GOOD GOVERNANCE A CATALYST TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The transition from nationalism to nationism in post-colonial Africa is fraught with many challenges, among which is the question of sustainable development. The political arrangement during the colonial period is solely created for colonial convenience and not meant for self-propulsion orchestrated the problem of development in Africa talk less of sustainable development. The success of governance in any organized political system is determined by the quality and quantity of change brought about by such governance, which means that the development of any organized political system is determined by the quality of leadership in government. This paper therefore hypothesizes that good governance is a sine qua non of development, and good governance can therefore be catalytic to sustainable development. The paper also contends that bad government devoid of general acceptability jeopardizes their very stride for sustainable development, ipso facto, is people-focused and the participation of the citizens is indispensable for its success. In the main, where such willful participation perpetually compromised because the government is bad, then the whole concept of sustainable development in the realm of such social construct becomes a farce.

KEYWORDS: Governance, Catalyst, Sustainable Development, Government.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the emerging concept of "Sustainable Development" which is now central to the programmes of many governments, businesses, educational institutions and non-

governmental organizations around the world in relation to good governance. The concept Sustainable Development is development-focused interventions that seek to promote and enhance the socio-political and economic welfare of the people within an ecologically sustainable context at all levels of social organization.

The concept 'Sustainable Development' is an 'emerging concept' in two ways; first, because it is relatively new and evolves as we learn to gossip it's wide implications for all aspects of our lives, and second, because its meanings emerge and evolve according to local contexts.

According to Brundtland Commission, (1987), Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the light of this, since sustainable development is people-based, the government, true representative of the very people should incarnate sustainability. In the main, the success of governments in effecting these policies rests on their credibility in the eyes of the people with such qualities themselves reliant on the good governance. But in the absence of this credibility, governance becomes volcanic and erosive to sustainable development measures.

In Africa for instance, it is a known fact that, governments are not of the people, talk less of them or by them, based on the above; the attainment of sustainable development has been and will still remain a mirage. This is basically because governments' policies are not people-focused as dictated by the concept of sustainable development and if such governments even thought in that direction, application will be complicated because they are eyesores to the people hence good governance is a lubricant to sustainable development.

DEFINING THE CONCEPTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) research project, "Good governance is the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised; the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently, and to formulate, implement and enforce sound policies and regulation; and, the respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (cited in Onigbide, 2007).

UNDP (1997) described good governance as the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs, comprising the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences. It encompasses the political, economic, legal, judicial, social and administrative authority and therefore includes; government, the private sector and the civil society. It also includes both a broad strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institution of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic (Minogue, 1997 cited in Abe,2010). In the other words of Healey and Robinson, it implies "a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and public welfare" (1994). In addition to participation, accountability and transparency as enunciated by the UNDP report, good governance according to Healey and Robinson also include openness and the rule of rule. The World Bank offered a more comprehensive and insightful explanation of good governance when it averred that, "it is the means by which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1992). To Potter (2000) good governance is seen as "sound development management" that is a broad sphere of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development (reforms); information and technology; the legitimacy of government; the competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decision; implement them effectively and deliver services. Therefore good governance can also be seen as the extent at which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the welfare of the people and having the ability to respond to the needs of its citizens, competent in the maintenance of law and order, and public services delivery, able to create an enabling environment for productive activities and equitable in its conduct.

Governance means making and managing public policy, organizing people, controlling subordinates to exercise skill and commitment to achieve excellence in a given set of assignments. It is concerned with ensuring that constituents follow established process while instruments of governance provide means to maintain accountability. In the realm of public

affairs, governance refers to the range of policies public officials enact and actions they take to manage the affairs of society (Ukaegbu, 2010).

Sustainable Development is a concept which first appeared in the Swiss-based World Conservation Union Report (IUCN, 1980) which called for emboldened and democratically new conceptions of development that advance the material wants of the present generation without depriving the future generation of the resources required to satisfy their needs. The World Commission on Environment Report of 1987, also referred to as Brundtland Commission which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development defined sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs." (Brundland 1989)

The field of sustainable development according to United Nations, can be broken into four constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability and political sustainability.

Pearce, Makandia and Barbier (1989) opined that sustainable development involves devising a social and economic system, which ensures that those goals are sustained, ie. That real incomes rise, educational standards increase, the health of the nation improves, that the general quality of life is advanced.

In terms of scope and definition, Sustainable Development does not focus solely on environmental issues. More broadly, Sustainable Development policies encompass three general policy areas; economic, environmental and social. To buttress this point, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, refers to the "independent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development as economic/social development and environmental protection."

To Pearce (1993), Sustainable Development is concerned with the development of a society where the costs of development are not transferred to future generations or at least an attempt is made to compensate for such costs. To the network of excellence, Sustainable Development is a diverse word, which integrates multidisciplinary capacities and interprets cultural diversity as a key element of a new strategy for sustainable development. The United Nations Division for Sustainable Development lists the following as coming within the scope of sustainable

development: Agriculture, Education, International Law, Science, Poverty, Information for Decision making and Participation, Disaster Reduction and management, among others. Looking at the above is many considering the multidimensional and all-encapsulating nature of the development itself.

Brundtland, (1987) offered a more comprehensive and insightful explanation when it averred that, "Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the need of the future generations to meet their own needs, and that sustainable development contains within it two key concepts which are, (i) the concepts of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and (ii) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environments ability to meet present and future needs "

With the above, one could say that sustainable development is a development that takes care of the present and future needs without necessarily through the actions taken today subject the future generation into any kind of debts that should be paid later. It is all about meeting the needs of the present and future without necessarily making the future pay for the cost of meeting such needs later. Sustainable Development is a concept that have succeed in exciting the imagination of development specialists and policy-makers, governmental leaders and scholars to enter into agreement to seek to promote socio-economic development and protection of the environment. Today, Sustainable Development is not only multidimensional but cross-sectoral and a new paradigm in development circles.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE INTERFACE

Contemporary discourses to development seem awash with scholarly preoccupation with the concept and practice of good governance. The heightened interest in both the concept and practice of good governance may not be unconnected with myriad of concerns raised across the African continent over the apparent incapacity of the various African leaderships to ensure the

delivery of the dividends of democracy as were widely envisaged by the people at the onset of democratization and openness in their countries (Umar, 2008).

The concept of good governance essentially "highlights issues of state responsiveness and accountability and the impact of these factors on political stability and economic development" (Bratton and Rothchild, 1992). To Hyden (1992), the concept of good governance is seen as "the conscious management of regime structures with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public realm" and to Bratton and Rothchild (op.cit) it is seen as the practice of good government, and to Potter (2000), he calls good governance "sound development management," following the above, it shows that the concept governance is utilized differently by practitioners and commentators.

However one looks at it, governance is essentially concerned with the efficient and effective management of a society and its resources in such a way as to ensure the realization of the developmental goals of society. It revolves around the need for the effective handling of both the material and human resources available for deployment in nation-building. Implicit in the concept, also, is the extent to which government is to have legitimacy and the extent of its capacity to discharge its statutory responsibilities to the citizens. Good governance, therefore, necessarily precludes conditions that potentially may lead to the non-realization of the developmental objectives of society, especially one brought about by glaring lack of accountability, transparency and citizen involvement in the activities of the state. (Umar,2008).

The above assertion therefore implied that good governance is what is needed if there is going to be sound ethical and/or moral standards in the realm of governance and at all strata of society. However, the issue of transparency, equity, justice, decorum, accountability and interpersonal trust and respect, among others, are to be put together if the moral standard of both the individual and society are to rise. Also worthy to note that this standard is universal and as such every groups the world over, seek to promote same and reject their antithesis. In the context of states, the preoccupation with these ethical prescriptions is predicted on their interface with the developmental objectives.

It is also arguable, to say that the crisis of governance, brought about by some of the issues mentioned above has been the hallmark of the African society. The political landscape of the African countries has suffered enormously owing largely to the inability of its leaders to effectively handle the affairs of their country in such ways as to lead to the attainment of better life for all. Thus, not only are the citizens of those countries denied the latitude for the actualization of their cravings for prosperous living, but being largely dissatisfied with the prevailing the country into chaos.

Almost all the countries in Africa, has over the years been afflicted by the debilitating problems of lack of good governance. Prominent among such problems is the issue of corruption, the unwanton rape of the countries occasioned by leaderships that are both corrupt and wanting in vision remains quite enormous as to truncate the country's march to progress. "Realizing the fact that corruption is a monster that has been militating against our nationhood, our past leaders, from military to civilian, introduced various strategies aimed at eradicating and combating its menace. Sorrowfully however, they used the same agencies to shield themselves, while engaging in deep corrupt activities. " (Saturday Sun, 2013). Furthermore as argued by Gowon, the poverty of moral and other leadership virtues, in especially the public sphere, has been held to account for the inability of the country in particular and several areas in Africa in general, to attain development. According to him, "The leadership question, particularly the lack of committed and selfless political leaders on the African continent is largely responsible for the slow pace of development." (Leadership, 2008)

Taking the case of Nigeria for instance, Nigeria's poor ranking in the Transparency Index and its position in the World Development Chart, in spite of its enormous wealth and other potentials, supports the above claim. Further evidence is going by the inaugural speech of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as democratically elected president, promised to fight the monster called corruption, vowing that it would no longer be business as usual (which suggested that it had been business all the while), to prove his quality of determination, Obasanjo's very first bill to the National Assembly was the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Bill that was passed into an Act, which gave birth to Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000, as an agency to fight bribery and corruption.

Also in 2004, Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) was further set up. But what has been the achievement? Not much. To further expatiate on the above issue of corruption, it could be said to be something that is as old as Nigeria itself, as argued by Ibrahim, (2001): "Corruption is disputed in Nigeria and it manifests itself in virtually all aspects of national life. Crippling corruption encumbers both the state and the society at large." According to the African Development Report (2001), Corruption is not just endemic but an integral part of social fabric of life in Nigeria. It had in the last decade, especially under the military regime, increased to the extent that it begin to be asserted that in Nigeria it is not simply that officials are corrupt, but corrupt is official. The above simply means that while accountability and good governance enhances the prospect for development, corruption undermines it. The above also draws the attention to the fact that previous efforts at fighting the ills of corruption as captured in schemes alluded to earlier and the various enactments as the Corrupt Practices Decree 1975, the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act 1990, the Recovery of Public Property Act 1990 (as amended in 1991), the Failed Bank Decree 1994 (amended in 1999), the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000, the Economic and other Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act 2002 etc, were mere palliatives, failing to stem the tide of corruption in the polity. The state of affairs also makes clear the requirement for the moral resuscitation of society in the attempt to ward off the negative effects of the malaise.

To the dictators, he recommends, "leadership in Africa has been terrible, but how do you correct leadership. To my view, a leadership with strong institution, deriving power from the people and for them, democracy, transparency, rule of law, strong and representative parliaments and devolved power [---] I think it helps good leadership that can result to sustainable development."

CONCLUSION

Sustainable Development has conceptually become an area of concentration in the development circles. Indeed it has taken the position of the venerably concepts such as growth, modernization, progress and accelerated growth. To view this concept as one of those passing fad or yet another feeble effort to capture the imaginations of development policy-makers is to miss the power of the concept. The four dimensions of the sustainable development that shows that it encompass everything that development entails could be identified as follows,(i) ecological sustainability

which entails non-renewable and other resources are not depleted for short term improvements, (ii) economic sustainability which implies improvements do not depend on continuing infusion of resources that cannot be maintained, (iii) political sustainability requires changes are consistent with emerging distribution of power in the society and (iv) cultural sustainability which suggests changes must be consistent with core values, expectations, and mores of the society.

Sustainable Development in this context becomes a very viable ground to many fields of studies and the goals very desirable that it is incumbent for governments to strive to implement them for the benefit of both the present and future generations. However, in the discharge of these responsibilities, governance is indispensable because the goals are people-focused and the support of the very people is needed for efficacy. Bad governance thus become menaces to sustainable development and since the unsustainable practices could be national or regional yet the impact transnational or worldwide, institutionalizing good governance should be the target of all.

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