



Comparing the Efforts, Evaluations, Perceptions, and Wishes of Citizens and Governments Regarding the MDGs and SDGs: A Case Study from Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

While the global community has long worked to ameliorate the livelihoods of people and promote environmental sustainability around the world, many social, economic, and environmental issues remain unsolved. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) sought to end poverty but ended with mixed results depending on the country. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are more ambitious, sought to address remaining problems and other issues extending beyond the scope of the MDGs by 2030. The SDGs cover a wide range of areas, from fulfilling basic needs to environmental sustainability, although their prioritization differs from person to person. It is critical to understand how people recognize the MDGs and prioritize SDGs in order to determine efficient means of achieving SDGs. Thus, this study assesses citizens' perceptions and needs in Nigeria, illustrating gaps between official evaluations of goal progress and people's thoughts about these global agendas. Economically speaking, Nigeria is the largest country in West Africa; still, it did not meet all of its MDG targets by 2015. This study found differences between the official report and people's observations. People generally considered MDG 2 and MDG 6 to have been attained despite official evaluations asserting that these goals had made only weak progress. The study also found that people's expectations are generally high on goals related to economic sustainability but low on goals related to environmental sustainability. Interestingly, it is found that the Nigerian government has the most concrete strategies related to social sustainability. The results suggest that the needs perceived by the government are distinct from those perceived by the Nigerian people. They also highlight the fact that the importance of environmental sustainability must be recognized by Nigerians if they are to meet their SDG targets by 2030. Of course, it is difficult for any countries facing social and economic issues to allocate significant resources to environmental sustainability, especially amid violent conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the symptoms of climate change. However, to get back on track in the years that remain and make significant progress toward environmental sustainability, it is important to heighten cooperation among ordinary people while obtaining a better understanding of their needs.

Keywords SDGs · MDGs · Nigeria · Social sustainability · Environmental sustainability · Economic sustainability

1 Introduction

The global community has gone through a difficult time from 2020 to 2021, in large part due to the pandemic of COVID-19. The pandemic severely hindered the efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). Before the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community worked to bring economic growth to developing countries, through structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which consisted of harsh macroeconomic policy changes. However, research indicated that SAPs, which mandated cuts to health, education, and other important socioeconomic budgets, did not achieve the intended economic growth (Peabody 1996; Easterly 2005; Hulme 2009). Instead, many Latin American and African economies suffered from their adverse effects, with African people specifically often suffering from chronic hunger (Watts 1991). Consisting of initiatives aimed at addressing persistent hunger and bridging the gap between developing

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and developed countries, eight MDGs comprising 21 specific targets were introduced (Watts 1991; Hulme 2009). The MDGs aimed to help people in developing countries that had not previously reaped the benefit of the economic growth with a focus on human rights and basic needs. While the gap between developing and developed countries was the primary focus, it also included elements linked to environmental sustainability as a result of rising global concern over the harm caused by anthropogenic activities (Costanza and Daly 1992; Costanza et al. 1998). In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the SDGs as the successor of the MDGs, which featured focus on ameliorating the livelihoods of the poor and protecting the environment for future generations (Sachs 2012; United Nations General Assembly 2015).

While UN and the Member States evaluated MDG achievements and found significant improvement, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Oceania regions fell behind in terms of achieving their MDG targets (UN DESA 2016). This has proven to be a challenge with the SDGs as well, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic hindering progress. Furthermore, evaluating progress comes with its own challenges, as developing countries often lack reliable data sources; however, simply using percentage or formulating the targets of “decreasing (–)” or “increasing (+)” can create unfair conditions for countries facing severe poverty and population growth (Easterly 2009).

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world, but it is exhibiting rapid population growth, meaning that catching up with other countries in achieving SDGs constitutes a difficult task. With the population over 181 million and a GDP over 1 trillion USD in 2015, Nigeria is the largest country in the region in terms of both economic might and population (World Bank 2019). According to the MDG end-point report, however, the country fully met one of its eight goals. While it made weak progress on one goal and strong or moderate progress on six goals, the report concluded that poverty-reduction efforts in the country were, overall, unsuccessful (OSSAP-MDGs 2015). Moreover, the regional differences were significant within the country; northeastern areas suffered from severe living conditions caused by frequent insurgent attacks, while southwestern areas enjoyed substantial benefits from economic growth. Importantly, official MDG evaluations were done based on national figures, meaning that they did not account for local distinctions. Ordinary people’s observations are, however, based on their lived daily experiences. Therefore, their perception could effectively complement the quantitative indicators of national development. Still, the SDG strategies were set based on the MDG evaluations without listening to local people’s voices.

Previous studies have mainly analyzed the MDGs’ achievements using published data, rarely extending their analysis to people’s perception (Easterly 2009; Jacob 2017). To improve people’s livelihood and truly “leave no one left behind,” it is critical to achieve a proper understanding of local people’s thoughts and needs. Do local people actually agree with the MDGs evaluations conducted by national government and international organizations? This study fills a worrisome gap in the literature by conducting a survey in Nigeria and comparing its results with those of the official evaluation. This is important in terms of gauging the achievement of SDGs; if people do not agree with the MDG evaluations, it may need to rethink its evaluation methods moving forward (Jacob 2017). This study explored people’s understanding of the global development agenda in Nigeria, their view on their own country’s efforts, and their expectations of the SDGs. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced their perceptions, this study still provides critical insights that may be useful in achieving SDGs by 2030.

To understand their perceptions, we conducted a survey featuring questions about MDGs and SDGs. We then compared the responses to the results of the MDG end-point report. The questions about the SDGs were used to assess people’s expectations and desires regarding three different types of sustainability: environment, social, and economic.

The following section explains this study’s background, methods, and details of the survey data and SDG groupings. The results section offers a comparison between the official MDG evaluation and people’s perceptions. Finally, this study offers a discussion about disparities between the two assessment methods and people’s expectation of the SDGs.

2 Study Area and Methodology

2.1 Study Area

This study selected Nigeria as a case study in which to investigate the gaps between the official evaluations of MDG achievement and people’s perceptions and expectations of the development goals. The country has long faced economic instability and widespread poverty despite its potential to steadily grow as a major oil producer. Despite being the largest economy in Africa, with a GDP over 1 trillion USD (PPP, current international), its GDP per capita was only a little over 6,000 USD (PPP, current international) in 2015—significantly lower than the GDP per capita of South

Africa, the second-largest economy in Africa, which stood at 13,000 USD (World Bank 2019). Nigeria began engaging in oil production in the mid-1950s, and the country enjoyed solid export earnings until the oil price crashed in the 1980s, troubling the country's oil-dependent economy (Mosley 1992; Watts 2004). An SAP was implemented in 1986 to liberalize the economy and trade, privatize public utilities, revitalize civil services, and strengthen tax system; however, the literatures indicates that this SAP had a largely negative impact on Nigeria's economy and society.

While the financial sector was liberalized, prompting many banks to enter the market on account of a lower bar to entry, a lack of regulations swept a wave of inexperienced people in the banking industry, resulting in financial distressed (Lewis and Stein 1997; Daumont et al. 2004; Neu et al. 2010). Furthermore, the SAP induced high inflation, with the annual rate rising from 5.5% in 1985 to 72.8% in 1995 on account of high debt-repayment requirement and currency depreciation. Additionally, the removal of both industry protections and oil and fertilizer subsidies hindered economic development and led to the elimination of jobs and a reduced education budget (Anwu 1992; Geo-jaja and Mangum 2003; Daumont et al. 2004). Nigeria was originally a country with significant and promising economic wealth, but many people remained poor when the MDGs were implemented.

Nigeria is an ethnically diverse country housing over 300 ethnic groups. The country is often classified into three regions based on the presence of three major ethnic groups; the north of the country is predominantly Hausa-Fulani, the east Igbo, and the west Yoruba. Additionally, the north is predominantly Muslim, the southeast is Christian, and the southwest is about split (Langer and Ukiwo 2008). Also, worth noting is that economic wealth is unevenly allocated across the country, with the former capital Lagos in the southwest being the center of Nigerian economy despite the country's oil coming from the southeast and the most fertile agricultural land and abundant water resources being located in the north. On the latter point, the north has been made unstable in large part due to frequent terrorist attacks and violent riots (Solomon 2012). Beyond the country's ethnic and economic structures, population growth is notably higher in the north than in the south due to various factors, including varying religious and cultural backgrounds and differences in educational attainment (Izugbara and Ezech 2010). Such social and economic inequalities between the country's south and north must be diligently addressed if they are to be eliminated.

To explore people's perceptions of social change brought by the MDGs and their expectations of the SDGs, this study selected the capital of Nigeria, Abuja, as a case study. The city began to develop in 1976, the idea being that it provided equal access to the capital by people from anywhere

in the country (Abubakar 2014). Nigeria is divided into six geo-political zones—North Central, North East, North West, South East, South West, and South South—with Abuja being a distinct territory despite its location in the North-Central zone (Fig. 1). The capital was formally relocated to Abuja in 1991, prompting people from across the country to move to the center of the country. Thus, by conducting a survey in Abuja, this study gathers a relatively balanced outlook. We considered areas around four major traffic junctions in the city (Berger, Mpape, Maitama, and Nicon) as well as the University of Abuja in Gwagwalada. This focus on traffic junctions enables us to recruit respondents from multiple satellite towns with diverse backgrounds. The surveys were conducted across multiple dates in 2019: January 21, 23, and 27; February 11 and 23; March 1, 9, and 23; April 25 and 27.

2.2 Survey Approach

People perceive social problems differently depending upon their circumstances, meaning that the relevance of any given development goal differs from person to person. As already established, socioeconomic dynamics are vastly different between northern and southern Nigeria, meaning that a survey in one location would in no way be generalizable to the other. In Abuja, however, we believe that the body of opinions is more nationally representative. Of course, it was still difficult to conduct random sampling—and, in turn, to collect truly representative opinions—because the city's population distribution is unknown. Therefore, we employed nonprobability sampling or, more specifically, convenience sampling (Lavrakas 2008).

We made the questionnaire to be as simple as possible to ensure that people could offer truthful insights within a short period of time. Hence, the survey only includes nominal and closed questions. Table 1 lists the survey questions and their accompanying answer forms. If a respondent answered “no” to questions 1 or 3 about whether they knew about the MDGs and the SDGs, respectively, the questioner provided a brief explanation. The questioner presented the logos of the individual MDGs and SDGs to the respondents when asking questions 2, 4, and 5 to facilitate more efficient communication. The questioner carried plastic boards displaying the questions and asked passersby. In addition, the questioner asked about each respondent's name, age, occupation, and religion.

2.3 Coding SDG Targets and Correspondence Analysis

The MDGs comprised eight goals addressing the basic needs of people in developing countries, and the SDGs consist of 17 goals aimed at similar matters but with a greater focus on

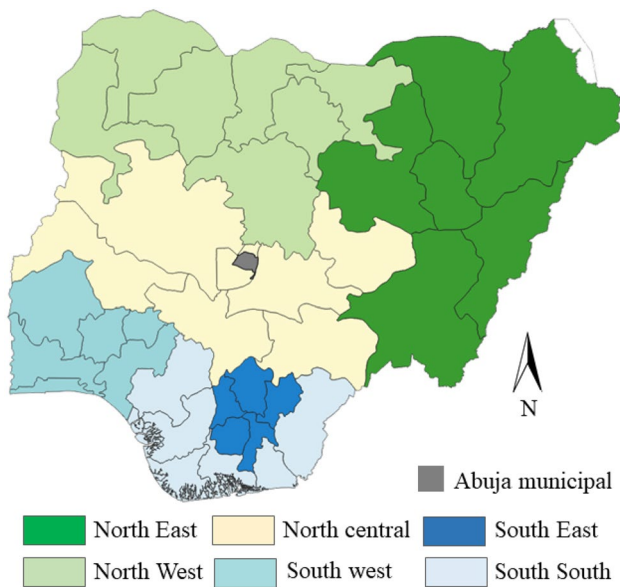


Fig. 1 Nigeria’s geo-political zones and Abuja. Nigeria consists of six geo-political zones: North East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe); North West (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara); North Central (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Federal Capital Territory); South East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo); South West (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo); and South (Akwa Ibon, Bayelsa, Cross River, Rivers, Delta, Edo)

environmental issues. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs focus on “three pillars of sustainability”—economic, social, and environmental sustainability—with each goal crafted to maintain all three forms of sustainability (Sachs 2012; Purvis et al. 2019). Still, each goal is particularly linked to a single sustainability type, and this general categorizability can aid in assessing people’s priorities.

Each goal has specific targets to be met by 2030. For instance, SDG 1 (“no poverty”) comprises seven targets, including 1.1: “by 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.” There are two types of targets:

one classified with a number (e.g., 1.1) and one classified with a letter (e.g., 1.a), which suggests that it is intended to be achieved through cooperation with developed countries (Osborn et al. 2015). There are 169 specific targets; 126 of them are classified with a number, while 43 of them are classified with a letter. The correspondence analysis of this study focuses on the targets with a number.

Four features were considered as distinctive characters of a goal: challenge specific to developing countries (developing), issue directly affecting social sustainability (social), issue affecting economic sustainability (economic), and issue affecting environmental sustainability (environment). If a target was found to align with those features, we entered “1”; if it was found to not align with the features, we entered “0.” For example, SDG 1 has 5 targets, from 1.1 to 1.5; SDG 1.1 addresses a typical issue in developing countries that is directly linked to social and economic sustainability, meaning that all features but “environment” were coded as “1.” All other targets were coded in a similarly binary manner, resulting in an individual score for each target. For example, by averaging the values from SDG 1.1 to 1.5, the score for SDG 1’s four features, “developing,” “social,” “economic,” and “environment” were calculated as 0.6, 1.0, 0.8, and 0.2, respectively. Proximity to 1.0 indicates that the goal strongly aligns with that feature. In this sense, SDG 1 appears to be important to developing countries and strongly linked to both social and economic sustainability. Table 2 presents estimated scores for all 17 SDGs.

Correspondence analysis enabled us to categorize the 17 goals based on the features and clusters. Such clusters help us to understand people’s expectations of each type of sustainability, as relationships between goals and features are plotted geometrically. The basic algebraic formulas and processes are explained at length in the literature (Hoffman and Franke 1986; Greenacre and Hastie 1987; Yelland 2010). In this study, however, it is merely important to know that the rows represent the SDGs’ profiles, while the columns represent the feature’s profiles, collectively constituting the

Table 1 Survey questions

	Question	Response form
Q1	Do you know the Millennium Development Goals?	Yes or no
Q2	Which goals have been accomplished in Nigeria?	Multiple choice (max of 3)
Q3	Do you know the Sustainable Development Goals?	Yes or no
Q4	Which ones are the most important to Nigeria?	Multiple choice (max of 3)
Q5	Which one is the most important to you and your family?	Multiple choice (max of 3)
Q6	Which is the more important for Nigeria today: economic development, environmental conservation, or both?	Single choice

two-way contingency table N (17×4). We obtained the row frequency matrix P using the following formula:

$$P = N / 1^T N 1, \tag{1}$$

where $1^T = (1, 1, 1, 1)^T$ and $1^T P 1 = 1$. The column frequency was obtained in the same way, but N was transposed: N^T (4×17), and $1^T = (1, \dots, 1)^T$, resulting in 1×17 . By dividing P by row or column sums, the profile points were weighted. Through the singular value decomposition process, we obtained relative points for the row and column profiles. This study used the “ca” package of R version 3.2.4 to determine the relationships between SDGs and their features (Nenadic and Greenacre 2007; R Core Team 2016).

3 Results

3.1 Questionnaire Survey Results: Awareness of the Development Agenda and Evaluation of MDGs

The profile of the 166 respondents is presented in Fig. 2, while Fig. 3 presents the responses to Q1 and Q3 about their awareness of MDGs and SDGs, respectively, by age group. The age groups were created by grouping “10–20” and “20–30” together as well as “30–40,” “40–50,” and “50–60” together, as two-thirds of respondents below 30 years old are students, and the awareness of the international development agenda was significantly different between these two constructed groups (Fig. 3). This suggests that education plays a significant role in one’s

Table 2 Estimated score for each goal

	Developing	Social	Economic	Environment
SDG1	0.60	1.00	0.80	0.20
SDG2	0.60	0.60	0.40	0.40
SDG3	0.22	0.89	0.33	0.11
SDG4	0.57	1.00	0.29	0.14
SDG5	0.17	1.00	0.33	0.00
SDG6	0.33	0.50	0.33	0.83
SDG7	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.67
SDG8	0.10	0.40	0.70	0.20
SDG9	0.40	0.20	1.00	0.40
SDG10	0.29	0.71	0.71	0.00
SDG11	0.00	0.86	0.00	0.57
SDG12	0.00	0.25	0.63	0.88
SDG13	0.00	0.67	0.00	1.00
SDG14	0.14	0.00	0.14	1.00
SDG15	0.00	0.11	0.22	1.00
SDG16	0.20	1.00	0.20	0.00
SDG17	0.32	0.21	0.74	0.26

understanding of the global agendas, as younger people were significantly more aware of the MDGs and SDGs than were older people.

To assess people’s evaluations of MDGs, we asked a question about MDGs’ accomplishments. The responses are shown in Fig. 4. Despite the respondents being allowed to pick a maximum of three goals, 27 people answered that none of the MDGs had been achieved in Nigeria. In addition, some respondents selected only one or two goals. In an absolute sense, only 254 votes were actually cast despite there being the potential for 498 votes.

The highest number of people selected MDG 6, “combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,” as an accomplished MDG, followed by MDG 2, “achieve universal primary education.” None of the respondents selected MDG 1, “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,” and MDG 7, “ensure environmental sustainability.” Only a very small number of people selected MDG 3, “promote gender equality and empower women,” and MDG 8, “a global partnership for development.” Interestingly, all three respondents who selected MDG 3 were men, indicating that women are more cognizant of the lingering gender gap in their society. Importantly, two-thirds of the respondents perceived the improvement in Nigeria’s disease control and attributed it to the MDGs. Primary education was

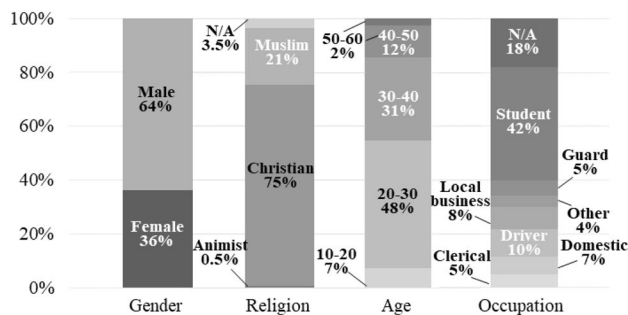


Fig. 2 Respondent profiles. “Other” in occupation includes the following: one engineer, one farmer, one hairdresser, one housewife, and one nurse

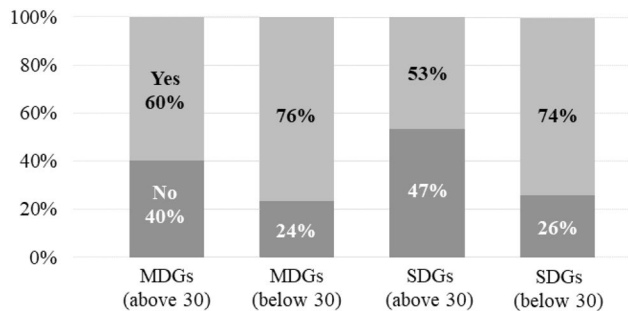


Fig. 3 Awareness of the MDGs and SDGs by age

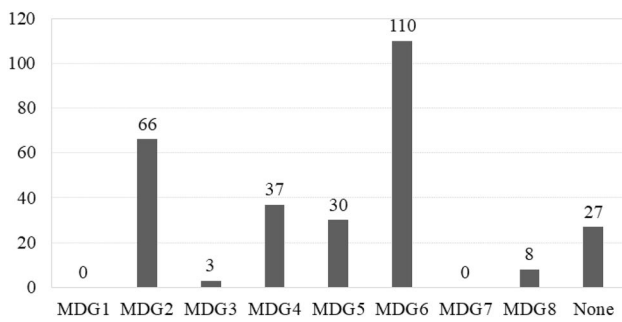


Fig. 4 MDGs considered to be “accomplished”

also viewed as improved, with 40% of people selecting MDG 2 as having been accomplished.

3.2 Relationships Between SDGs and the Four Features

Based on the estimated scores in Table 2, we analyzed the relationships between the SDGs and the four features. Table 3 presents the corresponding eigenvalues and percentages of variances. Dimensions 1 and 2 explain 90% of the total variance. Figure 5 illustrates the relationships between the rows (SDGs) and the columns (feature).

The location of the SDGs and features in Fig. 5 indicates relativities between them. The features of “developing,” “social,” and “economic,” for example, are located on the same side of the X axis, while “environmental” is located on the other side. This horizontal distance illustrates similarities among the first three features but differences between them and the last one. Vertical distance also corresponds to similarity; SDG 11 is distinct from others. Another important feature is feature proximity. For example, SDGs 3 and 4 can both be considered “social” goals, but SDG 3 exhibits a slightly stronger association with social sustainability.

SDGs 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, and 17 are located near “developing” and “economic” features. SDGs 1, 2, and 10 appear to be particularly relevant in developing countries, while SDGs 8, 9, and 17 have a strong association with economic sustainability. The goals’ relative proximity indicates that they are bound to similar degrees to their respective feature. In other words, SDGs 3, 4, 5, and 16 are approximately as associated with the “social” feature, as SDGs 6, 7, 12, 14, and 15 are with “environmental” feature. Of course, this interpretation leaves room for unique cases, such as SDG 11 and SDG 13,

Table 3 Eigenvalues and percentages of variance

Dimension	1	2	3
Eigenvalue	0.29	0.14	0.48
Percentage of variance	60.54%	29.65%	9.81%

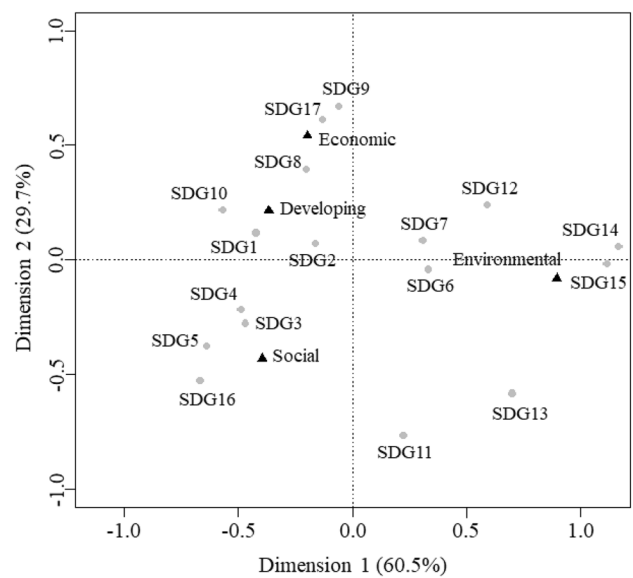


Fig. 5 Relationships between the SDGs and four features

which are approximately halfway between “environmental” and “social.” Considering the angles involved, however, it is fair to assert that SDG 11 has a stronger association with social sustainability, while SDG 13 has a stronger association with environmental sustainability.

3.3 Questionnaire Survey Results: Respondents’ Expectations of SDGs

Following the questions on MDGs, the respondents were asked about their expectations of SDGs. Q4 asked about the SDGs that are most important to the future of Nigeria, while Q5 asked about the SDGs that are most important to the respondent and their family. They could choose a maximum of three goals, but only 357 and 246 responses were ultimately collected for Q4 and Q5, respectively. Figure 6 illustrates the responses to Q4, while Fig. 7 illustrates those to Q5. The percentages were calculated separately for each age group, as there were modest but clear differences between the two groups.

Notably, no one in either age group selected SDGs 14 and 15 as an important goal for Nigeria or themselves. SDGs 12 and 13 were also deemed important, selected by one person at most. There were differences between the two age groups on SDGs 3, 4, 8, 9, and 11. SDGs 3, 4, 8, and 9 were considered to be important goals for Nigeria by people above 30, each accounting for 16–17% of responses, while people below 30 mainly considered SDGs 8 and 9 to be more important than other goals, each accounting for more than 20%. The younger group also considered SDG 11, “sustainable cities and communities,” to be important for Nigeria, accounting for 14%

of responses; the same goal only accounted for 8% of responses in the older age group.

Furthermore, there is a clear tradeoff between two groups in terms of SDGs 3 and 11. People above 30 considered SDG 3 to be important for Nigeria but SDG 11 to be relatively unimportant. Younger people, in contrast, considered SDG 11 to be important for Nigeria but SDG 3 to be relatively unimportant.

Q5, which asked about the SDGs most important to respondents' personal livelihood, produced similar results across both age groups. SDG 8 was, by overwhelming margin, the most common response across both younger

and older Nigerians. This was followed in a distant second and third by SDGs 3 and 4, respectively. However, there were some notable small differences. More people in the younger group selected SDG 8, while more people in the older group selected SDG 3. This makes sense, as finding a job is a challenge for young people despite them commonly boasting a college-level education.

A widespread emphasis on economic sustainability was clear from the responses to Q6. While 70% of respondents answered that both economic development and environmental conservation are important, 29% of people above 30 and 25% of people below 30 considered economic

Fig. 6 The percentage of people viewing each goal as the most important to Nigeria's development (Q4)

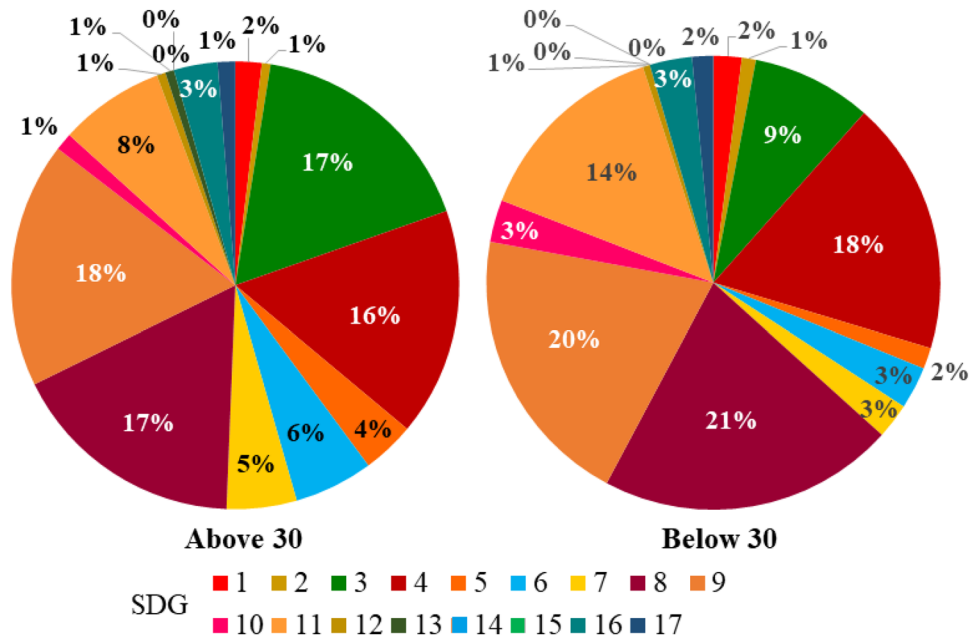
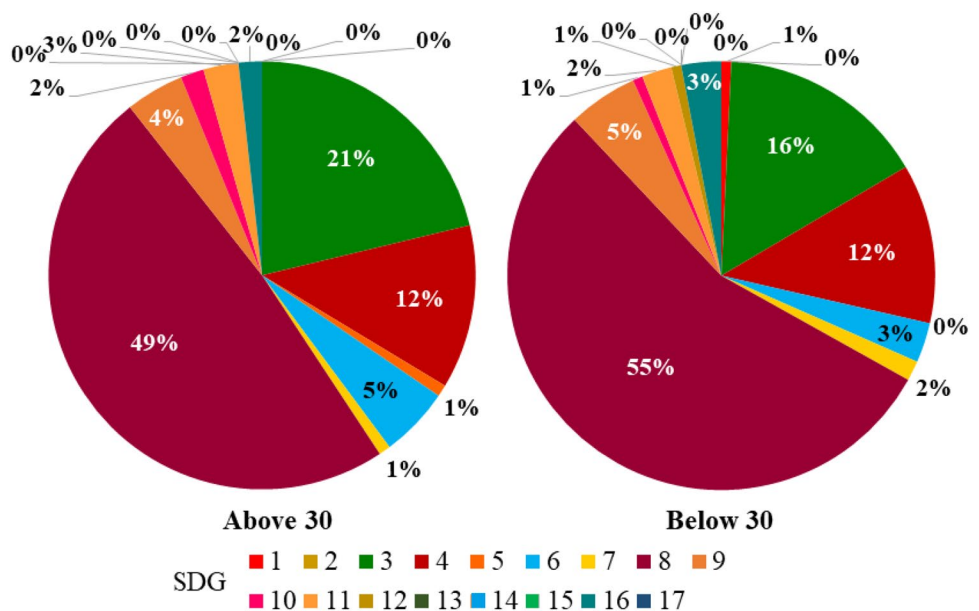


Fig. 7 The percentage of people viewing each goal as the most important to their own livelihood (Q5)



development to be more important than environmental conservation—no one selected the inverse. Based on the responses to Q4, Q5, and Q6, it is fair to assert that Nigerians currently value economic sustainability more highly than they do environmental and social sustainability on both national and personal levels. The goals associated with environmental sustainability—SDGs 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15—were rarely selected as important goals. This result may stem from the country’s weak education system and a lack of awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability.

4 Discussion

4.1 Official Evaluation of the MDGs Versus People’s Perceptions

The efforts to address MDGs ceased in 2015, with the international community producing end-point reports. Table 4 presents the summary of the Nigerian government’s self-evaluation. The MDGs comprised 21 targets and 60 indicators, with the table showing only some of them. According to the report, only six indicators met their objectives (OSSAP-MDGs 2015). MDG 8 was the only goal that the government considered to be fully met.

It is evident that people perceived the MDGs’ attainment differently; two-thirds of respondents answered that MDG 6 had been met, while 27 people asserted that no progress had been made on MDGs. The official evaluation reported that MDG 6 made appreciable but weak progress, highlighting strong progress on the malaria indicator. Did people assert MDG 6 had been met, because they witnessed a significant decline in the prevalence of malaria? The survey did not ask about the reasons behind their responses, though we can deduce them based on the literature on HIV/AIDS and malaria. Bello (2015) analyzed the most frequently reported health issues in Nigerian newspapers between 2010 and 2013, and found that HIV/AIDS to be the third most frequently reported topic and malaria to be the eighth most frequently reported topic (Bello 2015). Following the establishment of MDGs, the National Action Committee on AIDS was established in 2001 to address rising HIV/AIDS cases. This was followed by the launch of Nigeria National Response Information Management System and implementation of various strategic plans between 2004 and 2010 in coordination with UN agencies and donors (Akinwande et al. 2017). Similar efforts were made to tackle malaria, with the government implementing the National Malaria Control Programme in 2008 and developing the National Malaria Control Strategic plan for 2009–2013 (Kyu et al. 2013; Dawaki et al. 2016). Insecticide-treated nets and long-lasting insecticidal nets were given to people free of charge,

Table 4 Official report: MDG achievement evaluation

Indicator	Evaluation	Overall	Indicator	Evaluation	Overall
1.1	Weak	MDG 1: appreciable progress; goal not met	5.5	Weak	MDG 6: appreciable but weak progress; goal not met
1.2	Fair		6.1	Weak	
1.3	Fair		6.2	Weak	
1.8	Fair		6.3	Weak	
2.1	Weak	MDG 2: weak progress; goal not met	6.5	Weak	MDG 7: strong progress in provisioning safe drinking water; goal not met
2.2	Weak		6.6	Strong	
2.3	Weak		6.7	Weak	
3.1a	Strong		6.9	Weak	
3.1b	Fair	MDG 3: strong progress in gender parity; weak progress in women empowerment; goal not met	7.1	Fair	MDG 8: goal met
3.1c	Fair		7.9	Strong	
3.2	Weak		7.10	Fair	
3.3	Weak		7.d	Strong	
4.1	Strong	MDG 4: appreciable progress; goal not met	8.1	Met	MDG 8: goal met
4.2	Fair		8.2	Met	
4.3	N/A		8.14	Fair	
5.1	Met		8.15	Met	
5.2	Weak	MDG 5: maternal mortality target met; goal not met	8.16	Met	
5.3	Weak		8.17	Met	

The table was produced based on snapshot on pp.xxvii–xxix in the end-point report (OSSAP-MDGs 2015). Met: 100%; Strong: above 60%, below 100%; Fair: above 45%, at or below 60%; Weak: below 45%. Overall evaluation for each goal was obtained from the “Trends and End-point Status of Goals” section on pp.xvi–xx

with net ownership reaching more than 70% in 2010 (Ye et al. 2012; Kyu et al. 2013).

The HIV prevalence rate, access to anti-retroviral therapy (ART), and knowledge about the disease vary by gender, state, income, and educational level, and rural/urban residency. Higher prevalence was, on average, detected among female, less educated, and low-income people in South-East and North-Central zones (Samuels et al. 2012; Abah 2014). Notably, people in urban areas had greater access to ART and faced less stigma and discrimination than those in rural areas on account of policy differences (ibid.). Similarly, the malaria prevention was positively affected by policies aimed at social and behavior change decreasing the prevalence rate (Kyu et al. 2013; Otsemobor et al. 2013).

Regional differences in attaining MDG 6 have been found in other studies of different countries (McClure et al. 2018; Liang et al. 2019). Abuja is an urban area, and people living there benefitted greatly from MDG efforts. While Nigeria did not meet its goal rates, the MDGs still provided a better environment for those suffering from the disease. The respondents selected MDG 6 because they witnessed drastic improvement around them, not because they knew about drops in the national prevalence rate. Their perceptions are impacted by both quantitative and qualitative changes; understanding these changes would offer a greater understanding of how to improve human well-being.

The survey found that 40% of respondents considered MDG 2 to have been attained, but the official evaluation reported that the goal was not met on account of geo-political differences between the North zone and other areas. It reported that the primary school completion rate in Abuja was 92%, and this high rate was reflected by the survey responses. As with MDG 6, it is clear that people's assessment of MDG achievement is driven more by personal impressions than by knowledge of national indicators.

MDGs 2 and 6 were both formally evaluated as unsuccessful despite people in an urban area perceiving the goals as having been achieved. Conversely, MDG 8 was viewed as a success by the government, but people did not perceive it as a success. MDG 8 entailed “global partnership for development,” meaning that attainment depended on both donor and recipient countries. The goal comprised six targets and 16 indicators, with the official evaluation concluding that Nigeria had met MDG 8 based on its performance in the following indicators: 8.1, 8.2, 8.14, 8.15, 8.16, and 8.17 (OSSAP-MDGs 2015). Indicators 8.1 and 8.2 largely depended on donors' actions, and 8.14, 8.15, 8.16, and 8.17 were about technology transfer (i.e., the dissemination of network technologies such as telephone line, cell phone, and the Internet). These indicators fell under MDG 8 because they were expected to promote access to new technologies in cooperation with the private sector. Daily internet usage in Nigeria rose from 3.53% to 42.68% between 2005 and

2014, while cell-phone usage increased even more dramatically, from 0.02 to 77.84% between 2000 and 2014 (OSSAP-MDGs 2015).

According to the literature, the story behind MDG 8 is fairly distinct. It was added at the last minute to attract support for the MDGs from developing countries that were wary about the goals, many of which worried that MDGs would be used as donor conditionalities (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2011; Caliori 2014). Additionally, MDG 8.F was included in the goal, because technological inequality constituted a great burden for developing countries (Fukuda-Parr 2006). On the one hand, considering the features of MDG 8, it is understandable that no respondent selected it as a successful goal. On the other hand, considering people's perceptions of MDG 6, in which success was largely brought about through global partnership, aid may have been taken for granted, with international cooperation being somewhat invisible to the Nigerian people.

While the official evaluation provided conclusions that differed greatly from people's perceptions of MDGs, the SDGs were implemented with the Nigerian government declaring its resolve to work on both unfinished MDGs and the new agenda—but it did not prioritize any particular goals. While crafting strategies, the government committed to beginning by continuously working on SDGs 1, 2 (agriculture), 4 (basic education), 5 (gender equality), and 6 (water and sanitation) as well as to taking advantage of inter-governmental partnerships and successful MDG schemes (OSSAP-MDGs 2015).

4.2 People's Expectation of the SDGs and the Nigerian Government's Strategy

The survey asked the respondents about the most important SDG for Nigeria and for themselves. The goals commonly considered to be important for the country were SDGs 4, 8, 9, and 11 for respondents below 30 years of age and SDGs 3, 4, 8, and 9 for those above 30 years of age. SDGs 8 and 9, both of which are linked to economic sustainability, were rated highly across both groups. SDGs 3 and 4 are focused on social sustainability. Notably, older people want a path focused on economic development, health, and education, while young people seem to want the government to strongly pursue economic sustainability.

The expectation of which SDGs would improve their lives was found to be similar across both groups. The majority of respondents selected SDG 8, with a distant second being SDG 3. On a personal level, people want decent work, health, and well-being. The goals related to environmental sustainability are not considered to be urgent in either age group, trailing significantly behind economic sustainability.

The SDG indicators' baseline figures were formally established in 2016, with voluntary review updates being

published starting in 2017 (OSSAP-SDGs and The National Bureau of Statistics 2017; OSSAP-SDGs 2017). Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (NERGP) was also developed and featured 17 SDGs in its budget-allocation plan. Detailed strategies for SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, and 17 and its interim targets at 2020 were explained in the voluntary report. This study found that urban-dwelling Nigerian wanted most by 2030 was employment and economic growth. The Nigerian government aligned with their view, committing to reaching a GDP of 900 billion USD and a GDP per capita of more than 4,000 USD by 2020—but with no specific strategies in place. Although the government aims to boost the country's socioeconomic sustainability, a report published by the SDG Center for Africa ranked Nigeria behind only the Democratic Republic of Congo in terms of the number of people who fell into poverty between 1990 and 2018 (Twinoburyo et al. 2021).

The survey uncovered the relatively minor degree to which Nigerians prioritize environmental issues, such as climate change and biodiversity conservation. The 2017 review update briefly explained Nigeria's plans for SDG 14: "Marine activities constitute a significant revenue source for the country and efforts have been placed over time in developing and managing the sector to ensure continuous benefits to the country"; still, no specific plans were developed for SDGs 13 and 15 (OSSAP-SDGs 2017). Unfortunately, the frequency of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change are becoming impossible to ignore in Nigeria, meaning that ignoring these goals could hinder efforts toward other goals (Daramola et al. 2016; Abdulkadir et al. 2018). While it is difficult for a government to comprehensively address every goal, the Nigerian government must emphasize the importance of environmental sustainability, as the cooperation of citizens is critical to the success of environmental policies.

5 Conclusions

The end of MDGs in 2015 left many lessons for their successor goals, the SDGs. Varying development levels, rapid population growth, insurgencies, and disasters hindered the MDGs' chances, resulting in varying results across the world. For example, while many Asian countries achieved most of their MDGs, African countries were left behind. Nigeria is home to Africa's largest economy and population, but it did not succeed to fully meet seven of its eight goals. Importantly, however, "success" here is determined based on the internationally established national indicators, which can stray significantly from local needs and paint a distorted picture, with aggregation sometimes hiding a reality driven by regional differences. This study revealed that citizens directly observe societal improvements that are not captured

by official reports; conversely, the government sometimes sees success where people do not. This study suggests that ordinary people's observations constitute a worthwhile complement to standard indicators. Similar studies in different countries would reinforce this position and demonstrate the worth of observation as indicators.

While the SDGs cover a more diverse range of topics than the MDGs, this study revealed people's interest in environmental sustainability was low in Nigeria even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic may have lessened environmental interests even further. The international community set universal goals to be met by 2030, but citizens' interests, starting points, and political orientations vary tremendously from country to country. Nigeria is one of the few Sub-Saharan African countries with economic power, and its people still greatly prefer the SDGs aimed at economic development to those aimed at environmental sustainability. Thus, it is fair to assert that people in less-developed Sub-Saharan countries would also exhibit low interest in environmental sustainability. This is particularly troublesome when it comes to environmental matters, which require regional and global cooperation, as it is difficult for countries facing many socioeconomic issues to allocate resources to the environment. Further studies on people's awareness and expectations of SDGs across different countries would provide governments with information that could help them to develop strategies to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

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Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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