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## Sustainable Development, Global Humanitarian Politics: Study of Water Supply and Sanitation in Oyo State, Nigeria

By

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### Abstract

Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is a major human right necessary for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable access to an improved water and sanitation has a strong relationship with healthy and productive life as well as environmental sustainability. Efforts at ensuring access to clean and proper sanitation have witnessed tremendous progress globally and also at local levels. Specifically, poor accessibility to clean water has gross implications on socioeconomic development, personal hygiene and places the health of about 40 million Nigerians at risk of disease like cholera, typhoid, trachoma, dengue-fever and ascariasis; a threat to sustainable development goals. Through the method of primary and secondary data analysis, it is the aim of this study to examine how global humanitarian interventions have impacted on the attainment of sustainable development goals in Oyo state, Nigeria, particularly with reference to access to quality water supply and sanitation. The study adopts case study research design. Data were source from primary and secondary sources: 200 survey where administered to the beneficial communities of water and sanitation services provision under humanitarian politics across the 3 senatorial districts of Oyo State. Key informant interview were conducted with UNICEF and CSDA under RUWASA Oyo State. Participatory observation and community interactions were also held. The study reveals that; the beneficiary communities are aware of humanitarian intervention in water and sanitation services provision; maintenance of project are mainly done by the communities; service providers focused on achievement of global development agenda (SDG) in pursuit of water and sanitation service in the beneficiary communities; the politics of humanitarian service provision in Nigeria is more of donor driven and community ownership/management. The study concludes on the need for Nigerian States to harness humanitarian politics as a veritable channel for deepening attainment of the SDGs with particular reference to provision of water supply and sanitation

**Keywords:** Global Humanitarian Politics, Sustainable Development, Water Supply, Sanitation, Oyo State, Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

Humanitarian services is broadly defined as the act of providing material assistance to people in need. Humanitarian activities have existed throughout human history, often in the form of food or material aid provided during famine, drought or natural disaster<sup>1</sup>. Yet the modern concept and system of humanitarian aid as we know it; the impartial, independent and neutral provision of aid to those in immediate danger; has only existed since the mid part of the 20th century<sup>1</sup>. Humanitarian services are assistance that's used to relieve suffering during emergency situations.

The objectives of humanitarian actions are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations<sup>2</sup>. Global humanitarian politics is an aspect of world politics. At the heart of that discipline are the various processes of political globalization in relation to questions of social power in social support. Sustainable development was explicitly popularized and contextualized by the Brundtland Commission in the document "Our Common Future" where it was defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs<sup>3</sup>.

The Commission focused on three pillars of human wellbeing: economic, socio-political and ecological/environmental conditions and the basic concept endorses putting in place strong measures to spur economic and social development, particularly for people in developing countries, while ensuring that environmental integrity is sustained for future generations<sup>5</sup>. As further noted, that sustainable development is a normative concept outlining desirable development paths in societies, with an interest in ensuring intergenerational justice.

Sustainable development assessments and related processes help to identify key remaining challenges to eliminate poverty and hunger; to feed, nurture, house, educate and employ the

global population; to ensure peace, security, and freedom; and to preserve the Earth's basic life support systems. Water has been seen as a paramount and ubiquitous universal solvent on the earth surface which has the capacity and capability to dissolve most solid matter; it is indispensable to life in which human and other living things existence depend on for survival<sup>4</sup>.

The quantity and quality of the water that we drink is directly linked to health. If the water is contaminated with germs or chemicals, health will be affected. Outbreaks of diseases transmitted by water have a major impact on human health. Diseases which can be transmitted by water include cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A and many diarrheal diseases. All of these diseases can also be spread by other means, but the quality of public water supplies is particularly important because such supplies are capable of transmitting contaminated water to many people<sup>5</sup>.

The importance of the water supply and sanitation system has been a subject of serious attention reflected in the measurement of human development and in their inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals 6. This priority treatment follows official reports estimating about one billion people in the world living without access to improved drinking water supplies while 2.6 billion people live without adequate sanitation<sup>6</sup>. UNICEF works towards the progressive realization of human rights to water and sanitation for all, with a focus on interventions for children.

This aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which calls for universal and equitable access to water and sanitation services by 2030. In its *Global Strategy for WASH (2016-2030)*, UNICEF recognizes the scale of the challenge facing the world if it's to succeed in achieving this vision and singles out urban WASH as one of the priority areas for increased engagement, in order to reach the most vulnerable, wherever they are. Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development, healthy ecosystems and for human survival itself. It's vital for reducing the global burden of disease and improving

the health, welfare, and productivity of populations. It is central to the production and preservation of a host of benefits and services for people. Water is also at the heart of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between the climate system, human society and the environment<sup>7</sup>.

Water is an infinite and irreplaceable resource that is fundamental to human well-being. It is only renewable if well managed. Today, more than 1.7 billion people live in river basins where depletion through use exceeds natural recharge, a trend that will see two-thirds of the world's population living in water-stressed countries by 2025<sup>8</sup>. Water can pose a serious challenge to sustainable development but managed efficiently and equitably, water can play a key enabling role in strengthening the resilience of social, economic and environmental systems in the light of rapid and unpredictable changes.

Sanitation refers to efforts or activities aimed at developing and maintaining a clean, safe and pleasant physical environment in all human settlements. It comprises a number of complementary activities, including the construction and maintenance of sanitary infrastructure, the provision of services, public education, community and individual action, regulation and legislation. Sanitation therefore involves controlling the aspects of waste that may lead to the transmission of diseases<sup>9</sup>. Included in the term waste management are water, solid waste and industrial waste. Adequate sanitation in conjunction with good hygiene and safe water are essential to good health in an attainment of any social and economic development in a country. Most of the diseases resulting from sanitation have a direct relation to poverty. It is estimated that inadequate sanitation is responsible for 4.0 percent of deaths and 5.7 percent of disease burden worldwide<sup>10</sup>. Lack of sanitation such as inadequate drainage system or blocked drainage system leading to flooding or breeding site for vectors; inadequate and inaccessibility of public sanitary convenience which enhance indiscriminate defecation and urination thereby causing odour outbreak, flies' infestation thereby promoting disease

outbreak; potholes and other substances retaining water causing breeding of pathogenic organisms, presence of overgrown weeds, indiscriminate disposition of waste and so on.

<sup>10</sup>.

Waste is a serious issue that is affecting most developing countries and countries in transition. The importance of the isolation of excreta and waste lies in an effort to prevent diseases which can be transmitted through human waste, which afflict both developed countries as well as developing countries to differing degrees. It is estimated that up to 5 million people die each year from preventable waterborne disease as a result of inadequate sanitation and hygiene practices<sup>11</sup>. The effects of sanitation have impacted the society of people throughout history. Sanitation is a necessity for a healthy life.

A healthy population facilitates sustained poverty reduction and socio-economic growth and in lieu of this, access to potable water has been found to contribute to improved health status. It saves time for other productive activities, especially among women, and also enhances school attendance. Improved sanitation contributes significantly to the reduction and prevention of water and sanitation related problems such as malaria, typhoid, and dysentery. The implementation of appropriate health and hygiene promotion activities in the communities lead to reduction in communicable diseases<sup>12</sup>.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Water is vital for all forms of life to exist; without it, basic human needs including sanitation, food production, and consumption cannot be met. Given how crucial it is to human survival, it is reasonable to assume that people of all backgrounds will have equal access to clean drinking water. However, this is not the case since access to safe drinking water from modernized sources is not uniform. Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is a major human right necessary for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable access to an improved water and sanitation has a strong relationship with healthy and productive life as well as environmental sustainability. Efforts at ensuring access to clean

and proper sanitation have witnessed tremendous progress globally and also at local levels. Findings from previous studies on this theme revealed two things. First, there were wide gaps in the access to water facilities and the extent of use of the water. Secondly, many households are vulnerable to water-borne diseases owing to a lack of potable water sources in their vicinity. Specifically, poor accessibility to clean water has gross implications on the socio-economic development, personal hygiene and places the health of about 40 million Nigerians at risk of disease like cholera, typhoid, trachoma, dengue-fever and ascariasis; a threat to sustainable development goal. While there seems to be age-long neglect of this agenda, this study intends to examine the underlying challenges that may affect access to clean water and decent sanitation in Nigeria, particularly in Oyo state.

### **3. The Goals of the Study**

The goals of this study is to investigate global humanitarian interventions and how it as been exemplified to achieve sustainable development goal in form of access to quality water supply and sanitation in Oyo state, Nigeria within the period of 2022-2023. And the justification for this time-frame is to know the water quality and quantity and present sanitation status in Oyo state, Nigeria.

### **4.Literature Review/ Theoretical Synthesis**

Sustain ability as a concept has gained increasing usage from the 1990s with the intensification of globalization on one hand and poverty in the poorest regions of the world on the other<sup>13</sup> At its core, it is an attempt to incorporate ideas of sustainable use into the exploitation and rapid consumption of natural resources. So pervasive has it become especially within the context of climate it has adopted the character of a boundary term that links a wide range of social concepts including politics, economics, culture, science, engineering, technology and architecture to the notion of being sustainable conceived mainly from the perspective of protecting the environment.

Mentions of sustainability tend to evoke associations with managing non-renewable energy sources, conservation of natural resources including forests and water supply, urbanization, industrialization, reducing carbon emissions and environmental protection and activism but it also embodies an attitude of human beings towards the environment<sup>14</sup>.

The idea of humanitarianism springs from a range of positions rooted in intellectual, religious and cultural traditions. It's an activity that value human life, generosity, benevolent assistance and alleviation of human suffering. Humanitarianism deals with philanthropic approach to human rights in times of emergencies such as; voluntary emergency aid. Water is essential to human survival and the progress of their societies. Human societies first emerged as agrarian settlement where the value of water as essential for not just crop cultivation but growth of healthy crops as well as for the purpose of supporting metabolic functions and sanitation for hygiene. For this reason, human communities tended to be located on river sides/river basins<sup>15</sup>. While their activities were designed to take account of rainfall occurrence and its seasonal distribution for the purpose of enhancing productivity, unpredictable events like droughts and flood often created disruptions that threatened their existence and survival. Since these earliest days, humanity's requirement of water has only increased as their population skyrocketed and their societies experienced industrial revolutions. sanitation practice is crucial to human health and wellbeing to health. Yet many countries are increasingly hindered in the provision of adequate sanitation facilities for their populations exposing them to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related diseases. An approximate 2.4 billion people or 32% of the world's population do not have access to basic sanitation. Basic sanitation has been defined as having access to facilities for the safe disposal of human waste (feces and urine), as well as having the ability to maintain hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection, industrial/hazardous waste management, and wastewater treatment and disposal<sup>16</sup>.

Sanitation as deployed in this study conforms largely to the above description. Essentially, it refers to public health conditions related to accessing clean drinking water and adequate treatment and disposal of human excreta and sewage for the purpose of promoting human health and wellbeing.

Development, like modernization, has become the orienting principle of modern times. Countries that are seen as modern are also seen as developed, which means that they are generally more respected by institutions such as the United Nations and even as possible trade partners for other countries. The extent to which a country has modernized or developed dictates its power and importance on the international level<sup>17</sup>.

## **5. Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of this research, the study adopted a mix method of research which comprises of both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary source of data herein refers to data collected or obtained through first-hand information from the original sources from the user express purpose. Such data are usually obtained from field through interviews, questionnaires, surveys, planned experimental observation

## **6. Discussions of Findings**

It shows that (40.6%) representing 73 of the respondents said malnutrition and hunger, (32.2%) representing 58 respondents said socio-political unrest is a primary cause of humanitarian crisis in their community, (20.6%) of the respondents also said natural disaster is the primary cause of humanitarian and lastly, (6.7%) of the respondents are said environmental problems such as climate change is a primary cause of humanitarian crisis in their community. The implication is that, majority of the respondents believed that malnutrition and hunger is the sole primary source of humanitarian crisis in their community Also, political instability in their community affected the achievement of sustainable development goals in their local community while (32.8%) said



NO. (26.1%) representing 47 respondents said I don't know. The implication of this is that majority of the respondents are of the opinion that political instability contributed negatively to the achievement of sustainable development goals in their communities.

## **7. Conclusion/Recommendation**

The study discovered that while majority of the respondents are aware of humanitarian crisis in their communities, they believe that malnutrition and hunger is the primary cause of humanitarian crisis in their local communities. The study also identified that corruption and poor governance are the major challenges bedevilling the achievement of sustainable development goals number 6 in Oyo state and most of these humanitarian crises affected the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

The study recommends that:

1. **Increase Access to Humanitarian Services:** Since a significant proportion of the respondents did not benefit from humanitarian services, policymakers should focus on increasing access to these services. They could collaborate with religious organizations and UNICEF to provide more humanitarian services, including water and sanitation.
2. **Improve Water Quality:** A significant proportion of the respondents reported that their source of drinking water is not safe, and pollution was a significant issue. Policies should focus on improving water quality and increasing access to clean water. Government intervention is needed to address the pollution issue, and health officers should be involved in the disinfection process.

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