

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES COLLABORATION WITH SOCIETAL GROUPS TOWARDS  
ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:**

*Public Libraries collaboration and partnership with societal groups towards achieving the sustainable development goals in Nigeria was investigated empirically, The study's population consisted of the six Heads of State Library Boards in southwest Nigeria, who were surveyed using a descriptive research design. While gathering data, the interview method was employed. The researchers and additional research assistants set out to interview every member of the study population in accordance with the total enumeration technique that was chosen for the study. However, one of them was not available for interview, giving 80% response rate. The interview responses were examined using thematic analysis. In this way, the researchers familiarise themselves with the data they have received, create preliminary codes from the responses based on the different study objectives, and apply codes to themes or more general concepts associated with the research. The study's findings demonstrated the active partnership and collaboration between public libraries and social groups in the states of South West Nigeria. However, many state-run public libraries have either not done so yet or are in the process of doing so. The study recommended inter alia that State-level public libraries that have not yet started working together or forming partnerships with social groups should try to do so and Public libraries that already collaborate with groups should consider the possibility of collaborating with additional social groups and adding new initiatives to the ongoing collaborations.*

**Keywords:** Public Libraries, Societal Groups, Sustainable Development Goals-Nigeria, South-West, Nigeria

**Introduction**

The establishment of collaboration and partnerships between libraries and diverse stakeholders is imperative in Nigeria to effectively attain sustainable development. Libraries fulfil a pivotal function in facilitating information accessibility, fostering literacy, and bolstering lifelong learning, thereby serving as invaluable resources in the pursuit of sustainable development objectives (SDGs). Collaboration and partnership between libraries and societal groups have been identified as pivotal factors in the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria. Libraries serve as more than mere storehouses of knowledge; they also function as community hubs that actively contribute to a range of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The establishment of collaboration and partnerships between public libraries and societal groups holds significant potential in contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. Public libraries are not merely repositories of books; rather, they hold significant value as community hubs that can function as catalysts for social and educational advancement. Public libraries have the potential to contribute significantly to the achievement of

Quality Education (SDG 4) by fostering partnerships with various societal groups. These partnerships can be established with schools, universities, and educational organisations, with the aim of promoting literacy, facilitating access to educational resources, and facilitating lifelong learning. One potential strategy to foster the development of students and educators is through the implementation of workshops, seminars, and training programmes. These initiatives aim to augment their skills and knowledge. Public libraries have the potential to establish collaborations with food banks, agricultural organisations, and nutrition programmes in order to effectively distribute knowledge regarding sustainable farming practises, food security, and appropriate nutrition. In addition, it is worth noting that they have the capacity to facilitate community gardening initiatives and conduct workshops centred around food preservation. These endeavours have the potential to contribute to the eradication of hunger and the successful attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 2.

Similarly, by establishing partnerships with healthcare institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community health centres, public libraries have the potential to enhance public knowledge regarding health matters, facilitate access to trustworthy health information, and contribute to the implementation of health-related initiatives such as vaccination campaigns and health screenings. These collaborative efforts can ultimately contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims to promote good health and well-being. In a similar vein, public libraries have the potential to collaborate with women's groups, organisations focused on gender equality, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in order to advance the cause of gender equality and foster women's empowerment. The organisation has the capacity to facilitate dialogues, educational sessions, and projects that actively question and counteract gender stereotypes, thereby cultivating an environment of inclusivity. These efforts contribute to the advancement of Gender Equality, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 5. Furthermore, through partnerships with water management agencies and environmental organisations, public libraries have the potential to enhance public awareness regarding water conservation, sanitation practises, and water pollution. In addition, they have the capacity to arrange various events aimed at promoting sustainable water utilisation, thereby contributing to the realisation of Clean Water and Sanitation objectives within the local ecosystem, ultimately facilitating the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 6. One additional objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that can be facilitated by public libraries is the promotion

of accessible and environmentally sustainable energy sources. SDG 7 entails the potential collaboration between public libraries and entities involved in renewable energy, such as companies, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with a focus on energy. This collaboration aims to advance clean energy solutions, disseminate knowledge on energy-efficient practises, and enhance public understanding of the advantages associated with renewable energy sources.

In a comparable vein, public libraries can provide resources and assistance to individuals seeking employment, aspiring entrepreneurs, and proprietors of small businesses through collaborations with local enterprises, vocational training centres, and employment agencies. In addition, they have the capacity to arrange workshops focused on enhancing job readiness and fostering entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which pertains to promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Public libraries have the potential to engage in collaborative efforts with human rights organisations, disability rights groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that focus on marginalised communities. These collaborations serve the purpose of fostering inclusivity and mitigating disparities. One potential approach to address the goal of Reduced Inequalities, as outlined in SDG 10, involves the implementation of various initiatives such as awareness campaigns, inclusive events, and programmes that are specifically designed to cater to the diverse needs of the community.

Public libraries have the potential to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which focuses on creating sustainable cities and communities. This can be accomplished through partnerships with urban planning departments, environmental organizations, and community development groups. By collaborating with these entities, public libraries can actively promote sustainable urban development, green initiatives, and community engagement. Public libraries have the potential to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. This is because public libraries can engage in partnerships with civil society organizations, legal aid centres, and human rights groups to facilitate access to justice, uphold the rule of law, and enhance public awareness of legal rights. In addition, they have the capacity to coordinate and facilitate events aimed at promoting constructive discourse and fostering mutual comprehension among members of the community.

Public libraries can fulfill the role of facilitators for partnerships by establishing connections among diverse societal groups, fostering a spirit of collaboration, and functioning as a hub for the exchange of information pertaining to sustainable development initiatives. These endeavours contribute to the realisation of SDG 17, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships in achieving the Goals. In order to optimize the effectiveness of collaborative efforts, it is imperative to establish robust channels of communication and foster a climate of trust among all relevant stakeholders. Public libraries should proactively engage in collaborative efforts, establish cooperative strategies, and consistently assess and modify their endeavors in response to the demands and input of the community. Through collaborative efforts aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), public libraries and various societal groups have the potential to foster a future in Nigeria that is characterized by sustainability and equity.

According to a study conducted by Ishola and Igbinovia (2019), in order for countries like Nigeria to effectively and significantly accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is imperative for the individual states within the country to collaborate and collectively contribute their efforts towards the agenda. In the same vein, Igbinovia, Ishola, and Alex-Nmecha (2018), opined that it is essential for libraries and librarians to enhance traditional practices that align with the global agenda, while also embracing new services in order to have a greater impact on humanity. However, there is a lack of comprehensive information regarding the collaboration and partnership between Public Libraries and societal groups in South-West region of Nigeria in relation to the attainment of sustainable development goals. Therefore, this empirical investigation examines the circumstances in the southwestern region of Nigeria.

## Objective of the study

- I. To investigate the existing level of engagement / extent of collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria
- II. To identify successful practices from the engagement / extent of collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria
- III. To identify challenges encountered in the process of engagement / extent of collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria
- IV. To identify potential areas for improvement in the engagement / extent of collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria

## Literature Review

Libraries are important research institutions and a place of information abundance which cannot be underestimated as the population greatly benefits from their service delivery. Libraries should participate in activities that will foster relationships between librarians, public, and other stakeholders because it is a social institution with the task of acquiring, organising, conserving, storing, managing knowledge and making information resources accessible to people in need. Bertsch and Warner-Soderholm (2013) reported from their studies that efficient public library services in Nigeria can support higher standards of living while guaranteeing sustainable development. While Priti and Jibril (2018), stated that public libraries play a crucial role in enhancing sustainable development. This was supported by Garcia-Milian et al. (2013) pinpointing that proper approaches by public libraries to national issues such as unemployment, scarcity of foods, insecurity, climate change and sustainable energy use increasingly necessitate the use of multi-institutional team collaboration. Diverse collaborative teams can contribute more creative ideas to the research endeavor, increase success while reducing mistakes, and maximize the effective and widespread distribution of new information (Disis & Slattery, 2010). Based on the foregoing, Oyeniran (2023) maintained that public libraries should work together to develop a platform where multinational corporations, government officials, and representatives from other organizations can interact. One such example is the current Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), which is working with the Rivers State Ministry of Chieftaincy Affairs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, organises educational programmes by involving different groups in the oil-

producing host communities within the Niger Delta region on discussions known as "THE CANVAS" to brainstorm, sensitize, initiate and educate, particularly the youth on issues centered on social and national issues like poverty eradication, economy growth, inequality reduction, promotion of good health and other national issues..

In the same vein, Ibeun and Eiriemiokhale (2014) claimed that evidence from a variety of literature indicates that genuine engagement from public libraries, social groups, individuals, and civil society is necessary to achieve successful and sustainable development. While Ekere and Benson (2017) highlighted various areas of partnership in which public libraries and societal groups can work together to achieve sustainable development objectives. these include raising awareness: By collaborating with social groups, public libraries can spread knowledge of the widely reported sustainable development goals. Consequently, Igbinovia (2016) advocated for public library librarians to take on new duties by encouraging greater cooperation with professionals from all fields in order to help solve social issues for their local and national communities.

Ravishankar et al. (2016) outlined the five primary collaboration issues that the general public and social groups faced when collaborating: a lack of information exchange, management capacity gaps, funding, insecurity, mismatched organisational styles, conflicting priorities, and corruption. Similarly, Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014), bemoaned the underfunding of public libraries and the deteriorating conditions that have made it difficult for these institutions to fulfill their primary objectives of disseminating knowledge for development and the realisation of SDGs. Akintoye and Opeyemi (2014) listed the following problems as barriers to attaining sustainable development in developing countries; Corruption, short-term objectives for governments and individuals and a lack of manpower skills to invent and actualise ideas.

World Wildlife Fund (2000) noted that during collaborations, some well-known actors who could play significant roles might decide not to participate, some unwanted stakeholders might want to participate, and some participants might decide to stop. While working together has many advantages, there are drawbacks as well, which all parties should be aware of and work to overcome. Only when these challenges are effectively surmounted can cooperation yield the desired and expected results. Thus far there is no known collaboration and partnership between Public Libraries and societal groups in South-West region of Nigeria in relation to the attainment of sustainable development goals, hence this study.

## Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted to elicit data from the six Heads of state library board in south west Nigeria, which constituted the population for the study. While interview method was used for data collection. Based on the adopted technique for the study, the researchers and other research assistants' set out to interview all the population of study. However, one of them was not available for interview, giving 80% response rate. The interview guide included four demographic questions as well as four major questions and four probing questions based on the study goals. Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview replies. In this manner, the researchers become acquainted with the received data, generate initial codes from the replies depending on the various objectives of the study, and assign codes to themes or wider concepts related to the investigation.

## Results and Discussion of findings

**Table 1: Demographic table**

S/N	Participant's Identity	Sex	Type of library	Highest Educational Qualification	Recognition	Institution	Ownership of Institution
1		Se					
2	First Participant. (P1)	Male	Public Library	MLS	Director State library board	Ondo State Library Board	Ondo State Government
3	Second participant. (P2)	Male	Public Library	MLS	Director State library board	Lagos State Library Board	Lagos State Government
4	Third participant (P3)	Female	Public Library	MLS	Director State library board	OSun State Library Board	OSun State Government
5	Fourth participant (P4)	Female	Public Library	MLS	Director State library board	Ekiti State Library Board	Ekiti State Government
6	Fifth participant (P5)	Male	Public Library	MLS	Director State library board	Oyo State Library Board	Oyo State Government



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Table 1 showed that five of the directors of the six public libraries in South West Nigeria responded to the study. The entire five respondents have masters degree in library science both genders were represented.

**Table 2: Responses to the Interview Questions**

**N.A** = Not Applicable

	Questions	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
1.	is there collaboration/ partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in your state	Yes	Yes	No	No	No (But in process)	
2	is there collaboration/ partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in your state towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	No	Yes	No	No	No	
3	If yes (Probing question 1):					-	

	<p>What are the exiting types &amp; impact of partnership programmes between public libraries and societal group in your state</p> <p>(Probing question 2):</p> <p>What are the societal group have you collaborated with?</p> <p>(Probing question 3):</p> <p>What are the impact of partnership programmes between public libraries and societal group in your state</p> <p>If No Why?</p>	Non	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World book day,</li> <li>• Literacy day,</li> <li>• Lagos book Walk</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors,</li> <li>• Miscellaneous</li> <li>• Writers,</li> <li>• iread network,</li> <li>• Ministry of education,</li> <li>• Read aloud Lagos,</li> <li>• iread mobile library Lagos,</li> <li>• iread community book club,</li> </ul> <p>Impact of collaboration include improved reading culture, self-reliance&amp; building elf confidence</p>	Just Working on having collaboration and partnership	Have plans in place. Just waiting to take off		NA
4	<p>What are the challenges encountered in the process of</p>			Government beauracy,		NA	NA

	engagement / collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria						
5	What are the potential areas for improvement in the engagement / extent of collaboration / partnerships between public libraries and societal groups in the South-West region of Nigeria			Government should allow public libraries to negotiate with societal group without intervention  Proceed from collaboration should be used for public libraries Development  Collaboration should be flexible not rigid and partner should be truthful and hardworking			

Table 2 showed that only two respondents indicated they have partnered with and collaborated with societal groups in their states; one stated his library is currently in the process of doing so, while the other respondents did not mention this. In the same vein, only one state library board director mentioned that their state's public library and various social groups work together to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. This result is consistent with research by Bertsch and Warner-Soderholm (2013), who found that efficient public library services in Nigeria can support higher standards of living while guaranteeing sustainable development, and Priti and

Jibril (2018), who found that public libraries play a crucial role in enhancing sustainable development. This finding is also supported by earlier findings from Garcia-Milian et al. (2013)

On the ongoing partnership programmes between public libraries and social groups in the state of South West Nigeria, one of the respondents indicated World Book Day, Lagos Book Walk, and Literacy Day as examples of these programmes. Another respondent indicated they have plans in place and are just waiting to get going, while another said they are just working on partnerships and collaboration. Some others stated there isn't one yet. These results are consistent with the arguments made by Ibeun and Eiriemiokhale (2014), who claimed that evidence from a variety of literature indicates that genuine engagement from public libraries, social groups, individuals, and civil society is necessary to achieve successful and sustainable development.

On the nature of the societal group public libraries in south West Nigeria have collaborated with, Authors, Miscellaneous Writers, iread Network, Ministry of Education, Read Aloud Lagos, iread Mobile Library Lagos, iread Community Book Club, were mentioned by one respondent. Some others indicated there isn't one yet. The discovery from the study aligns with Ekere and Benson (2017) highlighted various areas of partnership in which public libraries and societal groups can work together to achieve sustainable development objectives. these include (i) Raising awareness: By collaborating with social groups, public libraries can spread knowledge of the widely reported sustainable development goals and Igbinovia (2016) who underlined the necessity for public library librarians to take on new duties by encouraging greater cooperation with professionals from all fields in order to help solve social issues for their local and national communities and

Regarding the difficulties that public libraries face when attempting to engage, collaborate, or form partnerships with various societal groups within their state. One respondent stated that their biggest obstacle is government bureaucracy, while other respondents chose not to answer the question. This result aligns with the findings of Ravishankar et al. (2016), who outlined the five primary collaboration issues that the general public and social groups faced when collaborating: a lack of information exchange, management capacity gaps, funding, insecurity, mismatched organisational styles, conflicting priorities, and corruption. This result is also consistent with the findings of Onoyeyan and Adesina (2014), who bemoaned the underfunding of public libraries and the deteriorating conditions that have made it difficult for these institutions to fulfil their primary objectives of disseminating knowledge for development and the realisation of SDGs. This finding also agree with Akintoye and Opeyemi (2014) list of barriers to attaining sustainable development in developing countries, which Nigeria is not exempted.

On the possible areas where public libraries in the South-West region of Nigeria could enhance their level of engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with societal groups. One of the participants mentioned the following as potential areas for improvement: Public libraries should be allowed to negotiate with social groups without government interference. Proceeds from collaboration should be used for public libraries development, this collaboration should be flexible rather than rigid, and partners should be honest and diligent. This finding is supported by World Wildlife Fund (2000), which noted that during collaborations, some well-known actors who could play significant roles might decide not to participate, some unwanted stakeholders might want to participate, and some participants might decide to stop. While working together has many

advantages, there are drawbacks as well, which all parties should be aware of and work to overcome. Only when these challenges are effectively surmounted can cooperation yield the desired and expected results.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to determine how public libraries in Nigeria collaborate and partner with various social groups to achieve the country's sustainable development goals. The research revealed that public libraries and social groups in states in South West Nigeria are actively collaborating and partnering. However, a large number of state-run public libraries have either not yet done so or are currently in the process. Similarly, it was found that the biggest obstacle to finding long-term partners and encouraging cooperation between public libraries and community organisations was government bureaucracy. Public libraries should be allowed to negotiate with social groups without interference from the government; the proceeds from collaborations should be used for the development of public libraries; the nature of the collaborations should be flexible rather than rigid; and partners should be trustworthy and hardworking. These are some potential areas identified in the study where public libraries in the South-West region of Nigeria could improve their level of engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with societal groups. The research has successfully investigated the existing level of engagement, identify successful practices, challenges, and potential areas for improvement for Public Libraries collaboration and partnership with societal groups towards achieving the sustainable development goals in Nigeria. It has also improved understanding of the current situation and offered insightful advice on how to maximise the influence of public libraries and societal groups in advancing sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **Recommendations**

1. State-level public libraries that have not yet started working together or forming partnerships with social groups should try to do so.
2. The public libraries that are already involved in the partnership process should move quickly to complete it.
3. Public libraries that already collaborate with groups should consider the possibility of collaborating with additional social groups and adding new initiatives to the ongoing collaborations.
4. States' ministries of education and the government should offer frameworks and policies that promote joint ventures and cooperative efforts.

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