rely on observable indicators. NBS (Uneze et al, 2017) define monitoring as a continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.

In other words, monitoring refers to collecting information on a project regularly and analyzing it to find out how it is progressing. To this end, business developers can support in monitoring different developmental projects for accountability and to ensure that standardization and project specifications are adhere to. Again, achievement of SDGs involves context-specific challenges. Countries need context-sensitive measures that track efforts to attain goals, and evaluation methods that help determine what is working, for whom, under what circumstances, how and why. This is where evaluation comes in. Evaluation is define as episodic (not continuous as the case with monitoring usually midterm and at end of the project) assessment of an ongoing or completed project to determine its actual impact against the planned impact (strategic goal or objectives for which it was implemented) efficiency, sustainability, effectiveness (Otitoloju, 2016). Thus, business developers being group of skilled evaluators can support in evaluation of projects that are linked to the SDGs. Business developers using adaptive management can help governments to explore emerging and alternative ways to meet objectives and targets, using knowledge from monitoring and evaluation to develop new understanding and appropriate ways of acting and also maintaining stakeholder involvement in follow-up and review processes that will help national governments select the most relevant indicators, take informed decisions and foster widespread ownership of the development agenda.

Conclusion

Business developers have important roles to play in the achievement of SDGs in Nigeria. The roles Business developers can play are summarized as follows. Business developers can use their broad networks to engage in awareness campaign and sensitization of the general public on SDGs. Business developers can also strengthen and leverage impact of development programs by providing local knowledge, identifying potential risks, targeting assistance, and expanding reach, particularly at the community level. Business developers can promote public consensus and local ownership for reforms and for national poverty reduction and development strategies by creating knowledge-sharing networks, building common ground for understanding, encouraging public-private cooperation, and sometimes even diffusing tensions. More so, Business developers can give voice to the concerns of primary and secondary stakeholders, particularly poor and marginalized populations, and help ensure that their views are factored into policy and program decisions. Lastly, Business developers can play monitoring and evaluation role by

ensuring the implementation of the SDGs on yearly basis, and strengthening the fight against corruption.

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