



Igbo Language: A Veritable Tool for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Igbo Communities

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ABSTRACT

The world, faced with many problems, finds a way to solve or reduce them by instituting programmes that would impact positively on the living standards of people. The more developed a society, the higher its living standards, and vice versa. This explains why, in 2000, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that targeted only developing countries, was instituted. The programme lasted till 2015. The 8 MDGs were hardly satisfactorily realized in Igbo speaking communities of Nigeria, particularly as a result of not disseminating the relevant MDGs information in Igbo. In 2015, the world moved from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to last till 2030. It involves all countries irrespective of their level of development. With the way its implementation is going in Igbo communities, without the dissemination of its information in Igbo, one wonders if SDGs would fare better than MDGs. This forms the crux of this paper, aimed at investigating how Igbo could be deployed as a veritable tool for achieving SDGs in Igbo communities. Data on how conversant the Igbo rural dwellers are with SDGs and their views on giving them information on SDGs in Igbo were collected from 36 consultants in 12 communities spread across all the states of Nigeria where Igbo is spoken. Data were quantitatively and qualitative analysed using percentile ranking and discussions respectively. The findings show that more than 86% of the Igbo dwellers were ignorant about SDGs. The people would prefer getting information on SDGs in the Igbo language; this is the sure means of achieving SDGs.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty contributes in making life unbearable for the poor in any society. Often times, poverty is accompanied by disease, causing the death of some of the people afflicted because they would not be able to access good medical care. Natural disasters like draught, earthquake, flooding, fire, extreme weather conditions and epidemic, and man-made disasters like war and human trafficking also contribute to the problems confronting people in the different parts of the world. Faced with these problems and more, the different countries, under many Bodies and Organizations, formulate and institute programmes that would impact positively on the living standards of people by solving the identified problems or, at least, reducing them to the barest minimum. It is usually the case that the more developed a society or country becomes, the higher the living standards of the people of that society. Conversely, the less developed a country is, the lower the living standards of the people of that country.

To alleviate the problems confronting people living in the developing nations of the world, the United Nations instituted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000. MDGs targeted only developing countries, and was developed to last till 2015; by which year it was hoped that most of the MDGs targets must have been met. The programme, which had 8 Goals, including eradication of poverty and achieving universal primary education, was

believed to have the capacity to solve the targeted problems in the developing countries. After a period of 15 years that the implementation of the MDGs lasted, it dawned on the world that most of the developing countries have not met the expected goals. The non-achievement of the target set for MDGs by the implementing nations towards the close of 2015 made the world to move from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The programme is to last till 2030. This time around, the SDGs programme involves all countries irrespective of their level of development. The implementation of SDGs has now lasted for eight (8) years, and would end in the next seven (7) years, i.e. 2030.

With the way the implementation of SDGs is currently going on in Nigeria, particularly in Igbo communities that form the focus of this study, one wonders if SDGs would fare better than MDGs. The unsatisfactory score of MDGs in Igbo rural communities could particularly be attributed to the lack of dissemination of appropriate information that pertains to the programme. The said lack is the non-use of the Igbo language in passing on information to the people in the rural Igbo communities in order for them to clearly understand what the programme is all about and what they stand to gain by keying into it. In other words, the eight (8) MDGs were hardly satisfactorily realized in Igbo speaking communities of Nigeria as a result of not disseminating the relevant MDGs information in Igbo; which is the language of the people in the rural communities. The people the programme was meant to service were not actually carried along during its implementation because of language issue; as most of the announcements, write-ups, discussions, etc. pertaining to MDGs come in the English language. Whether the language situation has changed now for the SDGs programme to record tremendous success in its implementation forms the crux of this paper. It aims at investigating how the Igbo language could be deployed as a veritable tool for achieving SDGs in Igbo communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Onyido (2021) writes on the role of Nigerian universities in Nigeria's quest to attain the sustainable development goals. While pointing out that, "Teaching, research and engagement with society are the pillars of the core mandate of modern universities", he avers that the universities need the political establishment with visionary leadership at the national level and within the university system itself to enable the universities use their research and innovation produce in playing the needed strategic roles for Nigeria's economic development and social transformation. He makes it clear that Nigerian universities can only play the leading role in the country's attainment of the SDGs if impeding factors are squarely addressed. These negative factors include poor funding of universities, government neglect and non-recognition of the important role of the universities in societal development, and neglecting the adoption of sustainability as a way of life in Nigerian universities. Through his exposition of the many ills confronting the nation, most of which hinge on bad governance and corruption, he opines that the SDGs provide a new paradigm of development for Nigeria and the goals could be achieved if Nigerian universities are given the opportunity to play their role.

For Ugwude and Ekweozor (2021), education is the surest way to sustainably develop any society in the sense that the skills acquired through education by learners are subsequently applied to sustain the present and future generations. They discuss the role of early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria. The study concentrates on the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which centers on education, stating that education cannot be separated from human life, especially Early Childhood Education. According to them, this is because Early Childhood Education gears towards laying a sound intellectual, psychological, emotional, social and physical foundation for lifelong learning and development in young children, who are the future generation. Implementing SDG-4 would instill in them dignity of labour, moral duties, civil participation, citizenship rights and obligations; which are the pillars of peace in every society.

Kleespies and Dierkes (2022) discuss how the students of environmental courses in 41 countries rated each of the 17 goals of the SDGs. They point out the need for studies to show "how the SDGs are perceived, accepted and evaluated by people worldwide"(p. 1). According to them, earlier surveys have shown that,

While awareness of the SDGs has increased globally compared to their predecessor, i.e., the Millennium Development Goals... 63% of the respondents in a survey of 28 European countries said they had never heard of the SDGs. Globally, awareness of the SDGs is approximately 50%; however, only 1% of people say they are very well informed about the SDGs (p. 1).

This study by Kleespies and Dierkes (2022) uses Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Human Development Index (HDI), Education Index (EI), Environment Performance Index (EPI) and Sustainable Development Goals Index (SDGI) for assessment. It discovers that countries with high level of the indices rate the SDGs as less important when compared with countries with low indices rate SDGs as very important. For them, the results of their study would enable the SDGs stakeholders to know how to promote the SDGs programme in their countries.

Adzer (2018) avers that language is a very important possession of man that defines human nature. According to her, "The integral nature of language in the life of man and his affairs points to the fact that language represents the force

with which the wheels of life are driven." Language is, therefore, the means through which humans perform all functions that make life worthwhile, including thinking, talking, listening, reading and writing.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from the Igbo rural dwellers using oral interview, on how conversant they are with SDGs, as well as their views on giving them information on SDGs in Igbo or English. Although all the Igbo rural dwellers form the population for the study, data were collected from only a sample population comprising 36 consultants in 12 communities spread across all the states of Nigeria where Igbo is spoken. From Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States where Igbo is predominantly spoken, 2 communities were randomly selected; apart from Anambra State communities specifically selected for being the researchers' home communities. Only 1 community was selected each from Delta and Rivers States because Igbo is not predominantly spoken in these States. These sum up to 12 communities. From each selected community, three adult rural dwellers, either 2 males and 1 female, or 1 male and 2 females were consulted, making the number of consultants 36. The communities selected from the seven (7) States are Ibeku, Isialangwa (Abia), Akpo, Ogidi (Anambra), Amaezu, Eha-Amufu (Ebonyi), Ugwuoba, Achi (Enugu), Agbor, Onichaugbo (Delta), UmuawadaOnicha Ezinihitte Mbaise, Obowo (Imo State) and Etche, Ikwerre (Rivers). The data collected on how conversant the Igbo rural dwellers are with SDGs were quantitatively analysed using percentile ranking, while data on their views on giving them information on SDGs in Igbo or English were qualitatively analysed by discussions.

QUANTITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

On interviewing our 36 consultants from 12 communities, only 1 consultant each from Ibeku (Abia State), Ogidi (Anambra State), Onichaugbo (Delta State), and 2 from Obowo (Imo State) are aware of the existence of the SDGs programme. That is, 5 people out of the 36 consultants interviewed for the study. In other words, only 5 persons, representing less than 14% of the study consultants, have an idea of the programme. They explained that, from what they heard from the radio/television, the programme is meant to better the living standards of the people. On further questioning as to how this betterment of their lives would be realized through SDGs, none was able to give an answer. All our consultants from Ebonyi, Enugu, and Rivers States have not heard of the programme. This goes to show that more than 86% of the study consultants, representing 31 persons out of 36 persons, do not know that the SDGs programme exists.

Looking at the figures, it becomes clear that the level of awareness of the programme is very low. Even the less than 14% of the consultants that are aware of the programme expressed disappointment that they only heard of it in passing while listening to one English programme or the other on radio/television. They wondered how an elaborate programme like SDGs could not be brought down to the people in their own language. It is important to note that all the 36 consultants are of the view that the SDGs programme is better related to them in the Igbo language to enable them understand what the programme sets out to achieve, their individual and collective roles, and how they are to be impacted by the programme.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs), AND QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

United Nations (1987) defines Sustainable Development as the "...development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The United Nations, in September 2015, adopted a global agenda for development known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are shown in United Nations (2015). We elaborate on the 17 goals using excerpts from SDGs Summit (2015).

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

It is expected that by 2030, the programme must have achieved nationally appropriate social protection for all, build resilience in the poor and the vulnerable, and shield them from economic, social and climate-related disasters.

Many of the people which SDGs programme targets to capture in Goal 1, comprising the poor and the vulnerable, are not educated and do not have any serious means of regular income. Often times, they engage in petty trading and subsistent agriculture. For poverty to be eliminated in the Igbo communities through SDGs, by 2030, all the poor and the vulnerable must be orientated to the programme of the SDGs. The plan of activities of the SDGs and what the people should do to benefit from the programme must be clear to all the target population. This is where the Igbo language comes in.

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

By 2030, end hunger and ensure that everyone, especially the poor and those in vulnerable situations like infants, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons, have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round in order to end malnutrition.

Modern agricultural techniques and improved agricultural input are necessary if Goal 2 will be achieved. There is the need to acquaint the farmers in Igbo communities with the modern techniques and explain how to identify, access and employ the improved species of their farm input. This is where the Igbo language factor comes in; since the facilitators need to carry out their work using the language all the members of their target population understand very well.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

By 2030, reduce maternal mortality and end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years; end epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases; treatment and promotion of mental health; prevention and treatment of substance abuse; achieve universal health coverage; support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries; substantially increase health financing and recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries.

Some people in Igbo communities contract AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and some other diseases as a result of ignorance. This is also the case with substance abuse and resentment of vaccines and modern medicare facilities. Proper education of the people using the Igbo language, their mother tongue, would ensure they are knowledgeable in all these health affairs. With such knowledge, they would protect themselves against contracting diseases. Also, their knowledge of the need for early visit to health facilities and accessing ante- and post-natal care would drastically reduce maternal mortality and end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years. Doctors and nurses in charge of health matters should be paid well, better their working conditions and provide them basic amenities to enable them work with joy in taking care of patients under their judiciary. When the living standard of these health experts is captured by SDGs, it will reduce the rate at which our doctors and nurses leave the country for greener pastures.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations; build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive.

In this part of the world, girl's education seems neglected in the sense that most people have the mentality that their (girls) education ends in the kitchen. Same goes to the disabled people, spending money to send them to school seems as waste of money to their parents. The SDG facilitators should explain to rural parents of the target persons in raw terms why it is important to get them educated. And doing this in Igbo communities will require that the facilitators use the language the target population understands very well. For education, teaching with indigenous language has proven to be very effective. Therefore, for this SDG to be achieved, quality teaching and learning at all levels (not only boys and able persons) of education should be made available to all using the language that the target people are very familiar with, which is their native language (Igbo). Disseminating SDG messages in the Igbo language they understand very well will make learning easier and more of fun especially for the disabled, thereby promoting long lasting opportunities for all as desired by this SDG.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Eliminate all forms of violence and harmful practices against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation, child/early/forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Although people are aware of this goal as driven by the governments but they do not understand fully how this SDG would be of immense help to them, and to what extent it could. Sincerely, the major cause of the women and girls not utilizing this empowerment as they should, and most of them still being marginalized is because this goal has not been broken down in the language of their choice. When their rights and privileges are purely explained to them in indigenous language, all forms of exploitation will reduce drastically because they would stand up for their rights in the families and communities they find themselves. We encourage that seminars and programs on sensitizing the women and girls in Igbo speaking communities be done in the language they speak and understand well, that is Igbo if this SDG would be actualized.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all; achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation.

Water is highly needed for survival of humans for sustainable livelihood. Therefore, it should be accessible, affordable for all in appropriate quality and quantity for drinking and sanitation purposes. It is said that water is life, and cleanliness is next to godliness. In other words, having access to good water and sustaining its management is very vital to human existence, and also, keeping our surroundings clean and maintaining a healthy environment is a sure way to healthy living. Good toilet facilities should be available for all to use in order to end open defecation. To maintain the toilets and cleaning of hands by users, water is needed. So, if availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all will be achieved in Igbo communities by 2023, enlightening people on adequate use of water for health purposes, personal hygiene and other information with regards to this goal should be passed across to Igbo speaking communities using their language.

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

Without reliable and sustainable energy supply, people remain in the dark, and development would be farfetched. And so, electricity should be supplied in rural areas of Igbo communities to enable them to be in the know of what happens in the world around them by watching television and listening to radio news. Though some average people among them have resorted to the use of small generator to avoid being in the dark, and also to better their livelihood, then, what about those who cannot afford it? So, if this SDG 7 would be achieved within the stipulated period of time in Igbo speaking communities, the masses should be provided with electricity, sensitize them in the Igbo language on how to pay their electricity bills, and how important it is they pay it regularly in order to have a sustainable energy supply. Also, the electricity supply agents make the bills affordable for people to pay. Another area the use of Igbo for the rural dwellers to benefit this SDG is by orienting them about the use of prepaid meter newly introduced. Many people in Igbo rural areas do not know how better prepaid meter will benefit them when compared with ordinary meter they have been familiar with for a long time. Therefore, in order to achieve access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, the rural dwellers should be oriented on energy matters using the Igbo language.

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, and equal pay for work of equal value; take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, modern day slavery, human trafficking and child labour; protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

For this goal to be achieved in Nigeria, awareness of job opportunities should be made for people in the cities as well as those living in the rural areas. Most people in the rural areas lose job opportunities because they are not living in the cities where there is electricity neither do they have relations living in the cities. So, such opportunities elude them. They do not have televisions where some of these job vacancies are advertised. For those that have audio sets like radios may not afford batteries to listen to news and newspaper reviews where they can get such information. Another problem of Igbo rural dwellers is the issue of not being properly informed due to the use of English in disseminating the news and adverts. Using the Igbo language in reaching out to those hidden talented people in Igbo rural areas will be best so that they can benefit in SDG 8 as to their rights to getting good jobs, being well paid and without feeling inferior with regards to their background.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD) of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, grouped this goal under Thematic Group 6. According to CSD (n.d.), Thematic Group 6 "is concerned with working out and implementing integrated strategies for the comprehensive renewal of our cities and degraded communities and for the installation and maintenance of appropriate infrastructures to support economic activities for the wellbeing of their inhabitants."

For more of building resilient infrastructures, especially in the rural areas, lands are claimed by the government, some buildings are demolished in the process too to enhance sustainable development. These bring about conflicts between the masses and government personnel assigned to work to which if the masses are not controlled can cause fighting that might lead to loss of lives. In such a case, the use of appropriate language to address the masses comes into play. The masses are to be made aware about the innovation and development which they will help to achieve by giving their consent. If this awareness is not properly and adequately created in order to convince the rural masses, it will hinder

industrialization and sustainable development in such areas. For the achievement of this SDG 9 in Igbo speaking communities, the Igbo language should be used to communicate the masses in order to make them understand very well the target, get them persuaded on how the said goal will be of great benefit to them.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status; facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people.

Language can help to see to the achievement of this goal which is reducing inequality within and among countries. Firstly, among countries, there is this kind of inequality felt by Africans when compared with the Whites. That is why average Nigerians believe that the Whites are better than them in every aspect of life, making them feel inferior. For Igbo rural dwellers, if Igbo can be used to explain to them that there is need for all humans to be equal, and there is no much difference between them and the Whites, their morale will be raised to be at their best in every endeavor of life. Secondly, within the country, to mitigate inequalities people should be taught in lay terms that everyone is equal. Coming to the easterners (our area of study), they should be sensitized that Anambra people are not better than Ebonyi people or Imo people better than those from Enugu. Understanding this makes the migrants not to look as if they are lesser beings in any place they find themselves, therefore, should not be marginalized by their native occupants. How can this be done? The answer is by using a language familiar to Igbo speaking communities to share the target of this SDG. Moreover, economic or social class should not make some people feel they are better than others. Politics should not be restricted to men only or the aged, women as well as the young should be empowered too to campaign for any electoral post. For instance, no woman or youth vied for the post of a president in the just concluded Presidential election in Nigeria. It is a living proof that inequality exists in our nation. Coming to the area of income and social inequalities, improper guidance or wrong channeling of resources is responsible for that, and can be curbed by using Igbo in educating the Igbo rural dwellers on physical policies to help empower them through having access to loans and modern agricultural tools which will increase their income and better their living standards.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums; provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety; provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces; substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements.

One of the most important needs of man is where to lay down his head, that is, human settlement. As human population is on alarming increase, people need affordable and safe place to live and carry out their daily activities. Government has different housing schemes. Many Igbo rural dwellers though aware, but do not benefit in this scheme because they are not satisfactorily informed on how to partake in the scheme. As many are already under slum conditions, making houses and cities safe and sustainable in Nigeria generally, must incorporate slum settlements upgrade and ensure access to safe and affordable housing for all. Moreover, as people carry out daily activities, sustainable and safe transport system for all is needed. There is usually traffic congestion as population and cities increase. The safety of people on the road should also be emphasized. Therefore, the safety tips as well the enlightenment on how people would engage in the housing schemes should be disseminated not in English, but in Igbo which the Igbo rural dwellers are familiar with in order to ensure a sustainable and safe human settlements by 2030. .

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

By 2030, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

Many people in the rural areas do a lot of things without knowing the implications. For instance, there are some things they burn that release dangerous chemicals detrimental to their health, and if an asthmatic person is found within such environment at the moment of the burning the person collapses. Though articles and writings (written in English) abound with regards to environmental hazards, sound management of wastes and chemicals, but these are not accessed by Igbo rural dwellers. The reason is that most of them are illiterate farmers who hardly read and understand English. They do not know anything about these above mentioned terms, how some chemical substances could be dangerous to nature, their health and environment, and the adverse effects of not achieving this goal. But if this goal will be properly explained to them in the Igbo language, they will understand better the consequences of improper management of chemicals and wastes. When this goal is well understood by Igbo rural dwellers (having explained to them in the

language they understand very well), they will key into achieving it by 2023, having known that it will benefit and better their living standards.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Climate change is a familiar concept but not everyone knows what it means and what it entails. According to WIRED (2018), human activity is responsible for greater percentage of climate change. This is the reason people (especially rural dwellers) need to be educated about climate change, its impacts and ways to mitigate it. In Nigeria, we have Directorate of Climate Change in the Federal Ministry of Environment. In the platform (<http://climatechange.govt.ng/>), government structured operational policies that promote Green and Resilient cities, Climate Smart Agriculture, among other interventions, all interested in climate change mitigation. The question now is, ‘how many ordinary Nigerians in various communities (especially in the rural areas) know about these government policies and interventions?’ This is where language comes in. In Igbo speaking communities, 90% of the rural dwellers depend on agriculture for livelihood. They need to be aware of what this climate change is, its causes, how they as humans contribute to it, how detrimental it could be (drought, flood, erosion, wild fire and more) to agriculture (their source of livelihood) if no urgent action is taken to combat it. To attain this SDG 13 by 2030 in Igbo speaking communities, Igbo should be used to create awareness and educate the rural dwellers on climate change, as better understanding of it would help them improve in agriculture.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Most of the people in Igbo speaking communities living in riverine areas are rural dwellers who are fish farmers. They do not know most technical terms in fish farming to improve their occupation, other benefits of the rivers, seas and oceans surrounding them and how they can utilize these gifts of nature by irrigation and more to attract government interventions. When these are known, poverty will be eradicated; some rivers and seas around can turn to tourism centers. This is where language plays a vital role. Using the language Igbo rural dwellers know very well to enlighten and explain to them how essential seas and oceans are to human existence, how to maintain healthy seas and oceans, and human factors that can be endangering to seas and oceans will help achieve the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Igbo communities by 2030.

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.

This has do with the land base systems like deserts, forests, oceans, rivers and how they can be preserved and sustained for sustainable development. Agriculture is the major occupation of the target population of this study (Igbo rural dwellers), and their activities are directed at our natural endowment such as soil, water, ecosystem etc to raise crops and animal for food. If Igbo will be used as a communicative tool to teach people in Igbo speaking communities to plant trees for ecosystem, farrow their lands to mitigate degradation and improve crop yieldings, not to dispose waste into the river or channel any kind of thing into river, and more, virtually all hands will be on deck to seeing this goal greatly actualized by 2030. Thus, improvement on food production, as well as maintaining sustainable natural habitat for man, plants and animals will be achieved.

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive at all levels.

End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

Government and SDG facilitators through the use of Igbo language should make known to people in rural areas their rights to having/obtaining fair justice as those living in the cities without intimidation. Also, their duties and obligations to our nation in promoting and sustaining peace in various societies where they live should be explained to them as well as consequences for any crime committed. They should also be made to understand that everyone is accountable for every action consciously or unconsciously taken. When all these are communicated to Igbo rural dwellers in their own language, they will be inclusive in pursuance of peaceful societies which leads to sustainable development.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data.

Let us look at this in the area of business. In Igbo setting language has not been fully harnessed in the area of business because we have not used language very well to achieve a global community. For instance, those processing garri in the Igbo speaking communities use the Igbo language which make them operate on a local level. They cannot march up to peers like importers. For instance, a colleague in United Kingdom says there is a very high demand for garri. There are so many skilled workers processing garri in Nigeria especially in Igbo speaking communities, but because of lack of awareness in a language they understand very well (Igbo), they are limited. There is no development in terms of the growth of their businesses. Language has become a barrier to sustainable development in their businesses. There are Whites interested in doing business with Africans. When they come together in partnership, the small and medium enterprises (garri processing and supply) will be developed. This global partnership can only be actualized in Igbo speaking communities when the Igbo rural dwellers are exposed in Igbo the aim of this goal and what they stand to achieve with goal. When these facts are well understood, they will put in their strength and play vital roles to see that the dream of this SDG becomes a reality.

CONCLUSION

The paper investigated the role of the Igbo language in achieving sustainable development goals in Igbo communities. Although the SDGs programme has been in Nigeria since its introduction by the UN in 2015, its impact is yet to be felt in the Igbo communities. Most of our consultants do not know about the programme. The few people that know about it do not know even the basic things about the programme. Nothing about the programme is brought down to the people in the Igbo communities in the Igbo language, creating a huge communication gap between the programme sponsors and the target population.

The UN (<https://nigeria.un.org.sdgs>) has it that it is working with its partners in Nigeria to ensure that the country achieves the SDGs which comprises 17 goals addressing the major challenges facing Nigerians. Our source says,

The UN in Nigeria is strengthening its support through provision of technical support to the Office of the Senior Special Advisor to the President on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs) and line Ministries in an effort to ensure that planning and budgeting for development activities in the country are within the framework of the SDGs. We are working closely with the Government of Nigeria and other partners in ensuring that the SDGs are efficiently and effectively implemented and that resources are allocated to sectors of the economy that will yield highest dividend for the poor and the vulnerable Nigerians.

Our investigation finds out that the efforts of the UN have not actually impacted on the Igbo communities as the organization expects. The bodies the UN financially supports to drive the SDGs do not find it expedient to ensure that they use the people's language in explaining the programme to the people for which it is designed in order to make them embrace the programme. Except the Igbo language is employed as a veritable tool for achieving sustainable development goals in Igbo communities, getting the SDGs programme to record maximum success would definitely be a mirage.

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