

The Role of International Cooperation in Sustainable Development in Nigeria :An Overview

ABSTRACT

Sustainable development in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is an urgent priority due to the interplay of rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and socio-economic challenges. Nigeria has adopted global frameworks such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and various partnerships, including those with the African Union (AU), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO), to address these concerns. International cooperation has played a pivotal role in Nigeria's development by facilitating technical expertise and financial support across critical sectors like agriculture, health, energy, and environmental management. This paper employs the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Results-Based Management (RBM) to analyze how such collaboration has driven progress and highlights the challenges Nigeria faces in achieving sustainable development, including governance issues, over-exploitation of natural resources, and poverty. While international partnerships have catalyzed efforts toward Nigeria's development goals, significant gaps remain that require attention, such as corruption, environmental degradation, and inadequate infrastructure.

Keywords: International cooperation, Governance Issues, Nigeria, Sustainable Development Goals

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, refers to a form of development that ensures the needs of the present are met without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This principle has become a cornerstone of global development strategies, reflecting a growing recognition of the need to balance economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection. At its core, sustainable development aims to foster long-lasting improvements in the quality of life for all people. As a result, it has become a fundamental goal of global and national development policies [1]. The United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), often called the Global Goals, in 2015 as a framework for addressing pressing global challenges. These goals, detailed in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Sustainable Development documentation for 2023, consist of 17 objectives designed to promote peace, prosperity, and environmental sustainability worldwide. The SDGs build on the foundation laid by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which guided international development efforts from 2000 to 2015 [2]. Nigeria, being Africa's most populous nation and one of its largest economies, faces a unique set of developmental challenges. Rapid population growth,

urbanization, and environmental degradation have placed immense pressure on the country's social, economic, and environmental systems. Issues such as poverty, climate change, and depletion of natural resources are exacerbated by the fast pace of urbanization and population expansion. Addressing these challenges requires more than just national effort—it necessitates international cooperation. Global partnerships provide Nigeria with the technical expertise, financial resources, and strategic frameworks necessary to tackle these challenges and achieve sustainable development. Various laws and policies in Nigeria align with global development objectives, specifically aimed at integrating international cooperation into the national strategy for sustainable development [3]. However, in Nigeria, each goal is applicable to the laws and policies regarding environmental protection and sustainability in the country [4]. This paper seeks to explore the pivotal role international collaboration plays in advancing Nigeria's journey toward meeting its sustainable development targets.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research follows a qualitative approach, drawing on secondary data obtained from various online sources, including academic literature, governmental reports, and assessments from international organizations. Data were sourced from a variety of reliable and authoritative materials, including academic journals, articles, books, and reports and publications from relevant institutions. Data sources from previous literatures from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and DOAJ were utilized to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The collected data were meticulously analyzed to identify key themes, patterns, and insights. These sources provided contextual background and supported the analysis by offering historical data, theoretical frameworks, and previous research findings related to international cooperation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

3.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper employs the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as a planning and accountability tool to guide collaborative actions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria and adopting Results-Based Management (RBM) to evaluate the effectiveness of international cooperation by setting clear objectives, monitoring progress, and adapting interventions to ensure alignment with Nigeria's development priorities [45, 46].

3. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The concept of sustainable development is one that has been defined in many different ways over the years. Despite these numerous definitions, there is no, universally fixed or immutable meaning of the term, leading some scholars to describe it as an oxymoron [18]. In certain academic circles, sustainable development is seen as a fundamentally contradictory idea, with conflicting values and goals that cannot easily be reconciled [5]. Nevertheless, across all widely accepted definitions, one common thread remains: sustainable development is about ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same benefits and resources that current generations do. As noted by Kates et al. [5], sustainable development requires

the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, each with different perspectives and interests. The goal is to find a balance between competing values and objectives and create a coordinated plan for mutual action. This coordination is necessary to achieve not just one, but multiple development goals in ways that are complementary or even synergistic.

Fergus and Rowney[6] argue that as humans with shared ideals, we should aim to foster development that reflects positive progress in our relationships with each other and with the natural environment. This, in turn, leads to a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be human in the modern world. The concept of sustainable development was first brought to global attention by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report, commonly known as the Brundtland Report. This report laid the foundation for the current understanding of sustainable development, defining it as a process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [7]. In essence, sustainable development involves maintaining economic progress while also protecting the environment's long-term value. It provides the theoretical and intellectual framework for integrating environmental policies into economic and social development strategies. The Brundtland Report stressed that sustainable development must ensure that both developing and developed countries can meet the basic needs of their populations, without depleting the natural systems on which all life depends [8, 6]. Sustainable development, therefore, requires a pattern of growth that allows future generations to live as well as, or even better than, the current generation. The concept emphasizes "intergenerational equity," which is the idea that development should not harm the welfare of future generations [9, 10]. Development that negatively affects the resources or opportunities available to future generations is incompatible with sustainable development.

Economists often view sustainable development as maintaining or increasing the stock of overall capital assets over time. This includes both natural and human-made resources, ensuring that they do not diminish but rather improve for future use [10]. The idea of sustainable development also recognizes limits, though not necessarily absolute ones. These limits are shaped by the current state of technology, the capacity of social organizations, and the biosphere's ability to absorb the effects of human activities [7]. Any form of development that results in environmental degradation is, by definition, not sustainable. The ultimate goal of sustainable development is to achieve long-term stability and progress in both the economy and the environment. This can only be accomplished by integrating socio-economic and environmental considerations into decision-making processes [9]. As Naess [8] points out, there are two key implications of sustainable development in light of the earth's ecological carrying capacity. First, the present generation must limit its impact on the environment, particularly by curbing its consumption of non-renewable resources. Second, while developing countries may need to increase material consumption to meet the needs of their populations, developed countries must simultaneously reduce their consumption levels. This is essential to keep the total environmental impact within sustainable limits.

3.1. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK IN RELATIONS TO NIGERIA

International cooperation forms the foundation of numerous sustainable development initiatives in Nigeria. This collaboration is crucial in addressing the nation's socio-economic and environmental challenges, many of which align with the broader global agenda for sustainable development. One of the primary drivers behind this cooperation is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a global framework for creating a more equitable and sustainable future by 2030. Like many other developing nations, Nigeria has aligned its national policies with the SDGs, recognizing the importance of international partnerships in achieving these goals.

3.2. United Nations and the SDGs

The United Nations (UN) has played an essential role in Nigeria's sustainable development journey, offering technical support and fostering international collaboration through its various specialized agencies. Notable examples include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). By participating in the UN's SDG framework, Nigeria has been able to access a wide array of global partnerships, each aimed at addressing specific developmental challenges. These partnerships focus on areas such as poverty eradication, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation, and promoting affordable, clean energy solutions. In 2015, global leaders gathered and agreed to set the world on a sustainable development path by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda is comprehensive, containing 17 SDGs and 169 specific targets, each addressing various social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. While these goals offer an ambitious blueprint for global progress, a thorough review of their content reveals some challenges and gaps. For instance, the first goal which is ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and stands out as a cornerstone for the entire framework. Poverty, as a concept, is multidimensional. It affects not only the material conditions of people but also their physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual well-being [11, 12, 13]. As Sen[14] explained, human lives can be diminished in many different ways, and poverty reflects these various forms of deprivation. It is not just about a lack of material wealth; poverty also includes a deprivation of opportunities and choices necessary for people to achieve and enjoy basic levels of welfare [13, 16, 17].

Multiple factors contribute to poverty, making it a complex and multi-layered issue. These factors include inadequate income, unemployment or underemployment, high levels of inequality, poor health conditions, lack of security, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, inadequate infrastructure, poor environmental conditions, insufficient education, exclusion of certain groups from development opportunities, discrimination, adverse climatic conditions, and bad governance. If all forms of poverty are eradicated, the other goals within the SDGs would also be achieved to a large extent. Therefore, it can be argued that the first SDG encapsulates many of the other goals. By addressing the root causes of poverty, a domino effect would likely occur, leading to improvements in other areas such as education, health, and environmental sustainability. However, given the intricate nature of poverty, solving it requires coordinated international cooperation. This cooperation enables countries like Nigeria to access the

resources, expertise, and frameworks needed to implement and achieve their sustainable development objectives. Thus, while the SDGs provide an essential global framework, they also highlight the importance of international partnerships in tackling the challenges of sustainable development on a national scale [18].

3.3 The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Beyond regional initiatives like Agenda 2063, Nigeria has also engaged in international cooperation through partnerships with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [42]. These global institutions have been pivotal in supporting Nigeria's efforts in areas such as infrastructure development, education reform, and health system improvements. The World Bank and IMF frequently collaborate to provide technical assistance and financial support to developing countries like Nigeria, ensuring that these nations remain on a sustainable development trajectory. In 1989, the IMF and World Bank formalized their cooperation through a concordat, which outlines their shared responsibilities. This agreement enables high-level coordination between the two institutions during annual meetings where Governors from both institutions discuss international economic and financial issues. The Development Committee, established in 1974, further advises the IMF and World Bank on key development concerns and on the financial resources required to support low-income countries [19, 20]. One of the most critical areas of cooperation between the IMF and the World Bank is debt relief. Together, they work to reduce the external debt burdens of the world's most heavily indebted poor countries, ensuring that these nations can achieve their development goals without falling into unsustainable debt. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) are key frameworks in this effort. These initiatives have enabled countries like Nigeria to develop debt sustainability strategies and to continue focusing on long-term development [21, 22]. A significant outcome of Nigeria's collaboration with the World Bank and IMF is the launch of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach in 1999. This strategy became an essential element of the HIPC Initiative and remains a key anchor in concessional lending. Although the PRSP approach has since been streamlined, it laid the groundwork for more robust poverty reduction strategies that are crucial for achieving sustainable development [12]. Both the IMF and the World Bank have also been actively involved in supporting the 2030 Development Agenda. Since 2004, these institutions have jointly published the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), which assesses global progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the SDGs. Through new initiatives, both institutions remain committed to helping countries like Nigeria achieve their sustainable development goals. They also work together to strengthen tax systems and fiscal policies in developing nations, which is essential for long-term financial sustainability and poverty reduction [23].

3.4 Nigeria's Participation in Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements

Nigeria has actively participated in numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements aimed at fostering sustainable development. Among the most significant of these is the African Union's Agenda 2063, a long-term strategic framework that outlines Africa's vision for socio-economic transformation. Agenda

2063 is Africa's blueprint for sustainable and inclusive development, and it represents the continent's collective aspiration to become a global powerhouse. The framework emphasizes unity, self-determination, freedom, progress, and prosperity, all aligned with the principles of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. The origins of Agenda 2063 can be traced back to the realization by African leaders that Africa's development agenda needed to shift from a focus on political independence and the fight against apartheid, which was the goal of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the precursor to the African Union (AU) [26]. Instead, the focus now rests on inclusive social and economic development, democratic governance, regional integration, and peace and security. This shift aims to reposition Africa as a dominant player in global affairs. During the AU's 50th anniversary in May 2013, African heads of state signed the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, reaffirming their commitment to the Pan-African Vision of "An integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena" [24, 25]. While Agenda 2063 presents a comprehensive vision for Africa's future, several obstacles threaten its successful realization. Infrastructure deficits, such as inadequate energy, rail, road, and water systems, continue to plague the continent. Additionally, Africa struggles with challenges related to human capital development, low standards of living, governance issues, and conflict-related problems. Other threats include cross-border terrorism, youth and gender marginalization, and political instability. Without addressing these barriers, the goals of Agenda 2063 remain in jeopardy. The calamity many African states face is a lack of good governance due to corruption.

4. KEY AREAS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN NIGERIA

International cooperation plays a significant role in advancing various sectors of Nigeria's economy, contributing to sustainable development. The impacts are particularly evident in areas such as economic development, environmental management, health, and education.

4.1 Agriculture and Food Security

Agriculture is vital to Nigeria's economy, employing around 70% of the population, yet it contributes only about 27% of the country's GDP and a mere 2.6% of its exports. The country faces a significant challenge in producing enough food to sustain its population, leading to severe acute malnutrition in approximately 2.9 million children under five years old. Through the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy known as "Feed the Future," USAID collaborates with the Nigerian government and local communities to enhance agricultural productivity, increase market participation, and improve access to finance and technology. These initiatives aim to deepen the resilience of vulnerable households and create a more favorable business environment for farmers [27]. Similarly, in partnership with the state government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the community to boost local food production by distributing agricultural inputs to the farmers across the community in preparation for the year's planting season in anticipation of the much-awaited rains. This effort is in line with UNDP's vision of revitalizing the socio-economic activities of the conflict-affected communities in northeast Nigeria to ensure they are future resilient and sustainable. The 2022 farm implements distribution support targets 3000 farmers in

Ngala and 1000 in Banki, another community in Borno State. The materials provided, including farming equipment, fertilizers, and improved seeds such as maize, cowpea, millet, sorghum, groundnut, and sesame, will enhance the overall farming process and food production. Besides the implements, farmers will also receive training on how to utilize smart agriculture techniques, such as new methods of planting, harvesting, preservation and storage of harvest, to ensure that they are maximizing the productivity of their farms while also minimizing post-harvest losses [28].

4.2. Economic Growth and Energy

As the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria benefits from a substantial workforce and serves as an attractive market for both domestic and international investors. However, the country's economic potential is hindered by inadequate infrastructure, barriers to trade, low foreign investment rates, limited access to foreign currency, and an unreliable power supply. To address these issues, USAID supports Nigeria's efforts to enhance its business environment by removing trade barriers, expanding economic opportunities for women and youth, facilitating growth in the power sector, and improving overall energy access. International partnerships have been instrumental in driving economic development in Nigeria, especially in sectors like agriculture and infrastructure. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has initiated programs that support smallholder farmers in adopting climate-smart agricultural practices. These efforts not only enhance food security but also mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. According to a USAID publication, the agency collaborates with Nigerians to improve agriculture, health, education, and governance [27]. In 2024, the World Bank stepped up its support for Nigeria's reform efforts by approving a US\$2.25 billion financing package under two key programs: the Nigeria Reforms for Economic Stabilization to Enable Transformation (RESET) Development Policy Financing Program (DPF) and the Nigeria Accelerating Resource Mobilization Reforms (ARMOR) Program-for-Results (PforR). These programs are designed to provide immediate financial and technical assistance to Nigeria as it addresses pressing economic and social challenges. In particular, they aim to stabilize the economy, increase non-oil revenues, and support vulnerable populations, ensuring that Nigeria's reform efforts remain on track [29].

Furthermore, the energy sector in Nigeria faces significant constraints that limit economic growth. Despite the country's abundant oil, gas, hydro, and solar resources, many challenges hinder the sector's potential, including regulatory uncertainty, issues with gas supply, and limitations in the transmission system. Nigeria's economic dependence on a single primary export product, such as oil, adds another layer of complexity. This dependence creates a "mono-product" economy, where the country relies heavily on natural resource stocks for both its current and future development needs [30]. This dynamic makes it difficult for Nigeria to shift away from the over-exploitation of resources and towards a more diversified and sustainable development path. Approximately 85 million Nigerians lack access to reliable electricity. In response, the Nigerian government is encouraging investments in distributed renewable energy and

solar home systems. Programs such as Power Africa, the Presidential Power Initiative, and the Nigeria Electrification Project are critical in addressing these energy challenges of which the USAID is part of [27].

4.3 Water and Sanitation

According to Omokaro et al. [31] Nigeria as a country boasts vast freshwater reserves, encompassing surface and groundwater, intricate river drainage systems, numerous dams, and managed aquifer formations, primarily overseen by River Basin Development Authorities. Despite having significant water resources, Nigeria has made only modest progress in expanding access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Through the U.S. Water for the World Act, USAID is actively working to improve the management of water resources to ensure sustainable access and enhance sanitation and hygiene practices. Key objectives include increasing the availability of water and sanitation services, strengthening governance in water resource management, and promoting private sector involvement to enhance competition in urban water service delivery [27]. This was similar to Omokaro's suggestion who noted that "Nigeria must prioritize integrated water management practices to strike a delicate balance between resource utilization and preservation for the benefit of current and future generations."

4.4 Crisis and Conflict

Widespread conflict, driven by ethnic, religious, and resource-related tensions, poses ongoing threats to Nigeria's democracy and stability. The rise of hate speech and misinformation exacerbates this fragility. The intersection of ethnic and religious identities in Nigeria, and the circumstances in which the country was created, has been an incessant source of civil strife in the country several decades after the attainment of political independence [32]. These challenges have been compounded by blatant educational, economic and social horizontal inequalities among the ethnic/religious groups and regions [33]. In response, USAID Report [27] promotes collaboration between government entities and civil society at all levels to develop robust conflict early warning systems in vulnerable regions. By drawing on the expertise of community leaders, youth groups, and government officials, USAID works to identify and promote community-based solutions that address the root causes of conflict. Likewise, UNDP in partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria, is part of the UN's work on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and responsive institutions anchored in the UN Secretary-General's commitment to building peaceful and resilient societies [34]. However, Kori-Siakpere et al. [35] opined that "it is imperative for Nigerian organizations to prioritize diversity management strategies that promote understanding, respect, and inclusivity."

4.5. Environmental Management Cooperation in Nigeria

Nigeria faces a multitude of significant environmental challenges, including desertification, deforestation, and pollution. Iloabuchi et al. [43] posited that the barrels of oil spilled by companies into the environment

in the year 2018 totaled 28,827.29, with 716 incidents recorded, marking an increase in the number of incidents compared to 2016 and 2017. However, to combat these pressing issues, international cooperation has become essential. One notable initiative is the Great Green Wall (GGW), a pan-African project aimed at addressing desertification across the Sahel region. This initiative fosters collaboration between Nigeria and various international partners, including the World Bank and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) [44]. The Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and Sahel program was adopted by the African Union in 2005, seeking to mitigate the effects of land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change, while also enhancing food security across approximately twenty-one countries in the Sahel. The term "Great Green Wall" does not refer to the literal construction of a wall; rather, it symbolizes a comprehensive approach to sustainable land management and restoration that is tailored to the developmental priorities of the countries involved [36]. This initiative aims to create a resilient ecosystem capable of withstanding climate change impacts, while also improving food security and livelihoods in affected regions.

In line with its commitment to the Great Green Wall Initiative, Nigeria established the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW) in 2015 through an Act of Parliament [37]. This agency embodies Nigeria's coordinated efforts to address land degradation and desertification while ensuring effective ecosystem management and restoration. The NAGGW is tasked with protecting Nigeria's natural capital, promoting sustainable land resource development, and preparing the country's ecosystems to cope with climate change challenges. The mission of the NAGGW emphasizes the importance of halting and reversing land degradation, preventing the depletion of biological diversity, and ensuring that ecosystems are resilient to climate change by 2025 [41]. These efforts aim to provide essential services that contribute to human welfare and poverty eradication. Given that the Great Green Wall initiative focuses on areas around the Sahel and Sahara, Nigeria concentrates its efforts primarily on states affected by desertification, including Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. These regions represent about 35% of Nigeria's total land area and impact the livelihoods of over 50 million people [37]. To support the objectives of the Great Green Wall initiative, Nigeria has developed a five-year strategic plan aimed at fostering coordinated actions among stakeholders. This plan includes raising awareness among youth, men, and women while promoting partnerships between government agencies, local communities, and development organizations. The National Strategic Action Plan is crucial for implementing the GGW initiative and must align with the Harmonized Regional Strategy, the provisions of the GGW Convention, the National Plans to Combat Desertification, and the national priorities of the countries involved [36]. To effectively execute the plans set out in the National Strategic Action Plan, Nigeria has established an institutional framework that facilitates implementation at various levels.

4.6. Health Cooperation in Nigeria

International cooperation has proven to be instrumental in driving sustainable outcomes in Nigeria's health sectors. These collaborations, primarily with organizations like the USAID, World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Fund, are pivotal in addressing pressing health issues such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. The initiatives not only align with Nigeria's development objectives but also support the global agenda encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the goal of ensuring good health and well-being for all. More so, USAID's health programs are strategically designed to target states with the most pressing health needs. These initiatives aim to tackle some of the worst health indicators in Africa, addressing critical issues in Nigeria's healthcare system among which are maternity mortality as highlighted by USAID Report [27]. This was similar with Idama et al. [38], of which the author's highlighted that maternal mortality is primarily caused by medical complications such as hemorrhage, infection, unsafe abortion, hypertensive diseases, and obstructed labor. Other socio-economic factors like poverty, poor transportation, and inadequate electricity further hinder access to healthcare, delaying timely medical interventions. Behavioral issues like low antenatal care utilization, shaped by socio-economic and cultural elements, echo trends seen in other African regions. On the political front, inadequate healthcare funding and poor policy implementation significantly contribute to maternal mortality, underscoring the need for stronger political commitment and greater investment in maternal health systems. However, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in Nigeria, USAID works to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, improve reproductive health, expand immunization coverage, and combat diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis (TB). Additionally, USAID supports the integration of healthcare services, striving for universal health coverage through state social health insurance programs that also encompass HIV/AIDS and TB services [27].

In August 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated a partnership with the Private Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria (PSHAN) under the "Adopt-A-Healthcare Facility Programme" (ADHFP), with the goal of establishing a global-standard Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC) in each of Nigeria's 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs). This initiative aligns with the Health Sector Renewal Investment Programme, promoted by the Federal Ministry of Health and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA). According to WHO Country Representative Dr. Walter Kazadi Mulombo, the ADHFP aligns with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and the 77th World Health Assembly's resolution regarding "Economies of Health for All." This initiative is critical in mobilizing domestic resources and ensuring universal healthcare coverage by involving the private sector to address health inequities and broader social determinants of health [39]. In February 2024, a major milestone was reached when the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria signed eight new grants worth approximately \$993 million with the Nigerian government and health partners. These grants aim to strengthen the fight against AIDS, TB, and malaria while improving health systems and pandemic preparedness over the 2024-2026 period. Nigeria, the largest recipient of Global Fund investments, has received over \$4.8 billion since 2002, including \$1.2 billion from the previous funding cycle. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria made notable progress between 2021 and 2023,

with 90% of HIV-positive individuals aware of their status and 98% of those diagnosed receiving treatment. Additionally, 95% of individuals on treatment had a suppressed viral load. New HIV infections have decreased by 28% since 2012, and tuberculosis treatment coverage improved from 24% to 40% between 2019 and 2021. Malaria prevalence also reduced by nearly 50% between 2010 and 2018 [40]. Furthermore, Onyia et al. [47] found that international collaborations have significantly advanced the field of neurosurgery in Nigeria, highlighting robust partnerships primarily with institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom. Their research indicated that these collaborations have facilitated capacity building and training for local neurosurgeons, which are crucial for sustainable progress in addressing the challenges faced by the neurosurgical field in Nigeria. This aligns with the broader theme of international cooperation being vital for achieving sustainable development goals across various sectors in Nigeria.

Table 1: SDG Progress and International Cooperation in Nigeria thus Far

SDG	Indicator	Year	Value	Trend
SDG 1 - No Poverty	Poverty headcount ratio (\$2.15/day)	2024	31.4%	Improving
SDG 2 - Zero Hunger	Prevalence of undernourishment	2021	15.9%	Improving
SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000)	2020	1,047	Deteriorating
SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation	Population using basic drinking water services	2022	79.6%	Moderately Improving
SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy	Population with access to electricity	2021	59.5%	Deteriorating
SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth	Unemployment rate	2024	3.5%	Improving
SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	Internet usage (%)	2022	35.5%	Moderately Improving
SDG 13 - Climate Action	CO ₂ emissions from fossil fuels (tCO ₂ /capita)	2022	0.6	Improving
SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	Corruption Perceptions Index (0-1 best)	2023	25.0	Moderately Improving

Source: Author's compilation from www.sdqindex.org

1. **SDG 1 - No Poverty:** Nigeria's improvement in poverty reduction is partly driven by international programs such as the World Bank's poverty alleviation projects and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiatives. These programs emphasize inclusive growth, agricultural reforms, and access to financial services, targeting both urban and rural populations.

2. **SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being:** Despite international partnerships with bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, the maternal mortality rate remains high (1,047 per 100,000). This suggests the need for improved healthcare infrastructure, capacity building, and sustained funding through foreign aid and partnerships.
3. **SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation:** Moderate improvement in access to basic drinking water (79.6%) reflects the impact of projects led by UNICEF and USAID. International cooperation has provided water infrastructure development and hygiene education, particularly in rural areas. However, gaps in sanitation facilities persist, requiring further international support.
4. **SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy:** Although international donors, including the European Union (EU), have financed clean energy initiatives, access to electricity (59.5%) remains a challenge. Collaborative programs like the World Bank's Power Sector Recovery Programme are critical to achieving energy sustainability.
5. **SDG 13 - Climate Action:** Nigeria's commitment to reducing CO₂ emissions (0.6 tCO₂ per capita) highlights the importance of climate financing mechanisms from international bodies like the Green Climate Fund. The nation is also part of the Paris Climate Agreement, emphasizing the role of international cooperation in achieving environmental sustainability.

5. IDENTIFIED WORKS & GAPS FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN NIGERIA

Some previous research has worked on several aspects of international collaboration in relation to sustainable development in Nigeria. One notable example is the work of Mohammed and Ogunode [48] where they emphasized that international organizations are instrumental in enhancing the capacity and quality of tertiary education in Nigeria by providing technical support, funding, and influencing educational reforms. However, they also highlighted significant challenges, such as inadequate funding and resource allocation, which impede the effectiveness of these collaborations. The study emphasizes the need for sustained partnerships and increased investment from both the Nigerian government and international bodies to overcome these obstacles and promote sustainable educational development. Adanma and Ogunbiyi (2024) found that both regulatory and market-based environmental policies are critical for promoting sustainable development and economic growth. Their study highlights the role of technological innovation and international cooperation as essential drivers in addressing global environmental challenges. The authors also identified gaps and inefficiencies in current policies, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach that integrates economic objectives with sustainability goals. Strategic recommendations include investing in green technologies and strengthening international environmental agreements. Odinka et al. (2023) found that various poverty alleviation strategies in Owerri, Imo State, such as microfinance, agricultural development, and vocational training, significantly improve local living standards; however, their effectiveness is hindered by poor governance and lack of transparency. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning these strategies with sustainable development goals and involving the community to enhance their success. In their study, Obadahun et al. (2024) found that the

training and development of public university academics in Nigeria are essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The authors emphasize that enhancing academic staff competencies directly contributes to improved educational quality, which in turn supports various SDGs related to education, gender equality, and reduced inequalities. They highlight the need for targeted training programs that align with the global sustainability agenda and recommend increased investment in professional development initiatives to better prepare academics for contemporary challenges in higher education.

Table 2: Other Identified Gaps in Sustainable Development in Nigeria from Cited Sources

Identified Gaps	Description
Governance and Corruption	Corruption and ineffective governance hinder sustainable development. Mismanagement of natural resources, especially oil revenues, prevents economic gains from being translated into long-term growth and poverty alleviation.
Environmental Degradation	Despite international efforts, Nigeria continues to face severe environmental challenges, including deforestation, pollution, and over-exploitation of resources. These problems threaten the country's ability to achieve sustainability.
Poverty and Inequality	High levels of poverty and income inequality persist, worsened by demographic pressures and weak social infrastructure. Nigeria's development strategy needs to focus on inclusive growth to address the root causes of poverty.
Infrastructural Deficits	Inadequate infrastructure, particularly in energy, transportation, and water sanitation, hampers sustainable economic growth. Addressing these gaps requires national effort and sustained international collaboration.
Education and Human Capital Development	The education sector is underfunded and poorly managed, limiting the workforce's potential to contribute to economic growth. Greater focus on human capital development is critical for future progress.

Source: Author's Computation

6. CONCLUSION

International cooperation has been instrumental in driving Nigeria's sustainable development efforts, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and environmental management. However, persistent challenges, including corruption, environmental degradation, and infrastructural inadequacies, continue to undermine these efforts. For Nigeria to achieve its sustainable development goals, a concerted effort to address governance issues, strengthen institutional capacity, and ensure the equitable distribution of resources is essential. With continued international collaboration and improved national strategies, Nigeria can overcome these challenges and build a more sustainable future.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

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